

'Abdu'l-Bahá:

"It Is the Time for Love"

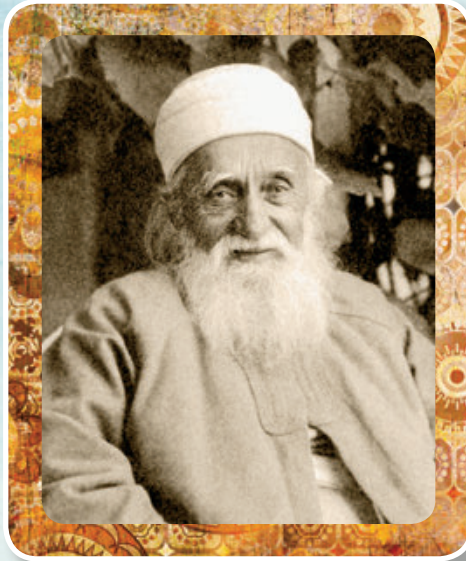
When 'Abbás Effendi was eight years old, his father, Bahá'u'lláh, was thrown into a horrible dungeon called the "Black Pit." Why? Simply because He believed in a new Messenger of God called "the Báb" ("the Gate"). 'Abbás's home in Tíhrán, Persia (now Iran), was robbed, and the family had to go into hiding. They couldn't find enough to eat. 'Abbás was chased by bullies in the streets.

The Báb's teachings encouraged education, the equality of women and men, and helping the poor. He also promised that another Messenger of God would soon appear. In the Black Pit, Bahá'u'lláh saw a divine vision announcing that He was the Messenger foretold by the Báb. Even as a child, 'Abbás recognized his father's station. He later took the name "Abdu'l-Bahá," which means "Servant of Bahá."

Dangerous Journeys

After Bahá'u'lláh was released, He was banished from Iran. The family made a long, dangerous journey to Baghdád, Iraq, over freezing mountains. 'Abdu'l-Bahá never returned to Iran. He lived in exile or imprisonment in Iraq, Turkey, and Israel. When Bahá'u'lláh declared His Mission publicly, 'Abdu'l-Bahá devoted his life to sharing the Bahá'í teachings of peace.

In spite of harsh difficulties and demanding voyages, 'Abdu'l-Bahá focused on helping others and showering them with kindness. He always looked out for the comfort of his fellow travelers. When his companions fell terribly ill, he spent long hours nursing them back to health.



'Abdu'l-Bahá was 24 when his family was sent to the prison-city of 'Akká, Israel. Over time, as conditions eased, he went into the city to help the poor. His struggles never got in the way of his service. He said, "I was happy in imprisonment. I was in the utmost elation because I was not a criminal. They had imprisoned me in the path of God."

When Bahá'u'lláh passed away in 1892, He left a will naming 'Abdu'l-Bahá as the leader of the Bahá'í Faith. 'Abdu'l-Bahá guided the Bahá'ís with wisdom and love. Though still imprisoned, he wrote inspiring letters and encouraged them to share the Faith around the world.

Leading by Example

'Abdu'l-Bahá was a prisoner in 'Akká for about 40 years. In 1908, at age 64, he was finally freed. A few years later, though in poor health, he made historic journeys to Egypt, Europe, and North America. He gave hundreds of talks, urging everyone to end prejudice, treat people of all religions as friends, and build peace. He said, "The greatest need in the world today is international peace . . . It is the time for love."

'Abdu'l-Bahá passed away in 1921. Ten thousand people from several faiths gathered to honor him. In his will, he appointed his grandson, Shoghi Effendi, as the leader, or Guardian, of the Bahá'í Faith.

Today, Bahá'ís around the globe are inspired by 'Abdu'l-Bahá's example. He said, "Do not be content with showing friendship in words alone, let your heart burn with loving kindness for all who may cross your path."