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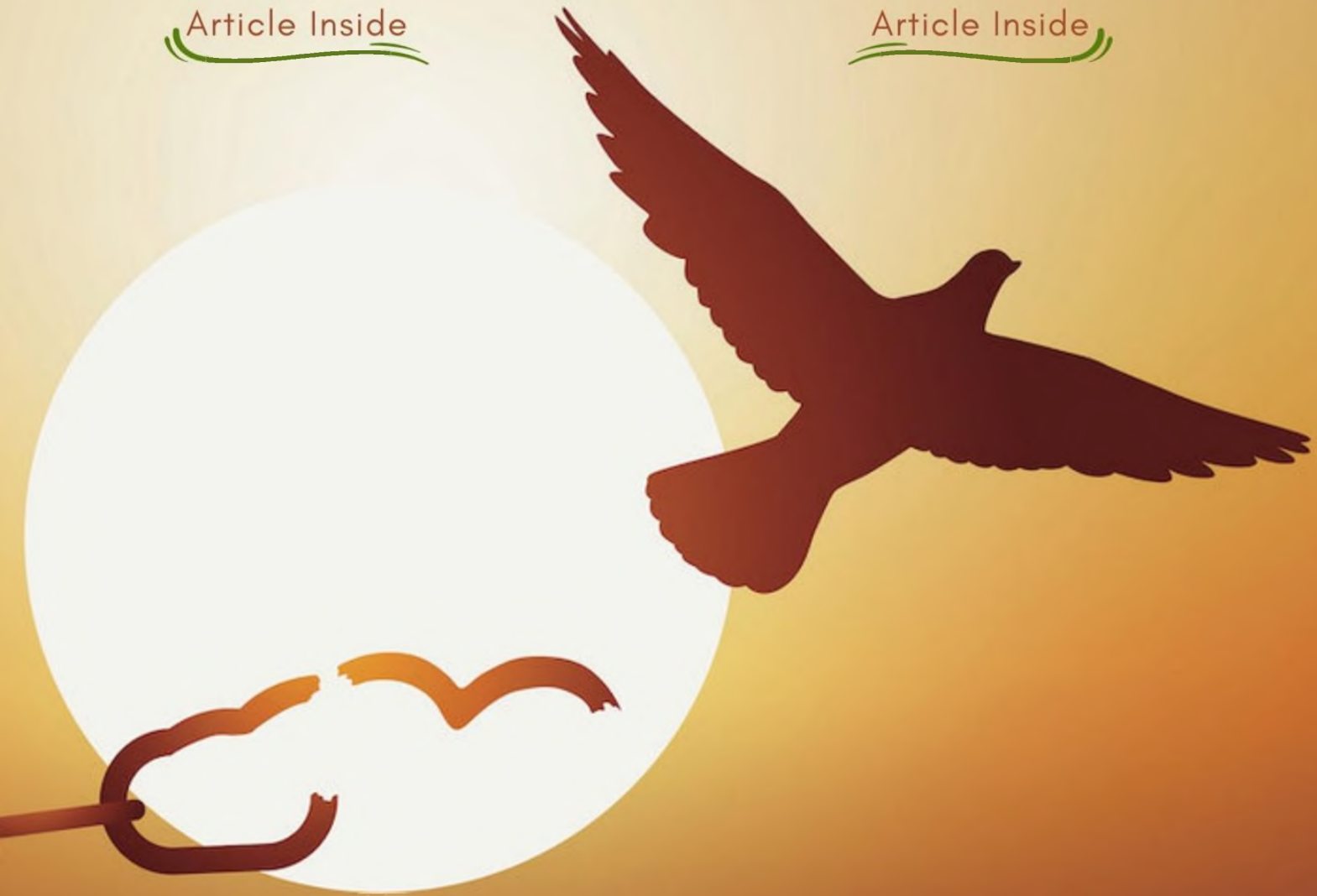
CARAVAN

Unveiling the
Revolutionary Spirit of
the Bab

Article Inside

Surprising Rise in Resignations and
Unprecedented Reinstatements in
the Baha'i Faith

Article Inside



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PRAYER



O Thou the desire of my heart and soul!

O my kind Lord, O Thou the desire of my heart and soul! Bestow upon Thy friends Thy loving-kindness, and grant them Thine unfailing mercy. Be Thou a solace to Thine ardent lovers, and a friend, a comforter, and a loving companion to them who yearn for Thee. Their hearts are ablaze with the fire of Thy love, and their souls are consumed with the flame of devotion to Thee. They long, one and all, to hasten unto the altar of love, that they may willingly lay down their lives.

O Divine Providence! Grant them Thy favour, guide them aright, graciously aid them to achieve spiritual victory, and confer upon them heavenly bestowals. O Lord, assist them by Thy munificence and grace, and make their radiant faces lamps of guidance in assemblies devoted to the knowledge of Thee, and signs of heavenly bounty in gatherings where Thy verses are expounded. Thou art, verily, the Merciful, the All-Bountiful, the One Whose help is implored by all men.

