

***Commentary on the Tablet of the Branch and the Covenant
(Lawh-i-'Ahd va Mitháq [Imriká])***

O ye friends of God!

Abdu'l-Baha is day and night thinking of you and mentioning you, for the friends of God are dear to Him. Every morning at dawn I supplicate the Kingdom of God and ask that you may be filled with the breath of the Holy Spirit, so that you may become brilliant candles, shine with the light of guidance and dispel the darkness of error. Rest assured that the confirmations of the Abha Kingdom will continuously reach you.

Through the power of the divine springtime, the downpour of the celestial clouds and the heat of the Sun of Reality, the tree of life is just beginning to grow. Before long, it will produce buds, bring forth leaves and fruits, and cast its shade over the East and the West. This Tree of Life is the Book of the Covenant.

In America, in these days, severe winds have surrounded the Lamp of the Covenant, hoping that this brilliant Light may be extinguished, and this Tree of Life may be uprooted. Certain weak, capricious, malicious and ignorant souls have been shaken by the earthquake of hatred, of animosity, have striven to efface the Divine Covenant and Testament, and render the clear water muddy so that in it they might fish. They have arisen against the Center of the Covenant like the people of Bayan who attacked the Blessed Beauty and every moment uttered a calumny. Every day they seek a pretext and secretly arouse doubts, so that the Covenant of Baha'u'llah may be completely annihilated in America.

O friends of God! Be awake, be awake; be vigilant, be vigilant! His Holiness, the Bab, made a Covenant for Baha'u'llah with all the people of the Bayan, so that on the day of appearance of "Him Whom God shall manifest" - and of the radiation of the Light of Baha'u'llah, they might believe and be assured, arise in service and promulgate the Word of God. Later the people of the Bayan, like Mirza Yahya and many others, arose against the Blessed Beauty, invented every sort of calumny, aroused doubt in the minds of the people, and from the Books of His Holiness the Bab - that were full of references to "Him Whom God shall manifest" - tried to prove Baha'u'llah false. Every day they wrote and spread a pamphlet opposing Baha'u'llah, caused trouble and perplexity among the people; they inflicted the greatest injury and cruelty, yet counted themselves firm in the Covenant of His Holiness, the Bab. However, when the light of the Covenant of His Holiness, the Bab, lighted the universe, then all the faithful and sincere souls were freed from the darkness of the violation of the people of the Bayan and shone like brilliant candles.

Baha'u'llah, in all the Tablets and Epistles, forbade the true and firm friends from associating and meeting the violators of the Covenant of His Holiness, the Bab, saying that no one should go near them because their breath is like the poison of the snake that kills instantly.

In the Hidden Words, He says: "Esteem the friendship of the just, but withhold both mind and hand from the company of the wicked."

Addressing one of the friends, He says: "It is clear to your honor that before long Satan, in the garb of man, will reach that land and will try to mislead the friends of the Divine Beauty through temptations which arouse the desires of self, and will cause them to follow the footsteps of Satan away from the right and glorious path, and prevent them from

attaining the Blessed Shore of the King of Oneness. This is a hidden information of which we have informed the chosen ones lest they may be deprived of their praiseworthy station by associating with the embodiments of hatred. Therefore, it is incumbent upon all the friends of God to shun any person in whom they perceive the emanation of hatred for the Glorious Beauty of Abha, though he may quote all the Heavenly Utterances and cling to all the Books." He continues - Glorious be His Name! - "Protect yourselves with utmost vigilance, lest you be entrapped in the snare of deception and fraud." This is the advice of the Pen of Destiny.

In another address, He says: "Therefore, to avoid these people will be the nearest path by which to attain the divine good pleasure; because their breath is infectious, like unto poison."

In another Tablet, He says: "O Kazim, close thine eye to the people of the world; drink the water of knowledge from the heavenly cup bearers, and listen not to the nonsensical utterances of the manifestations of Satan, because the manifestations of Satan are occupying today the observation posts of the glorious path of God, and preventing the people by every means of deception and ruse. Before long you will witness the turning away of the people of Bayan from the Manifestation of the Merciful."

In another Tablet, He says: "Endeavor to your utmost to protect yourselves, because Satan appears in different robes and appeals to everyone according to each person's own way, until he becomes like unto him - then he will leave him alone."

