

The following story is from the book
The Central Figures

Bahá'u'lláh

Volume Three



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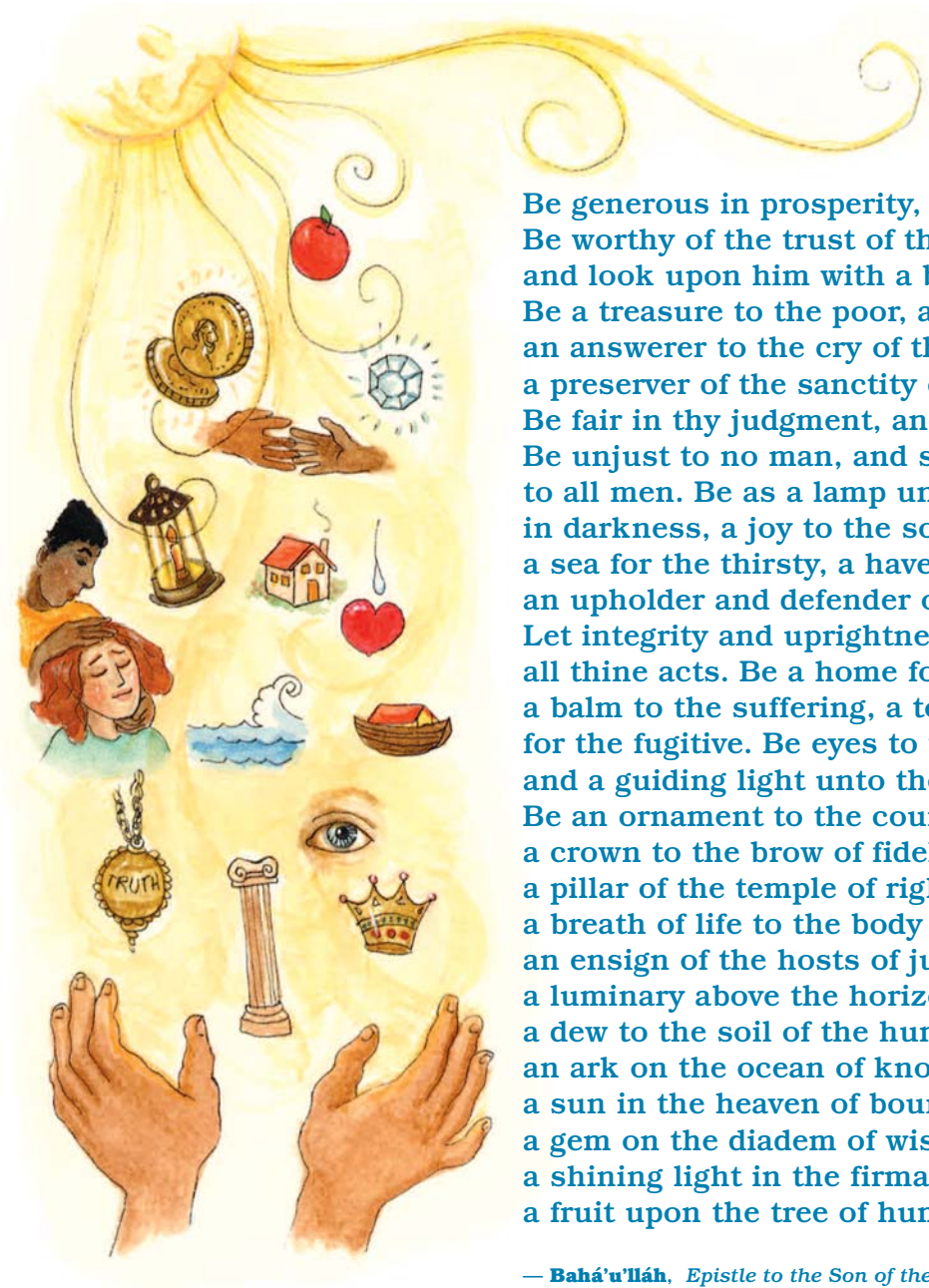
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Be generous in prosperity, and thankful in adversity.
Be worthy of the trust of thy neighbor,
and look upon him with a bright and friendly face.
Be a treasure to the poor, an admonisher to the rich,
an answerer to the cry of the needy,
a preserver 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.

— Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, pp. 93–94

Emily's First Talk

Written by Kim Douglas

Illustrated by Winifred Barnum-Newman



Emily Goldman's closest friend, Meg Wilson, entered the Bahá'í Center with her parents. Emily's parents and a few other community members introduced themselves. Emily's heart raced and she felt flushed. She didn't know that Meg's parents were planning to stay for the public meeting. This was her first talk ever! What if she flubbed up and forgot everything she had planned to say? Her mom, sensing her fears, squeezed her hand and whispered that she'd say some extra prayers.

The meeting began with Jose and Alexandra singing "Blessed is the Spot," in both Spanish and English. Their voices always stirred Emily's heart. Meg and her parents appeared moved by the music as well. What a relief! Emily could think of nothing worse than having Meg and her parents dislike the meeting—or worse, the Bahá'í Faith.

The secretary of the Local Spiritual Assembly, Alicia Jordan, welcomed the crowd and shared some of the basic teachings of the Bahá'í Faith. Then she introduced Emily. "Emily Goldman is in eighth grade at Rosa Parks Middle School. She and her family became Bahá'ís last summer. Since Emily was Jewish before declaring her belief in Bahá'u'lláh, she has expressed interest in learning about the first Jewish Bahá'í. Tonight, she will share her findings. Please welcome Emily Goldman."





The crowd in the room broke out in enthusiastic applause. Emily rose to her feet and walked up to the front of the room. She smiled at the crowd, feeling a miraculous sense of confidence.

“The other night I told my mom that I was too scared to give this talk. I thought I might faint. I worried that I would open my mouth and no words would come out. My mom reminded me that Dorothy Baker and other early believers relied on prayer.” Emily looked at her eager audience. “Believe me, I have said some prayers.”

Many individuals chuckled, which helped her to relax.

“First, I would like to share with you the qualities that can help people when they are seeking truth. This is important and relates to my story about the first Jewish Bahá’í, because breaking away from traditions requires great courage.”

Emily walked to the side of the room and set a display board that she had made on the table. The board listed the qualities necessary to find God, according to Bahá’u’lláh:

**Cleanse your heart of all that you have learned
and any imaginings**

Purge yourself of every defilement or evil

Sanctify yourself from the material world

**Don’t let too much love or too much hate of something
or someone blind you**

Renounce or put aside the peoples of the earth

Don’t think of yourself as better than your neighbor

Don’t backbite or gossip

Trust God

Observe silence

**Be content with little and try not to want more
and more things**

Enjoy friendship with godly people

Pray earnestly and enthusiastically

“When I first read this, I didn’t understand. Why would Bahá’u’lláh want seekers of truth to let go of all that they have learned? This seemed like a contradiction to me, because Bahá’u’lláh also states that we should acquire knowledge and learn the arts and sciences. Does anyone have any thoughts on this?” Emily asked the audience. Emily called on Mr. Sobhani.

“Some leaders of religion interpret the Word of God in wrong ways. Yet they have a lot of power. People look to them for answers and believe everything they have to say.”

