

A STATEMENT ON THE DISPUTE BETWEEN THE BEHAI FAMILY

by KAMAR BEHAI
Grand-daughter of Baha-U-Allah.

In its issue of the 23rd May 1952 the daily newspaper "El-Yum" published an article under the following heading: "The Ministry of Religious Affairs settles a dispute between the Behai Family". This article is a gross misrepresentation of facts. In order, therefore, to do justice to History and proclaim the truth of the matter, I requested the newspaper "El Yum" to publish the following statement but, taking a stand inimical to the principles of freedom of the press and for some other reasons, the said newspaper refused to accede to my request.

The dispute between the Behai Family is deep-rooted and cannot be settled as easily as may be inferred from the published article.

The Behai movement was born amidst vicissitudes and wornout traditions. Its leaders, started in all sincerity a relentless social revolution against the shabby set-up then existing in Persia for the purpose of achieving social justice and general reform. In the initial stages of the movement they sacrificed worthy position for the sake of maintaining their strife and spreading their principles. When overwhelmed, they were banished to Acre where they were imprisoned in the citadel and severely tortured. At the head of these leaders was Baha'Ulla and his entourage.

Prior to his death Baha Ulla nominated his eldest son Abbas Eff, called "The Greatest Branch" to succeed him and to be followed by his second son, Mohammed Ali Eff, "The mightiest Branch",

The followers loved Abbas Eff, obeyed his orders willingly and faithfully as a result of which, the movement attained its zenith during his life time, spread widely both in spirit and truth. Abbas Eff, was also respected by the Moslem community, was fulfilling his Moslem duty prayers in the Jereh Mosque at Haifa uninterruptedly, was distributing ulms to the Moslem, Christians as well as to the other denominations who may have stood in need, was convening Moslem religious personalities, who highly esteemed him, to discuss with them the interpretation of the holy Koran.

Abbas Eff, was fulfilling the commandments of his father "El Baha" to the letter and was faithful and trustworthy in his mission. His followers were conscious of his sympathetic regard towards them which he translated by elevating their educational and social standard, sending their children to Universities for higher studies, and further extended his financial help to those of his own community who were in need. For all these humanitarian acts, Abbas Eff, was greatly beloved and adhered to by his followers who carried out his wishes conscientiously.

Following the death of Abbas Eff, Shoki Rabbani, who was then still young, claimed that he was holding a WILL from his grandfather, on his mother's side, As Abbess Eff, did not beget any male children. In accordance with this Will, which is counterfeit, Shoki Rabbani was nominated successor. The Behais subsequently split among themselves, of them there were adherents of Mohammed Ali Eff, the son of Baha'Ulla who was to be the legal successor to his brother in accordance with his father's Will, while Shoki Rabbani had few supporters amongst his relatives.

Mohammed Ali's group were the true believers in Abbas Eff, for in his time remarkable advancement in the movement was made, because he carried on along the lines of his father's teachings. Combining with his qualities, the most holy respect with which easterners regard will, Abbas Eff, whom they believed and trusted could not possibly entertain the idea of the non-fulfilment of his father's Will.

It is therefore illogical that Abbas Eff, should have committed the blunder of appointing his young grand son as his successor and set aside his experienced brother who bore great suffering and struggled hand in hand with him to advance the movement.

As a first step to safeguard himself against the Bahai Family, Shoki Rabbani excommunicated the adherents of Mohammed Ali Eff by introducing a reign of terror which deprived them of their rudimentary right such as the one of paying their respect to their grand father's tomb. He further threatened his immediate followers and sympathisers to discontinue any contact with the other group and considered their presence in his surrounding as disturbing to his divinity. He therefore dispersed and banished them, thus causing, a serious social and economic loss to his followers.

By now the reader would have realised how deep rooted lies the dispute between the Bahais and how far it is from easy solution, for how could a settlement be achieved when such settlement should begin by deposing the world Bahai Leader - as the news paper called Shoki Rabbani.

Shoki Rabbani is not the Grandson of El Baha nor is he the legal heir of the Bahai movement, he does not represent the Bahai Family or sect, the men of the movement and the members of the Bahai Family are separated from him, in America there are thousands of followers of El Baha who hold dignified positions, own newspapers, publish books maintain their propaganda and consider Shoki Rabbani as a usurper, diverted from the policy originally laid down by the leaders of the movements.

