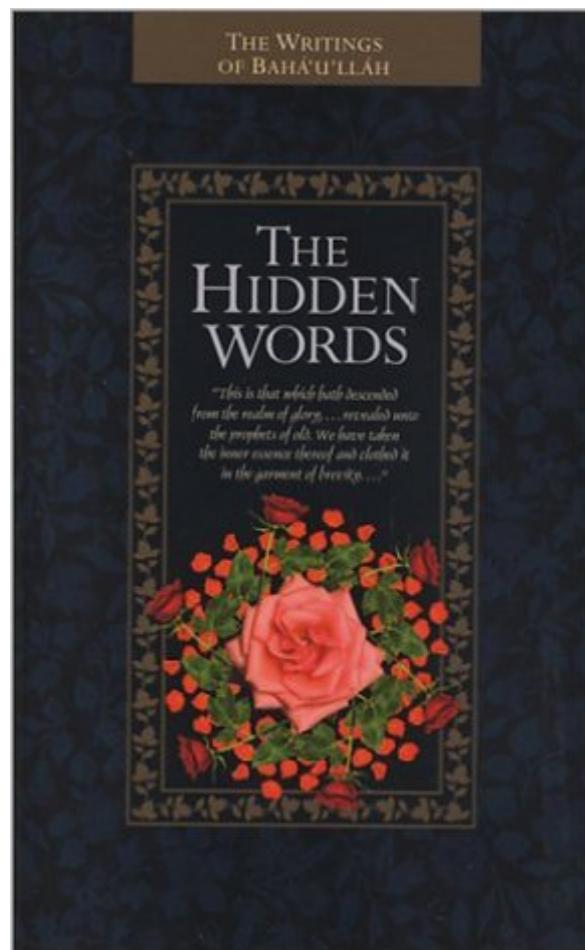


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The Hidden Words



Synopsis

A collection of lyrical, gem-like verses of scripture that convey timeless spiritual wisdom clothed in the garment of brevity, The Hidden Words is one of the most important and cherished scriptural works of the Bahá'í Faith. Revealed by Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the religion, the verses are a perfect guidebook to walking a spiritual path and drawing closer to God. They address themes such as turning to God, humility, detachment, love, to name but a few. These verses are among Bahá'u'lláh's earliest and best known works, having been translated into more than seventy languages and read by millions worldwide. This edition will offer many American readers their first introduction to the vast collection of Bahá'í scripture.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I won't offer my personal, highly biased opinion. Instead, I will share the reaction of two Christian friends, one of whom is just shy of a Master of Theology degree from a Methodist university, and the other of whom studied for the priesthood, before deciding it wasn't to be his life vocation. The first friend found the Hidden Words to be nothing special- a collection of platitudes. He didn't disagree with the ideas, but wasn't moved by the form of expression. The second said nothing for two or three weeks after receiving the book, but then told me it was the most Christian book he had had ever read, save the New Testament. He told me that some of the brief verses had brought him greater insight into the teachings of Christ than had his study of scholarly texts. He confessed he had only read part way through the very short book, because so many passages gave him so much to reflect upon. I think these reactions reflect a generality about reader reactions to the Hidden Words. It's not a matter of loving it or hating it. Instead, readers find it either inconsequential or life-changing. All in

the eye and heart of the beholder.

I have had a long curiosity about the Baha'i Faith and its teachings of the universal nature of religion, the unity of human beings, and the imperative of tolerating and respecting beliefs different from one's own. I have always been intrigued by how these teachings of universalism and the essential unity of all religions can fit within the confines of an individual, independent religion, the Baha'i Faith, with its own teachings and texts. Thus, I was pleased to have the opportunity to read this short book "The Hidden Words of Bahaullah" composed by the founder of the Baha'i Faith, Baha'u'llah (1817 -- 1892) while in prison. The book was written in part in Arabic and in part in Persian and was translated by Baha'u'llah's disciple, Shogi Effendi. This book was my first experience with Baha'i scripture. "The Hidden Words of Baha'u'llah" consists of about 153 short paragraphs in two parts. It is cast in the form of short revelations to Bahaullah each of which is prefaced by a short exhortation such as "To the Son of Man" characterizing the person or persons to whom the revelation is addressed. There is a brief introductory paragraph to the collection, indicating that the aim of the text is to distill, in short form, teachings that are universal to the spiritual life. This goal of the collection is reflected in some of the comments on this site. These teachings have, and were intended to have, many parallels in the teachings of the other great world religions. The teachings speak of the need for a pure heart, of the need of detachment from everyday life, and of the importance of not envying, criticizing or condemning others. I was struck by the other-worldliness of many of the teachings, as they exhort the follower to turn away from materialism and desire and turn one's attention and heart to the divine. To me, some of the teachings seem directed to mankind, while others, if I am not mistaken, appear primarily directed towards Baha'u'llah himself. In this latter regard, there are several of the teachings which speak of the value of imprisonment, suffering and martyrdom as they advance the cause of God. These teachings seem to be directed to the founder of the faith or to those in danger of persecution on account of their beliefs. While most of the short sayings are readily intelligible to readers of many backgrounds, some sections, particularly near the end of the book, allude to figures that have some specific meaning for the Baha'i faith. This book is known within the Baha'i community but will appeal to those who have an interest in exploring a variety of spiritual traditions. I am in this latter group. It is an inspiring text. The work here is presented without an introduction, notes, or commentary. Thus, I was unable to learn the place of this specific text within the Baha'i teachings as a whole. An introduction to the book with an overview of the Baha'i Faith and of how this book fits within it would have been invaluable. Also, notes in the way of a commentary on the organization and substance of

the text would have been helpful. There is always a great deal more to understanding a short spiritual work than reading the words of the text. Context and discussion would be useful. This is an important religious text, and it is good to have it widely accessible. It will appeal to those readers interested in the Baha'i Faith, to those interested in comparative religion, and to those interested in spiritual growth. Robin Friedman

Remember those Cliff Notes in school, condensing down long books into a form that was manageable? That's exactly what this book is, Cliff Notes for all the world's holy books. I read this book at least 5 or 10 times a year just to review the messages and see what new insights I can pick up. The very first paragraph of the book refers to these holy books, saying, "We have taken the inner essence thereof and clothed it in the garment of brevity, as a token of grace unto the righteous". Could Cliff Notes have stated it more clearly?

The book is written in verse form. I found each verse a condensed message with profound spiritual significance. It is not a quick read. I spent two or three days, about a half an hour each day, on each verse. The more I studied them the more I gleaned from them. I found my life enhanced from the knowledge and spiritual insights.

This short but powerful book condenses the spiritual essence of all the major religions. The style is at once beautiful, poetic, and easy to read. "My first counsel is this: Possess a pure, kindly and radiant heart, that thine may be a sovereignty ancient, imperishable, and everlasting." This is the first of the Hidden Words from a total of 153. The book is characterized by its Author as, "This is that which hath descended from the realm of glory, uttered by the tongue of power and might, and revealed unto the Prophets of old. We have taken the inner essence thereof and clothed it in the garment of brevity, as a token of grace unto the righteous, that they may stand faithful unto the Covenant of God, may fulfill in their lives His trust, and in the realm of spirit obtain the gem of divine virtue." This is an accurate description.

The Hidden Words by Baha'u'llah condenses a life full of spiritual truth into an easy to handle collection of short pieces concerning all aspects of the the truth to our nature and our relationship with the one creator. I also reccomend the Baha'u'llah's "Seven Valleys and Four Valleys."

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