

THE

CARAVAN

The Ascension of the Bab:
A Defining Moment in Baha'i History

Article Inside

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PRAYER



Thou seest, O my Lord, my dwelling-place in the heart of this mountain and Thou dost witness my forbearance. Verily I have desired naught else but Thy love and the love of those who love Thee. How can I extol the effulgent beauty of Thy Lordship, conscious as I am of my nothingness before the habitation of Thy glory? Yet the sorrow of solitude and loneliness prompteth me to invoke Thee through this prayer, perchance Thy trusted servants may become aware of my lamentations, may supplicate unto Thee on my behalf, and Thou wouldst graciously answer their prayers as a token of Thy grace and Thy favour. I bear witness that there is no God but Thee, inasmuch as Thou art invested with sovereignty, grandeur, glory and power which no one among Thy servants can visualize or comprehend. Indeed Thou shalt, by virtue of that which is inherent in Thine Essence, ever remain inscrutable unto all except Thyself.

- The Bab

FOREWORD

“Lord! Enable all the peoples of the earth to gain admittance into the Paradise of Thy Faith, so that no created being may remain beyond the bounds of Thy good-pleasure. From time immemorial Thou hast been potent to do what pleaseth thee and transcendent above whatsoever thou desirest.” – The Bab

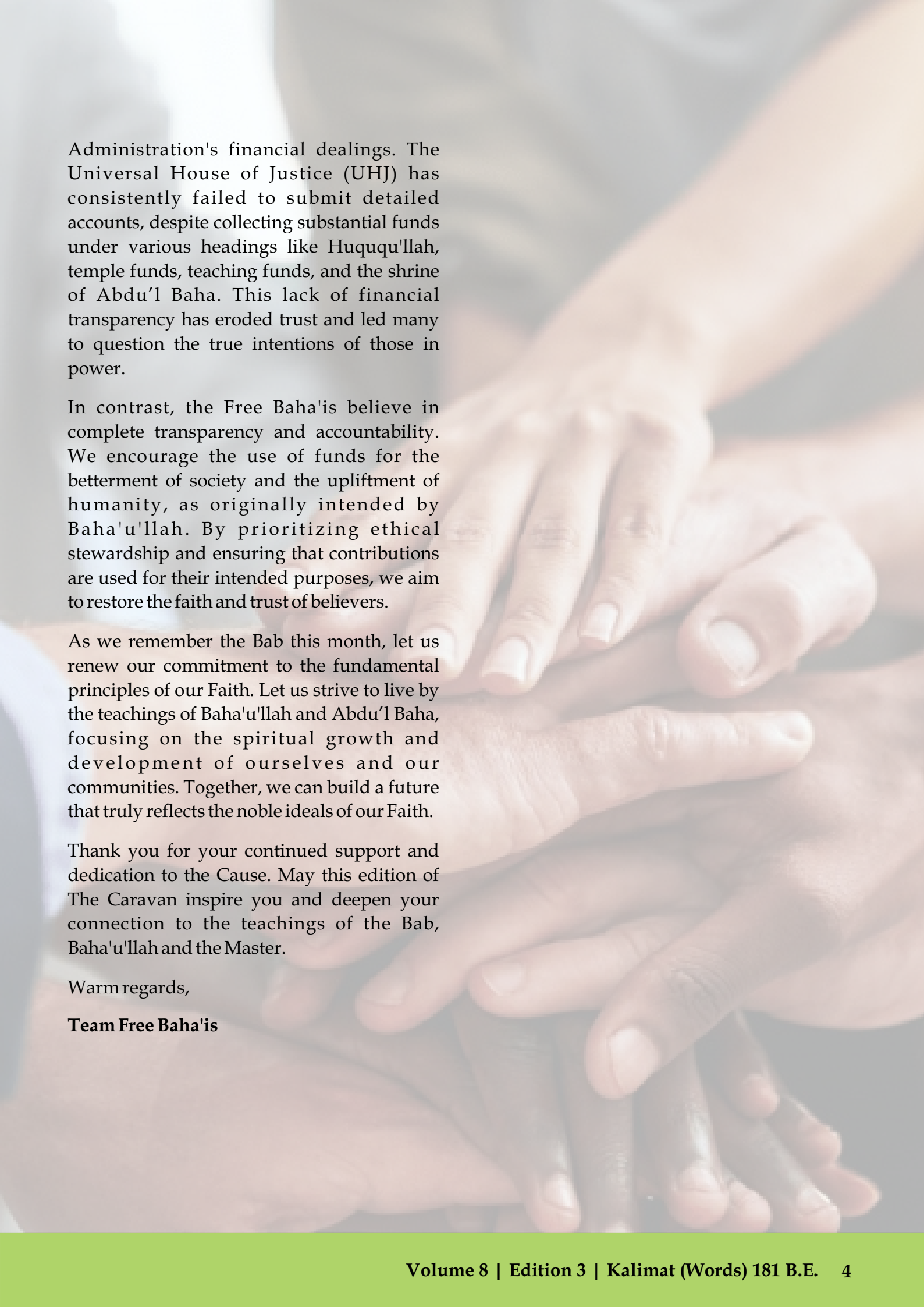
As we approach the month of Kalimat, we honor the memory of the Bab on the anniversary of His martyrdom, July 9th. This edition of The Caravan is dedicated to the Bab, whose sacrifice paved the way for the advent of Baha'u'llah and the renewal of spiritual and social teachings that continue to guide us today.

The Bab's mission was one of transformation and renewal, calling humanity to a higher standard of spiritual awareness and moral conduct. As Free Baha'is, we strive to uphold the true essence of His message, which was further expanded by Baha'u'llah. Our commitment is to the pure teachings of the Bab and Baha'u'llah, and we are dedicated to spreading their words with integrity and sincerity.

