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Dedication to the Sacredness of the Bahá'í Fund Compiled by the National Spiritual Assembly of Azerbaijan

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7. Role of the Treasurer and My Envelope

Dedication to the Sacredness of the Bahá'í Fund Compiled by the National Spiritual Assembly of Azerbaijan



... the Guardian would advise your Assembly to continue impressing upon the believers the necessity of their contributing regularly to the national fund, irrespective of whether there is an emergency to be met or not.

—Shoghi Effendi

... gatherings for collection of funds are permissible if it is done with a true spirit of sacrifice, not when the audience is especially aroused to a frenzy, and mob psychology is used to induce them to pay.... All the activities of the Cause should be carried through in a dignified manner.

—Shoghi Effendi

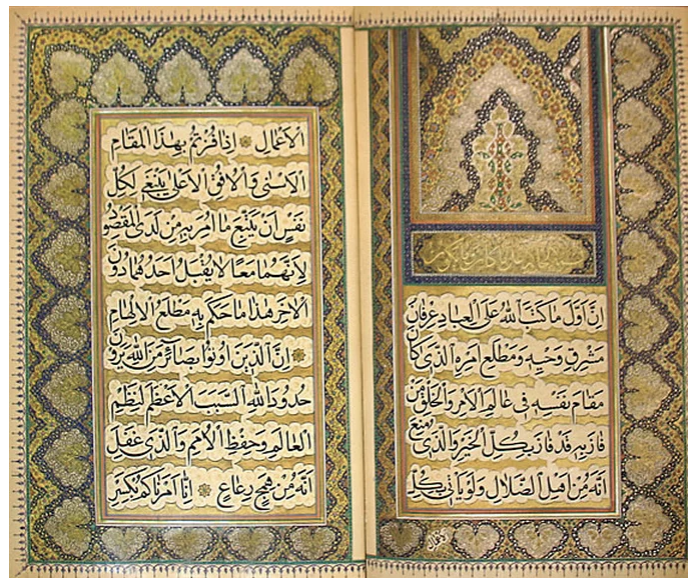
The previous issue of *The Roaring Fountain* was focused on the “direct and unavoidable responsibility of each Local and National Assembly to educate the friends in the spiritual principles related to Bahá'í contributions.” It discussed how the fear of crossing the fine line between spiritual education and compulsion may be one of the barriers that most hinders treasurers from educating the community on the

“spiritual principles related to Bahá’í contributions.” And we found that Shoghi Effendi provides an elegant framework to deal with this barrier.

... appeals of a general character, carefully-worded and moving and dignified in tone are welcome under all circumstances, [but] it should be left entirely to the discretion of every conscientious believer to decide upon the nature, the amount, and purpose of his or her contribution...

—Shoghi Effendi

In this issue, we will continue by examining three other obstacles that hinder Assembly treasurers from successfully carrying out educational appeals in the Bahá’í community. The first is a lack of knowing. The journey to discover the secrets of divine wisdom in Bahá’í contributions is lengthy and the individual elected as treasurer may still have a long way to go to familiarize her/himself with the writings on the Bahá’í Fund. As a result, the treasurer may not deeply grasp the marvelous spiritual blessings of sacrificial contributions. In these cases, when the treasurer stands up to share the Bahá’í verses with the community, s/he unwittingly radiates a **lack of certitude** on the subject. In addition to lack of personal deepening on the subject, when the treasurer, him/herself, is not participating in the process of generous, sacrificial, regular, and universal contributions to the Bahá’í Fund, it becomes challenging for him/her to genuinely speak about the mystical aspects of contributions.