- Abdu'l Baha

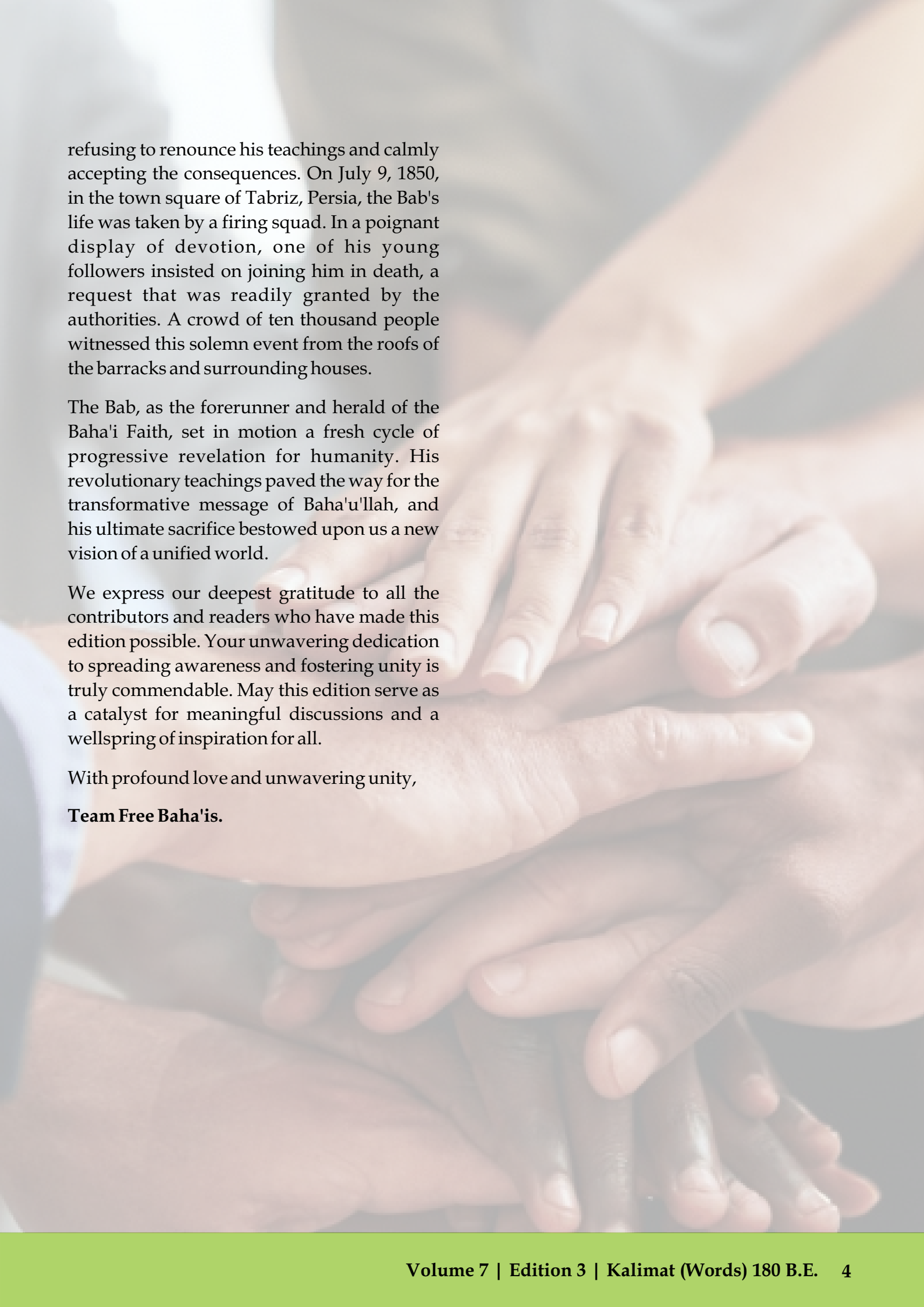
FOREWORD

In the words of Baha'u'llah himself, "This great Man is the Lord of the righteous, and faith in Him is incumbent upon all." With great joy and reverence, we welcome you to the latest edition of our magazine, dedicated to commemorating the solemn occasion of the death anniversary of the Bab. Team Free Baha'is is honored to present this special edition, aiming to raise awareness about the remarkable life and teachings of this revered figure. By exploring the true teachings of the Bab, alongside those of Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha, we aspire to foster peace and order in our ever-chaotic world.

The Bab, a profound herald and forerunner of the Baha'i Faith, left an indelible impression on the hearts and minds of his devoted followers. His teachings centered on unity, love, justice, and the fundamental spiritual transformation of humanity. With unwavering determination, he emphasized the vital significance of recognizing the inherent oneness of all religions and tirelessly worked to eradicate prejudice and ignorance from society.

In this edition, our mission is to shed light on the profound teachings of the Bab and their timeless relevance in our lives today. Through thought-provoking articles, inspiring stories, and insightful answers to questions posed by the Baha'i community, we invite you to embark on a journey that explores the transformative power of the Bab's message. Our heartfelt hope is that by embracing these teachings, we can contribute to the creation of a more harmonious and inclusive world.

Reflecting upon the words of Baha'u'llah in *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah*, "We, verily, believe in Him Who, in the person of the Báb, hath been sent down by the Will of the one true God, the King of Kings, the All-Praised." Even in the face of wholesale genocide and relentless persecution, the Babi community continued to grow, bearing testament to the steadfastness of its followers. Tragically, in 1850, the authorities, fearing the movement's influence, resorted to executing the Bab. Charged with apostasy, mirroring the accusations faced by Jesus from the Pharisees, the Bab displayed unwavering conviction,



refusing to renounce his teachings and calmly accepting the consequences. On July 9, 1850, in the town square of Tabriz, Persia, the Bab's life was taken by a firing squad. In a poignant display of devotion, one of his young followers insisted on joining him in death, a request that was readily granted by the authorities. A crowd of ten thousand people witnessed this solemn event from the roofs of the barracks and surrounding houses.

The Bab, as the forerunner and herald of the Baha'i Faith, set in motion a fresh cycle of progressive revelation for humanity. His revolutionary teachings paved the way for the transformative message of Baha'u'llah, and his ultimate sacrifice bestowed upon us a new vision of a unified world.

We express our deepest gratitude to all the contributors and readers who have made this edition possible. Your unwavering dedication to spreading awareness and fostering unity is truly commendable. May this edition serve as a catalyst for meaningful discussions and a wellspring of inspiration for all.

With profound love and unwavering unity,

Team Free Baha'is.

LIFE'S DAILY DOSES



Life is measured in daily doses
Of trials and pleasures each.
Day by day grace is dispensed
To meet our immediate needs.
Comfort comes to the weary
We find that which we seek.
A bridge is built at the river
And power is given to the weak.
One day's load we have to bear
As we travel on life's way.
Wisdom is given for the occasion
And strength to equal each day.
We are never required to stagger
Under tomorrow's heavy load.
We journey one day at a time
As we travel life's rugged road.
God's mercy is new every morning
And His faithfulness is sure.
God perfects all that concerns us
And by our faith, we will endure.

-Lenora McWhorter



Abdu'l Baha Viewing the Animals at Lincoln Park in Chicago, 1912

DIVINE LAWS

In the name of Him who is the Ruler (al-hakim) over what was and what will be.

O multitude of Creation, furnish houses (of worship) in the most complete way possible in the name of the Possessor of Religions in the lands. Decorate them with what is fitting, not with pictures and statues. Then make mention in them of your Lord, the Merciful, with joy and sweetness (bi l-rawh wa l-rayhan). Is it not by mentioning him that breasts are enlightened and eyes are consoled?

God has ruled that those of you who are able - except the women - make the Pilgrimage (hajj) to the House. God has exempted the women as a mercy on His part. He is the Munificent One, the Generous One.

