

# Letters of THE GREATEST HOLY LEAF

Bahiyyih Kkanum

Translated from Persian



O God, my God!

Thou seest me immersed in the depths of grief, drowned in my sorrow, my heart on fire with the agony of parting, my inmost self aflame with longing. Thou seest my tears streaming down, hearest my sighs rising up like smoke, my never-ceasing groans, my cries, my shouts that will not be stilled, the useless wailing of my heart.

For the sun of joy has set, has sunk below the horizon of this world, and in the hearts of the righteous the lights of courage and consolation have gone out. So grave this catastrophe, so dire this disaster, that the inner being crumbles away to dust, and the heart blazes up, and nothing remains save only despair and anguish.

Thou seest, O my God, in the midmost of this terrible event, this ultimate calamity, when the devoted never put aside their mourning dress, and the moaning and the tears never cease—how that malevolent band have, with all their powers, mounted an attack against Thy loved ones who are loyal to the Covenant, even as the assault of wolves upon the flock. They are striving, with all their strength, to bring down the mighty structure of Thy Covenant in ruins, and level Thy strong citadel to the ground, and turn away from Thy straight and clearly-marked path those Thou hast guided aright. O my Lord, I voice my complaint before Thee, and lay bare my griefs and sorrows, and supplicate at the door of Thy oneness, and whisper unto Thee, and weep and cry out.

O my kind Lord! Thou didst make a clear compact and a Covenant explicit and firm, not in veiled and allusive language, that all should turn unto the Centre of Thy Covenant and the Protector of Thy Cause—so that no doubts whatever would remain for the hostile and the suspicious to exploit; and then Thy lone Servant rose up to lift Thy banner high, and carry the day for Thy Faith. For thirty years He summoned the people unto Thee, publicly, privately, and spread Thy Teachings and Thy principles to every corner, every country of the earth. Night and day, He fostered Thy loved ones in the cradle of divine knowledge and wisdom, and endowed them with the qualities of the spirit. And all this time He bore, at the hands of that evil crew, not once but over and over again, every kind of outrage, and calumny, and oppression. For they were forever lying in wait for Him, were spying on Him at all times from their ambush, attacking Him in whatever manner they chose, swelling with their insolence and pride. And yet, through Thy strong support, Thine overwhelming confirmations, they were the losers in the end, and their strivings came to nothing in this world's life, and all they gained was their own ruin.

Then, O my Lord, Thou didst make Him to ascend unto Thee, to place Him at Thy side, and by this the pillars of joy were shaken to their base, and the hearts of the devoted were terrified, and



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the smoke of their sorrow overspread the earth. At such a time that hate-filled band, seeing their advantage in the dire event, came in from every highway and byway, advancing on every side to topple over the throne of Thy Covenant, and lead Thy loved ones to perdition. They have laid their very being in ruins and they know not. How far, how very far have they gone in their ignorance!

But the Centre of Thy complete and flawless Covenant, He Who occupies the seat of servitude to Thee in Thine exalted and all-glorious Cause, had written by Thy will and Thy power a Book that shall never be lost nor ever forgotten. Within it by Thy predestinating knowledge and might, He had set forth all that is essential and obligatory for the upraising of Thy Cause in this world below. It is a book in which all things are explained in minute detail, in such wise that no matters whether small or great have been left out. And by Thy will and pleasure He designated therein, in place of His own Person, a Branch grown out from the Tree of Thy holiness, one fresh and tender, verdant and flourishing, arising to serve Thee, dwelling in the groves of Thine eternity, and Thine immortal gardens. And he, after turning to Thy gracious countenance and through Thine ancient succour, is inviting the people unto Thee and unto Thy Covenant, sound and firmly-established, and is spreading Thy commandments and Thy doctrines throughout Thy land, and guiding Thy servants to the path that leads aright.