In recent times, it has become increasingly apparent that the current Baha'i Administration is more concerned with numbers and superficial growth than with the genuine spiritual development of its followers. The focus on reporting inflated statistics and creating an illusion of growth on paper is far removed from the true teachings of Baha'u'llah, which emphasize inner transformation and sincere dedication to the Cause.

The Free Baha'i community rejects the notion of manipulating numbers for appearances. Our focus is on bringing people to the authentic teachings of Baha'u'llah and the Master, Abdu'l Baha. We believe in honest and heartfelt efforts to share the message without any pretense. Our goal is to cultivate a community of individuals who are genuinely inspired by the teachings and strive to embody the principles of justice, love, and unity in their daily lives.

Another pressing issue that has caused concern among Baha'is worldwide is the lack of transparency and accountability in the



Administration's financial dealings. The Universal House of Justice (UHJ) has consistently failed to submit detailed accounts, despite collecting substantial funds under various headings like Huququ'llah, temple funds, teaching funds, and the shrine of Abdu'l Baha. This lack of financial transparency has eroded trust and led many to question the true intentions of those in power.

In contrast, the Free Baha'is believe in complete transparency and accountability. We encourage the use of funds for the betterment of society and the upliftment of humanity, as originally intended by Baha'u'llah. By prioritizing ethical stewardship and ensuring that contributions are used for their intended purposes, we aim to restore the faith and trust of believers.

As we remember the Bab this month, let us renew our commitment to the fundamental principles of our Faith. Let us strive to live by the teachings of Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l Baha, focusing on the spiritual growth and development of ourselves and our communities. Together, we can build a future that truly reflects the noble ideals of our Faith.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication to the Cause. May this edition of The Caravan inspire you and deepen your connection to the teachings of the Bab, Baha'u'llah and the Master.

Warm regards,

Team Free Baha'is



Tehran. The Gate of Naw. On August 15, 1852, three young Bábís, blinded by grief after the martyrdom of the Báb as well as of many of their fellow believers, foolishly attempted to take the life of Ná iri'd-Dín Sháh but failed. A horrific massacre of the Bábís followed. At the Gate of Naw, one of the northern gates of Tehran, the remains of many of the Báb's followers were hung.

DARKNESS



You, darkness, that I come from
I love you more than all the fires
that fence in the world,
for the fire makes a circle of light for everyone
and then no one outside learns of you.

But the darkness pulls in everything-
shapes and fires, animals and myself,
how easily it gathers them! -
powers and people-

and it is possible a great presence is moving near me.

I have faith in nights.

- Rainer Maria Rilke

DIVINE LAWS

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

Say: Do not rejoice in what you possess at nightfall, when at sunrise another will possess it. Thus does the Knower, the Omniscient One, inform you. Say: Have you seen that your possessions remain or are loyal to you? No! By My soul, the Merciful. If only you were of the just! The days of your life pass as pass the winds. The carpet of your glory shall fold up as did that of the ancients. Think, O people! Where are your past days? Where are the eras that have elapsed? Blessed are the days that have passed in the remembrance of God and the times spent in the remembrance of Him, the Wise One. By My life, the might of the Mighty shall not abide, nor the vanities of the rich, nor the pomp of the wicked. All shall pass away by a word from Him. He, indeed, is the Powerful, the Mighty, the Strong One. Their household goods will not benefit people. They have been careless of what benefits them. They shall be aroused and yet not find what has passed them by in the days of their Lord, the Mighty, the Praiseworthy. If they only knew, they would spend what they have, so that their names might be remembered before the Throne, are they not of the dead?

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

THE ASCENSION OF THE BAB: A DEFINING MOMENT IN BAHA'I HISTORY

– BY ELIZABETH HARDING

The Ascension of the Bab is a profound event in Baha'i history, commemorating the martyrdom of Siyyid Ali Mu'ammad, known as the Bab, who was a pivotal figure in the development of the Baha'i Faith. His life and subsequent martyrdom had an immense impact on religious history and continue to be a source of inspiration and reflection for Baha'is around the world.

Born in 1819 in Shiraz, Persia, the Bab declared His mission in 1844, proclaiming Himself as the Gate (Bab) to a new era of spiritual and social transformation. His teachings emphasized the imminent arrival of "He Whom God Shall Manifest," later recognized as Baha'u'llah, the founder of the Baha'i Faith. The Bab's teachings challenged the entrenched religious orthodoxy of the time, advocating for the spiritual and social renewal of society.

Despite the transformative nature of His message, the Bab faced severe persecution from religious and political authorities. His teachings, which called for the reformation of societal structures and the upliftment of the

oppressed, threatened the established order. Consequently, the Bab and His followers, known as Babis, endured intense persecution and violence.

The Bab's martyrdom on July 9, 1850, is a pivotal moment in Baha'i history. After being imprisoned and subjected to numerous trials and interrogations, the Bab was executed in the barracks square of Tabriz, Persia. He was publicly shot by a firing squad in a tragic and dramatic event witnessed by thousands. This act was intended to extinguish His influence and the spread of His teachings, but instead, it only served to galvanize His followers and solidify His legacy.

Accounts of the Bab's execution are filled with remarkable details that underscore the profound spiritual significance of the event. It is said that the initial firing squad, composed of Christian soldiers, failed to kill Him, with the Bab emerging unharmed from the smoke of gunfire. This miraculous occurrence further fueled the devotion of His followers and the awe of onlookers. A second firing squad was then assembled, and the Bab



was ultimately executed.

