



5. Can the Holy Spirit Find My Envelope?

Dedication to the Sacredness of the Bahá'í Fund Compiled by the National Spiritual Assembly of Azerbaijan



... the contribution which has been made by your friend, who has not been active in the Cause for a short time, will be the means of stimulating her to renewed service.... Service is the magnet which draws the divine confirmations. Thus, when a person is active, they are blessed by the Holy Spirit. When they are inactive, the Holy Spirit cannot find a repository in their being, and thus they are deprived of its healing and quickening rays.

—Shoghi Effendi

O Son of Being! Love Me, that I may love thee. If thou lovest Me not, My love can in no wise reach thee. Know this, O servant.

—Bahá'u'lláh

In the days of the Soviet Union, my friends and I were all atheists, because we protested against God and His failure to care for the poor and the needy around the world. We demanded social justice and believed that God was unable to provide a world where everyone received fair portions. It was years later that I came across this profound passage from Shoghi Effendi, which gave me a whole new perspective on how

God interacts with humankind: "When [we] are inactive, the Holy Spirit cannot find a repository in [our] being." Needless to say, the passage initiated a shift in my consciousness. While the prosperity of humanity is dependent on the blessings of the generous Hand of God, it also requires the hands of man to actively reach out and receive the Lord's blessings.

It seems that Shoghi Effendi's passage above is about a lady who had not been serving the Cause, and it suggests that the lady unexpectedly came forward to serve God by offering a sincere contribution. Shoghi Effendi praises the act, saying that her contribution "will be the means of stimulating her to renewed service!" Then he says, "Service is the magnet which draws the divine confirmations, and when people do not serve, the Holy Spirit cannot find a repository in their being." This statement was a wake-up call, reminding me how carelessly I could close the doors to God's blessings by not serving.

In this edition of *The Roaring Fountain*, we will focus on how human beings recklessly close their "envelope" of generosity and become "deprived of the Holy Spirit's healing and quickening rays." How does generosity become a magnet for blessings? Why does God want us to be generous? Does God not see how difficult our economic situation is? Can He not see we are unable to afford life's essentials—our daily bread, a house, a car? What is all this generosity and sacrifice for? My friend made a sacrificial contribution and did not receive blessings, so are we even guaranteed to receive blessings? Should I risk losing my money for a promise? One cannot deny that these questions go through our minds; we are just too ashamed to say them out loud. Nonetheless, they are important questions that we should reflect upon.

During the time of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, there was a believer in Akká who had not worked for a long time because there were so few jobs. His living conditions worsened each day, and although he was frugal, the time finally came when he had no more savings. He was a devoted Bahá'í and must have prayed in the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh imploring blessings. This is a normal human reaction in times of need—we turn to God and humble ourselves in prayer. Unfortunately, sometimes we pray but do not engage in acts of service.

Eventually, he decided to approach 'Abdu'l-Bahá—the embodiment of generosity and love. He witnessed how 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave to the poor and the needy and visited the sick in Akká; he was convinced that the Master would extend a helping hand to him, also. And why wouldn't 'Abdu'l-Bahá assist a fellow Bahá'í in need? The believer went to see 'Abdu'l-Bahá, explained his financial dilemma, and requested assistance. Without much discussion, 'Abdu'l-Bahá advised the believer to make sacrificial contributions in the path of God. That night, the believer went home empty-handed, thinking, "I have no money and the Master tells me to give to the Fund. Is it possible that I did not make myself clear to 'Abdu'l-Bahá?" Regretfully, this is the story of most of us. We know the advice, we read the Scriptures, we are given the True Physician's remedy, yet we go home wondering whether or not the remedy prescribed was appropriate.



'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Center
of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh

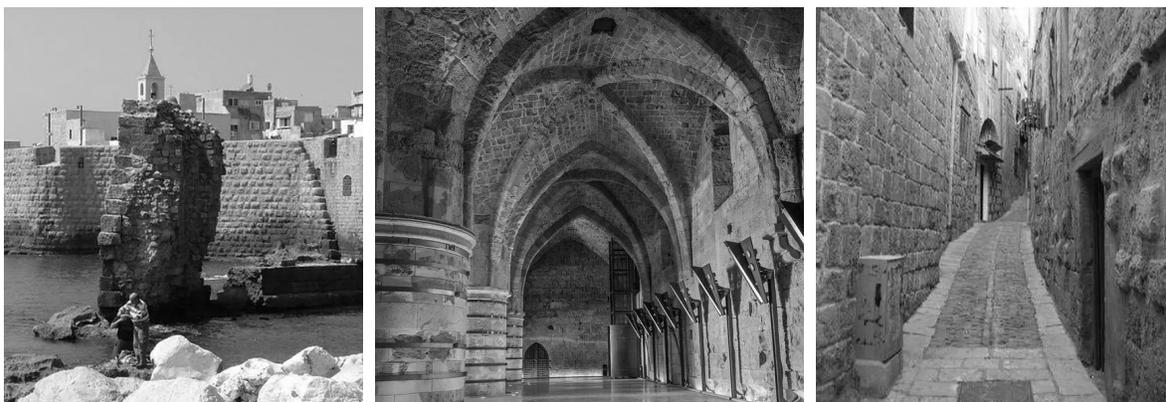
Even though ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s advice was clear, the believer had doubts, because it did not make sense to him. When a poor man asks God to be generous, why would God respond by asking him to give generously? He concluded that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá must not have heard him properly, so he never made a sacrificial contribution. After a whole month, the believer’s financial situation became unbearable. He spent his last few coins and considered making another plea to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to help him. He did not consider that Bahá’u’lláh’s New World Order sets forth a different relationship between God and His servants.