In another Tablet, He says: "Shun any man in whom you perceive enmity for this Servant, though he may appear in the garb of piety of the former and later people, or may arise to the worship of the two worlds."

In another Tablet, He says: "O Mahdi! Be informed by these utterances and shun the manifestations of the people of hell, the rising place of Nimrods, the rising place of Pharees, the fountain of Tagut, and the soothsayers."

Again He says: "Say, O my friend and my pure ones! Listen to the Voice of this Beloved Prisoner in this Great Prison. If you detect in any man the least perceptible breath of violation, shun him and keep away from him." Then He says: "Verily, they are manifestations of Satan."

In another Tablet, He says: "And turn your faces to the Great Countenance for before long the foul odors of the wicked persons will pass over these regions. God willing, you may remain protected during these days."

In the 18th chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, 6th to 9th verses, His Holiness Christ says: "But whosoever shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offenses, for it must needs be that offenses come, but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh. Wherefore if thy hand or thy feet offend thee, cut them off and cast them from thee; it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee."

And in the 21st chapter and 38th verse of the Gospel of Matthew, He says: "But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, this is the heir, come let us kill him and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him and cast him out of the vineyard and slew him."

Also in the 22nd chapter and the 14th verse of the Gospel of Matthew, He says "But many are called and few are chosen."

In the Holy Writings of His Holiness, Baha'u'llah, in a thousand places at least, the violators of the Covenant are execrated and condemned. Some of the heavenly passages will be mentioned.

In short, all the friends in America know that the founders of this sedition - namely, the violators of the Covenant - are people whose aims are known to all the friends. Yet, O glorious God, they are deceived by them!

Praise be to God, you know with perfect clearness that His Holiness Christ, was extremely kind and loving, yet there were people like Judas Iscariot who - by their own deeds - separated themselves from Christ. Therefore, what fault of Christ's could that be? Now the Nakazene say that Abdu'l-Baha is despotic, drives some people out and excommunicates like the Pope. This is not so at all! Any person who has left (the Cause), did so because of his own actions, intrigues and evil plots. If this objection be raised against Abdu'l-Baha, they must also object to the Blessed Beauty who, with distinct and conclusive command, forbids the friends from companionship and familiarity with the violators of the people of Bayan.

Supplication! O Lord of the Covenant! O luminous Star of the world! The persecuted Abdu'l-Baha has fallen into the hands of persons who appear as sheep and in reality are ferocious wolves; they exercise every sort of oppression, endeavor to destroy the foundation of the Covenant, - and claim to be Baha'is. They strike at the root of the Tree of the Covenant - and count themselves persecuted - just as did the people of Bayan who broke the Covenant of His Holiness, the Bab, and from six directions shot arrows of reproach and calumny at Thy Blessed Body. Notwithstanding this great oppression, they call themselves oppressed. Now this Servant of Thy Threshold has also fallen into the hands of oppressors. Every hour they contrive new intrigues and fraud, and bring forth new calumny.

Ya-Baha'u'l-Abha! Protect the Stronghold of Thy Cause from these thieves, and safeguard the lamps of the Kingdom from these malevolent winds!

Ya-Baha'u'l-Abha! Abdu'l-Baha did not rest a moment until He had raised Thy Cause and the Standard of the Kingdom of Abha waved over the world. Now some people have arisen with intrigues and evil aspirations to trample this flag in America, but My hope is in Thy confirmations. Leave Me not single, alone and oppressed! As Thou didst promise, verbally and in writing, that Thou wouldst protect this deer of the pasture of Thy love from the attacks of the hounds of hatred and animosity, and that Thou wouldst safeguard this persecuted sheep from the claws and teeth of the ferocious wolves, - now do I await the appearance of Thy bounties and the realization of Thy definite promise. Thou art the true Protector, and Thou art the Lord of the Covenant! Therefore, protect this Lamp which Thou hast lighted, from the severe winds.

Ya-Baha'u'l-Abha! I have forsaken the world and its people, am heartbroken because of the unfaithful, and am weary. In the cage of this world I flutter like a frightened bird and long for the flight to Thy Kingdom.

Ya-Baha'u'l-Abha! Make me to drink the cup of sacrifice, and free Me! Relieve Me from these difficulties, hardships, afflictions and troubles! Thou art the assister, the helper, the protector and the supporter!