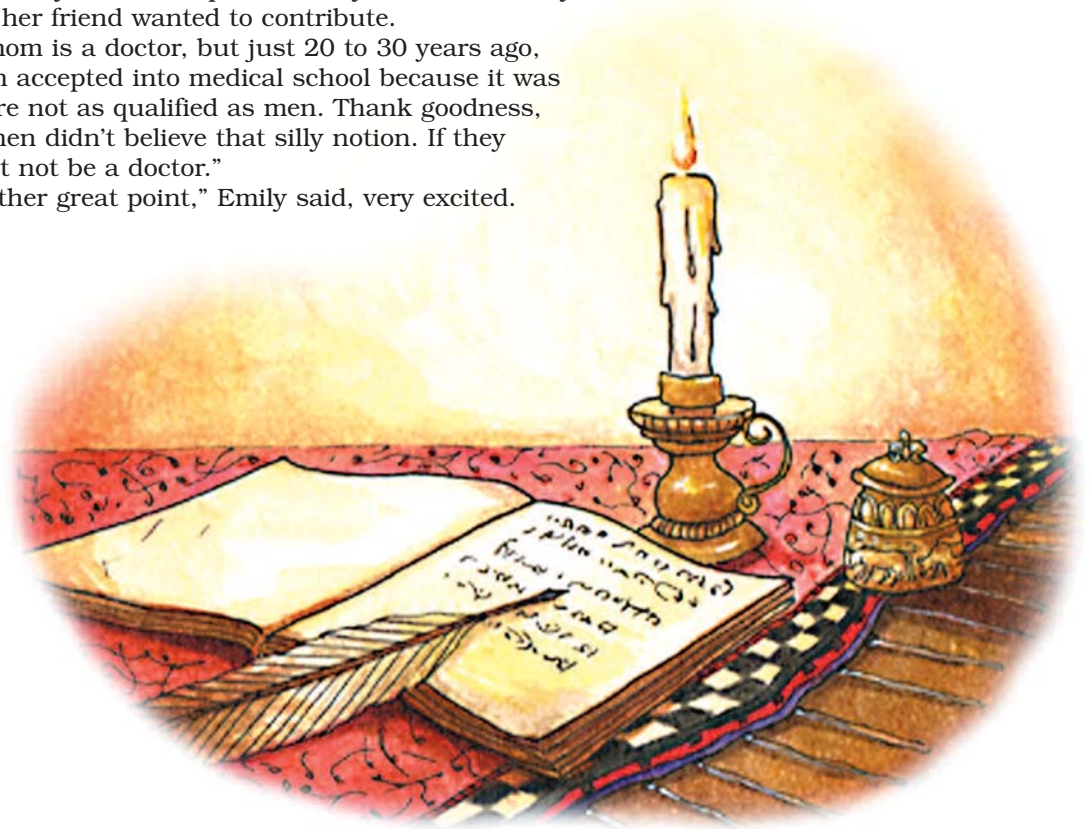
“Thank you, Mr. Sobhani. I remember when my family and I were studying the Faith and asking a lot of questions, you always responded, ‘Let’s find the answer to your question in the Bahá’í writings.’ You were reluctant to share your own opinions and interpretations and guided us to the Bahá’í books instead.”

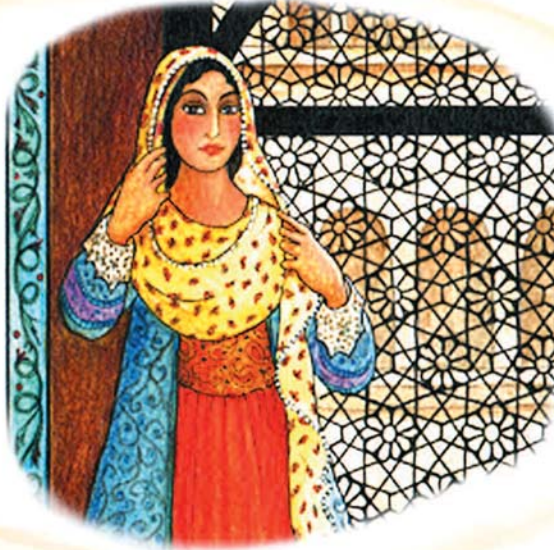
“Absolutely,” Mr. Sobhani said.

“Meg, you have your hand up. What do you think?” Emily asked, excited that her friend wanted to contribute.

“Well, my mom is a doctor, but just 20 to 30 years ago, women were seldom accepted into medical school because it was believed women were not as qualified as men. Thank goodness, some women and men didn’t believe that silly notion. If they had, my mom might not be a doctor.”

“That’s another great point,” Emily said, very excited. “Thank you.”





“Now I’d like to ask all of you to imagine that it is about 1860 and you’re in Persia. There are no jets and no cars, no stereos and no video cameras, no computers and no e-mail. Most of the people are Muslims, though some Christians and Jews are scattered about. There is great commotion because of the new Bábí and Bahá’í religions, just as there was in the times when Moses, Christ, and Muḥammad brought new religions. At that time, Ḥakím Masīḥ was a doctor—an excellent one—so excellent that he was the doctor to Muḥammad Sháh, the ruler of Persia. One time, the Sháh asked Ḥakím Masīḥ to go with him on a trip to ‘Iráq. What famous Bahá’í heroine do you think Masīḥ met there?”

“Ṭáhirih,” Mehraban shouted from the back row.

“That’s right,” said Emily.

“Ṭáhirih is known by Bahá’ís for challenging many traditions. First, Ṭáhirih’s father educated her. Most girls and women were not even allowed to learn to read. Second, Ṭáhirih freely spoke her thoughts, refusing to be kept quiet as most women were instructed. She also became one of the first to believe in the Báb, who announced He was bringing forth new Teachings from God.