Shoki Eff, would have declined to accede to the wishes of the Ministry of Religious Affairs as to permit Mohammed Ali Eff's followers to visit their holy places - a visit prohibited to them for the last thirty years - had he not feared to be brought before the Israeli Courts where justice is delivered in an ideal measure and had he not anticipated the emergence of other serious complications, the settlement of which would have been impossible.

Although I feel in what critical position Shoki Rabbani is placed and know that the permission to visit the holy places was extorted from him, his agreement to it disprages his position and dignity among his followers, yet on the other hand, Shoki Rabbani, was unscrupulously callous towards the afflictions of his followers when he was ordering their banishment and dispersion.

It had not been my intention to raise the matter up to courts in order to stop the demolition of two small rooms situated at the entrance of El Baha grave except for the following two reasons :

1. To preserve of the historical aspect of the building,
2. To Apprise Shoki Rabbani of the necessity of consulting his partners in the Estate when he proposes to undertake any constructional change.

I fail to understand how Shoki Rabbani denounces a group as heretics and sets out to demolish their property by force without sanction; in the circumstances, I had no alternative but to lay the matter for adjudication before the public through the medium of newspapers and to resort to litigation if necessary.

KAMER BAHAI
Grand-daughter of Baha-U-llah.

Statement No. 2

by
Kemar Bahai
Grand daughter of Baha U'Allah.

In its issue No. 1358 dated the 6th June, 1952, the evening Hebrew newspaper "Ma'ariv" published a lengthy article by the well-known writer N. Giladi on the Bahai movement and the history of its founder and its leaders in which he discusses the existing dissensions between the members of the family. I quote hereunder for information a verbatim translation of the article for the particular attention of the Bahai family and the Bahais all over the world.

While I do not concur with all the views expressed in the article, I must point out that the writer pronounced the mere truth about the malevolence of Shoki Rabbani, his usurpation of the spiritual leadership of the Bahai movement and the harsh treatment and exile inflicted by him on its leaders. However I leave it to every reader of the article to form his own judgment.

Kemar Bahai
Grand daughter of Baha U'Allah

The Brotherhood celebrates its Jubilee in dissension.

The Bahai religion called Brotherhood religion, religion of light or Persian religion will celebrate shortly the centennial anniversary of its founder Baha U'Allah (the light of God) thanks to whose inspiration the centre of the fourth world religion has been instituted in Palestine.

This event is to be celebrated in the midst of a great schism besetting the Bahai family whose sixty members oppose the self-imposed leadership of Shoki Rabbani.

While the nature of the dispute within the sect is spiritual yet it has a material and social aspect as well.

While his antagonists contend that in the founder's will his son, Abbas Effendi is nominated as successor to be followed by his second son Mohamed Ali Effendi, they claim that Shoki Effendi violated the succession order and unjustly took the crown to himself.

The dissension in the Prophet's family has been lately brought before the Law Courts. Only a fortnight ago the public cherished the hope that the Ministry of Religious Affairs might reconcile the opponents.

The Community has property considered holy by all the adherents of this religion. In Northern Acre there exists the house where the founder lived and his tomb. The house has been turned to a Museum, but is also being utilised as a shelter for pilgrims from overseas. This property, six sevenths of which is registered in the name of the Bahai family opposing the leadership of Shoki Rabbani forms a bone of contention which may be settled by litigation. But matters relating to spiritual values where principles of faith are involved cannot be solved or determined by human judgment. For this reason the opponents had resort to the Law Courts when Shoki Rabbani ordered the demolition of a part of the said property.

Succession Dispute.

When the demolition was started the opponents obtained a Court's order for the stoppage of work. Consequently the head of the Community approached the Ministry of Religious Affairs in the matter and a notice served by the Deputy Minister declared the property to be considered as a holy place and accordingly the dispute fell outside the jurisdiction of Civil Courts. In the circumstances the opponents lodged a case in the High Court against the Deputy Minister for Religious Affairs on the basis that the declaration of the place as holy was made without their knowledge.

