

The Covenant



Level One

TO UNDERSTAND THE CONCEPT OF A DIVINE COVENANT

THE DEFINITION OF A DIVINE COVENANT

**SPIRITUAL QUALITIES RELEVANT TO THIS TOPIC:
PURITY OF HEART, INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION, OBEDIENCE**

The first duty prescribed by God for His servants is the recognition of Him Who is the Dayspring of His Revelation and the Fountain of His laws, Who representeth the Godhead in both the Kingdom of His Cause and the world of creation. Whoso achieveth this duty hath attained unto all good. . . . It behoveth every one who reacheth this most sublime station, this summit of transcendent glory, to observe every ordinance of Him Who is the Desire of the world. These twin duties are inseparable. Neither is acceptable without the other.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 19, paragraph 1

A Covenant in the religious sense is a binding agreement between God and man, whereby God requires of man certain behaviour in return for which He guarantees certain blessings, or whereby He gives man certain bounties in return for which He takes from those who accept them an undertaking to behave in a certain way.

The Universal House of Justice, *The Compilation of Compilations*, vol. I, p. 111

Learning Objectives and Suggested Activities



KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVES

- To know that the Covenant is God’s promise made to humanity to always provide us with spiritual guidance and protection
- To know that in order to receive God’s blessings one must be obedient to the laws and teachings of the Manifestation of God
- To know that every individual has the responsibility to abide by the laws of the Manifestation of God

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Discuss what the term “Covenant” means in the religious sense by using the analogy of the sun rising and setting.
- Use the analogy of the strength of a piece of rope for the strength of the Covenant: God’s promise is one strand (Covenant); obedience to God’s laws and teachings is another strand; love of God is another strand; etc. All the strands together make the rope stronger.
- Share quotations about the Covenant.
- Share quotations from the Bahá’í writings that pertain to the importance of following the laws of Bahá’u’lláh.
- Memorize a quotation from Bahá’u’lláh regarding God’s Covenant with humanity.
- Memorize a quotation on the individual’s responsibility to abide by the laws of God.



WISDOM OBJECTIVES

- To understand the continuous nature of God’s love and guidance
- To understand how the laws of God permit us to live in harmony and order
- To understand that firmness in the Covenant draws on God’s protection for humanity

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Brainstorm laws of nature such as gravity, phototropism, fluid motion, polarity, momentum, inertia, etc.
- Discuss quotations about the Covenant in small groups.
- Create a timeline or visual representation of the Manifestations that God has progressively sent to humanity.
- Share quotations from the writings of the major religions that relate to God’s Covenant and discuss how they interrelate to create a continuous Covenant between humankind and God.
- Read from the Bahá’í writings and consult about what it means to be firm in the Covenant, i.e., what will happen to the rope if any strand breaks or get loose.
- Share rules that students observe at home or school, and the reasons for those rules. Discuss what would happen without rules, or when rules are not followed.
- Role-play situations from daily living. Decide which laws of God are being followed (or if not being followed, which law could be applied to the situation).
- Read and or tell stories about examples of firmness in the Covenant.



SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVES

- To perceive the security we can gain through firmness in the Covenant
- To perceive that humanity’s progress is only possible through acceptance of the Manifestation of God and obedience to His laws

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Create a Covenant checklist of daily spiritual activities.
- Act out situations where someone has done something for the students, and they have done something in return. Consult about their feelings in these situations.
- Invite students to share experiences when they have felt firmness in the Covenant.
- Encourage students to read prayers for firmness in the Covenant.
- Provide opportunities for students to relate incidents from their lives when things have gone well because of obedience to rules.
- Invite students to create an illustration that represents something good that can result from following one of the laws or teachings of God.



ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVES

- To be able to explain the concept of the Divine Covenant and the meaning of firmness in the Covenant
- To demonstrate firmness in the Covenant through constant effort to follow the laws and teachings of Bahá’u’lláh

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Create a Covenant journal in which the students can write and draw their reflections about the Covenant each day.
- Enter into a covenant with the parents or teacher to follow the Covenant checklist.
- Provide the opportunity for each student to explain to another community member the analogy of the strands of rope for our Covenant with God.
- Encourage students to memorize and recite a prayer for firmness in the Covenant.
- Invite the students to choose one of the laws or teachings of Bahá’u’lláh they will concentrate on following. Provide opportunities to share what happened when they followed this teaching.

TOPIC: THE DEFINITION OF A DIVINE COVENANT

Sample Activities

ACTIVITY 1: THE PEANUT BUTTER COVENANT

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To know that the Covenant is God’s promise made to humanity to always provide us with spiritual guidance and protection

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To understand that firmness in the Covenant draws on God’s protection for humanity

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct use of the Bahá’í sacred writings; Use of science; Use of manipulatives; Use of consultation

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 30 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Copy of the quotation on chart paper
- Peanut butter
- 2 slices of bread for each student (the slices may be small) Inexpensive white bread works well for this demonstration.
- Kitchen knife/spreader
- Paper towels
- Chart paper and marker

Advance Preparation: Write on chart paper or chalk board the following quotation. Display it in the classroom.

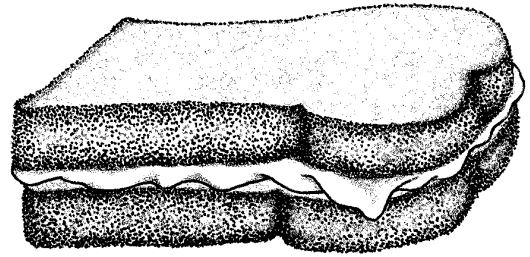
A Covenant in the religious sense is a binding agreement between God and man, whereby God requires of man certain behaviour in return for which He guarantees certain blessings, or whereby He gives man certain bounties in return for which He takes from those who accept them an undertaking to behave in a certain way.

The Universal House of Justice, *The Compilation of Compilations*, vol. I, p. 111

1. Welcome the students. Invite them to stand together in teams of two. In these teams invite them to find two ways that they are the same and two ways that they are different.
2. Invite all team members to introduce their partners to the whole group, to share their similarities and their differences. Then discuss:
 - What are some ways that we are **all** the same?
 - Why is it nice also to have some differences?
 - What are some of the agreements that we can make in our class—or that we have already made—so that we’re **all** happy while we’re in class together?
3. List or review your classroom agreements. Invite the class to affirm or re-affirm these agreements. Explain that these agreements are our classroom **covenant**.
4. Refer to the posted quotation and read it aloud twice. Invite students to explain what they think “binding” means.
5. Provide students with 2 pieces of bread. Invite them to stick together the pieces of bread with nothing in between. Do they stick together?
6. Then encourage the students to spread a layer of peanut butter on the bread and pat the pieces together to make a sandwich.
7. Observe that the peanut butter binds the bread together, just as our classroom agreements bind us together as a class. In the same way the Covenant is our agreement with God. Briefly discuss: What are some of the agreements that we have with God?

