

Home of Baha - allah

Acca. Syria.

July 6th 1914

Dear friends!

From Haifa to Acca is a ten mile drive along the lovely beach, round the bay. The views of Carmel as the pilgrim looks back from the window of the train or the carriage are very attractive and fine. First the ancient river, the river Kishon is crossed, then the traveller enters the great plain of Acca. The Nahr Na mân, ancient Belus, is afterwards crossed and soon a great hill is seen to the right where Napoleon planted his batteries when besieging Acca in 1799. During the journey one might notice the beautiful shells which are abundant on the beach. Amongst these are specimens of the murex ^{from} which the Tyrians extracted their far famed purple dye.

Acca, otherwise Aceho, Pto Lemais, or Acre, or St Jean d'Acre has always played an important part in the history of Syria in particular and the world in general. The fortifications are very old dating back into dim history but they are now quite out of repair as in several places the walls are destroyed, the cannons rusted with age thrown pell-mell here and there and its fame as an impregnable fortress is given up. It is stated that it contains 10,000 inhabitants, of whom

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only 700 are Christians. It stands on the projecting headland which forms the northern boundary on the bay which curves round from Mount Carmel on the south. Round and back of Acca there is a fertile plain about 6 miles broad, watered partially by Nahr Roman. The hills which further north approach the sea, skirt round this plain and recede towards the south yet farther inland toward Sepphoris. Acca from its favorable geographic situation as regards both sea and land approaches has been called the "Key of Palestine." How wonderfully this is true in the spiritual sense also. For with the dawn of this glorious Revelation from its horizon it has not only become "the Key of Palestine" but the "Key of the world" with which the locks of all the international problems are opened.

According to ^{the only} one verse in the old Testament (Judges 1. 31) Acca was allotted to Asher but was never conquered. It was commonly reckoned a Phoenician city. Although the town is not mentioned again in the old Testament it is noticed on existing cuneiform tablets of the fifteenth century B.C. Under the Ptolemies it assumed much importance and was called Ptolemais. Antiochus the Great subsequently seized the city, and attached it to his Syrian dominions; it figured also in the wars of ^{the} Maccabee brothers. It afterwards became a free town and then a Roman colony.

46 It is also once mentioned in the New Testament (as Ptolemais) in connection with St Paul's journey from Tyre to Cesarea. 'And when we had finished our course from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day' (Acts XXI. 7).

Acca came into the full current of turbulent history in the 12th and 13th centuries when the forces of the East and the ~~West~~ clashed together in the name of religion under the title of Crusades; it was taken in 1102 and held till 1187 as a royal town and port of the Kings of Jerusalem. Retaken in 1191 from Saladin, after a famous siege, it was held till 1291, and greatly increased in size by a new quarter on the north. It was here that the Knights of St John prolonged for forty three days their gallant resistance to the Sultan Iltis Kalawin of Egypt and his immense hosts. It is estimated that sixty thousands Christian citizens and soldiers were, on that occasion, slain or sold as slaves. In 1799 besieged Acca and was prevented from taking it by the English under Sir Wm Sidney Smith. On 3d November, 1840, it was bombarded for several hours by the allied English and Turkish fleets, when the explosion of a magazine destroyed the garrison and laid that part of the town in ruin. Fearing a similar catastrophe,

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they transferred, during the Turco-Italian war, all the powder and shells from the Magazine in the town to the large cave under the Napoleonic walls, at the gate of which there is stationed always a number of guards.

After alluding to the town of Acre and its connection to the tribe of Asher with Bible history, the frequency of allusions to its existence in the Scriptures, and the fact that ancient Ptolemais or Acca, is linked with only one Apostolic event, the landing of St Paul to commence his last journey to Jerusalem, one of the Western historians goes on to say: "The peculiarity, therefore, of the story of Acre lies in its many sieges, - by Baldwin, by Saladin, by Richard, by Khalil, in the middle ages; by Napoleon, by Ibrahim Pasha, and by Sir Robert Stopford, in later times. It is thus the one city in Palestine, which has acquired distinct relations with the Western world of modern history, analogous to those of Caesarea with the Western world of Ancient history. But the singular fate which it enjoyed at the close of Crusades gives it a special interest never to be forgotten by those who in the short space of an hour's walk can pass round its broken walls. Within that narrow circuit - between the Saracen armies on one side, and the roar of the Mediterranean Sea on the other - were cooped up the remnant of the Crusading

Armies, after they had been driven from every other part of Palestine. Within that circuit 'the Kings of Jerusalem and Cyprus, of the house of Lusignan; the Princes of Antioch; the Counts of Tripoli and Sidon; the great masters of the Hospital, the Temple, and the Teutonic Orders; the Republics of Venice, Genoa and Pisa; the Pope's Legate; the Kings of France and England; assumed an independent command. Seventeen tribunals exercised the power of life and death.' All the eyes of Europe were then fixed on that spot. Acre contained in itself a complete miniature of feudal Europe and Latin Christendom." Aside from all these historical interests the greatest World drama of Universal Religion has been acted here, the Supreme Manifestation of Universal Peace has raised His clarion Voice from here and Abdul Baka, the focal centre of good will and sympathy towards all mankind is living today here.

Today the Beloved did not show himself to the believers except a few minutes but his hours during the day were monopolized by the stream of callers from Mefti to other officers and citizens who were conducted to his room upstairs. It seems the true ruler of Acre is the Master for they come to him with all their complaints and expect him to redress and set them right.