
Program for Commemorating the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh

Introduction

Already nine months before His ascension Bahá'u'lláh, as attested by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, had voiced His desire to depart from this world. From that time onward it became increasingly evident, from the tone of His remarks to those who attained His presence, that the close of His earthly life was approaching, though He refrained from mentioning it openly to any one. ... On the night preceding the eleventh of Shavval 1309 A.H. (May 8, 1892) He contracted a slight fever which, though it mounted the following day, soon after subsided. He continued to grant interviews to certain of the friends and pilgrims, but it soon became evident that He was not well. ... Six days before He passed away He summoned to His presence, as He lay in bed leaning against one of His sons, the entire company of believers, including several pilgrims, who had assembled in the Mansion, for what proved to be their last audience with Him. "I am well pleased with you all," He gently and affectionately addressed the weeping crowd that gathered about Him. "Ye have rendered many services, and been very assiduous in your labors. Ye have come here every morning and every evening. May God assist you to remain united. May He aid you to exalt the Cause of the Lord of being. (Excerpts from *God Passes By* chapter 13)

Sufferings of Bahá'u'lláh

My God, my Master, my Highest Hope, and the Goal of my desire! Thou seest and hearest the sighing of this wronged One, from this darksome well which the vain imaginations of Thine adversaries have built, and from this blind pit which the idle fancies of the wicked among Thy creatures have digged. By Thy Beauty, O Thou Whose glory is uncovered to the face of men! I am not impatient in the troubles that touch me in my love for Thee, neither in the adversities which I suffer in Thy path. Nay, I have, by Thy power, chosen them for mine own self, and I glory in them amongst such of Thy creatures as enjoy near access to Thee, and those of Thy servants that are wholly devoted to Thy Self. (Bahá'u'lláh: *Prayers and Meditations*, pages 278)

The Ancient Beauty hath consented to be bound with chains that mankind may be released from its bondage, and hath accepted to be made a prisoner within this most mighty Stronghold that the whole world may attain unto true liberty. He hath drained to its dregs the cup of sorrow, that all the peoples of the earth may attain unto abiding joy, and be filled with gladness. This is of the mercy of your Lord, the Compassionate, the Most Merciful. We have accepted to be abased, O believers in the Unity of God, that ye

may be exalted, and have suffered manifold afflictions, that ye might prosper and flourish. He Who hath come to build anew the whole world, behold, how they that have joined partners with God have forced Him to dwell within the most desolate of cities! (Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, pages 99-100)

I have offered Myself up in the way of God, and I yearn after tribulations in My love for Him, and for the sake of His good-pleasure. Unto this bear witness the woes which now afflict Me, the like of which no other man hath suffered. Every single hair of Mine head calleth out that which the Burning Bush uttered on Sinai, and each vein of My body invoketh God and saith: 'O would I had been severed in Thy path, so that the world might be quickened, and all its peoples be united!' Thus hath it been decreed by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed. (Bahá'u'lláh: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, pages 52-53)

His Majestic Figure

Outwardly He was a Prisoner, condemned and wronged, but in reality He was the Sun of Glory, the Manifestation of grandeur and majesty, the King of the Kingdom of poise and dignity. Although He showed much compassion and loving-kindness, and approached anyone who came to His presence with tender care and humbleness, and often used to make humorous remarks to put them at ease, yet in spite of these, no one, whether faithful or disbelieving, learned or unlettered, wise or foolish, was able to utter ten words in His presence in the usual everyday manner. Indeed, many would find themselves to be tremulous with an impediment in their speech. (Haji Mirza Heydar Ali in Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh vol 3 p 248)

... my conductor paused for a moment while I removed my shoes. Then, with a quick movement of the hand, he withdrew, and, as I passed, replaced the curtain; and I found myself in a large apartment, along the upper end of which ran a low divan, while on the side opposite to the door were placed two or three chairs. Though I dimly suspected whither I was going and whom I was to behold (for no distinct intimation had been given to me), a second or two elapsed ere, with a throb of wonder and awe, I became definitely conscious that the room was not untenanted. In the corner where the divan met the wall sat a wondrous and venerable figure, crowned with a felt head-dress of the kind called 'taj' by dervishes (but of unusual height and make), round the base of which was wound a small white turban. The face of him on whom I gazed I can never forget, though I cannot describe it. Those piercing eyes seemed to read one's very soul; power and authority sat on that ample brow; while the deep lines on the forehead and face implied an age which the jet-black hair and beard flowing down in indistinguishable luxuriance almost to the waist seemed to belie. No need to ask in whose presence I stood, as I bowed myself before one who is the object of a

devotion and love which kings might envy and emperors sigh for in vain!
(Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era page 39)

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„at the hour of dawn, ..., eight hours after sunset, in the 75th year of His age“, His spirit, at long last released from the toils of a life crowded with tribulations, had winged its flight to His “other dominions,” dominions “whereon the eyes of the people of names have never fallen,” the Sun of Bahá has set (Excerpts from God Passes By chapter 13)

“Methinks, the spiritual commotion set up in the world of dust had caused all the worlds of God to tremble.... My inner and outer tongue are powerless to portray the condition we were in.... In the midst of the prevailing confusion a multitude of the inhabitants of ‘Akká and of the neighboring villages, that had thronged the fields surrounding the Mansion, could be seen weeping, beating upon their heads, and crying aloud their grief.” (Nabil quoted in God Passes By chapter 13)

