

Letters of THE GREATEST HOLY LEAF

Bahiyyih Khanum

Translated from Persian



It is clear how that most dire of calamities, that most great disaster which was the ascension of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, may our souls be sacrificed for His meekness, has set our hearts on fire and dissolved our very limbs and members in grief. Darkness settled on our souls, of blood were our tears. Even the essences of sanctity cried out in fear, and the gems of holiness moaned and lamented, while our own inner selves fell to ashes, and there was no peace left in the soul, no patience in the heart.

No more does the ardent nightingale carol its joyous songs, and the sweet and holy melodies of the immortal dove are hushed. That gleaming Moon is hidden now behind the clouds of everlasting life, that Orb of the high heavens sank down at the setting point of glory and rose into the skies of the world that we see not, and above the realm of the placeless He is casting forth His rays.

With His departure, these afflicted ones were plunged into a sea of pain, and beaten and blown about in a whirlwind of anguish more violent than the spoken or the written word can tell. Our days wear away in tears, our nights in sighing, and it is this storm of grief and regret and yearning that has kept us from writing before now, even to send you our love.

It is certain that the people of Bahá, who are the dwellers of the Crimson Ark and breast the seas of the Lord, and who have attained to the bounties of the Abhá realm, and who are steadfast in the Covenant—they, men and women alike, young and old alike, share with these homeless ones the anguish of our bereavement and this direst of ordeals. We could hear, with the ear of the spirit, the wailing of those lovers of Him Who was the Ravisher of hearts, those like us scorched by the fires of separation, and from our own sad hearts we would lift our cries of sorrow to the heavens, and weeping would send up our entreaties in such words as these, to the threshold of the luminous Beauty of God:

O kind Lord! O Comforter of anguished hearts!

Send down Thy mercy upon us, and Thy grace, bestow upon us patience, give us the strength to endure. With Thy generous hand, lay Thou a balm upon our sores, grant us a medicine for this never-healing woe. Console Thou Thy loved ones, comfort Thy friends and handmaids, heal Thou our wounded breasts, and with Thy bounty’s remedy, restore our festering hearts.

With the gentle breeze of Thy compassion, make fresh and green again these boughs, withered by autumn blasts; restore Thou to flourishing life these flowers, shrivelled by the blight of bereavement.



TRANSLATION

With tidings of the Abhá Paradise, wed Thou our souls to joy, and rejoice Thou our spirits with heartening voices from the dwellers in the realm of glory.

Thou art the Bounteous, Thou art the Clement; Thou art the Bestower, the Loving.

From the first dawning of the new light, that noble land shone with the rays of the Great Announcement, and was lit by the sunbeams of the Ancient Beauty. Like heavy rains, the bounties beat upon that sacred place, and out of clouds of mercy, grace showered down upon that region of resplendence, bringing freshness and new greenery, and the trees of being then turned verdant, and there burst forth blossoms of the spirit, and wind-flowers of true knowledge blew, and mystic myrtles grew and flourished. And from out of that land came musk-laden gales, scenting with their perfume the other lands as well, and scattering far and wide the musk-deer sweetness of heavenly mysteries.

So it was that Khurásán became the grove of the lions of God, and a nesting-place for the birds of the Ridván Paradise. The Ancient Beauty singled out that blessed land for special favour, extending to it uncounted blessings and gifts. Now in wondrous and most sweet voice, again with the tracings of His exalted pen, and on the head of each one of the beloved in that bright region, He set a crown of imperishable glory, and He robed each one with His bestowals and grace, and wrapped each one in a mantle of spiritual perfections. Of them all He spoke the highest praise, and to all He gave abundant blessings, as is proved by the text of His scrolls and Tablets. And whenever that sacred King of all the world would speak of Khurásán, His being would stir for joy, and His luminous face would grow still brighter with exceeding gladness. His bounties never ceased, and from clouds of grace His favours continually showered down upon that land.