O my God, I beg of Thee by all the days which Thy Light, the Centre of Thy Covenant, did spend in scattering Thy sweet scents abroad, and by all the nights when that delicate and fragile Being rested not, but kept the long vigils, crying out unto Thee, expending His efforts to guard Thy Cause and Thy dear ones, exerting His utmost to spread out Thy bounties and bestowals—while the malevolent, comfortable against their pillows, rested in their beds—I entreat Thee, by the ordeals He endured, for the sake of exalting Thy Word, at the hands of those who join partners to God, and the deniers, and the deserters, to keep Thy loved ones safe from the arrows of the calumniators, and the doubts of those who mislead and betray. Hold them fast, then, in the gardens and groves of Thy Covenant and Testament, and make them to enter the pavilions of Thy good pleasure, and shelter them in the refuge of Thy protection, and cast upon them the glance of Thy mercy's eye, and guard them from deviation and schism. Make them to live in unity and harmony, one with the others, and aid them to serve Thy Faith and to spread Thy Teachings far and wide.

Verily Thou art the Living, the Eternal, the Watchful, the All-Powerful, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

O you true servants of the Holy Threshold, you faithful friends of 'Abdu'l-Bahá!

Our hearts are burning away with the intense emotions aroused by this most dreaded of calamities, and our souls are suffering the torments of this separation causing delay in correspondence with you, yet God be praised, you are all among the well-favoured at the divine Threshold, and are drinking from the winecup of the Eternal Covenant. To the holy summons, you have all replied 'Yea!'; you have seized the chalice of His Testament and held it high. You are enamoured of that world-adorning Face, your hearts are tightly bound to those curling locks, that waft the fragrance of the musk-deer's scent; you are held spellbound by that magic nature, and by the teachings like nectar on the tongue, refreshing the spirit; and all continually receiving

divine bounties from the One alone beloved, and ministering at His Threshold, and sincere and pure of heart.

The glories of that Sun are shining now from out the high, immortal realms, and His glance is resting on His loved ones. The portals of everlasting blessings are opened wide. The succouring armies are standing ready, waiting to behold what efforts the loved ones will exert as they carry out the holy Will, as they boil up and roar like waves of the sea. Let them rest not for a moment, nor wish for quiet and repose; let them carry out all His behests and thus prove their loyal gratitude for all His endless grace.

Over a span of thirty years the Centre of God's Covenant rested not, nor was His human temple ever tranquil and at peace. By day, by night, He would be teaching and guiding stranger and friend alike, and protecting the Cause, and seeing to its progress, and for these things He sacrificed His life. Now does loyalty to Him require that the beloved should rise up in obedience to His instructions, and devote their efforts to teaching the Faith, and to passing around from one to the next this winecup tempered at the camphor fountain, and to protecting God's Cause from the evil suggestions and the mischief of the adversary, and to guarding the structure of the holy Covenant from disruption at the hands of the Covenant-breakers. Now is the time to stand as an impregnable rampart around the city of the Cause of God, to defend it from the assaults of alienation and violation, that come against it like Gog and Magog.

Praised be God, those of His friends who have been cradled and fostered for many a year within His wisdom and His teachings, and have drunk deep from the soft-flowing waters of true and mystic knowledge, and whose eyes have been opened, whose ears are attentive, whose hearts are wise—these, in all that concerns faith and certitude and the abiding by His instructions, stand fixed and firm as the high mountains. They are even as the towering palm, the goodly tree 'its root firmly fixed, and its branches in the heavens.' Their roots run deep, and the fruits they yield are sweet. They know a mirage for what it is; they know, too, what will endure—for 'As to the foam, it is quickly gone: and as to what is useful to man, it remaineth on the earth.' They have heard and read of how the Covenant met with opposition and violation in the Dispensations of the past, and have both heard of and seen for themselves the storms of mischief and the tests that appeared in the early days of this Cause. They know how these trials are designed to sift and purify, and how the dense clouds of revolt and violation would gradually pass from its skies; for the errors and falsehoods of the violators can never withstand the overwhelming power of the Covenant, nor can the mountains of diabolical suggestions ever stand under the rod of God's majesty and might.

