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*The Central Figures*

# Bahá'u'lláh

Volume Three



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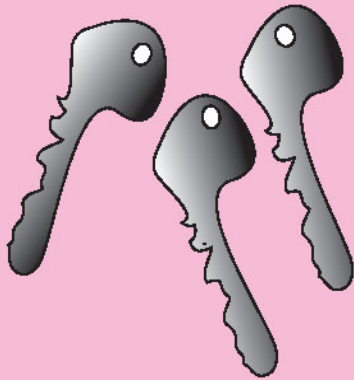
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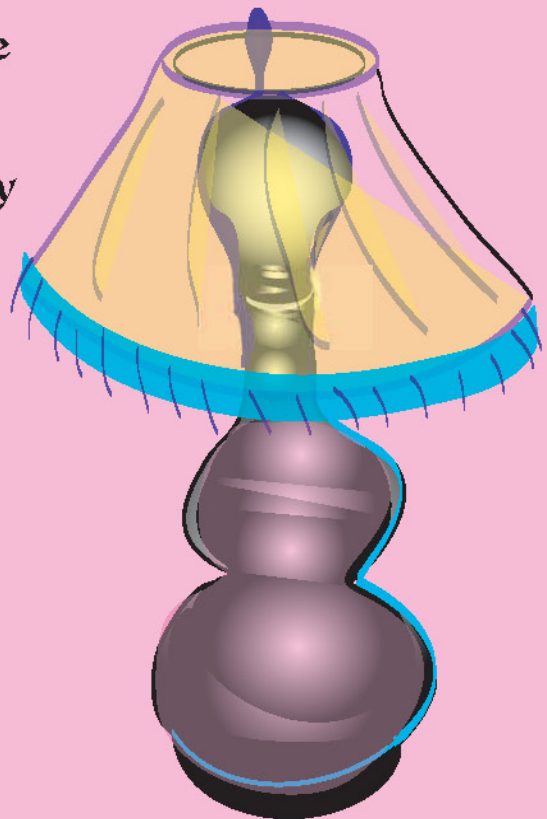
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**○ ye peoples of the world!  
Know assuredly that  
My commandments  
are the lamps of  
My loving providence  
among My servants,  
and the keys of My mercy  
for My creatures.**

— Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 20



# Once Poor, Once Wealthy

*Written by Adrienne Ellis Reeves  
Illustrated by Laurie Mason*



During the years when Bahá'u'lláh was in the Holy Land, there were Bahá'ís living in Constantinople, which is now known as Istanbul. Located in the north on the coast of the Black Sea, it was the largest city in Turkey and had many travelers going to and fro.

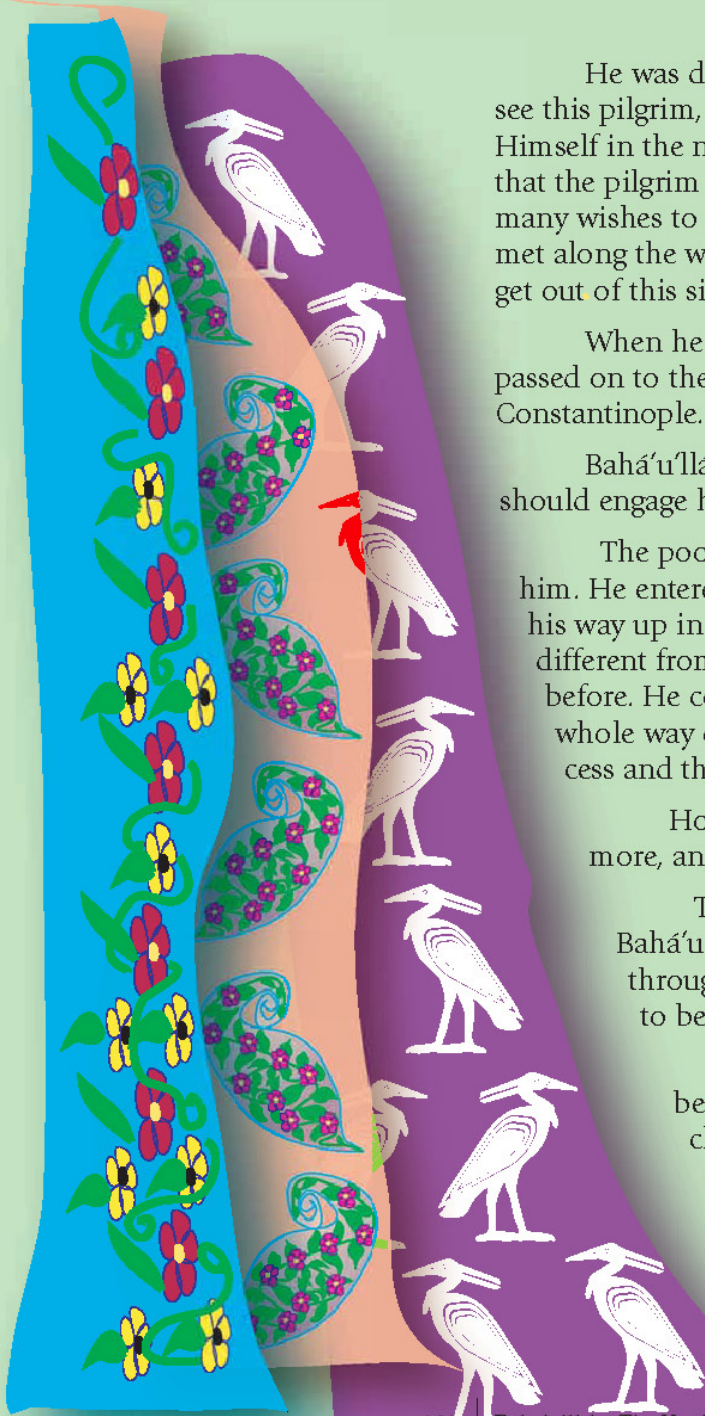
One of the Bahá'ís living there was very, very poor. He heard that a Bahá'í was passing through Constantinople on a pilgrimage to see Bahá'u'lláh. He sought out the pilgrim.