“So Ḥakím Masīḥ went to hear her speak about the new Faith from God. He later told a devout believer that her words had great power, and her knowledge was so vast that the Muslim clergy could not disprove her proofs of the newest religion of God.



“Dr. Masīḥ did not become a Bahá’í at any of those meetings, but a seed was planted in his heart. He began to meditate and pray, which, if you will recall, is one of those important qualities of a true seeker.

“Years later, Dr. Masīḥ offered his services as a doctor to a prisoner. No other doctors would do this because this prisoner was a Bábí, which was the very reason why he was imprisoned.

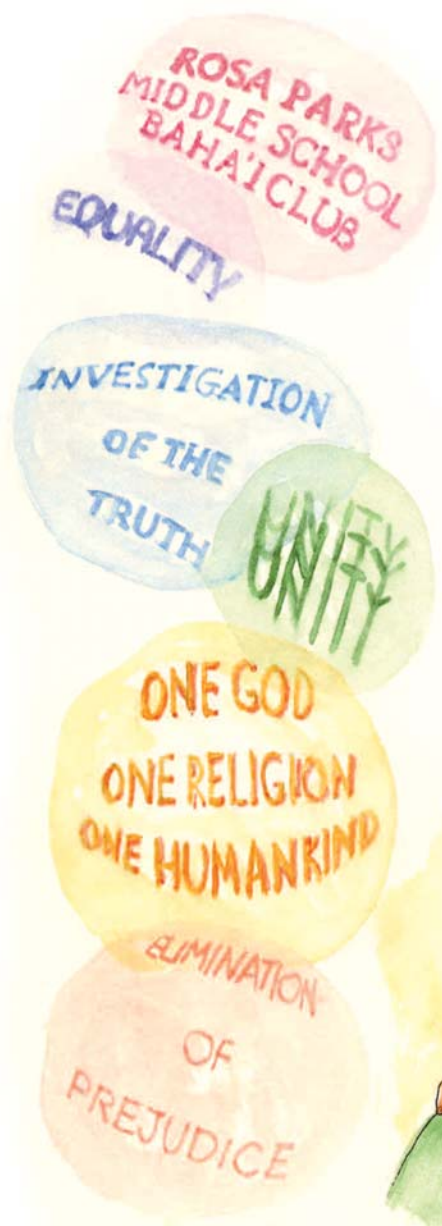
“Imagine a doctor refusing to treat a child! Imagine a child imprisoned for his religious beliefs!

“The child and his father were chained together with two other believers. For two years and four months, they were kept in filthy conditions, and the young boy became very sick. During the time Dr. Masīḥ treated the child, and even afterwards, he would go to that terrible prison and sit at the feet of Ismu’lláhu’l-Aṣdaq, the prisoner, and learn about his faith. He soon declared himself a believer of Bahá’u’lláh, recognizing Him as the Promised One of the Old Testament.

“Bahá’u’lláh wrote many Tablets to Dr. Masīḥ, encouraging him to remain steadfast, even when those filled with hatred would rise against him.

“When we look at our list of qualities, you can see it would take detachment, patience, and prayer to survive the cruelty and evil ways of those who hated the followers of this new religion,” Emily said, pointing to the list.





“Dr. Ḥakím Masīḥ had all these qualities. He was a true seeker, and he encouraged many others to investigate the Teachings of Bahá’u’lláh, many of whom were Jewish. The Faith grew as a result. Even one of his grandsons, Dr. Luṭfu’lláh Ḥakím, was elected to the Universal House of Justice, the international governing body of the Bahá’í Faith.”

That night Meg and her parents, Dr. and Mr. Whitman, remained at the Bahá’í Center for two whole hours after most had left. They had so many questions. Wow, Emily thought, this is just like when Mom and Dad and I were studying the Faith. What if Meg and her parents become Bahá’ís?

As it happened, two months later, Meg and her parents enrolled in the Bahá’í Faith at Emily’s house. They thanked Emily for being the first one to introduce them to Bahá’u’lláh and His Teachings. Emily felt happier than she had ever felt in her whole life. She had faced her fears of talking in public with the support of her mom and lots of prayer. She had shared the Faith, and now Meg and her parents had made up their own minds and joined. She was no longer the only Bahá’í at her school. Both she and Meg were so excited that they both wanted to start the Rosa Parks Middle School Bahá’í Club. They could take turns giving the talks. They could encourage their classmates to investigate the truth for themselves. ★