Now some of the writings, prayers and verses of the Blessed Beauty will be mentioned in which association with the violators is forbidden. In the Iranian Commune, He says:

"Protect this Servant from the doubts of the persons who have turned away from Thee and are deprived of the sea of Thy knowledge. O God! O God! Protect this Servant through Thy bounty and generosity from the evil of Thine enemies who have broken Thy Covenant and Testament."

In another place He says: "O My God and the Aim of My Life! Protect this weak one with Thy Mighty hand from the voice of the Naegh."

Also He says: "Ye have taken one whom I hate to be thy beloved, and My enemy to be thy friend."

Also He says: "The company of the wicked ones increaseth sorrow, and the association with the pious ones removeth rust from the heart. The one who desires to associate with God, let him associate with His

friends; the one who wishes to hear the Words of God, let him hear the words of His chosen ones."

Also He says: "Do not associate with the wicked, because the company of the wicked changeth the light of life into the fire of remorse. If thou asketh for the bounties of the Holy Spirit, associate with the pure ones, because they have quaffed the eternal chalice from the hands of the Cupbearer of eternity."

Also He says: "The greatest of degradation is to leave the Shadow of God and enter under the shadow of Satan."

Also He says: "O ye servants! There is nothing in this heart save the effulgences of the splendor of the morn of Meeting, and it does not speak but the absolute truth from your Lord. Therefore, do not follow self; break not God's Covenant and violate not His Testament. Proceed with perfect steadfastness, and with heart, soul and tongue, turn unto Him, and be not of the thoughtless."

And still He says: "You have forgotten God's Covenant and violated His Testament."

And again He says: "If anyone comes to you with the book of the wicked, put him behind you."

"Among the people are those who have broken the Covenant, and among them are those who have followed what was ordained by the All-Knower, the All-Wise. My affliction is not from My imprisonment and persecution, or from what comes to Me from My rebellious servants, - but from the actions of those who attribute themselves to this persecuted

One and commit among the people that which is degrading to the honor of God. Verily, they are of the seditious."

Likewise speaking for the violators, He says: "Thou hast made the pulpits for Thy mention, the proclamation of Thy Word and the manifestation of Thy Cause, and we have ascended them to proclaim the breaking of Thy Covenant and Testament."

Likewise, He says: "Take what has been ordained for you and follow not those who have broken God's Covenant and Testament, for lo! they are the people of error."

Again He says: "Those who have broken the Covenant of God, notwithstanding His Commands, and have turned away, they are the people of error before the most Opulent, the Exalted."

And He says: "Those who have been faithful to God's Covenant are of the highest ones in the sight of the exalted Lord. Those who have become negligent are of the people of fire in the sight of Thy Lord, the Beloved, the Independent."

Likewise He says: "Blessed is the servant or maid-servant who believes, and woe to the polytheists who have violated the Covenant of God and His Testament, and deviated from My Right Path."

Likewise He says: "I implore of Thee not to deprive me of what Thou possessest or what Thou hast ordained for Thy chosen ones who have not broken Thy Covenant and Testament. Say! Die with your hatred! Verily, He is come by Whom the pillars of the world have been shaken and because of Whom the feet have stumbled - save those who

have not broken the Covenant, but have followed what God revealed in His Book."

Likewise He says: "The Supreme Concourse will pray for the one who is adorned with the garment of faithfulness between heaven and earth; but he who breaks the Covenant is cursed by heaven and earth."

Likewise He says: "Take hold of what has been revealed unto you, with a power superior to that of the hands of the unbelievers who have violated the Covenant of God and His Testament, and have turned from the Face."

Also He says: "O Yahya! Verily the Book has come! Take it with a power from Us and do not follow those who have broken the Covenant of God and His Testament, and have denied what has been revealed from the Powerful, the All-Knower."

Likewise He says: "I awoke this morning, O My God, under the shadow of Thy great bounty and have taken, with Thy power, the pen to mention Thee with such mention as shall be a light unto the pure, and fire unto the wicked who have violated Thy Covenant, denied Thy Verses and put aside the Kawther of life which appeared by Thy command and was revealed by the finger of Thy will."