Today the cupbearer, by God's design,
poured bile into the cup of life, not wine.
Every wound has its balm, each ache a cure-
except this wound! this endless ache of mine!
The nightingales refuse to sing. No trees.
The world's gone dark, and every eye is blind.
Calamity! The universe unbuilt.
Calamity! The reign of God undone.
On the Sea of Mercy all waves lie still.
But waves of woe rise high! The storm's begun.
The banner of God's Name collapsed. Such grief,
such grief that heaven will be overrun.
Through Him the Day of Resurrection dawned:
Now earth quakes at the setting of His Sun.
From Sinai He called, "Come see!" Now Moses
hears these final words: "You shall never see."
On the Most Great Ocean the Crimson Ark
has sunk. The tears of Noah drown the sea.
Look west! The Sun of Holiness has set.
Look up! and in His placeless place He'll be.
We'll never hear His voice again, but there
the Nightingale of Paradise flies free.

(This poem is an eyewitness account of Bahá'u'lláh's passing, and appears in the anthology of 'Andalib's poems, titled Diván-i 'Andalib, pp. 471–74)

Conclusion

Be not dismayed, O peoples of the world, when the day-star of My beauty is set, and the heaven of My tabernacle is concealed from your eyes. Arise to further My Cause, and to exalt My Word amongst men. We are with you at all times, and shall strengthen you through the power of truth. We are truly almighty. Whoso hath recognized Me will arise and serve Me with such determination that the powers of earth and heaven shall be unable to defeat his purpose.(Gleanings, p.137)

Tablet of Visitation

The praise which hath dawned from Thy most august Self, and the glory which hath shone forth from Thy most effulgent Beauty, rest upon Thee, O Thou Who art the Manifestation of Grandeur, and the King of Eternity, and the Lord of all who are in heaven and on earth! I testify that through Thee the sovereignty of God and His dominion, and the majesty of God and His grandeur, were revealed, and the Day-Stars of ancient splendor have shed their radiance in the heaven of Thine irrevocable decree, and the Beauty of the Unseen hath shone forth above the horizon of creation. I testify, moreover, that with but a movement of Thy Pen Thine injunction "Be Thou" hath been enforced, and God's hidden Secret hath been divulged, and all created things have been called into being, and all the Revelations have been sent down.

I bear witness, moreover, that through Thy beauty the beauty of the Adored One hath been unveiled, and through Thy face the face of the Desired One hath shone forth, and that through a word from Thee Thou hast decided between all created things, causing them who are devoted to Thee to ascend unto the summit of glory, and the infidels to fall into the lowest abyss.

I bear witness that he who hath known Thee hath known God, and he who hath attained unto Thy presence hath attained unto the presence of God. Great, therefore, is the blessedness of him who hath believed in Thee, and in Thy signs, and hath humbled himself before Thy sovereignty, and hath been honored with meeting Thee, and hath attained the good pleasure of Thy will, and circled around Thee, and stood before Thy throne. Woe betide him that hath transgressed against Thee, and hath denied Thee, and repudiated Thy signs, and gainsaid Thy sovereignty, and risen up against Thee, and waxed proud before Thy face, and hath disputed Thy testimonies, and fled from Thy rule and Thy dominion, and been numbered with the infidels whose names have been inscribed by the fingers of Thy behest upon Thy holy Tablets.

Waft, then, unto me, O my God and my Beloved, from the right hand of Thy mercy and Thy loving-kindness, the holy breaths of Thy favors, that they may draw me away from myself and from the world unto the courts of Thy nearness and Thy presence. Potent art Thou to do what pleaseth Thee. Thou, truly, hast been supreme over all things.

The remembrance of God and His praise, and the glory of God and His splendor, rest upon Thee, O Thou Who art His Beauty! I bear witness that the eye of creation hath never gazed upon one wronged like Thee. Thou wast immersed all the days of Thy life beneath an ocean of tribulations. At one time Thou wast in chains and fetters; at another Thou wast threatened by the sword of Thine enemies. Yet, despite all this, Thou didst enjoin upon all men to observe what had been prescribed unto Thee by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

May my spirit be a sacrifice to the wrongs Thou didst suffer, and my soul be a ransom for the adversities Thou didst sustain. I beseech God, by Thee and by them whose faces have been illumined with the splendors of the light of Thy countenance, and who, for love of Thee, have observed all whereunto they were bidden, to remove the veils that have come in between Thee and Thy creatures, and to supply me with the good of this world and the world to come. Thou art, in truth, the Almighty, the Most Exalted, the All-Glorious, the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Compassionate.

Bless Thou, O Lord my God, the Divine Lote-Tree and its leaves, and its boughs, and its branches, and its stems, and its offshoots, as long as Thy most excellent titles will endure and Thy most august attributes will last. Protect it, then, from the mischief of the aggressor and the hosts of tyranny. Thou art, in truth, the Almighty, the Most Powerful. Bless Thou, also, O Lord my God, Thy servants and Thy handmaidens who have attained unto Thee. Thou, truly, art the All-Bountiful, Whose grace is infinite. No God is there save Thee, the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Generous.

-Bahá'u'lláh