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8. Ask the students to try to pull the bread away from the peanut butter and observe the results. Briefly discuss: What happens if we try to pull ourselves away from the Covenant? What are some things that we can do to make ourselves firm in the Covenant? List student responses on chart paper.
9. Find a way to acknowledge or affirm all student responses; then add one or two additional ideas if you like. Invite each student to choose one action to show firmness in the Covenant in the coming week.
10. Remember to invite students to share stories about their efforts to be firm in their Covenant with God at the beginning of the next class. Conclude the activity with the first line of the prayer on Resource Page 18. You may also teach this verse to the students by using the song in the following activity.



ACTIVITY 2: MAKE FIRM OUR STEPS

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE: To perceive the security we can gain through firmness in the covenant

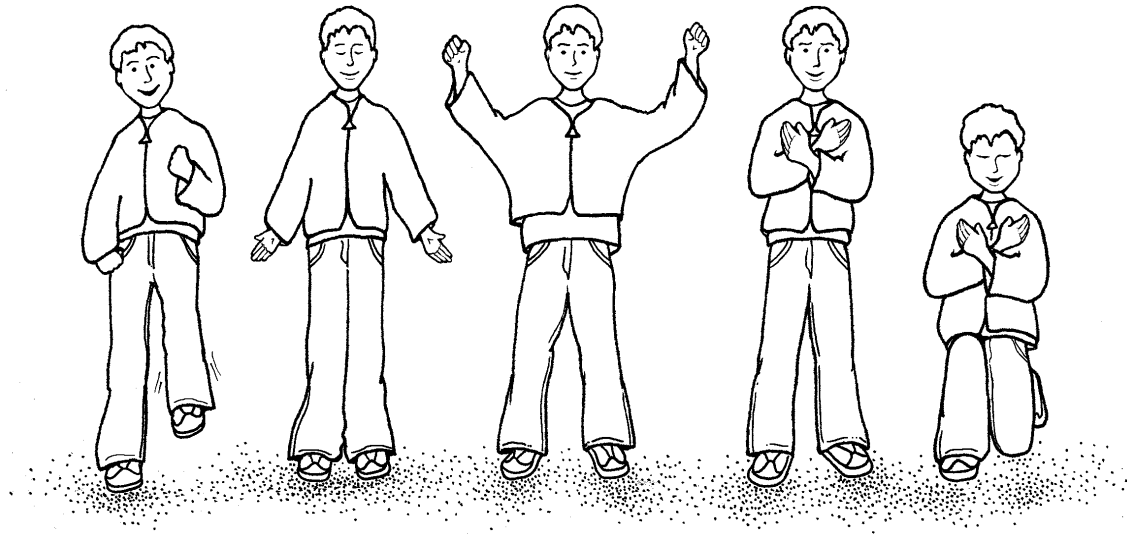
INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Education directed towards God; Direct use of the Bahá'í sacred writings; Use of music; Use of memorization

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 15 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Sheet music from Resource Page 15 or CD with the song “Make Firm Our Steps”

1. Share the following portion of a prayer by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá (also available as a song on Resource Page 15):
Make firm our steps, O Lord, in Thy path and strengthen Thou our hearts in Thine obedience.
2. Using music from Resource Page 15 or the CD *Immerse Yourself* by Joe Crone, teach the song “Make Firm Our Steps.”
3. Encourage the students to learn this passage, perhaps using body movements related to these words.



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ACTIVITY 3: TWIN DUTIES

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To know that in order to receive God’s blessings, one must be obedient to the laws and teachings of the Manifestation of God

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE: To demonstrate firmness in the Covenant through constant effort to follow the laws and teachings of Bahá’u’lláh

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Engaging the mind and heart; Education directed towards God; Direct use of Bahá’í sacred writings; Use of consultation; Use of reflection

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 30 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Several copies of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas
- Chart paper & markers
- Symphonic music from the World Congress CDs or other music, and CD player
- Paper and pencil for students (or Covenant Journal)
- A reference list of Bahá’í laws (Resource Page 16)

Advance Preparation: Copy the following quotation on chart paper and display in the classroom.

The first duty prescribed by God for His servants is the recognition of Him Who is the Dayspring of His Revelation and the Fountain of His laws, Who representeth the Godhead in both the Kingdom of His Cause and the world of creation. Whoso achieveth this duty hath attained unto all good. . . . It behoveth every one who reacheth this most sublime station, this summit of transcendent glory, to observe every ordinance of Him Who is the Desire of the world. These twin duties are inseparable. Neither is acceptable without the other. . . .

Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 19

1. Gather the students together and reverently display a copy of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. Briefly explain its importance and significance, that it is the Most Holy Book, God’s Book of Laws for this day.
2. Provide each student an opportunity to hold a copy of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. Invite each student to reverently hand it to another, while repeating its significance.
3. In pairs or small groups, assist the students to reverently open the Book to the Codification section and look for a law that we all must accept and obey, such as praying every morning and evening.
4. Invite the small groups to share their laws in the whole group. Create a list of these laws on chart paper.
5. Then ask students if they know of other laws that we are to obey and list them on chart paper.
6. The teacher may refer to the list on Resource Page 16 and add one or two additional laws, if desired.
6. If desired, use Resource Page 16 to provide students with the number of the paragraph in which Bahá’u’lláh gives us the law mentioned previously by each group. Assist the groups as needed to find the paragraph in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas that provides the original text of that law. Encourage students to find and read aloud a few words or an important phrase of the pertinent laws.
7. Read aloud the posted quotation or read these same words directly from the first paragraph of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. Read the quotation again.

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8. Briefly discuss:
 - What are the twin duties mentioned by Bahá'u'lláh?
 - Why is it important for us to know God's laws and to obey them?
 - What do you think it means when He says, "Whoso achieveth this duty hath attained unto all good?"
 - What might be some blessings that obedience to God's laws could bring?
9. From the list of laws, invite the students to reflect and choose one law on which they will focus in their own lives. Encourage them to use their journals, think carefully about exactly what they can do and then to write some important words or draw a picture to show what they will do. Assist them to identify where and when they will take these actions.
10. Invite students to share their plans with each other if they like. Remember to invite students to share the results of their actions at the beginning of the next class.

ACTIVITY 4: GOD'S ETERNAL COVENANT

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To know that the Covenant is the promise made to humanity by God that He will always provide us with spiritual guidance and protection

WISDOM OBJECTIVES: To understand the continuous nature of God's love, guidance, and protection of humanity, and the meaning of firmness in the Covenant; To understand the continuous nature of God's love and guidance

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct study of the Bahá'í writings; Use of science and nature; Use of consultation

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 45 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Board or chart paper & markers
- Outdoor area for walking
- Dedicated space to prepare a reverent atmosphere
- Copies of Holy Books of major religions
- Cards with titles of Holy Books, their related Manifestations of God, and symbols of their religions

