

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY

OF THE

BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE UNITED STATES

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To the American Bahá'í Community  
for the Feast of Jalál

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

In 1853, Bahá'u'lláh entered Baghdad a physically broken exile. He was stripped of wealth and rank, shunned by His countrymen, reviled by the people of His new home, persecuted by His enemies.

Ten years later, His departure from Baghdad for Constantinople proceeded amidst weeping and lamentation. As He exited the Garden of Ridván, mounted on "a red roan stallion of the finest breed," countless well-wishers "'bowed to the dust at the feet of His horse, and kissed its hoofs, and . . . pressed forward to embrace His stirrups.'"

Bahá'u'lláh's stay at the Garden of Ridván signalizes the commencement of the "holiest and most significant of all Bahá'í festivals, the festival commemorating the Declaration of His Mission to His companions."

This year, as the Festival of Ridván coincides with the end of the first year of the Five Year Plan, we wish to share with you the status of our community's efforts to "Guide . . . the people unto the garden of delight which God hath made the Throne of His Paradise."

Our assessment of the Bahá'í community's spiritual vitality and prospects for growth inspires our confidence that "the elements required for a concerted effort to infuse [our country] with the spirit of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation" are robust and capable. Public awareness and receptivity to the Bahá'í Faith are high, tens of thousands of Bahá'ís are trained in the core activities, well over 1,100 children's classes are held regularly, 41 programs of intensive growth are in operation, and Local Spiritual Assemblies and cluster agencies evince increasing vigor in their pursuit of the Plan's goals. Nevertheless, as we reported last year, growth remains low. The past 10 years have witnessed a 50 percent decline in enrollments.

Our challenge in the second year of the Plan is to arise in remembrance of God's promise to Bahá'u'lláh in the Síyáh-Chál that "ere long will God raise up the treasures of the earth — men who will aid Thee through Thyself and through Thy Name." Let each one of us vow to arise and be one of His promised treasures, bringing new life to all people.

Our confidence in your devotion will never flag.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

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Robert C. Henderson  
Secretary-General