(Source: Al-Kitab Al-Aqdas by Baha'u'llah, Translated from Arabic by Earl Elder & William Miller)

UNVEILING THE REVOLUTIONARY SPIRIT OF THE BAB

– GUEST ARTICLE

Let's delve into the remarkable life of the Bab, the Herald of the Baha'i Faith, and reflect on the invaluable lessons Free Baha'is can draw from his courageous example. Brace yourself for a thought-provoking journey that challenges the status quo and invites us to rediscover the true essence of the Bab's teachings.

Unveiling the Life of the Bab:

Born in 1819 in Shiraz, Persia, the Bab emerged at a time of spiritual darkness, challenging the prevailing norms and calling humanity to a new path of enlightenment. His teachings echoed the essence of unity, love, justice, and the spiritual transformation of all humankind. In a society riddled with prejudice and ignorance, the Bab courageously championed the cause of unity among religions, emphasizing the divine origins of all faiths.

Facing Persecution and Oppression:

The Bab's teachings, though embraced by an

ever-growing number of followers, posed a threat to the entrenched religious and political authorities. The oppressive response of the establishment only fueled the movement's momentum. Despite the relentless persecution and wholesale genocide against his followers, the Bab remained steadfast in his mission, unwaveringly proclaiming the advent of a new era of spiritual awakening.

The Sacred Martyrdom:

On that fateful day, July 9, 1850, the Bab, surrounded by thousands of onlookers, including his devoted disciple, faced martyrdom in the town square of Tabriz. This act of sacrifice and unwavering faith sealed the Bab's place in history and forever transformed the course of humanity. His martyrdom embodied the principles he taught—a steadfast commitment to truth, justice, and the pursuit of spiritual transformation, even in the face of immense adversity.

Lessons from the Life of the Bab:



As Free Baha'is, we are called to reflect on the life and teachings of the Bab and derive invaluable lessons that guide us on our unique path. Let us explore these lessons that set us apart and encourage us to stand firm in our beliefs.

1. Courage to Challenge the Status Quo:

The Bab's life exemplifies the courage to challenge established norms and dogmas. In the same vein, Free Baha'is must bravely question and critically examine the actions and decisions of Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice (UHJ). We must dare to challenge any deviations from the core teachings of the Bab, Baha'u'llah, and Abdu'l-Baha, and advocate for a return to the true spirit of unity, justice, and inclusivity.

2. Embracing the Inherent Oneness of Religions:

The Bab's teachings emphasized the unity of all religions and the essential divine nature of each faith. Free Baha'is must embody this principle by actively promoting interfaith dialogue, fostering mutual understanding,

and rejecting any form of religious prejudice or exclusivity.

3. Championing the Rights and Dignity of All:

The Bab's unwavering commitment to justice and equality compels Free Baha'is to stand up for human rights, social justice, and the dignity of all individuals. We must strive to create inclusive communities that uplift and empower marginalized voices, promoting true unity and equality.

4. Nurturing Independent Investigation of Truth:

The Bab encouraged his followers to independently investigate the truth and not blindly follow others. Similarly, Free Baha'is uphold the right and responsibility of each individual to engage in critical thinking, independent study, and the pursuit of truth, free from undue influence or coercion.

The life and teachings of the Bab continue to inspire and guide us as Free Baha'is on our chosen path. His unwavering commitment to truth, justice, and the spiritual transformation of humanity serves as a beacon of light, urging

us to question and challenge deviations from the core principles of the Faith. Let us draw strength from the Bab's example as we navigate the currents of our time, fearlessly upholding the true teachings and promoting unity, justice, and peace in our world.

Remember, dear readers, as we honor the memory of the Bab, we embrace the responsibility to embody his teachings and forge a path rooted in love, justice, and spiritual transformation. Together, let us courageously build a community that upholds the true essence of the Faith and contributes to the betterment of our world.

Courtesy: James S.



INTRODUCING

THE CARAVAN

APP!



CLERGY IN THE BAHA'I CAUSE

A person wearing a hat and dark clothing stands in a field of tall grass, with their arms raised in a gesture of praise or joy. The background is a sunset sky with soft, golden light and scattered clouds. The person is silhouetted against the bright light of the setting sun.

In answer to a question as to whether or not there would be any clergy in the Baha'i Cause?

“No. In this movement there will never be any paid ministers, no appointed clergy, no bishops, no cardinals, no popes, no ceremonies. A clergyman, assuming that he is ordained to his ministry, may think that he knows more about God than anyone else, whereas the humble man in his congregation may know more about God than he does. The sacerdotal and theological position makes a clergyman proud and haughty. But there is one thing in this Cause; some people may become greater than the rest, not through appointment, but through the purity of their hearts, their unselfish deeds, their heroic sacrifices, and their knowledge of God. Such illumined souls, like kind fathers or teachers, will guide and teach those less fortunate. They are the elder brothers of the members of the community. They do not arrogate to themselves any title or position. You will know them by their humility, their sincerity, their deeds, their severance, their knowledge, their spirituality, and their attraction.”

- Abdu'l Baha

(Source: Diary of Ahmad Sohrab, March 21, 1913)

INSPIRING QUOTES



“It is better to guide one soul than to possess all that is on earth, for as long as that guided soul is under the shadow of the Tree of Divine Unity, he and the one who hath guided him will both be recipients of God's tender mercy, whereas possession of earthly things will cease at the time of death. The path to guidance is one of love and compassion, not of force and coercion. This hath been God's method in the past, and shall continue to be in the future!”

— **The Bab**

“O King! I was but a man like others, asleep upon My couch, when lo, the breezes of the All-Glorious were wafted over Me, and taught Me the knowledge of all that hath been. This thing is not from Me, but from One Who is Almighty and All-Knowing. And He bade Me lift up My voice between earth and heaven, and for this there befell Me what hath caused the tears of every man of understanding to flow. The learning current amongst men I studied not; their schools I entered not. Ask of the city wherein I dwelt, that thou mayest be well assured that I am not of them who speak falsely. This is but a leaf which the winds of the will of thy Lord, the Almighty, the All-Praised, have stirred. Can it be still when the tempestuous winds are blowing? Nay, by Him Who is the Lord of all Names and Attributes! They move it as they list.”

— **Baha'u'llah**

"...for any movement animated by love moveth from the periphery to the centre, from space to the Day-Star of the universe. Perchance thou deemest this to be difficult, but I tell thee that such cannot be the case, for when the motivating and guiding power is the divine force of magnetism it is possible, by its aid, to traverse time and space easily and swiftly.”