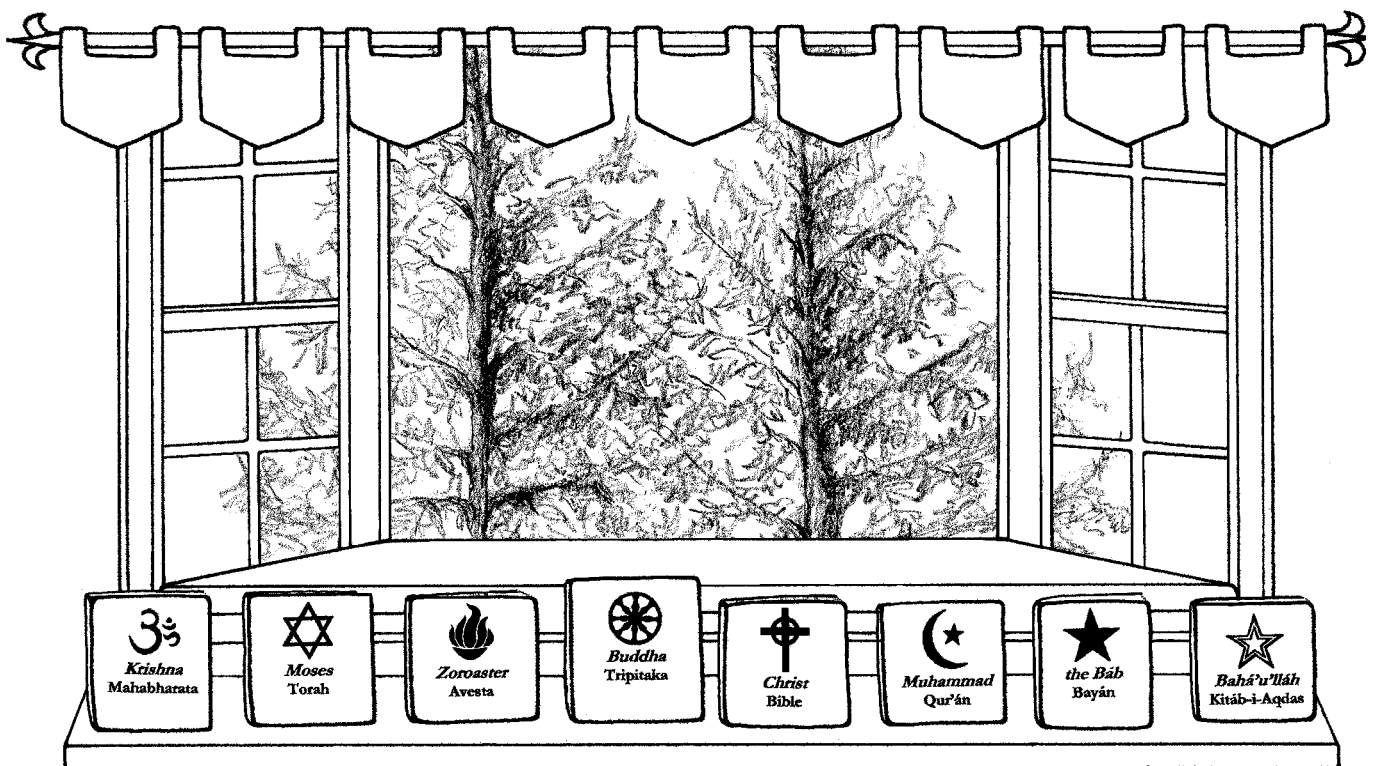
Advance Preparation: Prepare a room or a decorated area with a display of the Holy Books of some of the world's religions, in chronological order of their revelation: *Bhagavad-Gita* (Hinduism), *Torah* (Judaism), *Zend-Avesta* (Zoroastrianism), *Tripitakas* (Buddhism), *Gospels/New Testament* (Christianity), *Qur'án* (Islam), *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, and *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*.

1. With the students, write on the board or chart paper the words "Eternal Covenant" in large letters. Introduce these words as the theme for the class. Briefly discuss: What do these words mean?
 - What do the adults in the family give their children?
 - What do the children give the adults?
 - How do these agreements (spoken or unspoken) bind the household together?
2. Invite the students to silently reflect on the covenant or agreements they might have in their own households, whether these agreements are discussed or not. For example:

GOAL: TO UNDERSTAND THE CONCEPT OF A DIVINE COVENANT AND OBEDIENCE TO IT.

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3. Ask the students to now consider the Covenant that God makes with us. Take a brief walk outside: What do we see that God gives us? Encourage answers related to the natural world as well as the human world. What is our part of a covenant in which God provides us with so many wonderful things?
4. Younger students may enjoy singing the song “I Saw a Bird’s Nest” at this point (see Resource Page 17).
5. Back inside the classroom, lead the students to the display of Holy Books you’ve prepared in advance. Enter reverently. Explain that the greatest gift God has given (and has promised He will always give to humanity, forever and ever) is His Guidance. God’s Covenant with us is that He will never leave us alone. He will always send us guidance through a Divine Manifestation. Our part of that Covenant is to obey God’s Manifestations—in order to be happy, healthy, and better people, and to draw closer to God.
6. Briefly introduce each Holy Book. You may choose to involve the class in matching religious symbols and the names of the Manifestation with each Book, or in placing each Book in chronological order on a timeline. Assist them in understanding that it is through the Holy Books that we learn of God’s new Message, and come to know how He wants us to live.
7. Briefly discuss:
 - What are some laws that are the same in all these Holy Books? (Some examples might be the Golden Rule, prayer, love for parents, etc.)
 - How do all people everywhere show their love for God?
8. Encourage the students to think of the people they know. Then briefly discuss:
 - Who do you know that is a member of one of these religions?
 - What are some good things that these people do?



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9. As a class, think of some real possibilities for the students to share their appreciation of God's Eternal Covenant with one or more of the individuals they know. Here are some examples to get you started:

"Jorge, thanks for inviting me to go with you to Sunday school. I'll ask my parents. Maybe you'd also like to come with me to Bahá'í class? It would be fun to go together!"

"Mr. Ramirez, I really like seeing the nice way you hold your baby. That reminds me of God's love for all people."

"Mrs. Manga, thank you for giving us a ride to school. Your kindness makes me think of the Golden Rule."

10. Assist the students to think of appreciative comments that they could make to other people. Encourage students to work in pairs to practice making appreciable statements. Discuss when, where, and how they could show their appreciation to others. Remember to provide an opportunity at the beginning of the next class for the students to share the results of their efforts.

ACTIVITY 5: DEMONSTRATING FIRMNESS

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To understand the meaning of firmness in the Covenant

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE: To perceive the security we can gain through firmness in the Covenant

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE: To explain the concept of the Divine Covenant and the meaning of firmness in the Covenant; To demonstrate firmness in the Covenant through constant effort to follow the laws and teachings of Bahá'u'lláh

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct use of Bahá'í sacred writings; Use of consultation; Use of journaling

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 60 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- 2 plastic basins or wash tubs
- Bucket of sand and a flat rock or brick
- 2 small plastic houses (like those from a Monopoly® game) or other similar objects
- Watering can with water
- An area, inside or outside, for an obstacle course
- Stepping stones, bricks, beams, boxes, etc., if desired
- Blindfolds (for older children)
- Copy of Resource Page 18

Advance Preparation: Set up an area as an indoor or outdoor obstacle course. Inside you may wish to plan how to quickly rearrange furniture or classroom objects to create opportunities for students to go over, under, around, or through the obstacles. Outdoors, a challenging course may involve balance beams, stepping stones, or other natural objects. The course should be such that it is important to stay on the path with a firm footing. Depending on the age of the students, you may also have them do the course while blindfolded, with an unblindfolded student guiding them through, over, under, and along the path.