The remains of the Bab were secretly recovered by His followers and were eventually interred on Mount Carmel in Haifa, Israel, where the Shrine of the Bab now stands as a symbol of His enduring legacy. The Shrine of the Bab is a place of pilgrimage and reverence for Baha'is, representing the profound sacrifice He made for the advancement of humanity.

The Bab's martyrdom is not merely a historical event but a profound spiritual lesson for Baha'is. It exemplifies the ultimate sacrifice for one's beliefs and the enduring power of faith in the face of persecution. The Bab's life and martyrdom are a testament to the transformative power of divine revelation and the enduring impact of spiritual leadership.

In the modern Baha'i community, the anniversary of the Bab's martyrdom, known as the Ascension of the Bab, is observed with solemnity and reverence. Baha'is around the world gather for prayers, reflections, and

readings from the Bab's writings. It is a time to honor His legacy, reflect on the sacrifices made by early believers, and renew their commitment to the principles of the Baha'i Faith.

The teachings of the Bab laid the foundation for the Baha'i Faith, emphasizing the oneness of humanity, the equality of men and women, and the need for universal education. His vision of a just and equitable society continues to inspire Baha'is to work towards the betterment of the world. The Bab's call for social and spiritual transformation resonates deeply with contemporary global challenges, making His message as relevant today as it was in the 19th century.

Moreover, the Bab's emphasis on independent investigation of truth and the rejection of blind imitation underscores the Baha'i principle of seeking knowledge and understanding through personal exploration and reflection. This principle encourages Baha'is to engage with the world thoughtfully and critically, fostering a spirit of inquiry and openness.

The story of the Bab and His martyrdom also highlights the theme of resilience in the face of adversity. Despite the immense challenges and persecutions faced by the Bab and His followers, their unwavering faith and dedication to His teachings laid the groundwork for the establishment and spread of the Baha'i Faith. This resilience is a source of strength and inspiration for Baha'is today, reminding them of the importance of perseverance in their efforts to promote unity, justice, and peace.

In conclusion, the Ascension of the Bab is a moment of profound significance in Baha'i history. It marks the sacrifice of a great spiritual leader whose teachings continue to inspire and guide millions of people worldwide. The Bab's life and martyrdom are a testament to the enduring power of faith, the importance of independent investigation of truth, and the transformative impact of spiritual leadership. As Baha'is commemorate this event, they honor His legacy and reaffirm their commitment to the principles of the Baha'i Faith, working towards the betterment of humanity and the realization of a just and unified 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

CLERGY IN THE BAHA'I CAUSE

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)



1846: Shiraz. The House of the Bab, where He lived together with His wife and His mother until early 1846.

FREE BAHAI ACTIVITIES

“The most acceptable prayer is the one offered with the utmost spirituality and radiance; its prolongation hath not been and is not beloved by God. The more detached and the purer the prayer, the more acceptable is it in the presence of God.”

- The Bab, Persian Bayan, Selections from the Writings of the Báb

The Free Baha'i community, inspired by the pure and unaltered teachings of Baha'u'llah and the Master, continues to flourish across the globe. In various countries, our members are making significant strides in promoting spiritual and societal development, reflecting the true essence of the Baha'i Faith. Here, we highlight the vibrant activities and contributions of Free Baha'is in different regions.

In Thailand, the Free Baha'i community is flourishing, thanks to the presence of a dedicated pioneer who is actively engaging with the community to spread the teachings of Baha'u'llah. They have organized various study circles and discussion groups aimed at deepening the understanding of the Faith among both Baha'is and interested individuals. A significant focus has been placed on implementing the principles of the

Tablets of Baha'u'llah in daily life, which has brought about positive changes in both personal and communal conduct.

The Free Baha'is in Canada have received heartwarming reviews for their recent publication, "Beyond the Narrative," which provides an in-depth analysis of the Will and Testament of Abdu'l Baha. The book has been widely shared in PDF format, facilitating easy access and broad dissemination of its insightful content. This has further clarified the importance of adhering to a Guardian appointed by the Master, helping believers understand the deviations that occurred with Shoghi Effendi's leadership.

In the USA, the Free Baha'i community has been particularly active in raising awareness about Huququ'llah. They emphasize the importance of ensuring that contributions are used for societal welfare rather than administrative expenses. This approach has resonated with many Baha'is, leading to a notable shift in how funds are allocated. The community also dedicates significant time to studying the original writings of Baha'u'llah, fostering a deeper spiritual connection and understanding.

Azerbaijan's Free Baha'is have been at the

forefront of humanitarian efforts, using their Huququ'llah contributions to support various charitable initiatives. These include providing aid to underprivileged families, supporting educational programs for children, and contributing to healthcare services. Their commitment to social justice and equity exemplifies the core teachings of the Baha'i Faith.

In Germany, the Free Baha'is have organized numerous interfaith dialogues and community service projects. These initiatives aim to bridge cultural and religious divides, promoting unity and mutual respect. The youth, in particular, have taken an active role in these efforts, highlighting the importance of understanding faith as a pathway to leading a successful and fulfilling life.

In Thailand, specifically in the city of Sam Phran and Hua Hin, the Free Baha'is celebrated Ridvan by inviting friends and family to a joyous gathering. This celebration was marked by an atmosphere of unity and reflection on the teachings of Baha'u'llah, fostering a sense of community and shared purpose. The event was a testament to the spirit of hospitality and inclusiveness that defines the Free Baha'i movement.