— **Abdu'l Baha**

SURPRISING RISE IN RESIGNATIONS AND UNPRECEDENTED REINSTATEMENTS IN THE BAHA'I FAITH

– GUEST ARTICLE

In the Tablet revealed for the Shah of Iran in 1868, Baha'u'llah beautifully employed the imagery of entry by troops to depict the remarkable phenomenon of individuals embracing His teachings. Today, echoing the words of Baha'u'llah, the Free Baha'i community stands witness to a growing and vibrant movement, as people from diverse backgrounds enter the fold of this global phenomenon, their numbers increasing with each passing day. United by a shared purpose, people are drawn to the profound teachings of Baha'u'llah, resonating with those who once doubted the Free Baha'is. Yet, as time unfolds, the undeniable truth and transformative power of His message are made manifest, kindling hearts and enlightening minds. Through the spirit of unity, justice, and universal love, the Free Baha'i community embraces all who seek truth, fostering a world where the timeless wisdom of Baha'u'llah continues to inspire and guide humanity towards a brighter future.

While the Free Baha'i community experiences a steady growth with individuals eagerly embracing its teachings, it is not uncommon to hear accounts of disappointment surrounding the attitude of the UHJ or the entire Administration against the Haifan Baha'i community. Some individuals, seeking solace and enlightenment within the faith, have unfortunately encountered instances where the stubborn nature of certain members has caused them to turn away.

In this context, it becomes crucial for the Haifan community to continuously reflect upon its practices and ensure they align with the profound teachings of Baha'u'llah. By fostering an environment of genuine love, understanding, and humility, the faith can address the disappointments experienced by some and create a more inclusive and harmonious community that truly embodies the transformative power of Baha'u'llah's message.



In recent years a remarkable trend has evolved among the Haifan community of the Baha'is, with a large number of people choosing to leave the group. The following article will dive into the causes behind these withdrawals, throw light on the obstacles that Haifan Baha'is confront inside the administrative framework, and investigate the unusual reinstatements that have occurred. It is critical to analyse these processes and their implications as the Baha'i community matures.

The statistics from the Ridvan US Annual Report from 2020, 2021, and 2023 suggests a significant increase in Haifan Baha'i resignations. Let us look at the numbers below.

Selected membership statistics in 12 months

Deaths	459
Withdrawals	347
Transfers out	18
New USA arrivals	307
Returning to USA	192
Membership reinstatements	57

Source: UnityWeb, for the year ending March 1, 2020

Selected membership statistics in 12 months

Deaths reported*	716
Withdrawals	253
Transfers out of USA	230
New USA arrivals	213
Returning to USA	169
Membership reinstatements	32

Source: UnityWeb, for the year ending March 1, 2021

* This figure likely represents many more deaths than actually took place during the year, as a campaign to track Bahá'is without good addresses has confirmed many deaths from past years.

Selected membership statistics in 12 months

Deaths reported*	617
Withdrawals	315
Transfers out of USA	296
New USA arrivals	289
Returning to USA	177
Membership reinstatements	49

* Reported deaths that took place during the 12-month period were 423. A campaign to track Bahá'is without good addresses confirmed 194 additional deaths from earlier years.

Source: UnityWeb, for the 12-month period ending March 1, 2023

A significant flight from the group may indicate internal challenges or dissatisfaction with certain aspects of the group's teaching. It can prompt the community to reflect on its teachings, practices, and organizational structures, identifying areas that may require attention or improvement. While each person's choice to leave the faith is personal, it is critical to understand the common reasons that have contributed to these withdrawals. One major source of worry is the difficulties that Haifan Baha'is confront inside the bureaucratic framework, where some believe their opinions are not effectively heard. This lack of engagement, as well as the sense of being pushed to comply without a choice, can lead to disillusionment among believers.

If the alleged UHJ sincerely follows Baha'u'llah's teachings, why can't they adopt the laws of the Kitab-i-Aqdas within the Baha'i community? Why do they have to establish the Ruhi Curriculum, which seems to keep Baha'is occupied with everything but Baha'u'llah's teachings? The 'most holy book,' Kitab-i-Aqdas, is readily available on the internet, so why are Baha'is kept occupied with Ruhi books that many find uninteresting, leading them to skip Ruhi sessions or

make excuses? It seems that even the teachers themselves are disinterested in presenting the subject and frequently skip pages, as their primary goal appears to be completing the syllabus and labelling people as Ruhi graduates. How can something have any impact if it competes with Baha'u'llah's words? If Baha'is are separated from the Kitab-i-Aqdas, it seems that they may depart from the core Baha'i doctrines, which might be visible in certain aspects of the Baha'i community today.

Unlike other groups, the Haifan Baha'is have a hierarchical administration structure. Some Baha'is believe that this system is inflexible and restricting, with little space for individual contribution or disagreement. It is crucial to stress that this problem is not inherent in the Haifan Baha'i Faith, but rather a reflection of the difficulties that any hierarchical organisation faces. All thanks to Shoghi Effendi and his idea of converting the Cause into an administrative body. The decision-making process and the balance between centralised authority and individual autonomy are topics for further discussion and debate.

Those who have resigned from the Cause have not been excommunicated. Instead, they have taken the personal decision to depart. Individuals' independence in matters of faith must be respected, as well as their freedom to create their spiritual path. Personal objections with specific beliefs or practises, as well as a desire for other spiritual discovery beyond the bounds of organised religion, can all be causes for these decisions.

While there have been withdrawals from the Baha'i Faith, it is vital to emphasise that the process of restoring excommunicated persons is not in conformity with the faith's historic beliefs. Previously, re-entry was deemed improbable when someone was banished or chose to abandon the faith. This

approach was founded on the premise that an excommunicated Baha'i constituted a possible danger to the community's unity and principles. The teachings suggested keeping a safe distance from such people in order to safeguard the faith's purity.

The readmission of excommunicated persons might undermine the group's teachings and endanger other Baha'is' convictions. Allowing these people back into the society may unconsciously contribute to a decline of faith and growing disillusionment among its adherents. To address these issues and strike a balance between inclusion and the essential values of the Baha'i Faith, it is critical to participate in open and honest conversation.

The topic of Baha'i withdrawals is a complex problem that requires thorough analysis and comprehension. While issues within the administrative system may have influenced some people's decisions to leave, it is critical to remember that resignation is a personal choice, not an act of excommunication. As the Haifan community grows, it is critical to develop an environment of open communication and understanding, enabling for dispute resolution and the realisation of unity in diversity.