Here, in a Tablet to Abdu'l-Baha, He says also: "O God! This is a Branch which has sprung forth from the Tree of Oneness, the Sadrat of Thy Unity. O God! Thou seest Him looking to Thee and clinging to the rope of Thy Bounties. Protect Him in the shelter of Thy Mercy! Thou knowest, O My God, that I do not desire Him save for what Thou dost desire Him, and I do not choose Him save for what Thou dost choose Him. Assist Him with the Hosts of Thy earth and Thy heaven. Assist,

O God, those who assist Him, and choose those who choose Him. Confirm those who draw nigh unto Him, and debase those who deny Him and do not want Him. O God, Thou seest that at this moment of Revelation My Pen shakes and My Being trembles. I ask Thee, By My impatience in Thy Love and My willingness to proclaim Thy Cause, to ordain for Him and His friends, what Thou hast ordained for Thy Messengers and the faithful ones of Thy Revelation. Verily, Thou art the powerful and the omnipotent! By God, O people, My eye weeps, and the eye of Ali weeps in the Supreme Concourse; My heart throbs, and the heart of Muhammad throbs in the Courts of Abha; My heart and the hearts of the Prophets lament with the people of knowledge, if you are those who are possessed of sight. My sorrow is not for Myself, but for the One Who comes after Me in the Shadow of the Cause with a clear, undeniable reign; because these will not acknowledge His Manifestation and will deny His evidences and verses, will dispute His power, will antagonize Him and will be traitors to His Cause - as they did to His Person in those days - and ye were witnesses."

Again in a Tablet to Abdu'l-Baha, He says: "O Greatest Branch! Verily, Thy illness caused Me sorrow, but God will cure Thee, and He is the most generous and best helper. Glory be upon Thee and upon those who serve Thee and encircle Thee! Woe and torment be upon him who opposes and torments Thee! Blessed is he who befriends Thee, and hell be for him who opposes Thee!"

Likewise He says: "Is it possible that after the dawning of the sun of Thy Testament from the horizon of Thy greatest Tablet, that any feet shall slip away from the right Path? We said, O My Supreme Pen, it behoves Thee to do as Thou hast been bidden by God, the exalted and the great. Do not ask about that which melts Thy heart and those of the denizens of Paradise who encompass Thy wonderful Cause. Thou

shouldst not know what We have hidden from Thee. Thy Lord is the veiler and the knower. Turn Thy most luminous Face to the greatest aspect and say: O My Merciful God! Decorate the Heaven of Bayan with the stars of steadfastness, trust and truth. Verily, Thou art the Powerful over what Thou willest. There is no God save Thee, the wise and the generous."

In short, from these Holy Utterances and those of His Holiness Christ, it becomes clear, evident and proved, that man should associate with people who are firm in the Covenant and Testament, and befriend the pure ones; because bad associates bring about infection of bad qualities. It is like leprosy; it is impossible for a man to associate and befriend a leper and not be infected. This command is for the sake of protection and to safeguard.

Consider this text of the New Testament: the brothers of His Holiness Christ, came to Him and they said: "These are your brothers." He answered that His brothers were those who believed in God, and refused to associate with His own brothers.

Likewise Qurratu'l-'Ayn, who is celebrated in all the world, when she believed in God and was attracted to the Divine Breaths, she forsook her two eldest sons, although they were her two oldest children, because they did not become believers, and thereafter did not meet them. She said: "All the friends of God are my children, but these two are not. I will have nothing to do with them."

Consider! The Divine Gardener cuts off the dry or weak branch from the good tree and grafts to it, a branch from another tree. He both separates and unites. This is that which His Holiness Christ says: that from all the world they come and enter the Kingdom, and the children of

the Kingdom shall be cast out. Noah's grandson, Canaan, was detested in the sight of Noah and others were accepted. The brothers of the Blessed Beauty detached themselves from Him, and the Blessed Beauty never met them. He said: "This is an eternal separation between you and Me." All this was not because the Blessed Beauty was despotic; but because these persons, through their own actions and words deprived themselves from the bounties and bestowals of the Blessed Beauty. His Holiness Christ did not exercise despotism in the case of Judas Iscariot and His own brothers, - but they separated themselves.

In short, the point is this: 'Abdu'l-Baha is extremely kind, but when the disease is leprosy, what am I to do? Just as in bodily diseases we must prevent intermingling and infection and put into effect sanitary laws - because the infectious physical diseases uproot the foundation of humanity; likewise one must protect and safeguard the blessed souls from the breaths and fatal spiritual diseases; otherwise violation, like the plague, will become a contagion and all will perish. In the early days, after the Ascension of the Blessed Beauty, the center of violation was alone; little by little the infection spread; and this was due to companionship and association.