Beyond these specific countries, Free Baha'is worldwide are implementing the teachings of the Baha'u'llah to the best of their understanding. This has proven beneficial in various aspects of life, from personal development to community welfare. The

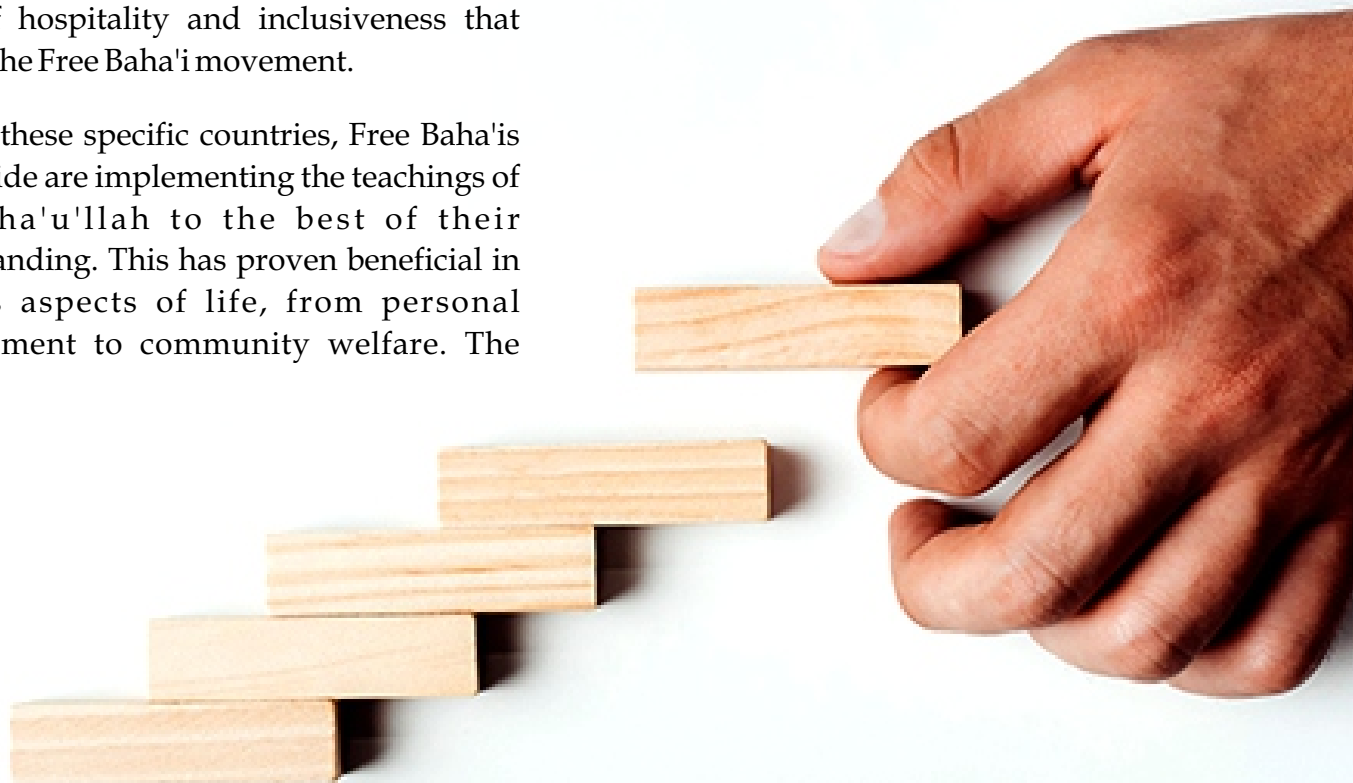
focus remains on serving humanity without gender or religious bias, staying true to the universal message of the Bab and Baha'u'llah.

Our community continues to grow as more people recognize the authenticity and purity of the Free Baha'i teachings. The global efforts in creating awareness, promoting justice, and fostering unity are a testament to our collective dedication to the Faith. By using Huququ'llah contributions for the welfare of society, Free Baha'is are not only adhering to the true teachings but also setting an example of ethical stewardship and selfless service.

As we move forward, let us remain committed to the principles of the Faith, working tirelessly to bring the light of Baha'u'llah's teachings to every corner of the world. Together, we can build a future that truly reflects the noble ideals of our beloved Faith.

With warm wishes and heartfelt gratitude,

Free Baha'i Team



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

“Be generous in prosperity, and thankful in adversity. Be worthy of the trust of thy neighbor, and look upon him with a bright and friendly face. Be a treasure to the poor, an admonisher to the rich, an answerer to the cry of the needy, a preserver of the sanctity of thy pledge. Be fair in thy judgment, and guarded in thy speech. Be unjust to no man, and show all meekness to all men. Be as a lamp unto them that walk in darkness, a joy to the sorrowful, a sea for the thirsty, a haven for the distressed, an upholder and defender of the victim of oppression. Let integrity and uprightness distinguish all thine acts. Be a home for the stranger, a balm to the suffering, a tower of strength for the fugitive. Be eyes to the blind, and a guiding light unto the feet of the erring. Be an ornament to the countenance of truth, a crown to the brow of fidelity, a pillar of the temple of righteousness, a breath of life to the body of mankind, an ensign of the hosts of justice, a luminary above the horizon of virtue, a dew to the soil of the human heart, an ark on the ocean of knowledge, a sun in the heaven of bounty, a gem on the diadem of wisdom, a shining light in the firmament of thy generation, a fruit upon the tree of humility.”

— Baha’u’llah

“Religion should unite all hearts and cause wars and disputes to vanish from the face of the earth; it should give birth to spirituality, and bring light and life to every soul. If religion becomes a cause of dislike, hatred and division, it would be better to be without it... Any religion which is not a cause of love and unity is no religion.”