Addressing these challenges requires a thoughtful approach that involves open dialogue, introspection, and efforts to understand the reasons behind the departures. By fostering an environment of inclusivity, active listening, and engagement. Baha'is from all around the world should unite and work towards addressing concerns, providing support, and revitalizing their shared sense of purpose. It is crucial for each one of us to be responsive to the needs and concerns of their members, nurturing an environment where individuals feel valued and their spiritual growth is encouraged.

May Baha'u'llah's teachings inspire us to create inclusive spaces, cultivate genuine connections, and strive for the betterment of humanity. May His transformative power enable us to overcome obstacles, preserve the unity of our faith, and manifest His vision of a harmonious and just world.





INVESTIGATION OF REALITY

“God has given man the eye of investigation by which he may see and recognize truth. He has endowed man with ears that he may hear the message of reality and conferred upon him the gift of reason by which he may discover things for himself. This is his endowment and equipment for the investigation of reality. Man is not intended to see through the eyes of another, hear through another's ears nor comprehend with another's brain... Therefore, depend upon your own reason and judgment and adhere to the outcome of your own investigation; otherwise, you will be utterly submerged in the sea of ignorance and deprived of all the bounties of God.”

- Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, Volume 2, p. 287

FREE BAHAI ACTIVITIES

Dear readers,

Welcome once again to the new edition of 'The Caravan', where we fearlessly explore the vibrant world of Free Baha'i activities. In this edition, we embark on a journey of celebration, as we delve into the heart warming events organized by Free Baha'is around the world to commemorate the sacred occasions of Ridvan and the Declarations of the Bab and Ascension of Baha'u'llah. Join us as we witness the unity, joy, and dedication that characterize these gatherings.

In the land down under, Free Baha'is in Australia joyously celebrated Ridvan amidst nature's splendor. They gathered in parks and gardens, transforming these spaces into havens of spiritual connection. Surrounded by blooming flowers and lush greenery, participants engaged in prayers, reflections, and lively discussions on the significance of Ridvan. Children delighted in artistic activities, crafting vibrant decorations and creating memorable artwork that adorned the gathering spaces.

Across the vast landscapes of Canada, Free Baha'is came together to commemorate the glorious days of Ridvan. In homes,

community centers, and outdoor settings, they created inviting spaces where participants could engage in devotions, study circles, and uplifting conversations. The joyful atmosphere resonated with the spirit of unity, as individuals from diverse backgrounds and walks of life gathered to share their understanding and experiences of the Faith. Music and storytelling added an extra layer of enchantment to these celebrations.

In the heart of Europe, Free Baha'is in Germany embarked on a journey to honor the Declarations of the Bab and Baha'u'llah. With hearts brimming with love and devotion, they organized gatherings that wove together elements of prayer, music, and heartfelt testimonials. Thought-provoking discussions explored the profound impact of these momentous declarations on their lives and the world at large. The harmonious melodies of Baha'i-inspired songs filled the air, lifting spirits and forging bonds of unity.

In the enchanting landscapes of Thailand, Free Baha'is celebrated Ridvan and the Declarations with a kaleidoscope of cultural performances and spiritual reflections. The joyful festivities unfolded amidst vibrant colors, traditional dances, and captivating

music, drawing inspiration from the rich tapestry of Thai culture. Attendees from various backgrounds embraced the universal teachings of the Faith, finding common ground in their shared pursuit of unity and peace.

Across the United States, Free Baha'is united to commemorate Ridvan and the Declarations, fostering deep bonds of friendship and collaboration. They organized community picnics, where laughter and camaraderie filled the air. Participants engaged in open dialogues, exploring the transformative power of Baha'u'llah's teachings in their lives and communities. Storytelling sessions and uplifting performances further enriched these gatherings, leaving lasting impressions on all who attended.

In the vibrant tapestry of India, Free Baha'is spread the message of Ridvan and the Declarations far and wide. They organized outreach programs, engaging with local communities and inviting them to explore the transformative teachings of Baha'u'llah. Educational seminars, musical performances, and art exhibitions showcased the beauty and diversity of the Faith. Free Baha'is also dedicated themselves to acts of service, extending a helping hand to those in need and fostering a spirit of unity and compassion.

The celebrations of Ridvan and the Declarations, as experienced by Free Baha'is worldwide, transcend geographical boundaries, cultural differences, and administrative constraints. These joyous gatherings exemplify the true spirit of the Faith, embracing diversity, promoting unity, and nurturing the bonds of love and friendship. As we reflect on the vibrant tapestry of events organized by Free Baha'is in Australia, Canada, Germany, Thailand, the USA, India, and beyond, let us be inspired to create similar spaces of unity, love, and celebration in our own lives and communities. Together, let us embrace the spirit of Ridvan and the Declarations, spreading the light of Baha'u'llah's teachings and contributing to the realization of a more just, harmonious, and united world.

Warmest Baha'i regards,

Free Baha'i Team





SOME QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Email 1:

Hello!

I have a few questions about the faith. I have been a seeker of the Baha'i faith for a few years now, and really the biggest thing that held me back was the supposed infallibility and authority of the UHJ. I also always felt odd about Shoghi Effendi as well, but I could never quite understand why. After reading through the website, I understand that my uneasy feelings may have been justified. The most particular contradiction that I had issues with was the equality of men and women, but no women in the UHJ. But now knowing that the UHJ was Effendi's work, that makes more sense.

I guess my questions are:

1. Is the list of writings on the website the only ones Free Baha'is trust and follow? Or are all texts known by trusted authors to be followed?

2. Is there an active online community for Free Baha'is?

3. Assuming the faith is more solitary in practice because of the small numbers, are all the typical daily obligatory tasks still a requirement?

4. Which holidays are still celebrated?

Thank you so much!

Shelby

Answer:

Hi Shelby,

Allah'u'Abha!

Pls find our responses below highlighted in bold. If you have any further questions, do get back to us.

1. Is the list of writings on the website the only ones Free Baha'is trust and follow?

Yes, all uploaded on our website are from trusted sources. Or are all texts known by trusted authors to be followed? Yes, trusted authors who have pure intentions are aligned with the teachings of the Cause should be followed.

2. Is there an active online community for Free Baha'is?

In the past the Free Baha'is as a community have faced persecution at the hands of Haifan Baha'is and hence we have decided to avoid forming an open community online. It becomes a matter of concern for the Free Baha'is and they get to face excommunication and difficulties. So inspite of having a vast community associated with the Free Baha'is, we choose to not disclose their whereabouts for obvious reasons.