Also practice the sand and water demonstration, so that it goes smoothly when you are with your students.

GOAL: TO UNDERSTAND THE CONCEPT OF A DIVINE COVENANT AND OBEDIENCE TO IT.

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1. Invite the students to observe a demonstration of firmness: Set up two plastic basins, both with several inches of sand in them, formed into a flat mound in the center. On the mound of sand in one basin, place a large flat rock or brick.
2. Place a plastic toy house on the mound of sand in one basin, and on the flat rock in the other basin. Explain the analogy: If we live our lives in ignorance of, or disobedient to, the laws of God, it is as if we built a house on a pile of sand—the house may look fine, but it has no foundation. If we live our lives in accordance with the laws of God, it is as if we built a house on a firm foundation, which will stay strong and secure even when difficulties happen.
3. Encourage the students to name some difficulties that might occur in one’s life. Illustrate the effect by pouring water (representing hard or sad times) from a watering can, first upon the house on the sand. Soon, the sand gives way and the house tumbles. Next pour the water over the house on the firm foundation—it withstands the difficulty!
4. Explain that the Covenant is like a solid foundation for our lives. Invite students to take turns setting up the two houses and pouring water on them.
5. Recite together, the first sentence of the prayer on Resource Page 18.
6. Then introduce the obstacle course by challenging the students to discover what it really means to be “firm” in a “path,” and to “strengthen” their “hearts.”
7. After everyone who wishes has had the opportunity to go on the course, in a manner which is a little challenging and perhaps scary for some of them, process the experience:
 - How did it feel to start to fall?
 - What did they do to keep their feet firmly on the path?
 - How did they help each other to succeed?
 - How is keeping our feet firmly on this path like keeping ourselves firm in our obedience to the Covenant?
8. As a closing reflection, read aloud the full prayer, reprinted on Resource Page 18. Ask the students to focus their efforts on increasing their loving obedience to a divine law of their choice. Encourage them to share their successes and challenges at the next class session.
9. After class, invite the students to take their parents or friends on the obstacle course, and to share with them the insights they’ve gained about obedience to the Covenant and protection from tests.



Resource Pages

Make Firm Our Steps

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Bahá'í Prayers*, p 70
Music: Joe Crone

♩ = 100

Voice

The musical score is written for voice in 4/4 time. It consists of three staves of music. The first staff begins with a tempo marking of a quarter note equal to 100. The lyrics are: 'Make firm our steps, O Lord, in Thy path and strength-en'. The second staff continues with: 'Thou our hearts in Thine o - be - di - ence. Make firm our steps, O'. The third staff concludes with: 'Lord, Make firm our Lord,'. Chord symbols are placed above the notes: C, G, C, F, C, G7, and C.

Make firm our steps, O Lord, in Thy path and strength-en

Thou our hearts in Thine o - be - di - ence. Make firm our steps, O

Lord, Make firm our Lord,

Some Bahá'í Laws

with relevant paragraphs from the Kitáb-i-Aqdas

- To recognize the Oneness of God, and to worship Him. ¶ 78
- To recognize and obey the Manifestation of God. ¶ 1
- To pray and meditate daily. ¶ 149
- To be friends with people of all religions. ¶ 144
- To study and deepen our understanding of the sacred writings. ¶ 149
- To study arts and sciences that benefit humanity. ¶ 77, Question 110
- To consult together. ¶ 30
- To refrain from the use of drugs and alcohol. ¶ 119, 155
- To teach the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh in a loving and considerate manner. ¶ 38
- To engage in an occupation or craft. ¶ 33
- To refrain from backbiting and gossip. ¶ 19
- To be truthful and trustworthy. ¶ 120
- To provide education for everyone. ¶ 48
- To build houses of worship. ¶ 31
- To establish Houses of Justice. ¶ 30
- To do good deeds. ¶ 73

I Saw a Bird's Nest in a Tree

Words: Roberta Christian

Music: Eugene Babcock

I saw a bird's nest in a tree. God loves the birds and

The first system of musical notation is for a piano accompaniment. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The melody is primarily in the treble staff, with chords in the bass staff. The lyrics are placed below the notes.

loves the tree, And God loves me.

The second system of musical notation continues the piano accompaniment from the first system. It also consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature and time signature remain the same. The melody continues in the treble staff, and the bass staff provides harmonic support. The lyrics are placed below the notes.

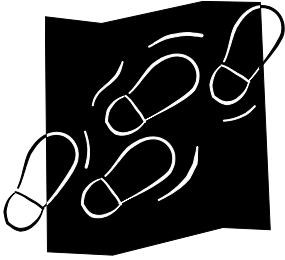
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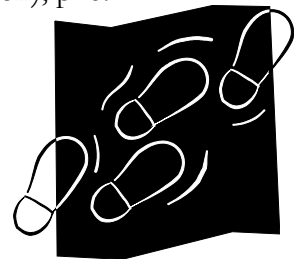


Make firm our steps, O Lord, in Thy path and strengthen Thou our hearts in Thine obedience. Turn our faces toward the beauty of Thy oneness, and gladden our bosoms with the signs of Thy divine unity. Adorn our bodies with the robe of Thy bounty, and remove from our eyes the veil of sinfulness, and give us the chalice of Thy grace; that the essence of all beings may sing Thy praise before the vision of Thy grandeur. Reveal then Thyself, O Lord, by Thy merciful utterance and the mystery of Thy divine being, that the holy ecstasy of prayer may fill our souls—a prayer that shall rise above words and letters and transcend the murmur of syllables and sounds—that all things may be merged into nothingness before the revelation of Thy splendor.

Lord! These are servants that have remained fast and firm in Thy Covenant and Thy Testament, that have held fast unto the cord of constancy in Thy Cause and clung unto the hem of the robe of Thy grandeur. Assist them, O Lord, with Thy grace, confirm with Thy power and strengthen their loins in obedience to Thee.

Thou art the Pardoner, the Gracious.