— Abdu’l Baha

INTRODUCING

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SOME QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Email 1:

Allah'u'Abha friends,

I'm Maggy from Atlanta, and I have been a steadfast follower of Baha'u'llah. I believe that the teachings of the Free Baha'is align very closely with those of Baha'u'llah. Although I attend NDF meetings every month and participate in local community service, I have stopped giving my Huququ'llah money to the Administration. Instead, I freely spend it on the needy and poor in my area.

I have a solid understanding of why this stance against the Administration's collection of Huququ'llah is correct, but I would appreciate it if you could provide me with some reasons why the Free Baha'is are opposed to this practice.

Thanks,

Maggy

Answer:

Hi Maggy,

Allah'u'Abha!

Glad to know that you too are following the pristine teachings of Baha'u'llah and are one of the Free Baha'is.

Free Baha'is are against collecting Huququ'llah (the Right of God) for the centralized Baha'i Administration for several reasons. These reasons are grounded in their interpretation of the teachings of Baha'u'llah and their concerns about the current practices of the Baha'i Administration. Here are the main reasons with references from Baha'u'llah's teachings:

1. Adherence to Original Teachings

Free Baha'is believe in strictly adhering to the

original teachings of Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha without the additional interpretations and administrative structures introduced later by Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice (UHJ). They argue that the original teachings emphasize personal responsibility and spiritual integrity over centralized control.

2. Lack of Transparency

Free Baha'is are concerned about the lack of transparency in how Huququ'llah funds are managed and utilized by the central Baha'i Administration. They argue that Baha'u'llah's teachings stress the importance of justice and transparency in all affairs, including financial matters.

"Ye are the trustees of God on earth and His viceroys among men." — Baha'u'llah, The Hidden Words

This emphasizes the need for accountability and transparency, qualities they feel are lacking in the centralized collection and distribution of Huququ'llah funds.

3. Potential for Misuse of Funds

There is concern among Free Baha'is that centralized funds can be misused or diverted away from their intended purposes. They believe that Baha'u'llah's teachings support the direct use of resources for the betterment of society and helping the poor and needy, rather than being controlled by a central authority.

"It is incumbent upon every man of insight and understanding to strive to translate that which hath been written into reality and action." — Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah

This suggests that actions, including financial contributions, should directly translate into tangible benefits for society.

4. Focus on Personal Responsibility

Free Baha'is emphasize the individual believer's responsibility to directly contribute to social welfare and community development, rather than delegating this responsibility to a central authority.

"The purpose of justice is the appearance of unity among men." — Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf

This highlights the idea that justice and unity are achieved through individual actions and contributions, aligning with the Free Baha'i view of direct personal responsibility.

5. Avoiding Clericalism and Bureaucracy

Free Baha'is are wary of the development of a clerical class or bureaucratic elite within the Baha'i Administration, which they believe is contrary to Baha'u'llah's vision of a decentralized, community-based religious practice.

"O people of Baha! It is incumbent upon each one of you to engage in some occupation—such as a craft, a trade or the like." — Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf

This encourages personal initiative and engagement in practical affairs, rather than reliance on a centralized clerical structure.

6. Promoting Local and Community-Based Initiatives

Free Baha'is believe that Huququ'llah funds should be used locally, supporting initiatives that directly benefit their communities. They

argue that this approach is more in line with Baha'u'llah's teachings on community development and the practical application of spiritual principles.

"Be anxiously concerned with the needs of the age ye live in, and center your deliberations on its exigencies and requirements." – Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah

This calls for a focus on addressing the specific needs of local communities, which Free Baha'is interpret as supporting local use of funds over centralized collection.

In summary, Free Baha'is advocate for a decentralized approach to Huququ'llah, emphasizing personal responsibility, transparency, and direct community impact, aligning with their interpretation of Baha'u'llah's teachings. Hope that answers the question.

Thanks and regards,

Team Free Baha'is



Email 2:

Hello, I was a Muslim earlier and recently converted to the Baha'i Faith. My question is whether kissing the hands of elderly people out of respect is not allowed, and if so, why not? Is this mentioned in the teachings of Baha'u'llah or Abdu'l Baha? I just need to understand the reasoning behind it.

Answer:

Dear Friend,

Thank you for your question and for sharing your journey with us. Welcome to the Baha'i community.

Regarding the practice of kissing the hands of elderly people out of respect, Baha'u'llah has provided clear guidance in the Kitab-i-Aqdas:

"The kissing of hands is forbidden in the Book. This (kind of reverence for religious leaders) is what you were forbidden by your Lord, the Mighty, the Wise. No one need beg forgiveness of another. Repent to God for yourselves. He is the Mighty and Relenting Giver and Forgiver."

The prohibition against kissing hands is rooted in the principle that no individual should be elevated to a status where such acts of reverence are deemed necessary. Baha'u'llah's teachings emphasise the inherent nobility and equality of all human beings, discouraging practices that suggest hierarchical reverence or dependence on human intermediaries for forgiveness and grace.

Instead, Baha'u'llah encourages direct repentance to God, underscoring the personal and direct relationship each individual has with the Divine. This approach helps to prevent any form of undue exaltation of religious leaders or elders, maintaining the focus on God as the ultimate source of

forgiveness and guidance.

This principle is intended to foster a community where respect and honour are shown through actions and attitudes that uphold equality and humility, rather than through physical gestures that might imply subordination or undue reverence.

I hope this explanation helps clarify the rationale behind this aspect of Baha'i teachings. Please feel free to reach out if you have any further questions or need more information.