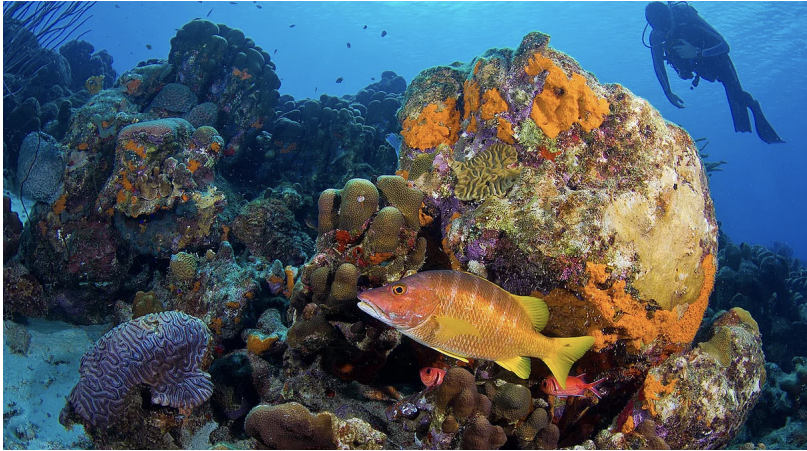


The Kitab-i-Aqdas - The Most Holy Book for the Bahá’ís

Think not that We have revealed unto you a mere code of laws. Nay, rather, We have unsealed the choice Wine with the fingers of might and power.

—Bahá’u’lláh

Before learning how to dive, I used to sit in front of the ocean and enjoy its beauty and the vast horizon it offered. It moved me so much that in my youth, I wrote poetry about it. But I always wondered what was beneath the surface. When I received my license to dive, I discovered a new world. The seabed was more beautiful than I had ever imagined from the top of the ocean. The different sizes and colors of marine life were welcoming, magical, and at the same time humbling. I felt that millions of fish in the sea had lovingly accepted me in their world. While floating in the deep blue, breathing rhythmically and meditatively, and gazing at vibrant coral, my eyes were opened to the mysteries of the ocean in a way that I could have never otherwise comprehended.



All my life I watched the ocean surface. So in my poems, I described the ocean as wavy and turbulent, and I noted how its crashing waves turned the water into particles of mist in the air. But when my diving instructor trained me and gave me confidence to immerse myself in the deep sea, I realized how my fear of the waves had deprived me all these years of experiencing the beauty of the life of the sea. Unlike the surface, everything inside the sea happens in slow motion. It is silent and serene; the water gently directs life and shapes the world.

For me, the treasurer of the Spiritual Assembly is like a diving instructor who should confidently encourage the believers—through the Holy Writings—to immerse themselves in the ocean of divine wisdom “*that they may unravel its secrets.*” The treasurer should be a diver, himself, and be the first to practice and increase his understanding of the teachings on the Bahá’í Fund. He can only do this by treating the teachings as much more than a set of laws; rather, he must look at them as a gift that, when unwrapped, reveals boundless treasures. Presenting the Holy Verse as “*a mere code of laws,*” is like describing the ocean only from what one can see on the surface.

Immerse yourselves in the ocean of My words, that ye may unravel its secrets, and discover all the pearls of wisdom that lie hid in its depths.... This is the changeless Faith of God, eternal in the past, eternal in the future. Let him that seeketh, attain it; and as to him that hath refused to seek it—verily, God is Self-Sufficient, above any need of His creatures.

—Bahá’u’lláh

This immersion in God’s ocean allows us to uncover its divine wisdom. As Bahá’u’lláh alludes, it should be the focus of our attention, and nothing else, when contributing in the path of God. One should be completely detached in order to discover “*the secret of right living.*” Bahá’u’lláh says, “*Let him that seeketh, attain it.*” In my lifetime, I have met many individuals who condition their contributions in the path of God on the treasurer’s behavior. We must be fair in our judgment and recognize that the treasurer is a simple human being just like all of us, struggling through his own journey. Focusing on the treasurer

will prevent us from immersing ourselves in the ocean of the Holy Writings. Instead, we must re-direct our attention on our relationship with Bahá'u'lláh.

Here is an interesting story about a wealthy Bahá'í community in the West who demonstrated how focusing on our personal relationship with Bahá'u'lláh, and not the shortcomings of the treasurer, can attract tenfold blessings. For years, this particular community gathered money to purchase a property for the Bahá'í center. At fundraising events, large sums of funds were universally contributed by the friends. As God is ever ready to swiftly test His servants, following the fundraising, the treasurer did the unthinkable and ran away with the cash. How do you think Bahá'u'lláh responded to the community? What do you think happened to Bahá'ís there? I will give you some options to reflect:

- a) The community became quite poor while the treasurer lived a wealthy and happy life;
- b) Bahá'ís were dismayed and many of them left the Faith;
- c) No one gave to the Bahá'í Fund anymore for lack of trust in the treasurer;
- d) The community never acquired a Bahá'í center;
- e) Bahá'u'lláh punished the Bahá'í community because of the theft;
- f) God rewarded the community for its faith in the process of generous giving!