—’Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í Prayers* (1991 edition), p. 69



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LIST OF ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Stories & Articles:

Brilliant Star:

- SE 92 A Covenant Is a Promise, p. 4
- JF 95 Sun Returns to Nightland, p. 22
- MA 98 Show Your Love, p. 2
- MJ 98 The Majesty of the Covenant, p. 4
- MJ 98 Promises Kept, p. 22
- SO 03 Walking in the Sunshine, p. 2

The Covenant for Young People, Enoch N. Tanyi, George Ronald, London, 1991

Covenant, The: Its Meaning and Origin and Our Attitude Toward It, National Teaching Committee, 1988

The Power of the Covenant, Part 1, National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, 1976, p. 6–9

The Power of the Covenant, Part 2, National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, 1976, p. 3–6

To Serve the Covenant: Fundamental Verities, Course 5, National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, 2003

New Heaven-New Earth: The Divine Order of Bahá'u'lláh: Historical Evolution of the Bahá'í Faith and Its Covenant, Heidi Lakshman, The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada, 1999

Worksheets and Coloring Pages:

Brilliant Star:

- SE 92 Great is Thy Blessedness, p. 1
- SE 92 The Covenant is Like the Sea. . . , FC
- MJ 98 Covenant Is Like the Sea, p. 7
- SO 03 Lifeboat, p. 5

Activities:

Brilliant Star:

- SE 92 Ark of Salvation, p. 12
- SE 92 Covenant in the World of Nature, p. 14
- SE 92 Greater Covenant, p. 6
- SE 92 Heart of the World, p. 22
- SE 92 Make a Bead Chain of. . . , p. 8
- SE 92 Making Promises, p. 2
- SE 92 My Part of the Covenant, p. 33
- SE 92 Signs of the Covenant, p. 19
- SE 94 Firmness in the Covenant, p. 10
- SE 94 Spirit of Obedience, p. 11
- ND 95 Light of the Covenant, p. 22
- SE 96 Keys to the Human Heart, p. 14
- SE 97 Protect Me!, p.20
- MA 98 Gifts From Bahá'u'lláh, p. 6
- MA 98 Drawn by a Magnet, p. 27
- MJ 98 What Is Our Part In the Covenant, p. 6
- MJ 98 ABC's of the Covenant, p. 14
- MJ 98 My Covenant To-Do List, p. 18
- MJ 98 The Cord of the Covenant, p. 20
- MJ 98 Their Minds, p. 28
- SE 98 Mighty Covenant Training Camp, p. 16
- SO 03 Promise Practice, p. 3
- SO 03 Search for the Covenant, p. 4
- SO 03 Flags of the Fortress, p. 13
- SO 03 Cave of the Covenant, p. 14
- SO 03 Seeking Firmness, p. 16
- SO 03 Fruits of One Tree, p. 22
- SO 03 Three Steps Relay, p. 23
- SO 03 What Do U Say, p. 26
- SO 03 Chameleon Crossword, p. 28
- ND 03 Staying Together: A Parachute . . . , p. 18

Music:

Brilliant Star:

- SE 92 Covenant, p. 3
- SO 03 The Center of the Covenant, p. 21

“Your New Family,” *Stand Up For Love*, New World Construction Co.

Other favorite resources:

If you find any additional resources, please notify the National Children's Education and Resource Center, or submit your findings to the Core Curriculum website, www.core-curriculum.org.

**TO KNOW THAT THE GREATER COVENANT
IS RENEWED IN EVERY DISPENSATION
THE MANNER IN WHICH THE
MANIFESTATIONS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED
BY HUMANITY**

**SPIRITUAL QUALITIES RELEVANT TO THIS TOPIC:
HUMILITY, LOVE, INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION OF TRUTH**

. . . If man attains to the knowledge of the Manifestations of God, he will attain to the knowledge of God; and if he be neglectful of the knowledge of the Holy Manifestation, he will be bereft of the knowledge of God.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 222

. . . No one is debarred from becoming a Bahá’í; rich or poor, learned or ignorant, all have a sacred and equal right to accept the Supreme Manifestation for this age.

Shoghi Effendi, *Dawn of a New Day*, p. 199

GOAL: TO KNOW THAT THE GREATER COVENANT IS REPEATED IN EVERY DISPENSATION

TOPIC: THE MANNER IN WHICH THE MANIFESTATIONS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED BY HUMANITY

Learning Objectives and Suggested Activities



KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVES

- To know the special circumstances that exist in the world just prior to the appearance of the Manifestation of God
- To know that the Manifestations of God were not recognized by the generality of humankind at the time of Their appearance
- To know that the generality of humankind ultimately recognizes the Manifestations of God

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Share stories from history to show what it was like at the time of the appearance of some of the Manifestations.
- Discuss people’s reactions to the appearance of a new Manifestation.
- Invite scholars of other religions to present to the students an early history of their faith.
- Memorize passages from Kitáb-i-Íqán about the time of the Manifestation’s arrival.
- Read stories about the reactions of people to various Manifestations’ arrivals.



WISDOM OBJECTIVES

- To understand the intimate relationship between the appearance of the Manifestation of God and the conditions of humanity at the time of His appearance

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Do an experiment: Add a few drops of an iodine and liquid starch solution to a glass of clear water. Relate the resultant blue cloudiness to the need for a new Message from God. A few drops of lemon juice will turn the solution clear again, representing the Message of a new Manifestation.
- Discuss the definitions of “manifest” and “manifestation.”
- In pairs or small groups, invite the students to come up with a list of four ways that the Message of a Manifestation gets “cloudy.”
- Read and discuss the story “The Wonderlamp” by A.Q. Faizi or “The Gift” by Cynthia Wolcott.

TOPIC: THE MANNER IN WHICH THE MANIFESTATIONS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED BY HUMANITY



SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVES

- To perceive obstacles that prevent people from recognizing the Manifestation of God
- To perceive some ways to recognize the Manifestation of God

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Invite the students to share incidents from their lives when they didn't listen to or follow directions. Discuss why they think that happened. Role-play some situations.
- Encourage the students to share stories of not recognizing someone because of a new change (glasses, haircut, long time between visits, use of masks).
- Invite the students to wear masks and change them, and observe how the person stays the same even though the physical changes.
- Discuss reasons people might or might not recognize Bahá'u'lláh as the Manifestation of God for today.
- Provide opportunities for the students to meditate on what they can do to help others recognize Bahá'u'lláh as a Manifestation.
- Show the students how different light covers (lampshades, different color or shape of bulbs) do not change in any way the light they cover.



ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVES

- To articulate historical examples that illustrate the manner in which the Manifestations of God have been received by humanity
- To explain how we can help people to recognize Bahá'u'lláh as the Manifestation of God for the present age

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Provide opportunities for students to demonstrate and explain to other community members the iodine experiment.
- Encourage the students to retell stories about how the Manifestations were received by humanity, perhaps at a local fireside.
- Encourage the students to choose a friend and reflect on what might help that person to recognize the station of Bahá'u'lláh. Invite them to create a plan to assist their friend to recognize the station of Bahá'u'lláh. Students can consult and regularly report their results in class or at the nineteen-day feast.
- Encourage the students to recite prayers for detachment.

