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*The Central Figures*

# Bahá'u'lláh

Volume Three



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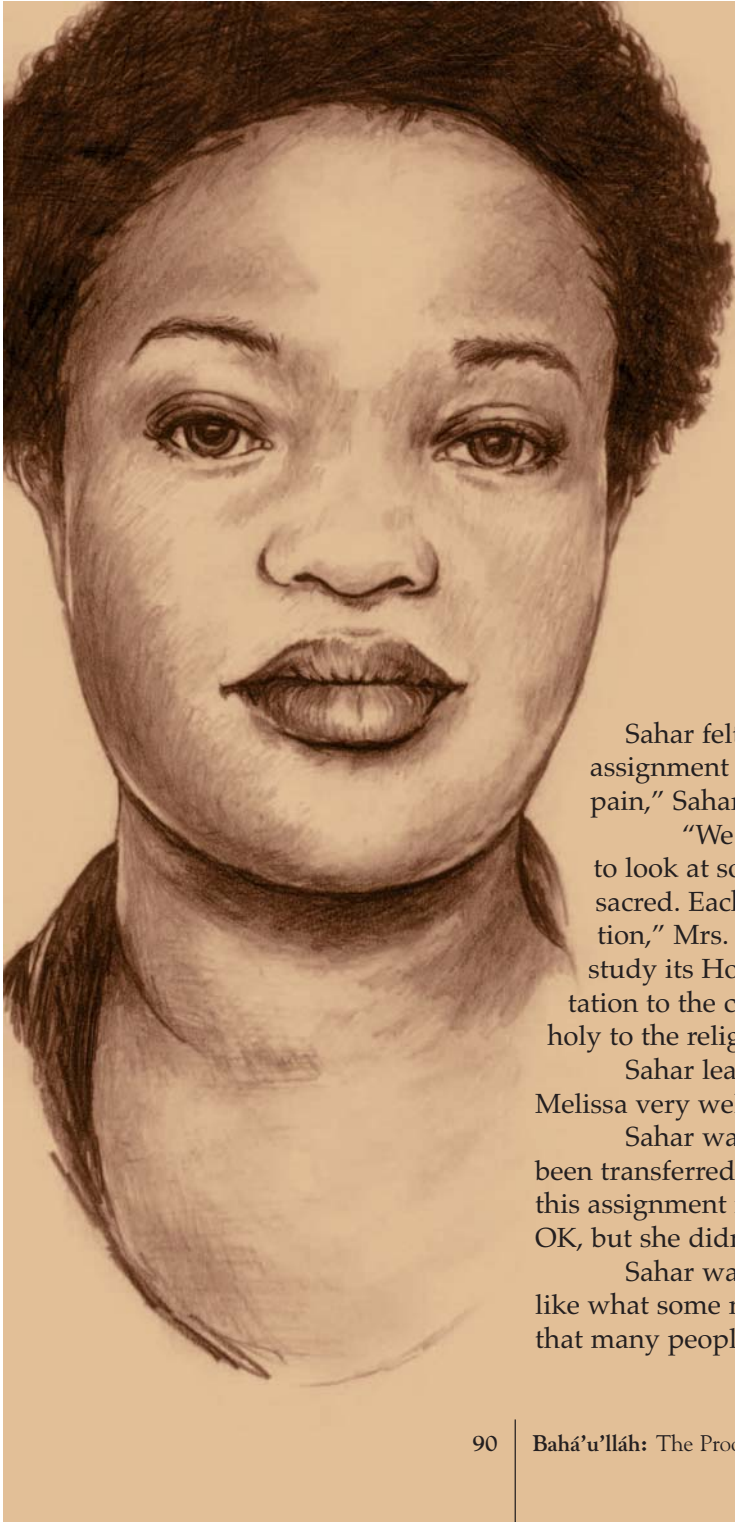
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# *Lifting the Veil*

*Written by Liz Donaldson and Rick Johnson  
Illustrated by Carla Trimble  
Photography by Pepper Oldziej*

Sahar felt homesick as she heard Mrs. Potts announce a new assignment for social studies class. “Uh-oh, this is going to be a pain,” Sahar thought.

“We are exploring different cultures. We are now going to look at some places different religions consider holy or sacred. Each of you will have a partner to develop a presentation,” Mrs. Potts was saying. “You will research a religion and study its Holy Places. Then you are to make a 10-minute presentation to the class telling about the holy places and why they are holy to the religion. Here are instruction sheets.”

Sahar learned that Melissa was her partner. She didn’t know Melissa very well, but she had a friendly look that was encouraging.

Sahar was new in her school. Her mother, an engineer, had been transferred to this town. That was bad enough. On top of that, this assignment made her feel homesick. The assignment itself was OK, but she didn’t know exactly how it would go for her.

