

O daughter of the Kingdom! Thy letter hath come and its contents make clear the fact that thou hast directed all thy thoughts toward acquiring light from the realms of mystery. So long as the thoughts of an individual are scattered he will achieve no results, but if his thinking be concentrated on a single point wonderful will be the fruits thereof.

One cannot obtain the full force of the sunlight when it is cast on a flat mirror, but once the sun shineth upon a concave mirror, or on a lens that is convex, all its heat will be concentrated on a single point, and that one point will burn the hottest. Thus is it necessary to focus one's thinking on a single point so that it will become an effective force.

Thou didst wish to celebrate the Day of Riḍván with a feast, and to have those present on that day engage in reciting Tablets with delight and joy, and thou didst request me to send thee a letter to be read on that day. My letter is this:

O ye beloved, and ye handmaids of the Merciful! This is the day when the Day-Star of Truth rose over the horizon of life, and its glory spread, and its brightness shone out with such power that it clove the dense and high-piled clouds and mounted the skies of the world in all its splendour. Hence do ye witness a new stirring throughout all created things.

See how, in this day, the scope of sciences and arts hath widened out, and what wondrous technical advances have been made, and to what a high degree the mind's powers have increased, and what stupendous inventions have appeared.

This age is indeed as a hundred other ages: should ye gather the yield of a hundred ages, and set that against the accumulated product of our times, the yield of this one era will prove greater than that of a hundred gone before. Take ye, for an example, the sum total of all the books that were ever written in ages past, and compare that with the books and treatises that our era hath produced: these books, written in our day alone, far and away exceed the total number of volumes that have been written down the ages. See how powerful is the influence exerted by the Day-Star of the world upon the inner essence of all created things!

But alas, a thousand times alas! The eyes see it not, the ears are deaf, and the hearts and minds are oblivious of this supreme bestowal. Strive ye then, with all your hearts and souls, to awaken those who slumber, to cause the blind to see, and the dead to rise.

(Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá)

“For no less than eight years the supreme Manifestation of God lived freely among the inhabitants of Baghdad. He walked among them, sat with them and poured out His affection and bounties upon them. Although he did not disclose His station to them, yet multitudes of people from all walks of life were attracted to His person and longed to attain His presence, to hear His words, or even catch a glimpse of Him as He walked in the streets or paced along the bank of the Tigris rapt in meditation.

...

The love and admiration of the people for Bahá'u'lláh was fully demonstrated on the day of His departure from His 'Most Great House' in Baghdad. Then His majesty and greatness were evident to both friend and foe. The news of His forthcoming departure for Constantinople had spread rapidly among the inhabitants of Baghdad and its neighbouring towns, and large numbers wished to attain His presence and pay their last tributes to Him. But soon it became apparent that His house was too small for the purpose. When Najib Pasha, one of the notables of the city of Baghdad heard of this, he immediately placed his garden-park, Najibiyyih, at the disposal of Bahá'u'lláh. This beautiful garden, designated by His followers as the Garden of Riḍván (Paradise), was situated on the outskirts of Baghdad, across the river from Bahá'u'lláh's house.

Thirty-one days after Naw-Rúz, on 22 April 1863,¹ in the afternoon, Bahá'u'lláh moved to this garden, where He remained for twelve days. On the first day He declared His Mission to His companions.² These twelve days are celebrated by the Bahá'ís as the Festival of Riḍván.

¹ Thirty-one days after Naw-Rúz (21 March) normally falls on 21 April. Occasionally, as in the year 1863, when the vernal equinox takes place after sunset, Naw-Rúz is celebrated on 22 March.

² This is stated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in a talk given at Bahji on 29 April 1916.

The departure of Bahá'u'lláh from His house witnessed a commotion the like of which Baghdad had rarely seen. People of all walks of life, men and women, rich and poor, young and old, men of learning and culture, princes, government officials, tradesmen and workers, and above all His companions, thronged the approaches of His house and crowded the streets and roof-tops situated along His route to the river. They were lamenting and weeping the departure of One Who, for a decade, had imparted to them the warmth of His love and the radiance of His spirit, Who had been a refuge and guide for them all.

...

Bahá'u'lláh was then ferried across the river accompanied by three of His sons: 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Mirza Mihdi (the Purest Branch) and Muhammad-'Ali, who were eighteen, fourteen and ten years of age, respectively. With them also was His amanuensis, Mirza Aqa Jan. The identity of others who may have accompanied Him, or of those in the garden who had pitched His tent and were making preparations for His arrival, or of those who might have followed Him on that day, is not clearly known.

The call to afternoon prayer was raised from the mosque and the words 'Allah'u'Akbar' (God is the Greatest) chanted ... [as part of the Muslim call to prayer] reverberated through the garden as the King of Glory entered it. There, Bahá'u'lláh appeared in the utmost joy, walking majestically in its avenues lined with flowers and trees. The fragrance of the roses and the singing of the nightingales created an atmosphere of beauty and enchantment.

The companions of Bahá'u'lláh had, for some time, known the Declaration of His station to be imminent. This realization came to them not only as a result of many remarks and allusions made by Him during the last few months of His sojourn in Baghdad, but also through a noticeable change in His demeanour. Another sign which unmistakably pointed to its approaching hour was the adoption, on the day of His

departure from His house in Baghdad, of a different type of headdress known as taj (tall felt hat), which He wore throughout His ministry.