GOAL: TO KNOW THAT THE GREATER COVENANT IS REPEATED IN EVERY DISPENSATION

TOPIC: THE MANNER IN WHICH THE MANIFESTATIONS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED BY HUMANITY

Sample Activities

ACTIVITY 1: MIRRORS, LIGHTS, AND SUNS

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To understand the intimate relationship between the appearance of the Manifestation of God and the conditions of humanity at the time of His appearance

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE: To perceive obstacles that prevent people from recognizing the Manifestation of God

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE: To explain how we can assist people to recognize Bahá'u'lláh as the Manifestation of God for the present age

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Education directed toward God; Direct use of Bahá'í sacred writings; Use of consultation; Use of the arts

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 60 MIN. (MAY BE COMPLETED OVER TWO CLASS SESSIONS, IF DESIRED)

Materials Needed:

- Access to sunshine outdoors or a lamp, flashlight, or other light source indoors
- Mirror or mirrors
- “Sun” template, as described below (see Resource Page 28)
- Posterboard, cardboard, or cardstock for suns (one for each student)
- Chalk board or chart paper
- Sheets of bright yellow paper (or shiny gold foil paper, if desired) large enough to cover the sun template
- Strips of stiff white paper or cardstock, 3 inches wide and 11 inches long, or photocopies of Resource Page 29
- Other art supplies as desired
- Permanent markers
- Scissors
- Sharp scissors or cutting edge for teacher’s use

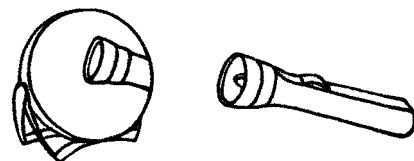
1. With students—outside using the sun or inside using a lamp—and a mirror, demonstrate the analogy of the Manifestations of God being perfect Mirrors reflecting God’s Light to humanity. Share this verse:

... These Manifestations ... are themselves the Primary Mirrors of the Divine Being. ... These Mirrors will everlastingly succeed each other, and will continue to reflect the light of the Ancient of Days.

Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 74

2. Ask the students if they know the names of some of these Divine Mirrors, these Manifestations of God. Write the Names that students suggest on the board or chart paper. The teacher may add additional names as desired: Adam, Krishna, Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus Christ, Muhammad, the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh.

3. Invite the students to take turns standing in different places and using the mirror to reflect the light. Briefly discuss: How is it possible that the mirror can reflect the light from so many different places? If God is like the sun, how are the Manifestations of God like the mirror (or mirrors)? How does this example show the oneness of religion? What could we say to tell other people about the oneness of religion?
4. Explain that another metaphor for the divine Manifestation is the sun which rises at different places on the horizon at different times in the year. Ask: Is it the sun that gives us light or is it the place on the horizon that gives us light?



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5. Explain that the teachings of God are like the light and the Teacher from God is like the sun. In the same way that plants grow in sunlight, we grow spiritually by following God's teachings. Invite students to reflect and then share their answers to the question: How do God's teachings help us grow and be happy?
6. Read aloud twice and then briefly discuss the following verse:

This Sun of Reality . . . is the prophet or Manifestation of God. . . .

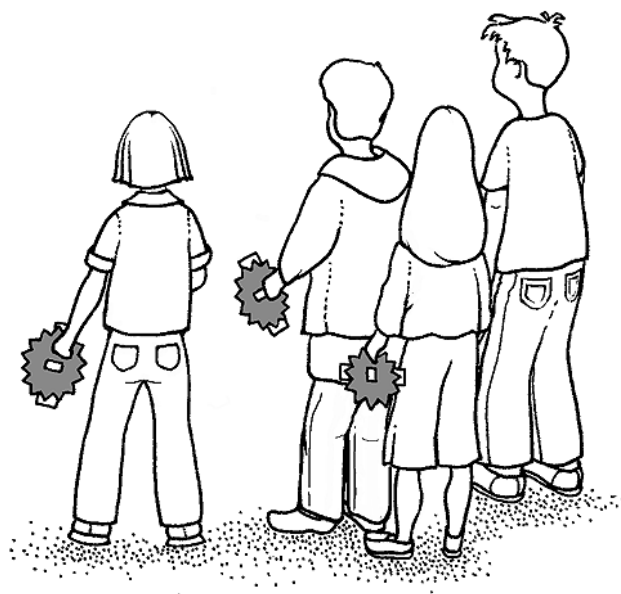
The Sun of Reality is one Sun but it has different dawning-places. . . . These day-springs or dawning-points differ widely but the sun is ever the same sun.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Foundations of World Unity, p. 11
7. Provide a cardboard template of a sun (see Resource Page 28) for students to trace and cut out of cardboard, cardstock, or poster board.
8. Cover the sun with shiny gold foil paper or bright yellow paper, or decorate with other available art supplies.
9. The teacher may cut two slits in the center of the sun, 3½ inches wide and 1 inch apart.

10. Encourage students to copy the previously listed names of Manifestations of God on strips of paper 3 inches wide and 11 inches long, as illustrated. Alternately, you may provide the students with photocopies of the list on Resource Page 29.
11. Assist students to weave the strip of paper through the two slits in the sun so that the name of each Manifestation appears one at a time as the paper slides through the slits.
12. When the students have completed their suns, invite them to stand in a line or a circle with their suns showing the name of Adam (or the first Manifestation on their list).
13. Invite the students to slowly raise their suns above their heads as you recite this verse:

. . . The Manifestation . . . is the Sun of Truth endowed with a supreme splendor and reflecting the beauty of God. . . . The lights of the Sun of Truth illumine our eyes, inspire our hearts, convey to our souls cheerful glad-tidings of God, cause our thoughts to become lofty and our efforts to be productive of glorious results.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Foundations of World Unity, p. 112



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14. Then ask the students to slowly lower their suns. Briefly discuss: How does it feel when the sun shines on us? What happens when the sun goes down each day? Does the sun rise in exactly the same place each day?
15. Invite one student to move to one corner of the room and advance the strip of paper to reveal the name of the next Manifestation in their list. Then repeat step 12, with this student raising the sun while you recite the verse and the other children turn toward the sun.
16. Ask the students to continue facing this corner of the room while the “sun” moves to another corner of the room and advances the strip of paper to reveal the next name on the list. Repeat the process again, while other students still face the previous corner.
17. Briefly discuss: Why could we not see the dawning of the next Manifestation of God?
18. Repeat as desired, with different students taking turns holding up their suns in different positions around the room.
19. Finally, invite the students to once again stand in a circle and advance their paper strips to reveal the name of Bahá’u’lláh. Once again have them raise their suns above their heads and repeat the verse. Briefly discuss: Why is it more important to turn to the sun than to the last place where we saw the sun? We know that the sun will keep rising and that God will always send His Manifestations. Why must we turn to the Manifestation of God for this Day? What are some ways that we can help other people recognize that Bahá’u’lláh is the Manifestation of God for this Day?
20. Encourage students to choose one specific action that they can take before the next class to show others the “Light” of Bahá’u’lláh through their words or their actions. Assist them to write their plans on the back of their “suns.” Remember to invite students to share the results of their actions at the beginning of the next class.

ACTIVITY 2: STORIES OF THE MANIFESTATIONS OF GOD

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To know that the Manifestations of God were not recognized by the generality of mankind at the time of Their appearance. To know that the generality of humankind ultimately recognizes the Manifestations of God.

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE: To articulate historical examples that illustrate the manner in which the Manifestations of God have been received by humanity.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Education directed toward God; Direct use of Bahá’í sacred writings; Use of stories; Use of play

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 40 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Resource Pages 30–32
- Button

1. Welcome the students. Then invite them to reflect on their experiences over the past week and to share their efforts to show the “light” of

Bahá’u’lláh through their words and actions. Affirm all.