O faithful loved ones of 'Abdu'l-Bahá! The centre of sedition, the focus of rebellion—whose evil character and passions, even in the days of the Ancient Beauty, made him known for his stubborn perversity and his ambition to lead—began to put forward certain claims, gathered about him a pitiful band, raised up the ensign of self-glorification and self-love, and considered himself to be a partner in authority with none other than Him Who was the True One, until in the end the hand of the Lord's omnipotence struck down his plans and hopes.

For a period of thirty years, he opposed the Centre of the Covenant and, to bring down His structure in ruins, did everything that lay in his power. This in spite of the fact that the divine Beauty had made His Covenant so strong, and appointed its Centre so explicitly, in writing,

unmistakably, that He had left no room for any questions or doubts. In the Most Holy Book of Aqdas, which in this most excellent of all ages is the Mother Book, and embraces all, and again in the Kitáb-i-'Ahdí, the last revealed Tablet by the Tongue of knowledge and wisdom, which contains the final wishes of God—the people of Bahá are directed with perfect clarity to turn their faces toward Him Whom God has purposed, and He is designated as the Interpreter of the Book, the Resolver of all complex and difficult questions, and the Centre of the Faith. Therein as well are the other Branches, the Afnán and the rest of the believers bidden to direct themselves unto that One so that all might face one and the same Centre, and all be bound thereto. Thus would the basic foundation of God's Cause, which is unity, remain unassailable. Thus the root of heresy and rebellion would wither away, and just as in the days when He Who is the Truth was made manifest, so too in the day of His Covenant the light of unity would pervade all things, and put to flight the murk of disbelief and dualism and rebellion and opposition—and thus the tree of His holy Cause would grow and flourish, and the rich fruits borne by the holy Teachings would satisfy all needs and be sweet in the mouth of all mankind.

This fact of there being only one Centre and of turning unto a single holy Being is, in the Kingdom of His Cause, as the shaft or spindle of a millstone, and all the other laws and ordinances must needs revolve around this one. In the temple of God's religion the Centre of the Cause can be likened to the heart, for upon it depends the life of the human body as one entity, as well as the relationships of its organs and their essential growth and vitality. In human society the Centre of the Cause can be compared to the sun, whose magnetic force controls the movements and orbits of the planets. The Centre of the Cause is also like the spine of a book, for by it the pages are all banded together into one book, and without the spine the papers would become loose and scattered.

Now each separate member of the community who is within the shelter of that blessed unity is, according to his rank and station, the recipient of grace; and that rank is respected and protected, in conformity with the verse: 'Not one of us but hath his clearly designated station.' Thus, in the body of man, the eye has a preordained station, one not belonging to some lesser members; and yet, should it once depart from the whole, and its connection with the centre be broken, then its membership in the body, and its very life, are ended, let alone its previous station and degree. Or should the eye be plucked from its place, torn out of the body, it would be deprived of life itself, how much less would it continue to enjoy the station that rightly belongs to the eye.

How strange! With reference to one who smokes opium, the Ancient Beauty, the Most Great Name, has said: 'He is not of Me', making no distinction here between one enjoying God's special favour, and some other. If the smoking of opium, which is one of the secondary and lesser prohibitions, completely severs the smoker from membership in the community and from relationship to the Person of the Manifestation, then what must be the condition of him who refuses to acknowledge the Centre of the holy Covenant? In the words of Christ, 'If thine eye cause thee to stumble, pluck it out ... if thy hand offend thee, cut it off...'