Sahar was a Muslim. Although she looked and acted mostly like what some might call a ‘typical’ American teenager, she knew that many people had really wrong ideas about Islám. It really

bugged her how often people seemed to think that all Muslims were Arabs and that all Muslim women wore veils. Although her family had been in America since colonial times, and her family name was “Smith”, Sahar was a Muslim.

Her parents had converted in college, and she had been raised as a Muslim. Her mother never wore a veil, nor did Sahar. That was a cultural practice that was done in many Islámic cultures, but not in all places. Her mother said “my ancestors were slaves, and my head is free now and it’s going to stay that way!”

Sahar had often heard her mother tell why she had left the church: “Folks just followed the preacher like he, himself, was God’s Prophet or something. The Qur’án said that people should investigate the truth for themselves. *And pursue not that of which thou hast no knowledge; for every act of hearing, or of seeing, or of feeling of the heart, will be enquired into on the Day of Reckoning.*”<sup>1</sup> These views were not uncommon in the Muslim world, but you never heard about that on the news.

Most Americans did not have a clue about Islám, really, or how varied Muslims were. Sahar sighed. She could imagine how difficult this project was going to be. She wished she were back “home” where there were lots of Muslims from all over the world. She probably was the only Muslim in her school. Sahar wasn’t excited about this project . . . The next day, Mrs. Potts provided class time for the project teams to get organized and begin their work.

Sahar pulled her chair over to Melissa’s desk and they looked over the project assignment together.

“Well, what do you think?” Sahar began.

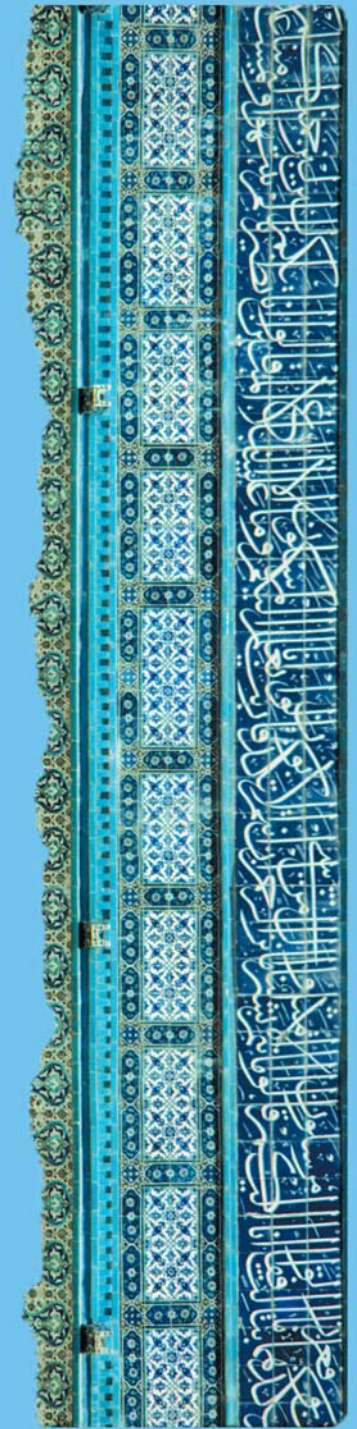
Melissa looked at Sahar and said quietly, “I’m actually a little worried about it.”

Sahar looked curiously at Melissa.

“I’ve been through this before,” Melissa continued. “I love my religion and this is a great opportunity to tell people about it, but people often have lots of misconceptions and weird ideas about it. I’m a Bahá’í, and not many people know much about it. There are only a couple of us in the school, so there’s not a lot of understanding.”

Sahar was astounded. Melissa was saying what she was feeling also.

<sup>1</sup> Qur’an 17:36; Cf. Qur’an 49:6







“Melissa, I feel the same way,” Sahar replied. “I’m a Muslim, and people often respond to me in the same way.”

“SAHAR, THAT IS SO COOL!” Melissa exploded.

“Oops!” she said, smiling at Sahar. “I was just so excited that I lost it for a minute!”

“You’re excited that I’m a Muslim?” Sahar responded. “Why?”

“I’ve never met a Muslim before, Sahar. We Bahá’ís believe in the Prophet Muḥammad and it is just so exciting to actually finally meet someone who shares that belief. If I tell most people that I believe that Muḥammad was a Prophet from God, and that Islám is a true faith sent by God to improve humanity, they think I’m nuts!”

Sahar’s head was swimming. “Melissa, how can it be that you’re a Bahá’í, but believe in Muḥammad? I’ve never heard of such a thing before.”

“Bahá’u’lláh, the Founder of our faith, was born a Muslim. Bahá’ís believe that He received a Message from God saying that He was the Promised One of all religions, including Islám.”