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2. Then pose the question: Where is the sun? After the students reply, briefly discuss: How is it that we know where to look for the sun? Why don't we look in a closet? Or under the table or sofa? Or in a box?

3. Note that Bahá'u'lláh tells us:

The proof of the sun is the light thereof, which shineth and envelopeth all things.

Bahá'u'lláh, The Kitáb-i-Íqán, p. 208

Read the quotation twice, then observe that in the same way that light tells us where to look for the sun, the pure teachings of religion—the light of truth—help us recognize the Manifestations of God.

4. Briefly discuss: What are some examples of the pure teachings of true religion?
5. Invite them to think again about their experiences over the past week: When and where did you see other people showing the light of religion in their words and actions? What did they do or say? How did you recognize the true light of religion when you saw it?

Allow some time for the students to think, then invite students to share their observations.

6. Then play a game like “Button, Button, Who’s Got the Button” in which you invite the students to stand in a circle, with their palms together and hands extended toward the center. The teacher’s hands are held in the same way, but with a button or other small object concealed between the fingers. The teacher walks to each student in turn, inserts her or his fingers between the fingers of each student, and

leaves the button concealed in one student’s hands. Then the teacher invites the students to guess: “Button, button, who’s got the button?” The student who guesses correctly then takes a turn placing the button while other students and the teacher guess. If desired, continue the game until all students have had a turn placing the button. Then discuss: How could we tell where to find the button? What were the signs? What can we learn from this game about finding true religion? What do we have to do to find it? How do we know it when we see it?

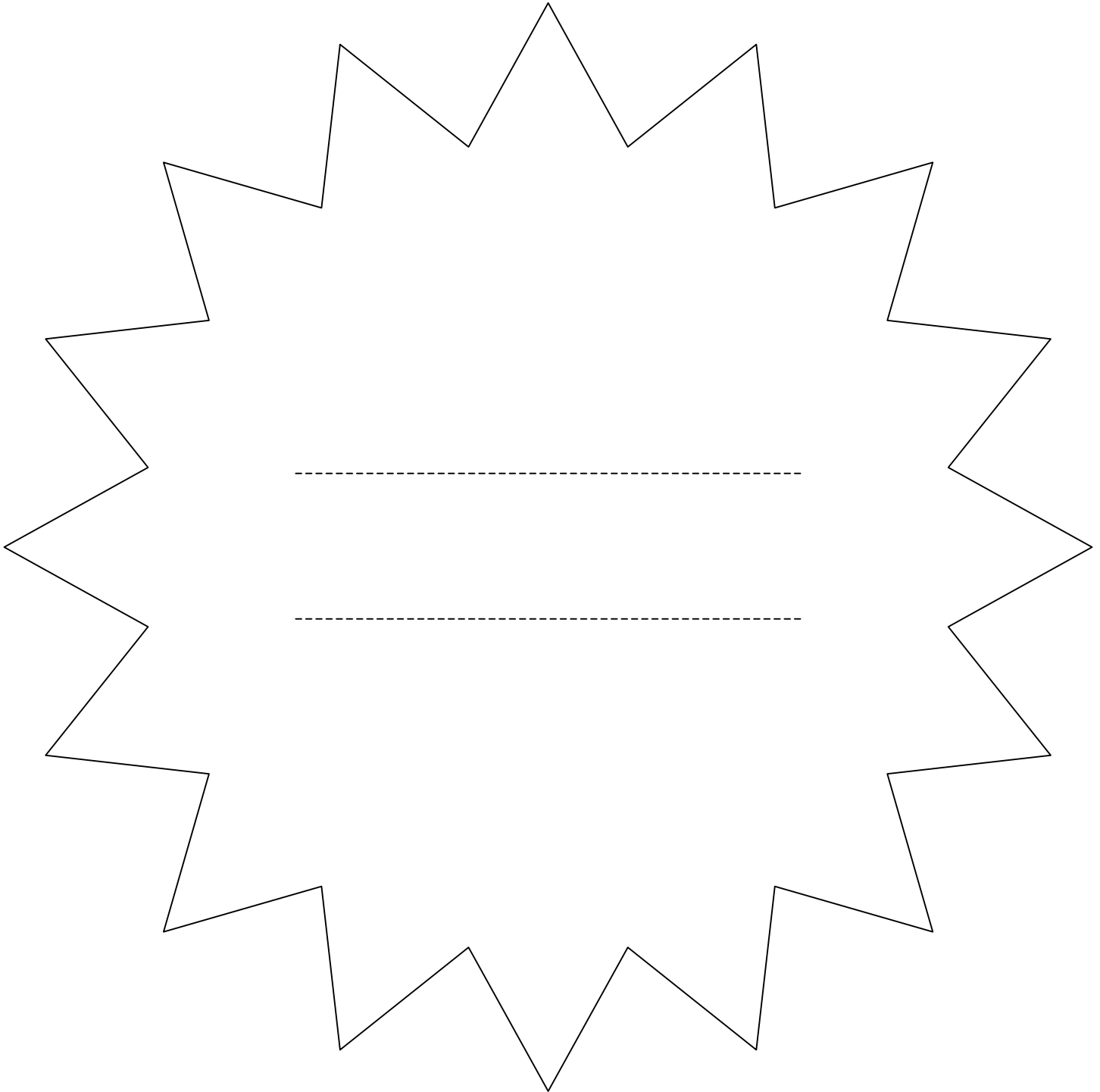
7. Next, explain that sometimes people have a hard time recognizing the true religion of God. Read aloud some or all of the stories on Resource Pages 30–32. Pause after each story to discuss: How did the people treat the Manifestation of God? What helped them recognize Him? Why did some people fail to recognize the Manifestation of God?
8. After reading and discussing the stories, invite the students to think again about the ways that they can show the proof of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings through their words and actions. Discuss: Who could we invite to come with us to Bahá'í class? When could we share a prayer with another person? When and where could we show the truth of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings by being a true friend to all people?
9. Work with the students so that they come up with a specific action plans to show the truth of God's teachings for today by their words and their actions. Encourage them also to think of one person that they could tell one of the stories from today's lesson. Remember to invite them to share the results of their efforts at the beginning of the next class.



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Resource Pages



GOAL: TO KNOW THAT THE GREATER COVENANT IS REPEATED IN EVERY DISPENSATION
TOPIC: THE MANNER IN WHICH THE MANIFESTATIONS HAVE
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ADAM	ADAM
KRISHNA	KRISHNA
MOSES	MOSES
ZOROASTER	ZOROASTER
BUDDHA	BUDDHA
JESUS CHRIST	JESUS CHRIST
MUHAMMAD	MUHAMMAD
THE BÁB	THE BÁB
BAHÁ'U'LLÁH	BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

TOPIC: THE MANNER IN WHICH THE MANIFESTATIONS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED BY HUMANITY

THE MANNER IN WHICH GOD’S MESSENGERS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED

Moses

Many years ago the Israelites were slaves of the Egyptians. They were treated with great cruelty, and God sent Moses to help them. Moses warned the Egyptian king, the Pharaoh, that he must let the Israelites leave Egypt or God would punish him and the Egyptian people. And God did send plagues of locusts, scorpions, frogs, hailstones, and other terrible ordeals to the land of Egypt. Still Pharaoh refused to release Moses and His people. Even when Pharaoh finally agreed, he broke his promise and chased them. But God allowed Moses and His followers to escape.