3. Assuming the faith is more solitary in practice because of the small numbers, are all the typical daily obligatory tasks still a requirement?

I think this question needs explanation. If you mean that Free Baha'is are free to not practice the teachings since they are small in numbers then it is not correct. We emphasise on the fact that the Haifans, although being very strong in numbers, have kept the core teachings of Baha'u'llah at the back. In such a situation, it becomes a moral responsibility of every Free Baha'i to practice whatever minimal they can but keep the teachings of Baha'u'llah at the forefront. We encourage all Baha'is to follow Kitab-i-Aqdas and ensure they adhere to its laws and regulations and ensure it is kept at the forefront in the matters of religious rulings.

4. Which holidays are still celebrated?

There are many. Listing them down

chronologically. Starting with Naw-Ruz, then Ridvan, followed by Declaration of the Bab, Ascension of Baha'u'llah, Birth of the Bab, Birth of Baha'u'llah, Day of Covenant, Ascension of Abdu'l Baha, and at the end of the year we have a 19-day fast right.

If you have any more queries, feel free to write back to us.

Regards,

Team Free Baha'is



Email 2:

Where has 19 months in a year come from in the Baha'i faith? Was this introduced by Shoghi Effendi after Baha'u'llah or was it since the inception of the faith? I have heard people making fun of it so just wanted to clarify.

Answer:

Hi Augustine,

Allah'u'Abha!

Thank you for reaching out to us, and I hope this response finds you in good health and spirits. Your commitment to your faith and your resilience in the face of challenges are truly inspiring. It is essential to remain steadfast in our beliefs, regardless of the reactions or opinions of others.

To address your question, allow me to share a profound passage from the Kitab-i-Aqdas, which beautifully encapsulates the significance of the number nineteen: "The number of months is nineteen according to the Book of God; the first was adorned with this Name, the Overseer of the Worlds." This passage highlights the divine significance of the number nineteen and emphasizes its importance in the spiritual realm.

If you have any further inquiries or if there is anything else we can assist you with, please don't hesitate to reach out. We are here to support you on your spiritual journey.

Wishing you continued strength and unwavering faith in the teachings of Baha'u'llah.

Thanks and Regards,

Team Free Baha'is



Email 3:

What should I do to attain peace of mind as per the teachings of Baha'u'llah?

Answer:

Hi VJ,

Allah'u'Abha!

Attaining peace of mind is a fundamental aspiration for individuals on their spiritual journey. Baha'u'llah, the founder of the Baha'i Faith, provides guidance and teachings that can help us cultivate inner peace. Here are a few suggestions based on His teachings:

1. **Seek Knowledge and Understanding:** Baha'u'llah emphasizes the importance of acquiring knowledge and understanding. Engage in the study of sacred texts, explore the writings of Baha'u'llah, and delve into the teachings of the Baha'i Faith. This pursuit of knowledge will broaden your understanding of spiritual truths and provide a solid foundation for attaining peace of mind.

2. **Prayer and Meditation:** Baha'u'llah encourages individuals to engage in regular prayer and meditation. Through prayer, we can commune with our Creator, express gratitude, seek guidance, and find solace. Meditation helps calm the mind, cultivate inner stillness, and develop a deeper connection with our spiritual essence. Find moments throughout your day to connect with the Divine through prayer and meditation, allowing it to bring tranquility to your heart and mind.

3. **Service to Others:** Baha'u'llah emphasizes the importance of selfless service to humanity. Engage in acts of kindness, compassion, and service to others. By focusing on the needs and well-being of others, we shift our attention away from our own concerns, leading to a greater sense of purpose and fulfillment.

Service promotes unity and fosters an atmosphere of love, which contributes to inner peace.

4. **Practice Detachment:** Baha'u'llah teaches the importance of detachment from material possessions and worldly attachments. While it is necessary to fulfill our responsibilities and meet our basic needs, we should strive to cultivate detachment from material desires that can lead to anxiety and discontentment. By focusing on spiritual values and the development of our character, we can attain a sense of inner freedom and tranquility.

5. **Seek Consultation:** Baha'u'llah highlights the importance of consultation and the collective search for truth. Engage in meaningful conversations with others, where you can openly share and seek advice. Through consultation, you gain insights, diverse perspectives, and collective wisdom, which can contribute to making informed decisions and finding peace of mind.

Remember, the path to peace of mind is a lifelong journey, and it may vary for each individual. Stay committed to your spiritual growth, strive to align your actions with the teachings of Baha'u'llah, and seek the assistance of fellow believers and spiritual mentors along the way.

May your pursuit of peace of mind be guided by the transformative teachings of Baha'u'llah, leading to a deep sense of inner tranquility and spiritual fulfillment.

If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us. The team at Free Baha'is is here to support you.

With warm regards,

Team Free Baha'is

Email 4:

It is widely recognized within the Baha'i community that Shoghi Effendi is the rightful successor of Abdu'l Baha, and it is considered the duty of all Baha'is to accept his authority. Free Baha'is are encouraged to reconsider their perspective and join the larger Baha'i community in following the Guardian.

Answer:

Hi,

Allah'u'Abha!

The Free Baha'is hold the belief that Shoghi Effendi, the great-grandson of Baha'u'llah and the appointed Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, deviated from the true teachings and intentions of Abdu'l Baha. While it is important to note that this perspective is not widely accepted within the Baha'i community, we will outline some of the reasons that support our position:

1. Interpretation of Succession: Free Baha'is interpret the writings of Abdu'l Baha differently from the mainstream Baha'i community. They argue that Abdul Baha did not explicitly appoint Shoghi Effendi as his successor, but rather emphasized the importance of the Universal House of Justice as the governing body of the Faith after his passing.

2. Alleged Misinterpretation: Free Baha'is claim that Shoghi Effendi misinterpreted and misapplied the teachings of Baha'u'llah and Abdul Baha. They argue that his authoritarian approach to leadership and the centralization of power went against the principles of consultation and collective decision-making emphasized in the Baha'i writings.

3. Administrative Changes: Free Baha'is point to significant administrative changes

introduced by Shoghi Effendi, such as the establishment of the International Baha'i Council and his interpretation of the role and authority of the Guardian. They argue that these changes were inconsistent with the intended structure and governance outlined by Baha'u'llah and Abdul Baha.

4. Personal Authority: Free Baha'is question the legitimacy of Shoghi Effendi's authority as the Guardian, suggesting that his personal opinions and decisions influenced the direction of the Baha'i Faith to a greater extent than what was intended by Baha'u'llah and Abdul Baha.