Warm regards,

Team Free Baha'is



Email 3:

What does the Bab mean when He compares God to the sun and believers to mirrors in His writings quoted below?

"The One true God may be compared unto the sun and the believer unto a mirror. No sooner is the mirror placed before the sun than it reflects its light. The unbeliever may be likened unto a stone. No matter how long it is exposed to the sunshine, it cannot reflect the sun."

Answer:

In this passage, the Bab uses a simple yet powerful analogy to explain the relationship between God and believers. Here's what He is trying to convey:

1. God as the Sun: Just as the sun is the source of light and energy, God is the ultimate source of spiritual light and guidance.
2. Believers as Mirrors: When believers turn their hearts and minds towards God, like a mirror placed before the sun, they reflect His divine light and qualities. This means that believers who are receptive to God's teachings and presence will naturally exhibit His attributes in their lives.
3. Unbelievers as Stones: Conversely, those who do not believe or open their hearts to God are compared to stones. Just as stones cannot reflect sunlight no matter how long they are exposed to it, unbelievers do not reflect God's light because they are not receptive to it.

In simple terms, the Bab is teaching us that believer, by turning to God, can reflect His light and virtues in their lives, while unbelievers, by not opening themselves to God, miss out on this divine reflection. This analogy emphasizes the importance of faith and receptivity to God's guidance in

transforming our lives.

Hope that answers your question.

Warm regards,

Team Free Baha'is



Email 4:

Greetings and Alláh-u-abhá,

I have contemplated reaching out over the past several months, and after the recent outcome of my community's LSA election, I decided to bite the bullet and move forward.

I joined the Faith 2 years ago, and officially declared on my birthday in 2023. I was raised in the Episcopalian church, and my parents were both very well-read, intelligent people. One of the greatest blessing I've had in life is being taught from a very young age to never take anything at face value, do my own research, think critically and come up with my own conclusions. I was taught by my stepfather that the most important things in life are: Critical thinking, and the pursuit of knowledge thru self education. That is what has brought me to writing this email today.

My parents told me when I turned 14 that I was now old enough to decide if I wanted to continue attending church. I knew inherently that Christianity was never for me, so I stopped going. I discovered the Bahai Faith several years ago in college. Reading the core doctrine of Baha'u'llah resonated with me deeply. It was what I already believed in. But, I knew I was not ready to make that kind of decision and commitment, so I told myself I'd come back to it later. Fast-forward to Autumn of 2022, I was tossing and turning in bed one night (frustrated as I had to work in the morning) and heard a message that told me to read about the Faith once more. I did, and knew without question that it was time. I reached out to my local LSA, and shortly after met with our secretary and an ABM.

At that time, I was suffering greatly due to several losses in my personal life, mental health issues and an overall sense of being lost in the world. My community welcomed me with enthusiasm and open arms. In the beginning, I felt that I had finally found my place. I became incredibly close with two of

the members, and they are now unofficially my adoptive parents. They, along with my community, gave me something I had desperately lacked all my life: stability and unconditional love.

As time went on, I took my studying of the Scriptures, the history of the Faith and Baha'u'llahs life incredibly seriously. My love and reverence for the Beloved is unlike anything I've ever felt. Learning the full scale of His suffering and sacrifice is what truly solidified my faith. I was so passionate about sharing His story and teachings, and incredibly grateful for his dedication to humanity. I was also deeply moved by the stories of the martyrs who died for the Cause.

Eventually, it dawned on me that my community was almost entirely disconnected from Baha'u'llahs vision. I used to look forward to attending Feast every month, now I hardly go at all. What used to be my safe space to voice my thoughts and opinions became a sterilized event that was much more concerned with the Institute process, guilt tripping about not donating enough (we live in an incredibly wealthy area, I should add), and repeating the same nonsense about core activities and the 9 year plan. I have voiced my concerns with my two close friends, and although they don't disagree, they view it as an "Oh, well". I should also add that I am one of the youngest of my community, one of the only non-Persians, and one of very few who came to the Faith on my own and was not raised as Bahai.

After discovering the Free Bahai website and reading thru the Caravan magazine, I started to really see the writing on the wall. The small cracks became chasms. And I could no longer live in cognitive dissonance. My attendance at Feast, Ruhi Class, Gatherings, Convention and Devotionals has become less and less. And after the recent LSA election, I've all but

given up. It is the same exact people who were the LSA of last year and the years prior. When reading the list of electees, I saw a name of a member I had never met nor heard of. When I asked someone who they were and why have I never met them at any events, I was told they were a wonderful person who has been part of this community for 20 years, but is so tied up with work that they don't have time to attend. I just don't understand how someone who has not been present for a single event I've been to in the last 2 years could even be considered. Our chair has also given me problems by over talking me during Feast, rushing me and others during the devotional portion, and being overall very condescending and passive aggressive. I know for a fact I am not the only one who has had issues with their behaviour. Seeing them being re-elected as chair did nothing but pour salt in my wound.

Thank you for taking the time out of your day to read this. Apologies for the length. I cannot abandon my love and Faith in Baha'u'llah. But I am so lost and disillusioned with everything. I need answers and support. The Free Bahai movement is my last hope before I say "screw it" and separate myself forever. Take care and Alláh-u-Abhá.

Enviado do meu iPhone

Answer:

Dear Adrienne,

Allah'u'Abha,

Thank you for reaching out and sharing your heartfelt story with us. We truly appreciate the time and effort you took to write such a detailed account of your experiences. Please note, your email went into our Spam folder, which caused a delay in our response. We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused.