At this juncture when the Deputy Minister foresaw the serious developments that might arise began taking steps in order to reach a reconciliation. The main argument of the opposition was that they were not permitted access to the property which although partially their own by right yet was wholly theirs spiritually. Mediation bore fruit as Rabbani agreed to permit his opponents both to use the house where the founder lived and to visit his tomb.

The lifting of the prohibition has reverted the dispute to its initial point and fresh developments are expected to ensue.

The Bahais are of Persian origin and do not form a large community. Their head derives his strength from his followers in the United States and Canada from amongst whom he married a beautiful wife. The Bahai Community in the United States is estimated to number one million from whom source of wealth emanates. The Bahais possess large estates in Haifa with big edifices and spacious gardens located in the Persian Street, besides the beautiful Bahai garden where improvements are being carried out in preparation for the centenary Jubilee this year. It is not permitted to see the Community Head not even for his entourage. The affairs of the Community are attended to by his Canadian wife assisted by a few Americans.

The Bahai religion was founded 100 years ago at the birth of Baha U'Allah. Tradition speaks of a precursor called "The Bab" who announced the impending appearance of the founder of a new religion. When Baha U'Allah grew up he began preaching the Religion of Brotherhood and Peace. He did not prescribe any functional rites but instructed his followers to live in light. The American Community calls itself "The National Spiritual Council" and falls under the leadership of Shoki Rabbani who is in fact the third leader, the first being Baha U'Allah who died in 1892, the second Abbas Effendi who died in 1922 and the third Abbas's Grandson on the mother's side who violated the founder's will.

In the Brotherhood Religion, brotherhood does not prevail in this jubilee year.

KAMAR BAHAI
Grand daughter of Baha U'Allah.

Circular No. 3
The Bahai Movement
by
Kamar Bahai

The reader has noticed that the local newspapers, Hebrew and English, have allotted space to writers who attempted in so far as they were acquainted with subject to publish information regarding the essence of the Bahai Movement. The reader has also noticed that this press campaign, if so it might be called, began after the publication of my first circular; in it I had explained the cause which brought about the dispute in the Bahai family, namely the split which arose after Shoki Rabbani had imposed himself as the Spiritual Leader of the Movement on the strength of the counterfeit will which he originated.

Now by virtue of my personal status as Grand daughter of Baha U'Llah the founder of the Movement and in response to many wishes expressed and questions set down in numerous letters I have received from Israel and Abroad following the publication of my circular No.2, I feel bound to put before the reader a concise and clear exposition of the essence and teachings of the said Movement.

First, let me begin by extending my whole-hearted thanks to Mirza Ahmad Schrab, the founder and editor of "Caravan" for his staunch loyalty to the Bahai family and Movement for the vehemence with which he has raised his voice in America, for his letters of encouragement, for the aptness of his advice - all of which confirm his unflinching devotion to the spreading and advancement of the cause.

That he is now extending his full support to the right of our cause is a further instance of his unflinching constancy and I take this opportunity to say to him that as from time he was secretary to my late uncle Abbas Effendi, I have never entertained the least doubt concerning his loyalty to the family and the Movement and I know that the motive of his revolt was occasioned by the counterfeit will which was claimed to have been written by the one for whom he was the most trusted confidant.

He then carried the flag to justice to America where he circulated pamphlets, wrote books, founded branches and disseminated the movement through his "Caravan", I will accede to his advice and convene a general congress to be attended by the Bahai Leaders here and in America.

Let me now take the reader back to Persia, the birthplace of the Movement, to Persia the all powerful who bestowed an unrivalled civilisation to the world, who produced great kings, statesmen, poets and philosophers and let us together turn over the pages of history until we reach the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th Century. Now we find that the kings are either too weak or too cruel, the religious heads fanatical to the extreme and the people sunk into ignorance, for how could education be encouraged when science and knowledge were looked upon as hostile forces working against religion? Therefore with corruption prevailing in the Government, with fanaticism replacing religion and with an economy in confusion the country was about to collapse.

In the circumstances it was inevitable that a social revolution should occur. A distinguished reformer rose to lead the revolution against the then existing evils. By virtue of his fiery spirit, his eloquence, convincing logic and peerless courage he was

B A H A U ' L L A H

God's revelation is like a crystal fountain that flows into the hearts of the prophets from time to time.

This fountain crossing the life of Zoroaster produced through his teachers, great kings, experienced politicians, wise philosophers, inspired poets and outstanding men of art.

That same fountain inspired the great Buddha who came as huge cloud and showered his principles, quenched the thirst of millions of peoples.

It overwhelmed the quiet life of Confucius and made the Chinese people a cultured and pious nations.

It found its way into Moses' heart as a result of which the desert blossomed in fruit and flower.

It made a deep incision into Jesus Christ's soul and then the scent of the flowers of love perfumed the lives of the believers.

It penetrated with violence and turmoil into the Arabian Desert where Mohammad, the irrigator watered the fields of knowledge, art and science.

And now this current of revelation struck the hearts of the Bahai Leaders. Mizra Hussein Ali, later named Baha U'llah was born in the city of Nur, Persia in the year 1817. He was the same reformer whose imminent appearance was prophesied by Mizra Ali Mohammad "Al Bab" when the latter made his movement in May 1844 in which he declared that the world with its methods and worn out traditions was about to collapse and a new free and strong world would replace it.

Baha U'llah started his revolutionary mission in 1863 and waged a relentless war against the worn-out traditions and the forces of evil as a result of which he was stripped of his hereditary title as a noble in the Persian Court and suffered the loss of his vast estates through confiscation.

He proclaimed the end of the night of aggression and cruel fanaticism and prophesied the dawn of peace and brotherhood, preaching the oneness of Earth, race and religion.

And he is the one who said that all the human race springs from one source and the apparent differences result from differences of environment and degrees of culture and that humanity is nothing else but one Family. After all God created the Earth without boundaries or frontiers.

The founders of the great religions in the world are but inspired people carrying holy messages to different corners of the world at different intervals of time.

Bahaism is not an organisation but a system of thought and a new way of living.

The effect of this was that the authorities of the State together with the authorities of Religion combined, arrested and imprisoned him and later exiled him with his family and a group of his followers across the Persian border. Bagdad then became his residence.

During the first twelve years of his exile in Bagdad, the Bahai Movement expanded and spread, for the suffering which he experienced and the hardships which beset him did not stop him from delivering his message. Men and women from various regions flocked to quench their thirst from this sweet and holy fountain.

Later he was exiled anew to Constantinople and from there to Adana and at last to Acre fortress. From that impenetrable fortress, this great prisoner spread his teachings of love, brotherhood, peace and justice to the East and West. From within the wall of this great fortress, Baha U'llah sent his messages to the kings, emperors and rulers of the world in which he showed them the way to salvation and urged them to put an end to the rule of violence and to establish a reign of justice, brotherhood and to erect the foundations for a permanent international Parliament.

These principles mentioned above preached by Baha U'Allah with great power of Spirit were transmitted to the President of the United States of America, to the king of Prussia, to the Emperor of Austria, to the Tsar of Russia, to Napoleon the III, to Queen Victoria, to the Sultan of Turkey, to the Shah of Persia and the Holy Pope.

After 40 years of exile and continuous labour and after the martyrdom of 20,000 of his followers, Baha U'Allah died in 1892, leaving a will to his eldest son, Abbas Effendi, to be succeeded by his second son, Mohammad Ali Effendi, assigning to them the spiritual leadership of the Movement and the responsibility of carrying out his mission of brotherhood and peace.

KAMAR BAHAI

Grand daughter of Baha U'Allah

15/1/53

ABDUL BAHÁ ABBAS

Abdul Baha Abbas was born at midnight on the 28th May, 1844 in Teheran, the same year that "El Bab" proclaimed his mission to the world.

When Abbas Effendi was scarcely nine years old, his father was arrested and imprisoned in Teheran. The mob attacked his house and looted it, the family was stripped of its property and left to suffer the sting of hardship and poverty.

Abdul Baha Abbas was so attached to his father that he almost appeared to act as his body guard. Being constantly around him, his father educated him as he wished and brought him up as he saw fit, sowed in him the seeds of his principles, built in him a strong personality, imbued him with the spirit of humanitarianism and taught him that those who serve humanity achieve victory at the end. He told that to be a good Bahai, he should love the world and humanity in general and try to serve it and labour for universal peace and brotherhood.

Abdul Baha Abbas graduated from his father's school a strong spiritual personality; he was wise and generous, a father to the needy and a guide to those who went astray. He drew his sublime principles and humanitarian ideals from the school of life and the hardships of experience.

The despotic rule of Abdul Hamid having terminated in 1908 and the then young Turkey having extended a general amnesty for all prisoners, Abdul Baha Abbas was released at the age of 40 from the prison in which he had entered as a boy.

At that age Abbas Effendi took upon himself the responsibility to propagate his father's mission, proceeded to Egypt, Switzerland, France, Germany, Hungary, Great Britain, United States of America and Canada and there preached his father's principles and humanitarian ideals which were deeply rooted in him. In the course of his visits to those countries thousands of people heard him preach the principles of his father, in churches and in every type of religious institutions, and millions of people read about the teachings of Baha U'Llah in the local newspapers, and so in virtue of his magnetic personality he was able to attract men and women of every belief and religion.

His followers loved him greatly and he reciprocated their love, he lifted their standards morally, spiritually and materially to the limit of his possibilities and he endeavoured with all his might to come to the rescue of those who were materially in need as well as to those who sought moral assistance.

This beloved religious leader who called himself Abdul Baha - meaning the servant of Baha U'Llah, his father - who was led by his father's personality in darkness and guided in solving problems, this leader who carried out his father's teachings almost literally without originating anything new himself or misconstruing, do you believe, dear reader that this servant of Baha U'Llah, this honest and good man could in any way deviate from the path his master drew for him for the advancement and leadership of the Bahai Movement?

Certain persons looking after their own private material benefit originated what they called a Will and attributed its issue to Abbas Effendi in which he was supposed to nominate his grandson to the spiritual leadership of the Movement. This grandson who was at that time a young boy and therefore unable to realise the extent of the great responsibility that was being entrusted to him by

those persons, is, in my opinion, and I have undeniable evidence to this effect - unable to realise it up to the present moment.

Those persons whether they intended or not have certainly committed an unforgivable sin against Abbas Effendi. A will contradicting his father's Will ! This is to Shame, Shame herself especially as the sacred nature of a will is respected not only by the Easterners but also by the nations of the world; moreover is it believable that Abbas Effendi should have tampered with his father's Will so long as he knew that he had no right whatever to change anything in it especially as his father had limited the succession, in case of death, to his brother, Mohmmad Ali Effendi.

Those persons who originated the Will and pretended to venerate abbas Effendi, attached to him a disgrace which the commonest of people would have resented, so how much more with him, the great religious leader, for they have pictured him as a disobedient boy violating his father's Will, the same Will which gave him the right to the leadership. His brothers respected the holiness of their father's Will and accepted it and extended their help in the struggle for the propagation of the Movement.

On Friday 25th November 1921 Abdul Behr Abbas, as usual attended Friday prayers and distributed in person alms to the poor and needy and returned to his residence. Three days later, on 28th November, 1921, Abdul Behr Abbas died, leaving according to his father's will, the spiritual leadership of the Movement to his brother, Mohamed Ali Effendi.

Kamar Behai

Grandaughter of Baha U'llah.

MOHAMMAD ALI EFFENDI.

The records of history instruct us about the world-wide social movements and about the intrigues that centred around earnest reformers; they also bring to light conspiracies which were hatched by consummate plotters for no other reason than considerable personal benefit.

If it were possible for me to mention here instances of such intrigues as accompanied the social movements referred to above, I would have done so, but considering the limited space of this circular, this is clearly impossible. If interested, the dear reader could turn over the pages of history and discover for himself innumerable instances of the existence of such intrigues.

The Bahai Movement itself did not form an exception to the rule. The basest form of intrigue was minutely worked up around the Movement and to a large extent succeeded in achieving its vicious aim and, in my opinion, not without besmirching the reputation of loyal and good leaders. The intriguers acting jointly to create a chasm in the Bahai family, aimed at separating the two brothers, Abdul Baha Abbas and Mohammed Ali Effendi, the legitimate leaders of the Bahai Movement. They sowed the seeds of discord between them by magnifying trifling incidents in such a way as to affect adversely the hearts of the two brothers and increase the misunderstanding between them. They succeeded in their dark purpose for the misunderstanding which they planted grew as the years went by.

To complete their wickedness those same intriguers prevented Mohammad Ali Effendi from seeing his dying brother, Abbas Effendi, pretending that the latter did not wish to be disturbed by his own brother from paying his last respects to his dying brother!!! and need there be a clearer manifestation of Mohammad Ali's noble character when he submitted to the intriguers' will and desisted from seeing his dying brother in order to prevent further dissension in the Movement.

As I am now presenting to the reader a picture of the life of the Bahai Leaders, I feel bound to put on record a short paragraph on the life's work of the Second Son of Baha U'llah, Mohammad Ali Effendi, - this son who was usurped of his right, whose good heart and noble character, followed the principles of Bahaiism to the letter, whose humanity was boundless, this man of peace whose very virtues enabled the intriguers to take full advantage of his adherence to Bahaiism in order to destroy the last bridge that linked him with what they called the followers of Abbas Effendi, who were in fact the intriguers themselves and a few of their supporters.

I would like to quote extracts from the then local Arabic, English and Hebrew newspapers when they mourned Mohammad Ali Effendi's death. In this connection it is noteworthy to mention that even the famous review "Great Britain and the East" which is regarded as the mouthpiece of the British Government in matters of foreign policy, published an article on the occasion of his death bearing the heading: "Bahai Leader Dead". The kind reader will now read the quotations taken from "El Difa", "Palestine", "Jamesh el Islamiye", "Post News", "Palestine Post", "Haboker", "Haaretz" and "Davar".

The picture of the deceased Mohammad Ali Effendi, the renowned and noble leader of Bahaiism, son of the great Baha U'llah, the founder of Bahaiism, Mohammad Ali Effendi, whose father Baha U'llah entitled him, "The Mightiest Branch" was born in Teheran the Capital of Iran in the year 1853. Accompanied his father to Baghdad and then

to the capital of the Caliphs and finally to Acre where the founder of Bahaism established his permanent residence.

His father educated him so profoundly that for all controversial matters regarding Bahaism and other religions, he was consulted as an authority. Moreover he edited books and wrote messages. As shown by his father's letters and messages, Baha U'Llah specially favoured him and so much so that he nominated him to the leadership of the Movement to follow his elder brother, the late Abbas Effendi, entitled "The Greatest Branch".

Mohammad Ali Effendi was a personality with a noble character, lofty heart and soul, a man of peace and above petty family quarrels, he instructed his followers to remain peaceful and quiet. He was the inseparable secretary and confident of his father."

Truly he was his father's confident for his father during his lifetime intrusted him with the mission of preaching Bahaism in India and Egypt. He was the only son, among Baha U'Llah's sons to have been honoured with such a responsible and weighty mission while the Movement was still in its infancy and needed strong and imposing men. He succeeded in his mission and achieved the aims set out by Baha U'Llah, his father.

The fact that the founder of Bahaism assigned the weighty responsibility of carrying out the mission to his son, Mohammad Ali Effendi among others, clearly proves, that he had great confidence in his abilities to carry out such a mission.

It is not an exaggeration to say that with all his inherent qualities Mohammad Ali Effendi would have been an ideal leader to succeed his brother, Abdul Baha Abbas.

This symbolic picture of the ideal leader, this noble heart, this wonderful character and elevated soul, this leader, who loved Bahaism and devoted his whole life to its service, his care for the edifice he had helped to set up, his earnestness to prevent it from cracking and crumbling all these obliged him to swallow in silence the great lie regarding the forged will which the malicious intriguers had fabricated and who made use of the alleged misunderstanding which they themselves invented in order to mislead public opinion and achieve their vicious ends. Consequently they tarnished the reputation of Abdul Baha Abbas and succeeded in discarding Mohammad Ali Effendi from the leadership and entrusted it to a boy whom they were able to handle as they pleased - on account of his youth.

Kamar Bahai

Grand daughter of Baha U'Llah

Haifa, 20/2/58.