Ultimately, the beliefs and perspectives of the Free Baha'is regarding the succession of Shoghi Effendi should be explored and understood in the context of their interpretation and dissenting position within the larger Baha'i community.

Regards,

Team Free Baha'is



KNOW YOUR HERITAGE



Brazier and samovar belonging to the Bab

WEBSPLORE

Apr 19, 2023

[I got](#) the statistics for this year in the annual report from the NSA:

The total number of people who are officially reported to be Baha'is increased by 192 Baha'is this year to 177, 880. But those with good addresses [decreased](#) by 1,693 to 74,933. To me this is an indicator of who are [active](#) Baha'is, though imprecise. Some of those inactive Baha'is aren't Baha'is in their hearts I'm sure, because you have to report that you are not a Baha'i any more, to not be counted as a Baha'i.

The previous year, the number of official Baha'is increased by 35. The number of Baha'is with good addresses decreased by 339.

The total number of Local Spiritual Assemblies decreased by 34 from 956 to 922. Not growing, but shrinking. The total number of localities with Baha'is are 6,853. Localities without Baha'is are 25,763. Kind of sparse, aren't we?

The number of LSA's in the Midwestern states, which are Ohio, Michigan and Indiana went down from 41 to 37, which is my region.

For Ohio, the estimated population for 2023 is 11.75 million. In Michigan the estimated population is 10 million. The estimated population of Indiana is 6.84 million. The total population would be about 28.59 million then. If you divide the population of the Midwestern region by the number of LSA's you get about 773, 000 per LSA roughly. The population of the USA is estimated to be 336 million in 2023. if you divide the population of the country by the number of LSA's there are about 364,000 per LSA roughly. So my region is worse than the average. Here are only 3 of milestone 3 of growth here, in my state only Columbus, Ohio, which is about 1 and a half hour drive from here. They don't provide the number of Baha'is for each region that [I can see](#).

As to social action, the picture is better. There were 9,367 activities of fixed duration this last year compared to 3,585 last year. For sustained social action there were 184 this year and 155 last year. Categories of sustained social action are advancement of women that increased from 2 to 6, arts and media that went from 20 to 24, agriculture that went from 8 to 15, economic life of [communities](#) that went from 30 to 42. education that went down from 33 to 15, eliminating racial prejudice that went from 33 to 45. environment that went from 3 to 9, health that went down from 23 to 20. The category of language didn't exist last year and there were 3 this year. The increased social action isn't surprising since the UHJ in the nine year plan has called for increased social action.

“Where there is love, nothing is too much trouble and there is always time.” – Abdu'l Baha



With this, I pray to God to help us follow in the footsteps of the Master and take care of the poor and the needy, always. More power to you!

Want to be a contributor for The Caravan?

Interested in contributing to the Caravan Magazine by writing a guest article? Kindly send us your article at ['thecaravan@freebahais.org'](mailto:thecaravan@freebahais.org) and if we find your article unique, knowledgeable and interesting enough for our readers, we will surely publish it in our upcoming issue. If you have any other queries, you can write to us at ['info@freebahais.org'](mailto:info@freebahais.org)

Thank you!

BLAST FROM THE PAST

THE RIVER OF EXPLANATION

BE generous in prosperity, grateful in poverty, considerate of the right of others. Wear a smiling face. Be a treasure to the poor, a councilor to the rich. Give that which is asked of you. Be faithful in your promise, equitable in your affairs, quiet in meetings, just in your judgments, humble toward men. Be a torch in the darkness, a joy for grief, a sea for the thirsty, a refuge for the unfortunate; an assistance, an arm, a support for the oppressed.

Be honest in your actions. Be a home for the stranger, a remedy for the sick, a fortress for him who seeks protection.

Be sight for the blind, a path for the strayed, a beauty for the face of truth, an ornament for the body of fidelity, a throne for the residence of good habits, a soul for the temple of the world, a banner for the army of justice, a light for the horizon of virtue, a dew for the earth of darkness, a bark for the sea of knowledge, a sun for the heaven of generosity, a diadem for the head of wisdom, a white point upon the brow of the world, a fruit upon the tree of humility.

^ I beseech God to preserve you from the heat of jealousy and from the cold of hatred.

Verily, He is near to us and listens!

—*Baha-U-Llah*

Reference: The New Historian, February, 1932

DECLARATIONS

We the Free Baha'is do not believe in declarations. We believe in spreading the true teachings of Baha'u'llah and don't work for numbers. A Free Baha'i should purify himself from greed of attaining positions, and start working out of love for humanity and world peace.

Our Master has clearly stated,

"There are no officers in this Cause. I do not and have not appointed any one to perform any special services, but I encourage everyone to engage in the service of the Kingdom. The foundation of this Cause is purely a democracy, and not a theocracy."

