

Home of Baha Ollah

Acca Syria

March 20th 1915

Dear friends!

The Arabian year which is kept in all the Islamic countries consists of twelve lunar months, consisting alternately 30 and 29 days, and making 354 in the whole, so that in every solar year eleven days are lost. The number of days thus lost amount in 33 years to 363. It becomes necessary, therefore to add an intercalary year at the end of each thirty third year to reduce the Mohamadan into the Christian era. Astronomically speaking a "sidereal solar year" is 365 days, 6 hours 9 minutes, 9 seconds. Of course the lunar months are very inconvenient because they do not indicate the season; as they commence earlier by eleven days every year. These few words were necessary in order to introduce you to the fact that according to the lunar reckoning this is the fifth of Jamad Azaval, 1333 A. H. and consequently the occasion for holding two anniversaries - the enunciation of the Babi and the birth of Abdul Baha. For this reason the Bahais did not fast because it was a feast day and an hour before sunrise we were up, praying and communing. One hour after sunrise all the believers who were in Acca gathered in the house, congratulating each other and expressing great joy in being privileged to live in these sweet, holy days under the wing of the protection of the Centre of the Covenant! After a few minutes Khosro brought us the word that the Beloved will receive us. With happiness in our hearts we ascended the stairs and were welcomed by the King of Kings, the one holy Kaaba to whom all the eyes are focussed. He was sitting in a chair in the centre of the room, his white locks fallen back on his shoulders and his countenance wreathed with the smiles of the Kingdom. One by one we ^{were} ushered into his presence and were permitted to sit on the floor - so many adoring moths flying around the Divine Candle, ready to singe their wings of self and ego and put on the wings of abstraction to soar in the atmosphere of spiritual attainment.

The sun was shining outside and streaming through the eastern windows, surrounded the Master with its iridescent rays. Thus encircled by the halo of light he addressed us: "May the benedictions of Baha Ollah descend upon you on this blessed day! May you be submerged in the sea of the Graces of the Lord of lords! May your hearts be set aglow with the Fire of the Love of God! May your taste be sweetened with the honey of Truth! May your spirits become radiant with inner illumination! May your souls aspire toward the Glorious paradise of the Almighty! This is indeed a blessed Feast! the dawn of the Sun of Reality! May it be a blessed day to all the Bahais in the world! It is a clear day, the weather is bright and full of vitality, the sun is shining, the birds are singing, the breezes are being wafted and the hearts are happy in the consciousness of Divine Presence." Then he dwelt on the glories and peacefulness of the days of Ridwan, cheered us with the reminiscences of the life of Baha Ollah, narrated some of the charming, elusive particulars of His historical journey from Bagdad to Constantinople and filled to overflowing our small cups with more blessings!

In the afternoon he sent the believers including myself to Bahajee to worship and pray at the holy Tomb "Remember me in your prayers" he said as he disappeared in a side-street and our carriage started ^{on} its drive.

In the evening we were called again into his room and while in his worshipful presence I thought of you and prayed that the same may be your privilege as soon as the path will be opened and the world returned to its normal condition. Because tomorrow will be Now Ruz he related some of the immemorial Persian customs on this national holiday, such as "Haft-seen". This custom indicates that they must have seven new products of the soil at the table, each commencing with the letter "Seen" or S. showing, that they are on the threshold of the life-giving spring and that the sun in its heavenly path has entered the vernal equinoctial point, vouchsafing to the people the balmy, odoriferous breeze of Elysian fields.

Then he told me to say something and I asked him a question concerning the chronological order of the chapters of the Koran. From his illuminating talk the following points were clearly established: During the life of Mohamad, ^{the} verses ^{were} revealed from time to time and dictated to his amanuensis. These were written ^{on} the shoulder-blades of sheep, on palm leaves and on white stones and thrown together in a box without due regard to the date or the time of its revelation. The chief repositories of the chapters of the Koran, however, were the memory of the Arabs who memorized particular chapters and recited them on appropriate occasions. Before his departure, Mohamad did not leave behind any clear injunctions as to the disposition and arrangement of the Koran. One year passed over the prophet's death and no step was taken in this important direction till Abu Bekr, his immediate successor, at the suggestion of Omar collected the scattered fragments of the holy book. Zaid Ibn Thabit, a native of Medina, the erstwhile Mohamad amanuensis was the person engaged to carry out this task and we are assured that he gathered together the present contents of the Koran from date-leaves, ~~shoulder-blades~~, tablets of white stone and from the breasts of men. This sole copy remained in the possession of Abu Bekr during the remaining days of his brief Kaliphate, who then committed it to the custody of Hafsah, Mohamad's widow or Omar's daughter. During the ten years of Omar's Kaliphate this text continued to be the standard. However in that interval copies were made from it and as a natural result, owing to the carelessness or indifference of the copyists various readings sprang up. This created differences of opinions and caused serious disputes amongst the believers under the Kaliphate Othman. In order to stop the people, before they should differ regarding their scriptures as did the Jews and Christians, he determined to establish a text which should be used as the sole and universal standard by the Islamic world. Consequently, he called in the already mentioned Zaid and entrusted the redaction into his hands. Moreover he associated with him a number of colleagues to insure the accuracy and ^{the} purity of the text. Copies of the Koran thus

formed were forwarded to the chief stations of the then Mohamaden world
 and all the previous existing copies were thrown into the flames. Hence we have
 the unique phenomenon that today 300 millions Mohamadans agree in
 the inviolability of their Sacred book. One does not find two different
 texts of the scriptures as amongst the Catholics and Protestants. The devotees
 of Islam, whether they are in China or Arabia, Persia or ^{Philippines} India or Egypt have one Book, read one Book and use the same
 identical text. Each person may understand from the same sentence
 a different meaning, but this is a matter of capacity and not essential
 difference. A botanist walking through the green country will know the
 names, the properties and uses of each plant and enjoys nature in part
 as well as in whole but a simple man looking on the same scene
 will take delight in the whole of nature, will feel an indescribable ^{sense}
 of pleasure, will be penetrated by a keen consciousness of contentment
 and gladness. The difference, therefore between the two men is that
 the former understands and will be able to explain the language
 and beauty of nature, while the latter feels it. It is nevertheless
 asserted by the mystics and adepts that those who feel know
 more than those who can merely explain. But when we find the
 two gifts - Divine expression and Divine feeling - combined in one
 individual, we must feel confident that we are face to face with
 a highly-evolved spiritual being and as such praise the Lord that
 we are living in his day. For the heart of such a man is like a ^{Treasure}
 of jewels whose master-key is his tongue. When he unlocks the door
 he invites us to wander therein and gathers the gems of wisdom
 and carry away with us as much as we are able. The mind of this
 godman is similar to a rose garden. We walk through its cool ^{arboreal} avenues
 beneath the shades of which rivers flow. Here we gather ^{under} our arms
 the sweet nosegays of ^{the} roses, hyacinths and fragrant basil of imperi-
 shable ideals whose leaves the rude hand of the blast of autumn ^{cannot}
 affect, and the bliteness of whose spring the revolution of time
 cannot change into the disorder of the waning year. When we come
 under the influence of such a being we realize somehow that we have