Sahar was thoughtful. “So Bahá’ís believe in Islám?” she asked.

“Bahá’ís believe that the Qur’án is a Holy Book from God, and that Muḥammad is God’s Prophet. In that sense, Bahá’ís accept Islám. Bahá’ís also believe that Bahá’u’lláh came especially to fulfill the promises made in the Qur’án.”

“Which promises?” Sahar asked.

“The one I like best says that one day all humanity will be brought together under the Promised One and unified. I can’t recite the verse exactly, but I remember that’s what it says.”

Sahar reached into her backpack and pulled out a well-used copy of the Qur’án. She thumbed through the pages. She stopped to read one of the many passages she had highlighted: “*One day We shall call together all human beings with their Imám: those who are given their record in their right hand will read it with pleasure, and they will not be dealt with unjustly in the least.*”<sup>2</sup> This passage refers to the Promised One of Islám, a new Prophet sent from God to establish justice on earth.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Qur’an 17:71

<sup>3</sup> Moojan Momen notes that the meaning of Imám in this passage refers to the Promised One, a new Prophet sent from God to establish justice on earth. *Islam and the Bahá’í Faith*, p. 111

“Sahar,” Melissa replied, “Bahá’ís believe the same thing. We believe that there will be a Most Great Peace when God makes justice, love and peace worldwide. We know that Muslims believe that, too.”

Sahar turned to the back cover of her Qur’án where she had many notes jotted down. “Listen to this, Melissa,” Sahar said excitedly. “This is one of the Traditions of Islám, which are considered teachings of Muḥammad. *Mutual hatred and rancour will disappear. The ability to injure will be removed from every injurious thing. Thus a boy will touch a snake and it will not injure him, and a girl will run from a lion and it will not harm her; and the wolf will be with the sheep, as though it is their sheep-dog. And the earth will be filled with peace, just as water fills a jug. And the word will be one, and only Alláh will be worshipped, and war will lay down its burdens.*”<sup>4</sup>

“That is really one of the beautiful teachings of Islám,” Melissa said happily.

Sahar felt very excited! Someone else loved the Teachings of Muḥammad. She’d never heard anything like this from a non-Muslim before.

“So, Melissa, you say that Bahá’u’lláh is supposed to be the Promised One of Islám. How can that possibly be?”

“Well, Bahá’u’lláh quotes the Qur’án and the Traditions of Muḥammad dozens of times in his Writings to show that His Coming fulfills Muḥammad’s Teachings about the Promised One. Bahá’ís believe that the great day of peace that people of all religions, including Muslims, have awaited for hundreds of years, is now here.” Melissa spoke with such friendly sincerity that Sahar felt like she had a new friend.

“Melissa,” Sahar responded, “I don’t know what I think about what you’re saying, since I’ve never heard it before. But I am so happy that you respect and love the Prophet Muḥammad, that I’m willing to hear more about it sometime. I’ll ask my parents about it, and they might be interested, too. We probably ought to work on our project right now, though! What do you think we should do?”



<sup>4</sup> Tradition of Muḥammad, according to Ibn Májah. Cf. *Islam and the Bahá’í Faith*, p. 207.



“Hmmm . . . Well, I’m not sure, but knowing that you’re a Muslim, maybe we could look at the Holy Places of Islám and then show how these Holy Places relate to Bahá’í Holy Places. The city of ‘Akká, where Bahá’u’lláh lived, is mentioned by Muḥammad as the place where the Promised One will appear, so it would be easy to do both. When I went on Bahá’í pilgrimage last year, we visited ‘Akká. We recalled that Muḥammad foretold that this would be the place of the Promised One. On the same trip we visited Jerusalem and saw the Dome of the Rock. I’ve got slides we can use in our presentation.”

“Muḥammad mentioned ‘Akká?” Sahar said, looking puzzled. Here was something else new.

“Well, like I said before, I’m not really up on all Muḥammad had to say,” Melissa said sheepishly, “but I remember from pilgrimage that one of the Islámic Traditions mentions the ‘Spring of the Cow’ which is in ‘Akká. I particularly remember that because I thought the name was interesting. Bahá’u’lláh quotes Muḥammad as saying that whoever visits the Spring will have their sins forgiven and that whoever visits ‘Akká would be blessed.<sup>5</sup> This was because these places are associated with the Promised One of Islám.”

“Well, it sounds like that might make a pretty interesting project,” Sahar said. “Let’s explore that possibility.”

“Maybe we could meet after school one day this week and work on it,” Melissa offered.

“Yes, that sounds good. Let’s meet at my house. I’m sure my parents will want to meet you also!” ★

<sup>5</sup>See *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, pp. 178–179.