Then came the era of the Covenant, and that full cup was passed from hand to hand, and the Sun of the Covenant rose up, shedding abroad on the horizon of unity the rays of servitude and thralldom, and lighting up the hearts of humankind. New life was breathed into the body of the world, and into the human soul came a fresh measure of delight. The hearts of the people of Bahá rejoiced to hear the glad-tidings from the Abhá Kingdom, and the minds of those who had sought shelter under the Tree of holiness were illumined with beams of fidelity and faith. Once again, the loved ones in that region were inebriated with the wine of the Primal Covenant, and in their firmness and steadfastness and loyalty they led the field. They showed forth such constancy as to astonish the mind, and they manifested such power and endurance as to raze the piled-up doubts of the doubters to the ground. Of the poisoned winds of violation there was no trace left in all that land. The hopes of the disaffected were blighted, and the centre of violation clearly witnessed the defeat of all his aims and plans.

It is certain that those who have caught the fragrance blowing from the Abhá Paradise, those who have heard the nightingale singing from the immortal gardens and taken delight therein, those who have trembled for joy, and whose souls have been renewed when the breezes of holiness out of the bowers of the All-Merciful were wafted over them—will find the raven's croaking and cawing a wearisome thing, and can only turn from it and flee away.

For thirty long years, from the hour of Bahá'u'lláh's ascension until His own immaculate spirit passed into the light of the all-highest realm, 'Abdu'l-Bahá rested neither night nor day. Single

and alone, a prisoner, a victim of tyranny, He rose up to reform the world—to refine and train and educate the human race. He watered the tree of the Faith, He sheltered it from the whirlwind and the lightning bolt, He protected God's holy Cause, He guarded the divine law, He defeated its adversaries, He frustrated the hopes of those who wished it ill.

All His life long, that quintessence of eternal glory, that subtle and mysterious Being, was subjected to trials and ordeals. He was the target of every calumny, of every false accusation, from enemies both without and within. To be a victim of oppression was His lot in this world's life, and all He knew of it was toil and pain. In the dark of the night, He would sigh out His grief, and as He chanted His prayers at the hour of dawn, that wondrous voice of His would rise up to the inmates of Heaven.

Under such conditions, He trained and with His own hand fostered a number of souls who would stand as a mighty fortress protecting the Cause, and as armour-plate for the Ark of the Covenant. With awesome power, these would scatter the forces of illusion, and with heavy blows, strike down the false rumours of the people of doubt. God be praised, that labour bore fruit, and the meaning of those toilsome efforts became plain. Those blessed souls rose up in all their loyalty, and with their steadfastness and long-suffering they served as shining examples for the children of salvation.

His bounties, His favours to the people of Bahá were made perfect, and extended to every class and kind. And as at the beginning, so at the end: His final bestowal of all, a crowning adornment, was His Will and Testament. Here, to Bahá'ís of every degree, in the clearest, most complete, most unmistakable of utterances, He described the obligation of each one, explicitly appointed, irrefutably and in writing, the Centre of the Faith, designating the Guardian of the Cause and the interpreter of the Holy Book, His Eminence Shoghi Effendi, appointing him, the Chosen Branch, as the one toward whom all must turn. Thus He closed for all time the doors of contention and strife, and in the best of ways and in a most perfect method He pointed out the path that leads aright.

Thus by its very roots He pulled out the tree of mischief and dissension. He razed the structure of violation to the ground. He left no margin for error, no room for doubts. And thus He crowned the first of all His loving-kindnesses with this last of them. Let us praise and thank God for this supreme gift, this great bounty.

Following that disaster of His passing, that dire ordeal, Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Cause, was overwhelmed by such never-ending grief and by his now heavy burden and supreme responsibility, that his sensitive heart could bear it no more. And so, after making the necessary arrangements, he sent out a letter expressing his wish to be alone for a time, in a quiet and secluded place, away from the noise and turmoil of everyday life—there to pray and supplicate and urgently beg for help from the realm of the All-Glorious.

With this in mind, he has gone on a journey, leaving us to loneliness and grief. Our hope is that very soon, the good results of this journey will become apparent, and that the friends will rejoice to see the important benefits that it will yield; that he will soon come home, and that once again correspondence with him can be resumed, and the doors of access will be opened wide.

Notes:

Dhī'l-Qádh 1340 A.H. (26 June-25 July 1922 A.D.), to a believer in Shíráz