"Would you please do me a great favor when you see the Blessed Beauty?" he asked the pilgrim humbly.

"Yes, if I can, I'll be glad to."

"Please convey to Him my request for His blessings, and request His assistance in resolving my financial position."





He was desperate and didn't know what to do except to see this pilgrim, who would be in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh Himself in the next few months. He felt he was taking a chance that the pilgrim might forget, because he must be carrying so many wishes to the Blessed Beauty from the many Bahá'ís he'd met along the way. Yet, he didn't know what else he could do to get out of this situation.

When he arrived in the Holy Land, the pilgrim faithfully passed on to the Blessed Beauty the request from the man in Constantinople.

Bahá'u'lláh replied, "We shall pray." Then He added, "He should engage himself in the cotton business."

The poor man took the advice Bahá'u'lláh sent back to him. He entered the cotton business and little by little worked his way up in it. As he did so, he became wealthy. He was very different from the poverty-stricken person he had been before. He could now afford to buy what he wanted, and his whole way of living had changed. He was proud of his success and the wealth he had accumulated.

However, he found it wasn't enough. He wanted more, and more, and still more.

The man who had brought him the message from Bahá'u'lláh came to see him one day. "I couldn't pass through Constantinople without seeing you. You seem to be doing very well."

The man now lived in a fine house in a beautiful part of the city. He wore expensive clothes, and he looked healthy and well-fed. He carried himself like a proud and powerful man.

"I'm very happy that so much has changed for you and that you're doing so well," the pilgrim said. It occurred to him that now, in these changed circumstances, this wealthy cotton merchant would want to pay the Right of God called Ḥuqúqu'lláh. When he'd lived in poverty, he'd not been obliged to follow that law, but now he could.

This law of Bahá'u'lláh requires that when a person has money beyond his necessary expenses, then 19% of the profit belongs to God.

Feeling that this rich dealer in cotton would be glad to realize he was in a position to pay Ḥuqúqu'lláh, the pilgrim said, "Now that you have attained this stage of wealth, you should make regular contributions as Ḥuqúqu'lláh."

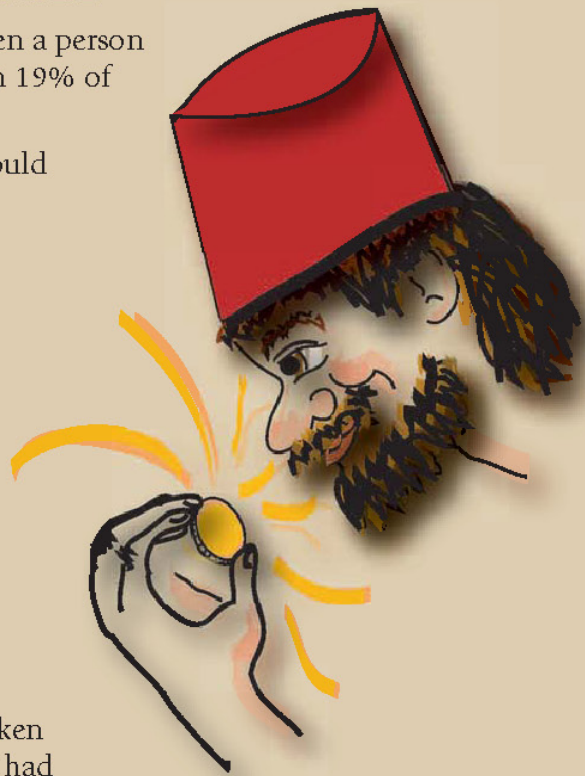
To his surprise and dismay, the merchant said carelessly, "My god, for the time being, is gold."

The pilgrim was very sad to hear this. He continued on his journey and arrived in the Holy Land.

