

The Ringstone Symbol and The Calligrapher

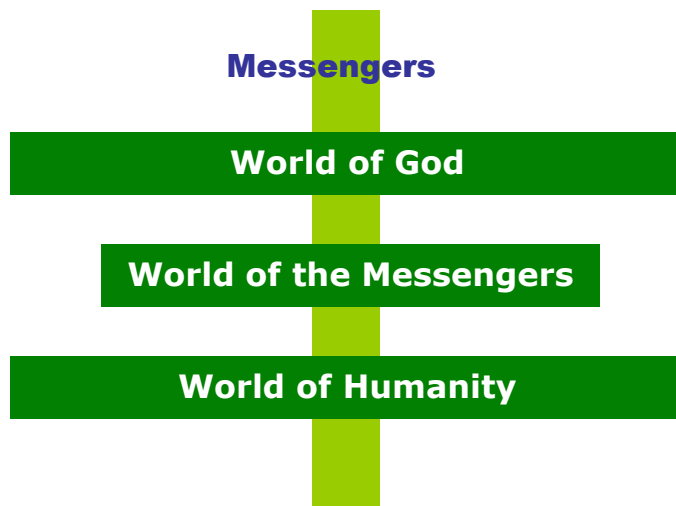
*from "Memorials of the Faithful" by Abdu'l-Baha
adapted by Scott Mattison
used in Book 2, Lesson 7*

There is an old saying: "A picture is worth a thousand words." It would take more than a thousand words to properly explain the relationship between God, His Messengers, and us. About a hundred years ago, Baha'u'llah's son, Abdu'l-Baha, designed the Ringstone Symbol to 'paint a picture' of this relationship.

His design showed a vertical line that joins three horizontal lines. The horizontal lines represented the world of God (the Creator), the world of the Prophets (or Messengers of God), and the world of humanity (Creation). The vertical line represented the

original stories

Messengers of God who connect us to God. It was something like the picture below.



Help With
Pronunciation

Mishkin

mesh (rhymes with
fresh) + **keen**
(rhymes with clean)

Qalam

gal (rhymes with
shall) + **am**
(rhymes with jam)

Help With
Pronunciation

Aqa

aa (rhymes with
jaw) + **gaa**
(rhymes with raw)

Hussein

ho (rhymes with
home) + **sayn**
(rhymes main)

Abdu'l-Baha wanted to make this symbol very beautiful so he asked **Mishkin-Qalam**, a master calligrapher, to draw it.

Mishkín-Qalam's real name was **Aqa Hussein**. He was born in 1826 in the legendary city of Isfahan, in the heart of Persia.

He was one of the greatest calligraphers in all the



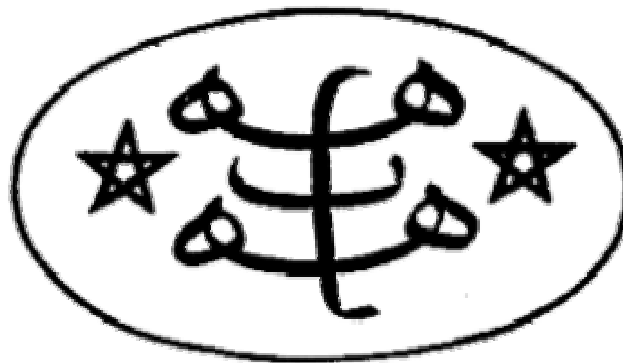
land, so the King gave him the title Mishkin-Qalam, which means "The Musk-Scented Pen".



One day Mishkin-Qalam heard about Baha'u'llah and set out on a journey to find him. He crossed great distances. He climbed mountains, passed over deserts, and even sailed over the sea. At last he came to the city of Adrianople. There he finally met Baha'u'llah. He spent a few years there. He produced more splendid calligraphy. For example, he would write out the different names of God in beautiful shapes. Sometimes the words he drew would look like a bird. Sometimes they would look like a face.

Even though he was sometimes put in jail for being a follower of Baha'u'llah, Mishkin-Qalam remained loyal to Him. He traveled everywhere to tell people about Baha'u'llah.

One day Abdu'l-Baha asked Mishkin-Qalam to work on the Ringstone symbol. This is how he drew it...



If you look closely at the symbol, you will see the three horizontal lines and the one vertical line. You will also see that there are two stars. These five-pointed stars on either side of the design represent the Bab and Baha'u'llah, the two most recent Messengers that God has sent.

Abdu'l-Baha said that Mishkin-Qalam was loving, peaceful and detached from the world. He also said that Mishkin-Qalam was bright and witty - like a garden in full bloom. He was always smiling. He spent his days and nights praying and talking with God.

Mishkín-Qalam died in 1912. He lived a wonderful life. He left behind beautiful calligraphy which people all around the world cherish to this day.

Example Discussion Questions for Story

- › What was the name of the symbol that Abdu'l-Baha designed? (The Ringstone Symbol)
- › What was the reason for him making up the design? (to show the relationship between God, Messengers of God and humanity)
- › Can you identify the three main horizontal lines and the vertical line that connects them in Mishkin-Qalam's calligraphy of the Ringstone symbol?
- › Can you draw the Ringstone Symbol design? (If you have enough time, then you can allow a couple of minutes for the children to draw up the design on a piece of paper).
- › Why did Abdu'l-Baha give the design to Mishkin-Qalam to draw up? (because he was a great calligrapher and an artist)
- › Do you remember what the name Mishkin-Qalam means? (It means "The Musk Scented Pen")
- › Can you describe the meaning of the Ringstone Symbol to others? Try to explain the meaning to your parents after class.