Obviously, the community was devastated, but not deterred; all the while, they continued giving to the Bahá'í Fund, focusing on their relationship with Bahá'u'lláh and not the behavior of the treasurer. In a mysterious turn of events, it so happened that a believer donated a multi-million dollar piece of property to the Bahá'í community. The community was blessed with a new center to help them in transition, but they continued to save for another center that could meet all their needs. With universal giving, the community was able to purchase a plot of land, and within a short period of time, the land increased in value tenfold. The community now has two properties, both worth significantly more than the amount they had initially saved. The treasurer's shortcomings clearly had no negative impact on the spiritual blessings destined for those who gave generously and sacrificially in the path of God, because they were giving to Bahá'u'lláh, not the treasurer. When believers immerse themselves, the ocean unravels secrets.



Yet another hindrance that can impede a treasurer from educating the believers is an accounts-payable/receivable mentality. Treasurers with such a mentality are extremely devoted and hardworking, but their sole focus is to meet the financial goals of the Assembly, not nurture the souls of the believers. Therefore, when the contributions are low, they devise marketing strategies to increase the amount of the funds, but not necessarily to increase generosity, sacrifice, and participation. When goals are not met, they blame themselves; when the amount of cash exceeds the goal, they feel accomplished. At the same time, they are unconscious to whether they have helped enhance the spiritual growth of the believers. I once came across an energetic and expressive treasurer with such a mentality, who graciously thanked

contributors only when they gave large amounts. Embarrassingly, he even once pointed towards a family



Treasurer's eagerness to win the financial goals of the Assembly



... gatherings for collection of funds are permissible if it is done with a true spirit of sacrifice, not when the audience is especially aroused to a frenzy, and mob psychology is used to induce them to pay.

—Shoghi Effendi

Attachment to the position and the title of treasurer, collection of funds, counting envelopes, and focusing on reporting, gradually turns the treasurer into a marketing manager and a business representative. The treasurer may feel he has a lot of pressure to deliver the annual financial goals set by the Assembly, but meeting the Assembly's Fund goals is not the treasurer's duty; it is the duty of the entire community who needs to be educated on the spiritual principles of universal and regular contributions. If the treasurer focuses on education instead of marketing, the Assembly's annual goals will be met with the right spirit.

The third hindrance that may impede the treasurer from openly and freely educating the friends could be a lack of planning by the Assembly. Sometimes the treasurer is left on his own and not given direction, guidance, or support on how to create and implement a program of education. An Assembly must help remove these obstacles from the treasurer's path.

A corollary to the sacred obligation of the friends to contribute to the Funds of the Faith, is the direct and unavoidable responsibility of each Local and National Assembly to educate them in the spiritual principles related to Bahá'í contributions.

—The Universal House of Justice

The National Assembly should neither feel embarrassed nor ashamed in turning to the friends, continuously appealing to them to exemplify their faith and devotion to the Cause by sacrificing for it, and pointing out to them that they will grow spiritually through their acts of self-abnegation, that the fear of poverty should not deter them from sacrificing for the Fund, and that the assistance and bounty of the Source of all good and of all wealth are unfailing and assured ...

—The Universal House of Justice

These Assemblies should not hesitate, nor be diffident, in speaking of the Fund to the believers. The friends in the mass teaching areas ... are full and equal members of the Bahá'í community; they should know their blessings and responsibilities.... Service to God and His Cause is the heart of the life of every true believer and contributing to the Fund is a vital aspect of such service.

—The Universal House of Justice

... the Guardian would advise your Assembly to continue impressing upon the believers the necessity of their contributing regularly to the national fund, irrespective of whether there is an emergency to be met or not. Nothing short of a continuous flow of contributions to that fund can, indeed, ensure

the financial stability upon which so much of the progress of the institutions of the Faith must now inevitably depend.

i Effendi



The Journey Continues...

Next Chapter: Spiritual Privilege...

The Roaring Fountain Bulletins

Stories about the Fund

Fundraising Projects



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