O would that they had contented themselves with their refusal to recognize that shining Being—with their failure to obey Him and to be lowly before Him. But no, they beat upon rebellion's drum, and hoisted the flag of contumacy and spite, and blew the trumpet of calumnies across the world. In the hearts of the credulous they sowed seeds of disaffection, and inconstancy and

opposition. They made common cause with the hostile, the biased, the mockers, who were arrayed against the Faith of the Blessed Beauty, flattering them and paying them bribes and holding out promises and hopes; they worked hand in glove with those occupying the seats of the judiciary, and those authorized to interpret the law and pronounce judgment, and those who sat on despots' thrones, and with still others who were engaged in affairs remote from God's; and by all manner of deceits and stratagems incited them to utterly extirpate the Covenant of Almighty God and the Centre of it. They even, with a liberal distribution of funds, hired assassins to shed the sacred blood of that Vicegerent of the Glorious Lord.

Could any just person imagine that such as these have any relationship or spiritual connection whatever with the Beauty of the One true God, or that they could be accounted as members of the Bahá'í community? Would not such as these be only plucked-out eyes and palsied hands?

Look at the treatise that their second chief wrote, regarding their first chief and his associates—in which he described, with his own pen, in minute detail, their shameful purposes and actions relative to the Centre of the divine Covenant—aims and acts that no perverse and godless tyrant would consider permissible treatment for anyone. Their second chief tells how, to a despotic and oppressive government, they brought false and malicious accusations against 'Abdu'l-Bahá; how they undertook to uproot the holy Tree; how they forged Tablets, in Bahá'u'lláh's name, that denounced the Centre of His Covenant; how they altered and corrupted the holy Texts to such a degree that he said his confidence in the reliability of the holy Tablets was virtually shattered. These and their other shameless activities are all set forth; and strangest of all is this, that he, their second chief—the very one who wrote the confession so full of the abominable acts of their first chief and his associates—now cleaves to the first one like flesh to bone. They are setting the axe to the root of the Cause of God; nor are they in the least ashamed, nor put to the blush, before the Lord God and His watchful and perceptive servants. There even exists a paper in the hand of Shu'á', son of their first chief, in which he tells of a person who was commissioned and was ready and waiting to martyr the Centre of the Covenant.

If I my tale could tell,

No bounds my pen would know;

My work would swell,

My book will grow,

For tons of scroll

Would bear my woe.

For over a period of thirty years, always increasing their efforts, they inflicted extreme anguish on 'Abdu'l-Bahá; and they did not, in all this span, ever take one step nor draw a single breath to help the Faith. They spent their entire time in attempts to wean to beloved of God away from obedience to the Centre of the Covenant, and to undermine their convictions, making them waver in their faith, and turning them cold; and because of what they did, thousands of souls were veiled from the holy Cause, and prevented from embracing it.

Such then is a glimpse of their aims and actions, which made them to be cut off from the Holy Tree, and excluded them from glory and joy everlasting. They lost out, both here and hereafter, and 'this verily is utter perdition'.

O you men who stand fast and firm, you women who are steadfast and firm in you faith! Whensoever I visit the Holy Shrines, I think of you, and in all lowliness at His Threshold, I entreat the Almighty to send down upon you all His invisible confirmations, and to let His endless bounties enwrap each one of you—so that through the efforts of those chosen ones of God, the lights of loyalty and sincerity and truth, and staunchness in the divine Covenant, will be shed upon that town; that it may be delivered from the consequences of ill-omened disaffection and violation, and that instead, a fortunate star may rise there out of the concealing depths and mount upward to the heavens; that no scrolls of doubt, and of calumnies against the divine Covenant, may remain therein; and that every name there may be written down in the heavenly register of those who have kept the faith.

O Lord, set their feet firm in Thy Covenant; let them hold fast to the cord of steadfastness in Thy Cause. Protect them from the hosts of discord and calumny, and cause them to come under the sheltering banner of Thy Testament, that is raised high on the summits of the earth.

Light up then in their hearts the flame of severance from everything except Thy love, and help them by Thine overwhelming might to labour for Thy Teachings.

Verily Thou art the Generous. Verily Thou art He Whose bounty embraceth all things.

May the lights and the splendours be shed upon all of you.

**Notes:**

Ramadán 1340 A.H. (28 April-27 May 1922 A.D.), to the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Tabríz