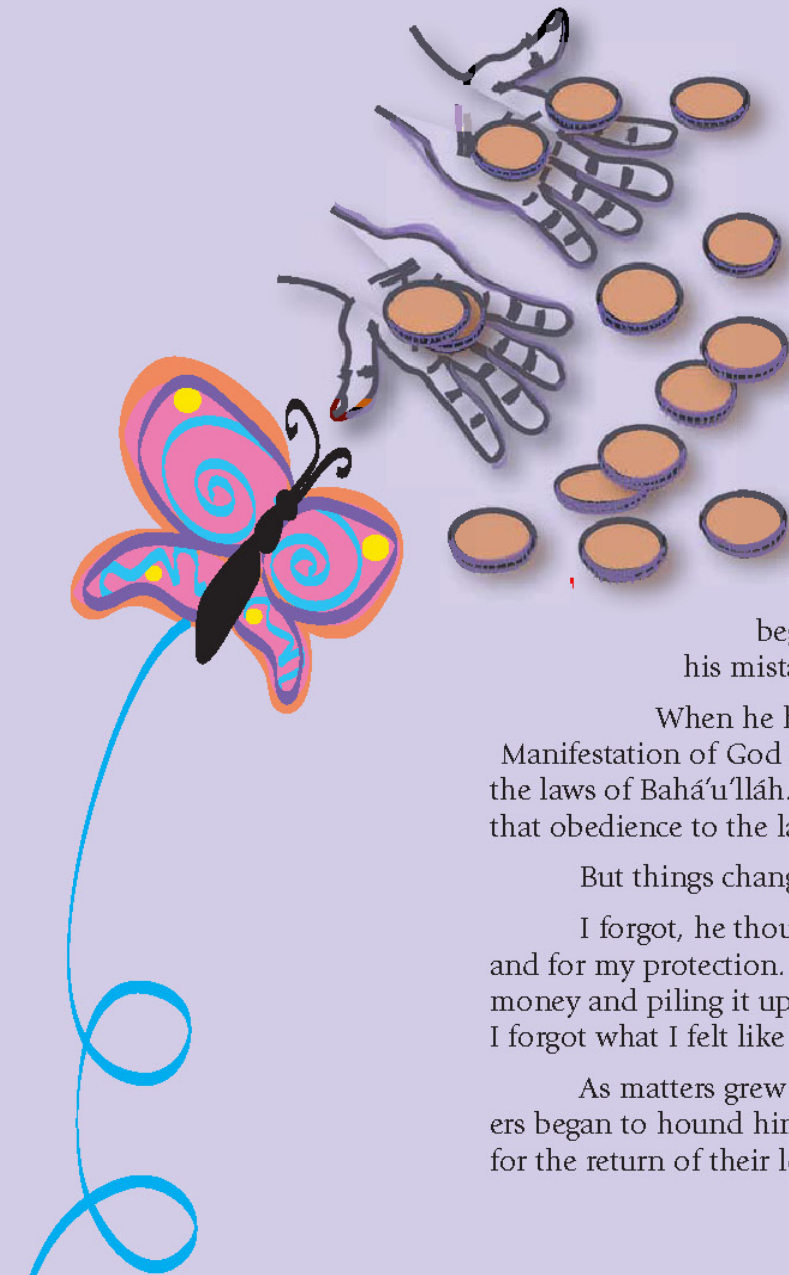
When he attained the presence of Bahá'u'lláh, the Blessed Beauty asked him about the poor man in Constantinople.

The pilgrim related how the man had taken the advice sent him by Bahá'u'lláh and how he had prospered in the cotton business. Then he said sorrowfully, "But when I reminded him that now he should pay according to the law of Ḥuqúqu'lláh, his answer was that 'my god, for the time being, is gold.'"

The Blessed Beauty replied: "We gave him that 'god,' and We are able also to take it away."







When the pilgrim left the Holy City to go home, he again passed through Constantinople. He asked about the cotton merchant.

"His trade is gone; it has evaporated," one person said.

"He has lost all his possessions," another said.

The pilgrim went on his way with a heavy heart.

With this turn of events, the merchant became despondent. He began to understand where he'd made his mistakes.

When he had recognized Bahá'u'lláh as the Manifestation of God for this Day, he had also vowed to obey the laws of Bahá'u'lláh. He was happy to find the truth and knew that obedience to the laws was a part of that truth.

But things changed when he began to accumulate wealth.

I forgot, he thought, that the laws are for my own good and for my protection. All I could think about was making more money and piling it up. I forgot about being kind and generous. I forgot what I felt like when I was poor.

As matters grew worse for the merchant, the moneylenders began to hound him and were unyielding in their demands for the return of their loans.



Each day he suffered more.

In his misery, he saw clearly how the gold he'd been making had caused him to be so greedy that he'd forgotten everything else except getting more.

He'd been unwilling to part with any of it. The worst thing was that he'd even been unwilling to obey the law of Ḥuqúqu'lláh and offer the Right of God!

In despair, he wrote to Bahá'u'lláh. He begged for His pardon and for His forgiveness.

The Blessed Beauty replied. He instructed the merchant to proceed to Báku, there to "busy yourself in transcribing the Holy Tablets in the Ḥazíratu'l-Quds of that city."

Relieved and thankful, the merchant followed Bahá'u'lláh's instructions. He went to Báku in Azerbaijan and happily remained there the rest of his life. ★