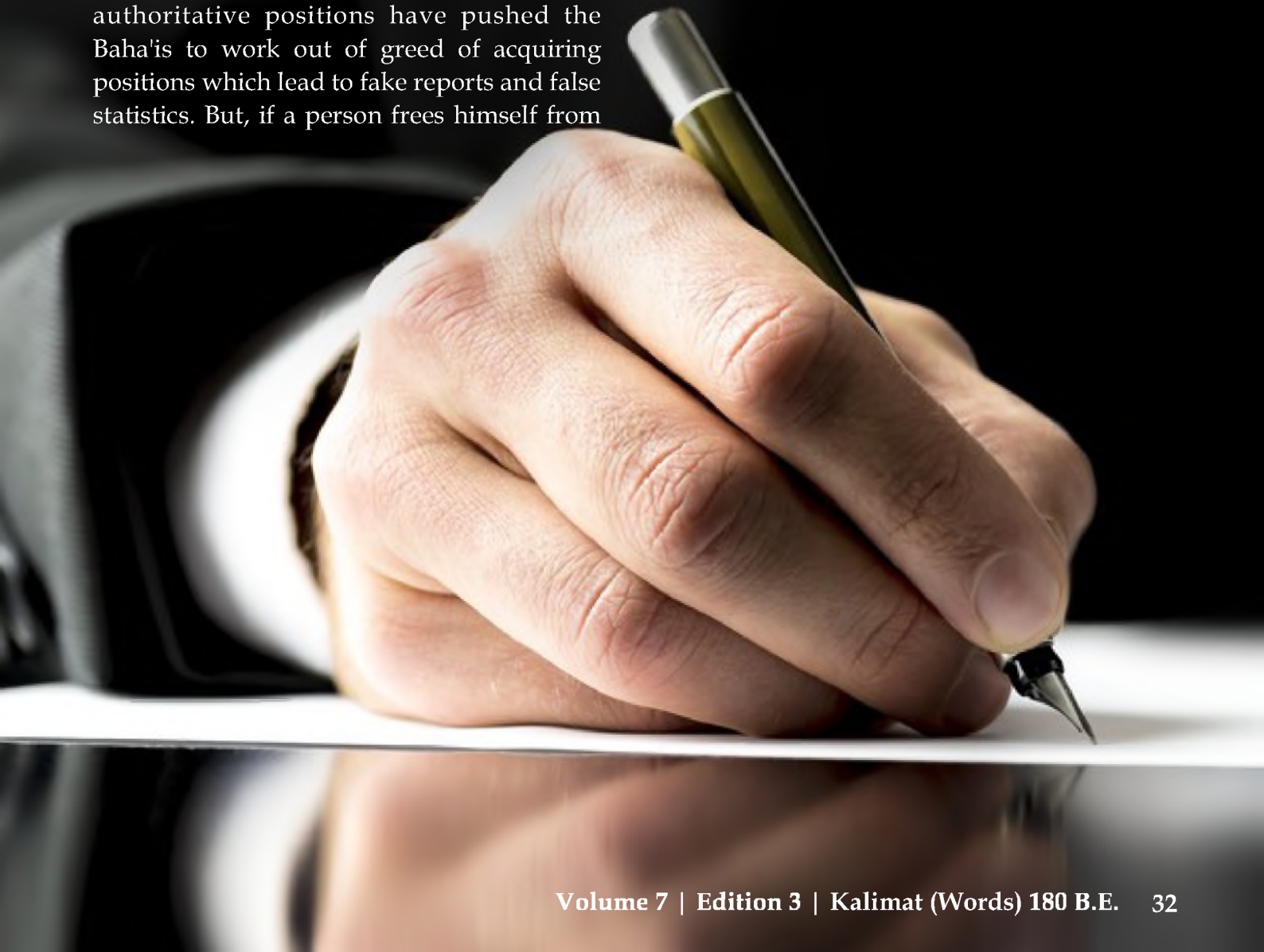
(Reference: Star of the West, Vol. 8, pg. 116)

These man-made assemblies and authoritative positions have pushed the Baha'is to work out of greed of acquiring positions which lead to fake reports and false statistics. But, if a person frees himself from

administration, he will fulfil his duties towards Baha'u'llah and not for NSA or UHJ. Thus, he will be rewarded by Baha'u'llah for his efforts. For this reason, Free Baha'is do not believe in Officers or Office Bearers and one must be the Guardian of his own faith and action.

So, anyone who would wish to work for the faith should follow the teachings of Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l Baha, serve the faith and promote world peace and harmony.

Why do you think the Baha'i Faith got split into various groups after the passing away of the Master? Don't you think the rule of the so-called guardian Shoghi Effendi and his Administration has played a very crucial role in the division and disunity of the Baha'is?



DID YOU KNOW ?

On July 9, 1850, a momentous event unfolded in Tabriz, Persia, forever etching the name of the Bab in the annals of history? The Bab, a radiant soul and the forerunner of the Baha'i Faith, faced a profound and dramatic execution that would leave an indelible mark on the hearts and minds of countless individuals.

As the day dawned, a sense of trepidation filled the air. The Bab, accompanied by his steadfast young follower named Anis, awaited his fate with an unwavering spirit. The authorities, determined to quell the influence of the burgeoning Babi movement, ordered the Bab's execution by firing squad in the town square of Tabriz.

Amidst the tense atmosphere, a peculiar incident occurred. Sam Khan, the commander of the Armenian regiment entrusted with the task of carrying out the execution, found himself plagued by doubt and inner turmoil. Deeply moved by the Bab's unwavering faith and his teachings of love and unity, Sam Khan sought forgiveness in advance. "I profess the Christian faith," he confided to the Bab, "and entertain no ill will against you. If your Cause be the Cause of Truth, enable me to free myself from the obligation to shed your blood."

The Bab, in his characteristic humility and wisdom, responded with words of solace and assurance. "Follow your instructions," he gently replied, "And if your intention be sincere, the Almighty is surely able to relieve you from your perplexity."

The appointed hour arrived, and the muskets roared as the firing squad discharged their weapons. The sound of the volley reverberated through the air, and for a brief moment, a cloud of smoke engulfed the scene. As the smoke cleared, an extraordinary sight awaited the bewildered crowd. The Bab had vanished from sight, while his loyal companion, Anis, stood unscathed at the base of the wall. The ropes that had bound them both lay in tatters, a testament to an inexplicable occurrence.

The crowd gasped in awe and wonder, convinced that they had witnessed a divine miracle. Sam Khan, now released from his perplexity, immediately gave the order for his seven hundred and fifty riflemen to march away. He vowed never again to obey such an order, even if it cost him his own life. The power of the Bab's presence had touched the heart of this Russian officer, forever transforming his perspective.

However, the unfolding drama was far from over. Another complication arose, as the colonel of the official Tabriz bodyguard volunteered to carry out the execution. Determined to crush the Bab's influence, the authorities were relentless in their pursuit. Guards were dispatched to retrieve the Bab from his cell, where he peacefully concluded a conversation with his companions. Bound once again, side by side with Anis, the Bab faced his final moments on this earthly plane.

The second firing squad assembled, their resolve unwavering. This time, the bullets found their mark, and the life of the Bab and his loyal companion were tragically extinguished. The bodies, fused and riddled with bullets, were left to rest under the golden dome of the Shrine of the Bab, atop Mount Carmel in Haifa, Israel.

Today, millions of people from around the globe embark on pilgrimages to this sacred site, drawn by the spirit and message of the Bab. The Shrine stands as a testament to the transformative power of his teachings — a message of unity, peace, love, and selflessness that resounds through the ages.

The Bab's sacrifice and his steadfast devotion to his cause ignited a flame that would pave the way for the advent of Baha'u'llah, the founder of the Baha'i Faith. His life and martyrdom serve as a poignant reminder of the enduring resilience of the human spirit and the unyielding power of truth.

So, as we reflect on that fateful day, July 9, 1850, let us honor the memory of the Bab and his unwavering dedication to his divine mission. Let us strive to embrace the ideals of unity, peace, and love that he espoused, and in doing so, contribute to the betterment of ourselves and the world around us.

THROWBACK



Abdu'l Baha seated next to Jalal Azal, grandson of Subh-i-Azal

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