'Abdu'l-Bahá has described how, upon His arrival in the garden, Bahá'u'lláh declared His station to those of His companions who were present, and announced with great joy the inauguration of the Festival of Riḍván.³[1]

Sadness and grief vanished and the believers were filled with delight at this announcement. Although Bahá'u'lláh was being exiled to far-off lands and knew the sufferings and tribulations which were in store for Him and His followers, yet through this historic Declaration He changed all sorrow into blissful joy and spent the most delightful time of His ministry in the Garden of Riḍván. Indeed, in one of His Tablets, He has referred to the first day of Riḍván as the 'Day of supreme felicity', and has called on His followers to 'rejoice, with exceeding gladness' in remembrance of that day.⁴

The manner of the Declaration of Bahá'u'lláh's Mission is not clear, neither is the identity of all who heard Him. One thing, however, is clear. During His ten-years' sojourn in Iraq, although Bahá'u'lláh had alluded to His station, and identified Himself with the utterances of God revealed in His Tablets, He had never designated Himself as 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'. It was in the Garden of Riḍván that, in the course of His Declaration, He unequivocally did so, announcing Himself as the One Whose advent the Báb had proclaimed, for Whose sake He had sacrificed Himself and for Whom He had established a covenant with His followers. That day was one of the most eventful in the life of Bahá'u'lláh. The whole day He was occupied with important affairs, which culminated in the Declaration of His Mission -- the most momentous event of His ministry.

(Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh* v 1, pp. 259-262)

³

See footnote 2.

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Quotes lines from *God Passes By* by Shoghi Effendi, p.149

The Divine Springtime is come, O Most Exalted Pen, for the Festival of the All-Merciful is fast approaching. Bestir thyself, and magnify, before the entire creation, the name of God, and celebrate His praise, in such wise that all created things may be regenerated and made new. Speak, and hold not thy peace. The day star of blissfulness shineth above the horizon of Our name, the Blissful, inasmuch as the kingdom of the name of God hath been adorned with the ornament of the name of thy Lord, the Creator of the heavens. Arise before the nations of the earth, and arm thyself with the power of this Most Great Name, and be not of those who tarry.

Methinks that thou hast halted and movest not upon My Tablet. Could the brightness of the Divine Countenance have bewildered thee, or the idle talk of the forward filled thee with grief and paralyzed thy movement? Take heed lest anything deter thee from extolling the greatness of this Day -- the Day whereon the Finger of majesty and power hath opened the seal of the Wine of Reunion, and called all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth. Preferrest thou to tarry when the breeze announcing the Day of God hath already breathed over thee, or art thou of them that are shut out as by a veil from Him?

No veil whatever have I allowed, O Lord of all names and Creator of the heavens, to shut me from the recognition of the glories of Thy Day -- the Day which is the lamp of guidance unto the whole world, and the sign of the Ancient of Days unto all them that dwell therein. My silence is by reason of the veils that have blinded Thy creatures' eyes to Thee, and my muteness is because of the impediments that have hindered Thy people from recognizing Thy truth.

Thou knowest what is in me, but I know not what is in Thee. Thou art the All-Knowing, the All-Informed. By Thy name that excelleth all other names! If Thy overruling and all-compelling behest should ever reach me, it would empower me to revive the souls of all men, through Thy most exalted Word, which I have heard uttered by Thy Tongue of power in Thy Kingdom of glory. It would enable me to announce the revelation of Thy effulgent countenance where through that which lay hidden from the eyes of men hath been manifested in Thy name, the Perspicuous, the sovereign Protector, the Self-Subsisting.

Canst thou discover any one but Me, O Pen, in this Day? What hath become of the creation and the manifestations thereof? What of the names and their kingdom? Whither are gone all created things, whether

seen or unseen? What of the hidden secrets of the universe and its revelations? Lo, the entire creation hath passed away! Nothing remaineth except My Face, the Ever-Abiding, the Resplendent, the All-Glorious.

This is the Day whereon naught can be seen except the splendors of the Light that shineth from the face of Thy Lord, the Gracious, the Most Bountiful. Verily, We have caused every soul to expire by virtue of Our irresistible and all-subduing sovereignty. We have, then, called into being a new creation, as a token of Our grace unto men. I am, verily, the All-Bountiful, the Ancient of Days.

This is the Day whereon the unseen world crieth out: "Great is thy blessedness, O earth, for thou hast been made the foot-stool of thy God, and been chosen as the seat of His mighty throne." The realm of glory exclaimeth: "Would that my life could be sacrificed for thee, for He Who is the Beloved of the All-Merciful hath established His sovereignty upon thee, through the power of His Name that hath been promised unto all things, whether of the past or of the future." This is the Day whereon every sweet smelling thing hath derived its fragrance from the smell of My garment -- a garment that hath shed its perfume upon the whole of creation. This is the Day whereon the rushing waters of everlasting life have gushed out of the Will of the All-Merciful. Haste ye, with your hearts and souls, and quaff your fill, O Concourse of the realms above!

Say: He it is Who is the Manifestation of Him Who is the Unknowable, the Invisible of the Invisibles, could ye but perceive it. He it is Who hath laid bare before you the hidden and treasured Gem, were ye to seek it. He it is Who is the one Beloved of all things, whether of the past or of the future. Would that ye might set your hearts and hopes upon Him!

We have heard the voice of thy pleading, O Pen, and excuse thy silence. What is it that hath so sorely bewildered thee?

The inebriation of Thy presence, O Well-Beloved of all worlds, hath seized and possessed me.

Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh