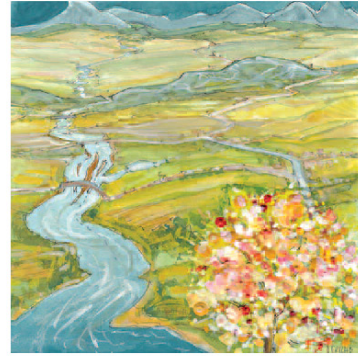


The following story is from the book

*The Central Figures*

*Bahá'u'lláh*

*Volume Two*



These stories are lovingly provided to download as a convenience to teachers or communities otherwise unable to acquire the book. Each book in this storybook series also includes an appendix with questions for discussion and reflection, a glossary of words and phrases used in the stories, a bibliography, and an index.

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Graphic Design by Pepper Peterson Oldziej

Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois 60091-2886  
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Published 2002  
05 04 03 02 4 3 2 1

Printed in the United States of America

Illustrations: cover © 2002 David S. Ruhe; pp. 3–4, 12, 40–44 Courtesy of the Audio Visual Department of the Bahá'í World Center, Haifa, Israel; p. 23 Courtesy of the National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Illinois; pp. 1–3, 7–11, 15–17, 19, 21–22 © 1979 Pepper Oldziej; pp. 4–6, 14, 20 © 1999 Pepper Oldziej; pp. 18, 24 © 2002 Haydar Barnes; pp. 25–28 © 2002 Ed Phillips; pp. 46–49, 51 © 2002 Cam Herth; pp. 45, 52–60 © 2002 Marilyn Lindsley; pp. 61–78 © 2002 Carla Trimble; pp. 79–94 © 2002 Beth Farkas; pp. 113–128 © 2002 Cindy Pacileo; p. 114 © 2002 Carl Cordini; pp. 129–146 © 2002 Winifred Barnum Newman; p. 168 © 2002 Majid Nolley and Omid Nolley; pp. 169–172 © 2002 Leona Hosack. All other illustrations © 2002 National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States.

**Core Curriculum for Spiritual Education • Stories**  
National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States

  
**Bahá'í Publishing Trust**  
Wilmette, Illinois



**The Greatest Holy Leaf**

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*Let these exalted words be thy love-song  
on the tree of Bahá, O thou most holy and  
resplendent Leaf: "God, besides Whom is  
none other God, the Lord of this world and the next!"  
Verily, We have elevated thee to the rank of  
one of the most distinguished among thy sex,  
and granted thee, in My court, a station  
such as none other woman hath surpassed.*

— Bahá'u'lláh, in *Bahíyyih Khánum, The Greatest Holy Leaf*, p. 3

*Written by Jean Gould*

*Photographs courtesy of  
the Bahá'í World Center  
Audio-Visual Department*

# *In Search of a Kindred Spirit*





Some precious possessions of the Greatest Holy Leaf preserved in the International Bahá'í Archives.

On the third anniversary of the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the adults congregating in His house in the Holy Land were overcome by grief. On this day, they were made freshly aware of their terrible earthly separation from the Master. There were many tears and loud cries, wrench-

ing sobs and a growing preoccupation with a deepening sense of loss. Fearful and anxious, the children looked to one adult, and then another and another, for someone to care for them, for someone to give them comfort and assurance. Finally, when it became obvious that none would be forthcoming, they followed their hearts to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's gentle sister, Bahíyyih Khánum.

Bahíyyih Khánum could understand their childish fears. She was only six years old when her Father, Bahá'u'lláh, was thrown into the Black Pit in Tīhrán for giving His allegiance to the Báb. Then the Holy Family lost their home and began a hard life in exile from Persia. She knew how completely and unexpectedly life could change from warm and safe to cold and uncertain. In Baghdád, for example, Mírzá Yahyá, the prideful half-uncle with the greedy, fearful eyes, came to live with them while her Father, the King of Kings, their Light, tore Himself from the Holy Family and walked away into the wilderness. Bahá'u'lláh had decided to leave Baghdád in order to give Mírzá Yahyá space and time to test his puny leadership skills on the people and his ridiculous claims. Once again, he demonstrated what an inadequate leader he could be.

In His absence, Bahá'u'lláh asked the Holy Family to care for Mírzá Yahyá so that they might turn his heart to love and obedience.

Bahá'u'lláh's own heart was heavy with thoughts of this necessary separation and the enormity of the task He had set for the people He loved. You must care for him, He said. Show him respect and consideration. Make him comfortable.

Of course, the Holy Family did these things for everyone who crossed their path, but it was vastly more difficult with Mírzá Yahyá. He demanded, he complained, he grabbed more than his share, and he lifted not one finger to help. Worse, he feared for his life, which meant that no one was allowed to go out of the house or to come into it.

Bahíyyih Khánum, blessed with her parents' delightful sociability, was lonely for people her age. One day, she chanced to see the two little girls who lived in the next house. She opened the door to peep at them and perhaps make an overture of friendship. But when he realized the door was open, Mírzá Yahyá shouted his ugly words at her, then slammed and locked the door. The little girls went their way, never having known the daughter of the King of Kings who might have been their friend.



The ring on the marble is the Greatest Name, and the ring in the small tray at center bears her own name.



The Greatest Holy Leaf standing with a child.

Eventually, Bahá'u'lláh returned and assumed the mantle of leadership of the infant Faith while Mírzá Yahyá, having failed miserably, left their house to hide in his own. Eventually, the lonely little girl behind the door grew to be a strong and wise woman and, for her unfailing service, received a new title from her Father: Greatest Holy Leaf. Eventually, she asked Bahá'u'lláh to allow her to remain unmarried so that, single-minded in her purpose, she might continue to serve the three people who had her heart in their hands: Father, Mother, and Brother. Perhaps this is why, years later, when the Bahá'í Faith had spread far and wide, she could be found among the children of the world on the anniversary of her Brother's passing. The children of the world who were, perhaps, standing in for her own sweet babies. The children of the world who might have been her friends in another place and time.

They hovered around her where she sat still and quiet, her smile opening like a rose, embracing them with her warm blue gaze, calming them with the complete understanding of one who has endured unending trouble and has found peace and protection. ★