Firstly, we understand that your journey has been one of deep contemplation and

commitment to the teachings of Baha'u'llah. Your passion for the faith and your dedication to critical thinking and self-education are truly commendable. We are sorry to hear about the challenges you've faced within your local Baha'i community, especially the disillusionment with the administrative aspects and the lack of genuine spiritual connection.

To address your concerns, it's important to clarify that the issues you're experiencing are, unfortunately, common in religious communities that have shifted towards an administrative focus, becoming more like social clubs operated by a select few. This transformation often leads to disconnection from the core spiritual teachings and values. In the case of the Baha'i Faith, we refer to this phenomenon as Shogism, after Shoghi Effendi, who played a significant role in institutionalizing the faith.

As Free Baha'is, we strive to adhere strictly to the teachings of Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l Baha, avoiding the bureaucratic and corporate culture that has emerged within the mainstream Baha'i administration. We believe in a faith free from administrative constraints, focusing on genuine spiritual growth, community service, and the teachings of Baha'u'llah and the Master.

You are welcome to join us in this true expression of the Baha'i faith. We do not maintain membership cards or statistics; our community is united by a shared commitment to the spiritual principles of Baha'u'llah. Your unique experiences and insights would be a valuable addition to our efforts to spread the teachings and values of Baha'u'llah.

Please let us know how you would like to get involved and contribute to the Caravan of Baha'u'llah. We are here to support you and answer any further questions you may have.

Warm regards,

Team Free Baha'is

KNOW YOUR HERITAGE



A robe worn by the Bab

WEBSPLORE

The Hollow Trunk of the Administration in Thailand

5 upvotes • 8 comments



The_Goa_Force • 21d

I think the numbers were falsified from the start. If there were millions of Baha'i around the world, they would produce quantities of informations. But the current quantity of informations does not show that there has been significant groups of Baha'is in South East Asia. Even a community by the thousands would have attracted attention in the form of interactions with the state or the press, emergence of new Baha'i personalities from these backgrounds, influence on local politics and culture. But everywhere you look at, except in a very few places such as Israel, North America and Iran, Baha'is are invisible, sometimes non existent.

... [Reply](#)   3 



TrwyAdenauer3rd • 21d

Absolutely. Supposedly 2 million Bahais in India but zero social media presence.

The Faith suspiciously only grows rapidly in countries that can't conduct an accurate census.

... [Reply](#)   2 

The Hollow Trunk of the Administration in Thailand

“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!

DID YOU KNOW ?

The teachings of the Bab and the principles upheld by the Free Baha'is share many foundational elements. Both emphasize the purity of spiritual understanding, the importance of independent investigation of truth, and a commitment to social justice and community welfare. Here are a few key ways the teachings of the Bab reflect the ethos of the Free Baha'i movement, supported by examples:

Independent Investigation of Truth

The Bab: The Bab emphasized the importance of each individual seeking out truth for themselves, rather than relying solely on the interpretations and teachings of others. This principle encourages personal spiritual exploration and understanding.

Free Baha'is: Similarly, Free Baha'is advocate for the independent investigation of truth, encouraging individuals to study the writings of Baha'u'llah and the Bab directly, without the mediation of institutions like the Universal House of Justice (UHJ). This approach ensures that each believer forms their understanding based on authentic teachings.

Example: A Free Baha'i in Canada spends time studying the Kitab-i-Aqdas and the writings of the Bab, forming a personal understanding of the faith's principles and applying them directly in daily life.

Emphasis on Pure and Unaltered Teachings

The Bab: The Bab's teachings laid the foundation for a new era of spiritual understanding, focusing on purity and direct divine revelation. His writings were vast and intended to be a direct connection between the divine and humanity.

Free Baha'is: Free Baha'is strive to adhere strictly to the original teachings of Baha'u'llah and the Bab, avoiding later interpretations or administrative additions they believe may dilute or alter the message. This reflects a commitment to preserving the faith's original purity.

Example: The publication and dissemination of "Beyond the Narrative" by Free Baha'is, which critically examines and seeks to clarify the Will and Testament of Abdul Baha, showing dedication to maintaining the purity of the teachings.

Social Justice and Welfare

The Bab: The Bab called for justice and the betterment of society, emphasizing the importance of helping the needy and uplifting the downtrodden. His teachings included provisions for charity and social welfare.

Free Baha'is: Free Baha'is reflect this emphasis by using Huququ'llah contributions and other funds to directly benefit society. They focus on charitable acts and social projects rather than administrative expenses, staying true to the spirit of service and justice.

Example: Free Baha'is in Azerbaijan use their Huququ'llah funds to support educational programs, healthcare services, and aid for underprivileged families, embodying the Bab's call for social justice.

Gender and Religious Equality

The Bab: The Bab's teachings promoted the idea of equality among all people, regardless of gender or religion. He envisioned a world where justice and equity prevailed.

Free Baha'is: Free Baha'is champion these principles by ensuring their activities and teachings are inclusive, fostering environments where all individuals are respected and valued equally, regardless of gender or religious background.

Example: In Germany, Free Baha'is organize interfaith dialogues and community service projects that promote unity and respect among different cultural and religious groups, reflecting the Bab's vision of an equitable society.

Implementation of Core Teachings

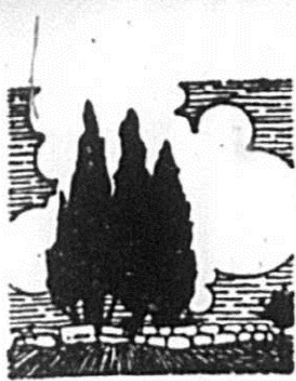
The Bab: The Bab's revelations included practical guidance for living a spiritually aligned life, emphasizing adherence to divine laws and principles.

Free Baha'is: Free Baha'is emphasize the practical application of the teachings of Baha'u'llah and the Bab, encouraging believers to integrate these principles into their daily lives and community activities.

Example: In Singapore, Free Baha'is conduct study circles focused on the Kitab-i-Aqdas, helping participants apply its teachings in ways that bring about positive personal and communal change.

In summary, the teachings of the Bab resonate strongly with the core values of the Free Baha'i movement. Both stress the importance of independent spiritual inquiry, maintaining the purity of the original teachings, advocating for social justice, and upholding principles of equality and practical application of spiritual laws. Through these shared principles, Free Baha'is continue to honor and reflect the profound legacy of the Bab.

BLAST FROM THE PAST



LIVING PICTURES

IN THE GREAT DRAMA OF THE 19th CENTURY

CHAPTER II

The Great Captive

November 12th, 1817

May 28th, 1892

Verily, Akka is a city of Syria which God in His mercy has distinguished.

I announce unto you a white city upon the borders of the sea; its whiteness is its beauty, given by God. Know that the voice which there, calls the Azan, will reach unto Paradise.

Happy is he who makes pilgrimage to Akka.

Happy is he who makes pilgrimage to the Pilgrim of Akka.

—From the Hadiths of Mohammed.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, a group of men, women and children leave their native province of Wuerttemberg, in the south of Germany, and migrate to Palestine. They settle at the base of Mount Carmel in the town of Haifa, forming a colony which spreads, as time goes on, to other parts of that land. Above the doorways of their houses they carve in bold letters, the words: "*Der Herr ist nach.*" (The Lord is at hand.)

Reference: New History, June 1933

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."

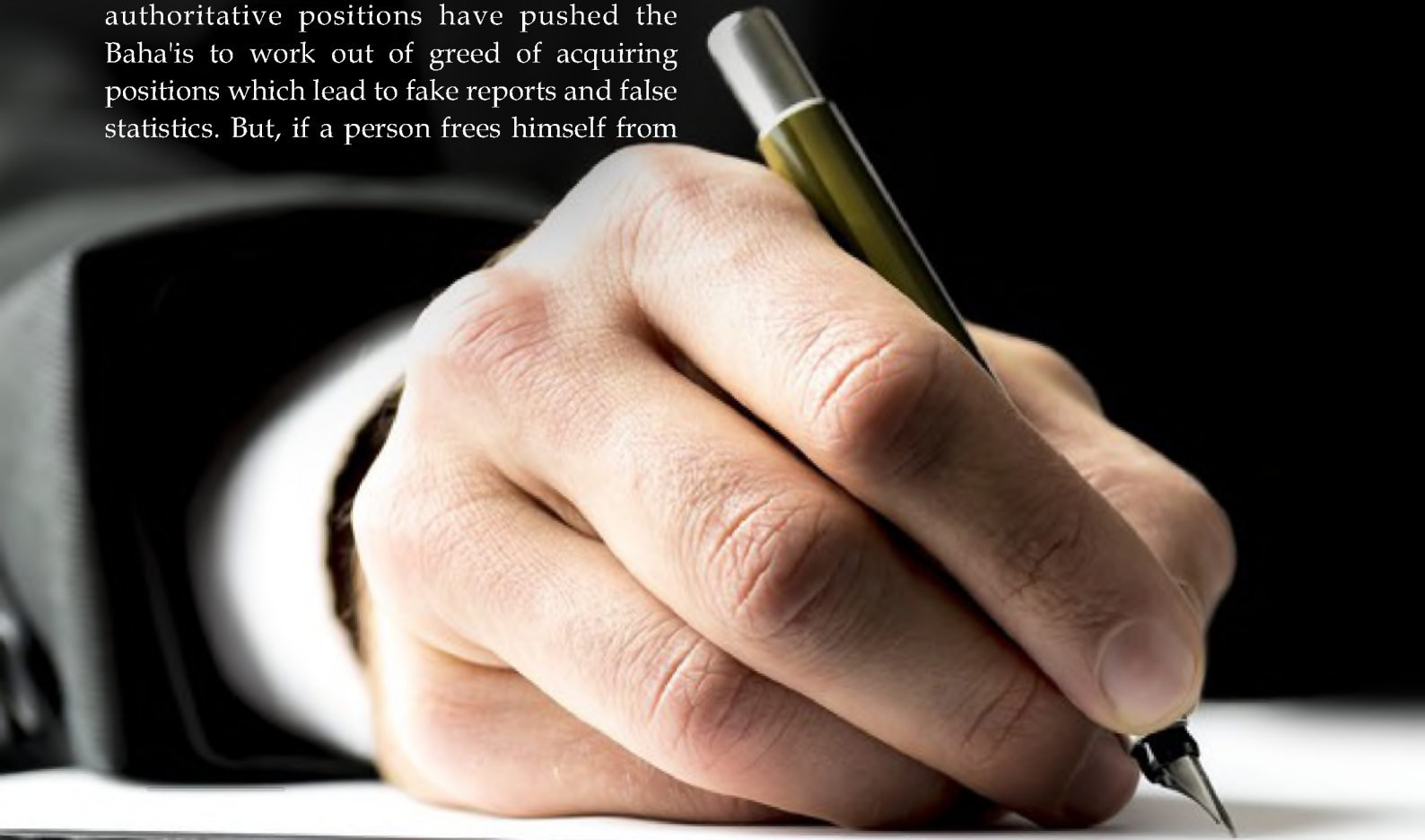
(Reference: Star of the West, Vol. 8, pg. 116)

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?



THROWBACK



The barracks square in Tabriz where the Báb was martyred

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