

Elucidation

Number of the Letters of the Living

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Question

I am hoping that you can clarify the number of Letters of the Living and explain why *The Dawn Breakers* presents them the way it does. I've always thought that the Báb had 18 Letters of the Living. In *The Dawn-Breakers*, in the table of illustrations, both the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh are listed as Letters of the Living. How can this be? What would be the most accurate response to this question: How many Letters of the Living were there? What Baha'i references answer this question and explain the meaning of 'Letter of the Living'?

Answer

On the subject of the number of the Letters of the Living (*Huruf-i-Hayy*), of course it is 18, which numerically corresponds with *hayy*. The mistake of counting the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh as the 19th and 20th Letters of the Living is through misunderstanding of those who edited *The Dawn-Breakers* for publication. The publication of the attached documents (Tablets) at the beginning of the book was done in the West without the supervision of the Beloved Guardian. The Tablets in their original forms have only the title of 18 Letters of the Living in sequence as the addressees. The titles are written on the margins of Tablets in Arabic and they include the sequence of 18 Letters of the Living plus the Names of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh without having them numbered. Another fact is that those 18 Letters of the Living and the Báb Himself are also known as the First Vahid (which numerically corresponds with number 19) and Bahá'u'lláh as Him Whom God Will Make Manifest.

I hope this short explanation will help to resolve the problem. I think, if I am not mistaken, the discrepancy is removed and corrected in the latest edition of *The Dawn-Breakers*.