At first the Israelites were very happy to be freed by Moses and they listened to His teachings and obeyed God’s laws. But after many years wandering in the desert in search of their new home, some of them began to grumble and complain, forgetting how God had helped them. All this time Moses helped them and cheered them on. But they even grumbled about Moses, and were rude to Him. But God looked after them just the same. When they needed food, God provided it. When they needed water, Moses found it. And when they said they didn’t believe in Moses, God didn’t abandon them. Finally they reached their new home and became a very great people. Moses taught that there would be another great Messenger from God.

Jesus

Jesus taught His followers that they should obey the commandments of Moses. He also brought a new law, and it was called the law of love. He said, “This is My Commandment; that ye love one another as I have loved you.” Jesus taught this to many people, and before long He became so greatly loved that the leaders of the land, the priests and governors, began to fear Him. They were jealous and feared that they would no longer be able to rule the people the way they wanted. The power of Jesus’ love was becoming too great for them, so they planned to kill Him.

In His great love, Jesus allowed Himself to be killed. His followers were full of sadness when He told them that this would happen. But He also told them that they must travel and teach the law of Love. He warned them that they, too, would be scorned and persecuted for teaching this new law, but they need not fear. Although they would not see Him anymore, He said that He would be with them always, “even to the end of the world.” Jesus said that a “counselor” would come in the future to guide and comfort the people.

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Buddha

The Buddha lived in India, where people were divided into groups called castes. Some castes had wealth and privileges. Other castes did most of the work and were quite poor. People were born into their castes, and no matter what they did, they all remained in their castes for their whole lives. Buddha said that there are good people and bad people in every caste, and people should be judged by the deeds they do in life, not simply by the family to which they are born.

But not everyone liked what Buddha was teaching the people. Some enjoyed their positions of wealth and power, and they plotted against Him. They accused Him and His followers of terrible crimes. The Buddha told His followers not to argue or fight back, but to remain patient and calm, and the people would soon see the truth. And He was right, of course. In a short time the Buddha and His followers became more respected than ever. The Buddha taught that in time there would appear a new Buddha to guide people.

Muhammad

In the land of Arabia a long time ago, the people were leading very wicked lives, stealing and killing and fighting one another. God knew that Arabia needed a Messenger very badly, so He sent Muhammad. Muhammad stood in the village streets and told the people to obey the laws of God, but they laughed at Him and threw stones. But He had great courage and He knew God would help Him. For thirteen years He preached in Mecca, but in all that time only a few listened. Finally Muhammad and his followers had to hide in caves because the wicked people were trying to kill them. When they escaped to another town called Medina, the Meccans marched to Medina with their swords. Muhammad and His followers did not believe in fighting, but they had to defend their families. God must have been helping them, because they were able to defeat their attackers. They captured many prisoners, but these prisoners were treated so kindly by Muhammad that many of them became His followers.

Every Messenger of God can change the hearts of people. Now they began to listen to the words of Muhammad, and as the years passed more and more of the Arabs believed in Muhammad, and obeyed His laws. They saw His kindly deeds and they copied them. Imagine how different life must have been, after the fighting and stealing were over. Muhammad taught that in the future a new Messenger would return for the “Day of Resurrection.”

TOPIC: THE MANNER IN WHICH THE MANIFESTATIONS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED BY HUMANITY

The Báb

When the Báb was alive, most of the people in the land of Persia were followers of Muhammad. They believed that Muhammad was the last Messenger that God would send to earth. But the Báb told His friends and followers that He was a new Messenger, a new Manifestation of God. The Báb also said that another Manifestation would come very soon, the most glorious Messenger of all, and the people should be ready for Him.

When the Báb's followers traveled from place to place sharing this good news, many people welcomed them and believed their message. The followers of the Báb were known as Bábís, and when more and more people became Bábís, the priests and rulers became jealous and fearful. Many Bábís were tortured and killed because they would rather die than say they did not believe in their new Prophet and His wonderful Message. Finally the Persian king ordered that the Báb Himself should be killed. The Persian ruler put an end to the glorious life of the Báb, but he could not stop His teachings, which continued to spread far and wide. And the Báb's teachings about the new Manifestation of God came true after a very short time.

Bahá'u'lláh

During the ten years following the death of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh and His family and many other Bábís were forced to leave their homes and live in the far-off city of Baghdad. While He lived there, Bahá'u'lláh knew that He was the new Manifestation of God for this Day, but He told no one. He made many friends in Baghdad, and crowds of people would visit His house to listen to His words. The Muslim priests began to fear that soon no one would listen to them, but only to Bahá'u'lláh. So they convinced the government to send Him to another city, and then another, and another even farther away from His home in Persia. But before leaving Baghdad, Bahá'u'lláh told His many followers that He was the Promised One for whom they were waiting. Most of them were overjoyed to learn the news. Some had already guessed His secret. Others became even more jealous and never stopped trying to harm Bahá'u'lláh and His family. Their lies encouraged the government officials to treat Bahá'u'lláh very badly, and He endured many hardships.

After He revealed His true station, Bahá'u'lláh wrote letters to the kings and rulers of the earth announcing the new Day of God, that this is the time for peace, and happiness, and true justice that all the Prophets predicted. But few rulers wanted to listen. They cared more about their own power than the Word of God. But many, many people with pure and simple hearts loved what Bahá'u'lláh had to say. Today God is helping all people learn to follow Bahá'u'lláh's great teachings of love and peace and unity.

Sources: *The Kingdoms of God* by Janet Lindstrom, and
God and His Messengers by David Hofman

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LIST OF ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Stories & Articles:

Brilliant Star:

- SO 03 A New Moon for Every Age, p. 6
- SE 91 Why Did Bahá'u'lláh Suffer?, p. 13
- JA 03 Seeing the Lights of God, p. 8

God and His Messengers, David Hofman, George Ronald, London, ?

Bahá'í Education for Children, Book 6, A. A. Furutan, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, India, 2000, p. 30

The Power of the Covenant, Part 1, National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, 1976, p. 30–33

The Power of the Covenant, Part 3, National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, 1977, p. 9–19

The Gift, Cynthia Wolcott, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, IL, 1978

The Wonderlamp, Don Stevenson, Abul-Qasim Faizi, Hugh Featherstone Blyth, Kalimat Press, 1986

The Kingdoms of God, Janet Lindstrom, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, IL, 1974

Worksheets and Coloring Pages:

Brilliant Star:

- SE 92 Greater Covenant, p. 6

Activities:

Brilliant Star:

- SO 03 Lifeboat, p. 5

Music:

“Rifle Sights,” *Artists for the Arc*, Don Reed et. al, World Beat Records, 1991

Other favorite resources:

If you find any additional resources, please notify the National Children’s Education and Resource Center, or submit your findings to the Core Curriculum website, www.core-curriculum.org.