

Áqá Muhammad-Báqir and Áqá Muhammad-Ismá‘íl, the Tailor

These were two brothers who, in the path of God, captives along with the rest, were shut in the ‘Akká fortress. They were brothers of the late Pahlaván Ridá. They left Persia and emigrated to Adrianople, hastening to the loving-kindness of Bahá’u’lláh; and under His protection, they came to ‘Akká.

Pahlaván Ridá—God’s mercy and blessings and splendors be upon him; praise and salutations be unto him—was a man to outward seeming untutored, devoid of learning. He was a tradesman, and like the others who came in at the start, he cast everything away out of love for God, attaining in one leap the highest reaches of knowledge. He is of those from the earlier time. So eloquent did he suddenly become that the people of Káshán were astounded. For example this man, to all appearances unschooled, betook himself to Hájí Muhammad-Karím Khán in Káshán and propounded this question:

“Sir, are you the Fourth Pillar? I am a man who thirsts after spiritual truth and I yearn to know of the Fourth Pillar.”

Since a number of political and military leaders were present, the Hájí replied: “Perish the thought! I shun all those who consider me the Fourth Pillar. Never have I made such a claim. Whoever says I have, speaks falsehood; may God’s curse be on him!”

A few days later Pahlaván Ridá again sought out the Hájí and told him: “Sir, I have just finished your book, *Irshádu’l-‘Avám* (Guidance unto the Ignorant); I have read it from cover to cover; in it you say that one is obligated to know the Fourth Pillar or Fourth Support; indeed, you account him a fellow knight of the Lord of the Age. Therefore I long to recognize and know him. I am certain that you are informed of him. Show him to me, I beg of you.”

The Hájí was wrathful. He said: “The Fourth Pillar is no figment. He is a being plainly visible to all. Like me, he has a turban on his head, he wears an ‘abá, and carries a cane in his hand.” Pahlaván Ridá smiled at him. “Meaning no discourtesy,” he said, “there is, then, a contradiction in Your Honor’s teaching. First you say one thing, then you say another.”

Furious, the Hájí replied: “I am busy now. Let us discuss this matter some other time. Today I must ask to be excused.”

The point is that Ridá, a man considered to be unlettered, was able, in an argument, to best such an erudite “Fourth Pillar.” In the phrase of ‘Allámiy-i-Hillí, he downed him with the Fourth Support.

Whenever that lionhearted champion of knowledge began to speak, his listeners marveled; and he remained, till his last breath, the protector and helper of all seekers after truth. Ultimately he became known far and wide as a Bahá’í, was turned into a vagrant, and ascended to the Abhá Kingdom.

As for his two brothers: through the grace of the Blessed Beauty, after they were taken captive by the tyrants, they were shut in the Most Great Prison, where they shared the lot of these homeless wanderers. Here,

during the early days at ‘Akká, with complete detachment, with ardent love, they hastened away to the all-glorious Realm. For our ruthless oppressors, as soon as we arrived, imprisoned all of us inside the fortress in the soldiers’ barracks, and they closed up every issue, so that none could come and go. At that time the air of ‘Akká was poisonous, and every stranger, immediately following his arrival, would be taken ill. Muhammad-Báqir and Muhammad-Ismá‘íl came down with a violent ailment and there was neither doctor nor medicine to be had; and those two embodied lights died on the same night, wrapped in each other’s arms. They rose up to the undying Kingdom, leaving the friends to mourn them forever. There was none there but wept that night.

When morning came we wished to carry their sanctified bodies away. The oppressors told us: “You are forbidden to go out of the fortress. You must hand over these two corpses to us. We will wash them, shroud them and bury them. But first you must pay for it.” It happened that we had no money. There was a prayer carpet which had been placed under the feet of Bahá’u’lláh. He took up this carpet and said, “Sell it. Give the money to the guards.” The prayer carpet was sold for 170 piasters⁴ and that sum was handed over. But the two were never washed for their burial nor wrapped in their winding sheets; the guards only dug a hole in the ground and thrust them in, as they were, in the clothes they had on; so that even now, their two graves are one, and just as their souls are joined in the Abhá Realm, their bodies are together here, under the earth, each holding the other in his close embrace.

The Blessed Beauty showered His blessings on these two brothers. In life, they were encompassed by His grace and favor; in death, they were memorialized in His Tablets. Their grave is in ‘Akká. Greetings be unto them, and praise. The glory of the All-Glorious be upon them, and God’s mercy, and His benediction.