

Letters of THE GREATEST HOLY LEAF

Bahiyyih Khanum

Translated from Persian



O steadfast ones, gathered beneath the Abhá Beauty's standard of oneness, O faithful lovers of 'Abdu'l-Bahá! Sad news has come to us out of Iran in recent days, and it has intensely grieved the entire Bahá'í world: they have, in most parts of that land, set bonfires of envy and malevolence, and hoisted the banner of aggression against this much-wronged community; they have left no means untried, no plot or strategy neglected, and have arisen with extreme hostility and spite to pull out by their very roots the trees of this garden of God.

From every side, they are aiming their arrows at hearts that rejoice in the knowledge of God and are filled with the love of Him. From every ambush, they are hunting down gazelles that pasture in the meadows of His unity. They are taking the men and women believers captive, and making orphans of the children. They are plundering the believers' property, sacking their hearths and homes. Those, however, who have been trained and educated in the school of God, even when coming to such a pass, are resignation itself, and to the brutal aggressor they are as the living waters of Heaven. They are rivers of pure mercy and peace. Though powerful and well able to defend themselves, they never raise a hand to strike, nor do they open their lips to protest. They confront the others' taunts and curses with prayers that God will forgive them, and their reply to the wounds of bullet and sword is to offer milk and honey. They kiss the murderer's hand; as intoxicated lovers, they drain the martyr's cup.

Such is the way of those who are attracted to His Kingdom, and that other is the behaviour of the foolish, the heedless of God. So has it been, at the time when the Manifestations of God appeared: the heedless and the ignorant turned upon their heavenly Teachers, and the diseased harried and tortured their loving Physicians in the spirit, idly thinking that they were acquiring merit thereby. Thus have their imaginings always been, at the outset of every Faith: that by such cruel acts they could destroy that seed, the Word of God; or that by blowing against it, they could put out the lamp that He has lit; or that by directing a storm of denial against them, they could bring down His trees, so flourishing, so firmly rooted in His Kingdom, or lay His fair gardens in ruins.

But as, time and again, experience has shown, in every age they have only seen verified the Blessed Beauty's assurance that calamity's rushing rain is the greening of His planted field, and afflictions are the oil that feeds and adds to the radiance of the lamp of God. And then, as the days go by, and they see with their own eyes the Day-Star in its noonday splendour, witness the bewildering richness of the fields that God has sown, behold His great and all-pervading Cause—then the fires of hatred and envy flame out of the hell of their natures; they can contain themselves no longer, and the truth of the holy words is proved, that God will not bring down a people from their station unless they have corrupted their good qualities themselves, and it



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becomes clearly shown that God brings on the downfall of the heedless little by little and in ways that they know not.

During occurrences of this kind, it is incumbent upon the believers in other countries to immediately adopt prudent and reasonable measures, that through wise methods such fires may be put out. Let them not allow the claws of ravaging wolves to be reddened with their brothers' blood; let them defend God's lambs from the hungry leopard's knife-sharp teeth; let them guard the members of the one and single Bahá'í family from the poisoned sting of scorpions and snakes.

This is the unique obligation of the Bahá'ís of the world. Addressing the believers, Baha'u'llah says: 'Be ye as the fingers of one hand, the members of one body.' This means that just as each member safeguards the rest, warding off any threatened harm, so too must the individual Bahá'ís do, whether in the East or the West. At this time it is urgently needful, and it is the request of this grieving servant, that the assembly of the believers in that area act at once, and take the case to the ambassador of the Iranian government. Let them tell him, 'The holy Cause of Bahá'u'lláh has so unified us who are His world-wide followers, and has brought us so close together, that we have become like a single body. If the foot of a Bahá'í, in the farthest Eastern land, is so much as scratched by a thorn, it is even as if we Bahá'ís here in the West had suffered the same. We have now received word from Írán that in Shíráz, in Sulṭánábád, in Hamadán, in Káshán, even in Tīhrán, and in other places as well, the fanaticism of the ignorant and heedless has been fanned into flame, and that agitators are stirring up the populace—with the result that our brothers and sisters, who are but well-wishers of all humankind and are indeed the world's only hope for peace, and are obedient and helpful citizens of Iran and her government, find themselves under attack and pushed into the heart of the fire.

'We therefore request the representative of Iran to ask his government to safeguard our brothers in Iran from the aggressions of their enemies, and to deliver that flock of God's lovers from the claws of the wolf, and provide for their security and well-being. By bringing us word of this outcome, Írán will earn the deep and heartfelt gratitude of thousands of Bahá'ís who reside in these countries, and widespread appreciation will be voiced by us in our many gatherings, of her government's good offices on our behalf.'

And further, if it be possible, you should make this same representation through your own ambassador in Tīhrán, so that he may direct the attention of the Iranian authorities to these persecutions, and awaken that government to the possibility of divine retribution and to the shameful stigma occasioned by such actions directed against this innocent community by the heedless and ignorant amongst the mass of the people.

Let him make them aware that there are thousands of adherents of this Faith of the love of God around the world, who are gazing in astonishment and disbelief at the savage acts now being perpetrated against their brothers, and are eagerly waiting to hear that the government has come to the rescue of this unique, this law-abiding people, who are the well-wishers of mankind, from the attacks of the ravaging wolves.

I pray for you continually at the Holy Threshold, and call upon Him on behalf of each one of you, and beg that He will bestow on you the blessings of the Kingdom.

Upon you, men and women alike, be the Glory of the All-Glorious.

Notes:

20 July 1922, to the Bahá'ís in America