

Shaykh Salmán

In 1266 A.H.ⁱ the trusted messenger, Shaykh Salmán, first heard the summons of God, and his heart leapt for joy. He was then in Hindíyán. Irresistibly attracted, he walked all the way to Tíhrán, where with ardent love he secretly joined the believers. On a certain day he was passing through the bázár with Áqá Muḥammad Taqíy-i-Káshání, and the farráshes followed him and discovered where he lived. The next day, police and farráshes came looking for him and took him to the chief of police.

“Who are you?” the chief asked.

“I am from Hindíyán,” replied Salmán. “I have come to Tíhrán and am on my way to Khurásán, for a pilgrimage to the Shrine of Imám Ridá.”

“What were you doing yesterday,” the chief asked, “with that man in the white robe?”

Salmán answered, “I had sold him an ‘abá the day before, and yesterday he was to pay me.”

“You are a stranger here,” the chief said. “How could you trust him?”

“A money-changer guaranteed the payment,” Salmán replied. He had in mind the respected believer, Áqá Muḥammad-i-Sarraf (money-changer).

The chief turned to one of his farráshes and said, “Take him to the money-changer’s and look into it.”

When they reached there the farrásh went on ahead. “What was all this,” he said, “about the sale of an ‘abá and your vouching for the payment? Explain yourself.”

“I know nothing about it,” the money-changer replied. “Come along,” said the farrásh to Salmán. “All is clear at last. You are a Bábí.”

It happened that the turban which Salmán had on his head was similar to those worn in Shúshtar. As they were passing a crossroads, a man from Shúshtar came out of his shop. He embraced Salmán and cried: “Where have you been, Khájih Muḥammad-‘Alí? When did you arrive? Welcome!”

Salmán replied, “I came here a few days ago and now the police have arrested me.”

“What do you want with him?” the merchant asked the farrásh. “What are you after?”

“He is a Bábí,” was the answer. “God forbid!” cried the man from Shúshtar. “I know him well. Khájih Muḥammad-‘Alí is a God-fearing Muslim, a Shí’ih, a devout follower of the Imám ‘Alí.” With this he gave the farrásh a sum of money and Salmán was freed.

They went into the shop and the merchant began to ask Salmán how he was faring. Salmán told him: “I am not Khájih Muḥammad-‘Alí.”

The man from Shúshtar was dumbfounded. “You look exactly like him!” he exclaimed. “You two are identical. However, since you are not he, give me back the money I paid the farrásh.”

Salmán immediately handed him the money, left, went out through the city gate and made for Hindíyán.

When Bahá'u'lláh arrived in 'Iráq, the first messenger to reach His holy presence was Salmán, who then returned with Tablets addressed to the friends in Hindíyán. Once each year, this blessed individual would set out on foot to see his Well-Beloved, after which he would retrace his steps, carrying Tablets to many cities, Işfáhán, Shíráz, Káshán, Tìhrán, and the rest.

From the year 69 until the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh in 1309 A.H.,ⁱⁱ Salmán would arrive once a year, bringing letters, leaving with the Tablets, faithfully delivering each one to him for whom it was intended. Every single year throughout that long period, he came on foot from Persia to 'Iráq, or to Adrianople, or to the Most Great Prison at Akká; came with the greatest eagerness and love, and then went back again.

He had remarkable powers of endurance. He traveled on foot, as a rule eating nothing but onions and bread; and in all that time, he moved about in such a way that he was never once held up and never once lost a letter or a Tablet. Every letter was safely delivered; every Tablet reached its intended recipient. Over and over again, in Işfáhán, he was subjected to severe trials, but he remained patient and thankful under all conditions, and earned from non-Bahá'ís the title of “the Bábís’ Angel Gabriel.”

Throughout his entire life, Salmán rendered this momentous service to the Cause of God, becoming the means of its spread and contributing to the happiness of the believers, annually bringing Divine glad tidings to the cities and villages of Persia. He was close to the heart of Bahá'u'lláh, Who looked upon him with especial favor and grace. Among the Holy Scriptures, there are Tablets revealed in his name.

After the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, Salmán remained faithful to the Covenant, serving the Cause with all his powers. Then, as before, he

would come to the Most Great Prison every year, delivering mail from the believers, and returning with the answers to Persia. At last, in Shíráz, he winged his way to the Kingdom of glory.

From the dawn of history until the present day, there has never been a messenger so worthy of trust; there has never been a courier to compare with Salmán. He has left respected survivors in Işfáhán who, because of the troubles in Persia, are presently in distress. It is certain that the friends will see to their needs. Upon him be the glory of God, the All-Glorious; unto him be salutations and praise.

ⁱ1849–1850.

ⁱⁱ1853; 1892.