

Home of Baha-Allah 55

Acre, Syria

July 8th 1914

Dear friends!

The difficulties that the early Bahais had to go through in Acre reminds one always of the Apostolic time and how the early Christians were subjected to the utmost ignominy and death. This gave them that irresistible faith which carried before it every insuperable obstacle. Filled with the love of Christ they carried his divine Gospel to the uttermost corners of the earth. They had seen the Glory of the Son and were fired with enthusiasm to share this knowledge of salvation with the members of the human family. Similarly these early Bahais filled with the Love of Baha-Allah willingly ~~tried~~ ^{endured} all manner of hardships and sufferings in order to behold His Face and perceive His Glory. Many Pilgrims at the end of their long journey were not permitted to enter the town and after making futile attempts all day they were forced to spend the nights in the cemetery and go on hungry. If they were caught in the act of entering the town, disguised as an Arab they were arrested, thrown into jail and severely punished. While Baha-Allah and others were still incarcerated in the Barrack, every Friday noon Abdul Baha

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accompanied by a number of friends walked out toward the Mosque. Two or four guards followed them in the distance. While in the mosque one or two pilgrims who had waited a long time would quietly join the Master's party and return to the prison without any one noticing the difference. Now and then the believers disguised themselves as Arab porters and carried on their heads the huge bundles deliberately arranged by the friend who went every day to the Bazaar to buy things for the Holy Family. Such pilgrims were kept in the prison for 2 or three or the utmost nine days and met Baha-allah as many times as possible and receiving his instructions and divine teachings slipped off in the same manner they had entered. Often they carried Tablets from Baha-allah for the believers in different parts of the Orient and diffused the Fragrances of the New Spiritual Awakening.

When the Blessed Perfection was still imprisoned in the Barrack there was living in Acre a man by the name Sheikh Mahmud. He was the Mofti of the town. He combined in himself the opposite qualities. He was a learned as well as an adept in horsemanship. He had a powerful physique and a quick mind. From the beginning he tried to oppose the Cause and harm the believers. One day while Abdul

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Baha was leaving the Mosque he blocked his path and raising high up in the air his close threatening fist he cried aloud so that every one may hear: "Art thou the son of God?" The Master gently reminded him: "Does not Mohamad command: 'Respect the guest, even should he be an infidel?'" Sheik Mahmud repeated his question in a menacing manner. The Beloved looking into his eyes most affably gave ^{him} the same answer. He was thawed down before the heat of the Sun of Truth and letting his hand fall beside himself, ~~he~~ left the scene quietly. This Sheik Mahmud often related to his friends that his father told him the Promised One will be brought to Acca and imprisoned there, but he never thought that the arrival of Baha-Allah in the Barrack ^{was the} fulfillment. He lived in a house several miles outside of Acca. One early morning while he was standing near the window of his room he looked toward Acca and saw very clearly the Blessed Perfection beckoning to him with his hand "Come, Sheik Mahmud!" He repeated this Command twice more and the vision passed away. Sheik Mahmud rubbed his eyes and could see nothing else but open space. He was so impressed with this vision that he rode his horse and hastened to the town. Entering the Barrack precipitately he went directly into the Presence of

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Baha-Allah and kneeling down on the floor he said: "My Lord, my Lord! I have come. Thou hast called me." Then the Blessed Perfection raised him from the ground and spoke to him very affectionately. From that time on he was a staunch and faithful Bahai and facilitated the visit of the Pilgrims in diverse ways. Once a pilgrim was forbidden entrance into the town. When Sheikh Mahmoud heard about it he went out in the evening and brought him by the underground aqueduct. The next evening he dressed like an Arab and put in his hand a lantern to be carried in front of him and started for the Barrack. This pilgrim stayed with Baha-Allah several days and when he left he carried with himself seventy Tablets.

Another charming, little story. When the Book of Akdas was revealed, the believers observed that every one was commanded to have a trade or profession and that work is considered as worship. The first person who obeyed this command was Abdul Baha. At the time there was a mat-weaver by the name Haji Ali in Acre and for several months the Master went to him and learned the art of mat-weaving. Several mats were made with his own blessed hand and they tell me some of these are yet in the possession of the Greatest Holy Leaf.

This morning the Beloved came down late and went out into the town to pay calls on various officials, because as I understand it he will leave to morrow for Barfa.

In the afternoon the carriage was ready and the Lord was driven to Bahajee to visit the blessed Tomb of his Glorious Father. On the way he spoke on casting away the robe of self and putting on the garment of Selflessness, humility and evanescence. "Man must be freed from every material tie and seek the Path of the Kingdom. He must not look backward, he must look forward, not downward but heavenward. Praising oneself is the sign of selfishness. Commending others is the passport to the realm of spiritual progress. Here is a man who speaks very few words but he is working all the time and attending to all his duties; there is another man who sits down, talks continually and boasts of his past achievements."

In the garden of the tomb he sat quietly and prayed for several minutes; then coming out he visited the garden of the Rest-house and spoke with the gardener, Aga Mehdī, telling him what to do increase the stock of his flora. "Man" he said "must be tireless in his effort. Once his effort is directed in the proper channel if he does not succeed today he shall succeed to morrow. Effort in itself is one of the noblest traits of human character."

Devotion to one's calling, Effort in its speedy execution, Simplicity of spirit and Steadfastness through all the ups and downs are the hallmarks of Success. A person characterized with these attributes will gather the fruits of his labor and obtain the happiness of the Kingdom."

It was after sunset when we reached home. All the believers were awaiting the Beloved's arrival. Although he felt very tired on account of the exertion of the day, yet he summoned the friends to his room upstairs - the room of Baha-ollah. He gave a very ^{short} talk about his Western trip and expressed great longing for the solitude of the desert, where no one may be found there. Then he dismissed us with the gentle wave of his hand.

As I descended the stairs I could not help but think of the great change that had come over the Cause since the days of Baha-ollah. Spiritually and many of us physically did not exist in those days but now here I am living and working in the very same home where the Great Manifestation lived and worked! Who could ever dream that we will be all so fortunate and unworthy as we are be permitted to share of the heavenly Bounties of the Lord of Hosts