O Son of Being! Love Me, that I may love thee. If thou lovest Me not, My love can in no wise reach thee. Know this, O servant.

—Bahá’u’lláh

The believer in Akká finally built up the courage to visit ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for a second time. “Dear Master,” he said, “I am completely destitute of the bare necessities of life, and I cannot endure it any longer. What am I to do?” The Master lovingly replied that he had heard the man the first time and had advised him to make a contribution.

It is notable that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is divinely aware that the believer had not made contributions in the path of God, in any form or shape. This goes back to the previous editions of *The Roaring Fountain* that discuss how God is fully aware of our generosity at the moment of giving. The man went home in great sorrow! He wept and prayed aloud calling for divine mercy. He must have been confused as to why ‘Abdu’l-Bahá could not help him.



Streets of Akká

When they are inactive, the Holy Spirit cannot find a repository in their being, and thus they are deprived of its healing and quickening rays.

—Shoghi Effendi

That night, the believer decided to obey ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and opened his heart to detachment. He searched his possessions at home to see what he could generously sacrifice and found, on the wall, two picture frames that he had cherished for many years. He then decided to take the frames to the market, sell them, and contribute the proceedings in the path of God. On the way back from the market—before having a chance to offer his contributions to anyone—he found an employer waiting at his residence to hire him for work. The employer was frustrated and explained that he had been searching for him for a whole month. Akká is a small fortress, the size of Ichehri Sheher in Baku, yet the employer somehow could not find the believer. It was just as Shoghi Effendi told us: “if believers do not serve, the Holy Spirit cannot find a repository in their being.” In the words of Bahá’u’lláh, “If thou lovest Me not, My love can in no wise reach thee.”

What fascinates me with this story is that the believer had not even delivered the contributions, but received divine blessings only by taking an action in the path of service. It is worthy to note that the believer sold both frames on the wall while all he had to do was to sell one frame to make a contribution. This was a truly sacrificial contribution.

Until a being setteth his foot in the plane of sacrifice, he is bereft of every favour and grace.

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá

As discussed in the previous editions of *The Roaring Fountain*, generous and sacrificial giving also restores our *dignity as individuals in the community and in society*. How joyous and dignified the believer must have felt when the employer spoke publicly that he had heard about the believer’s honesty and was looking for him for one month. Divine blessing is much more than just finding employment or having food on the table. It is an infinite source of abundance, a feeling of inner joy and contentment.

Although it is impossible to understand the definition of “*Lord’s blessings*” or “*healing and quickening rays of the Holy Spirit*,” as stated by Shoghi Effendi, I personally came closer to feeling the depth of this mystery when I stood on the ground where His Holiness Jesus Christ fed a multitude of 5,000 with five loaves of bread and two fish on the Sea of Galilee.



The sea of Galilee where Jesus blessed the bread and fed 5,000

Then Jesus took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them, and broke them, and kept giving them to the disciples to set before the multitude of five thousand people. And they all ate and were satisfied; and the broken pieces which they had left over were picked up, twelve baskets full.

—*Gospel of Luke*

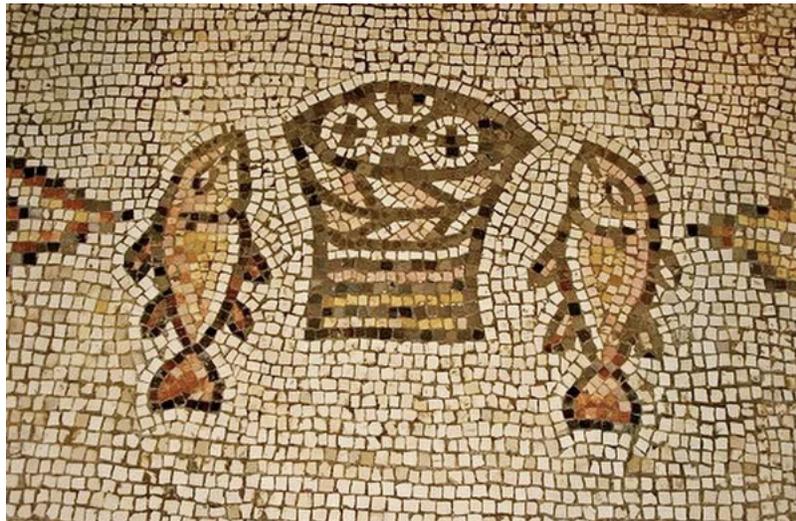
Many years ago I traveled to the Holy land and visited Tiberius close to the Sea of Galilee. The day I visited the area, there were no Christian pilgrims and the entire region was in deep serenity and calmness.

I took a boat and passed the location where Jesus walked on water. On the other side of the sea I walked to the location where Jesus had fed a multitude of 5,000. I was tired and I sat down. The serenity of the place made me humble and I closed my eyes to chant: *“Blessed is the spot and the house, and the place and the city, and the heart, and the mountain.... where mention of God hath been made, and His praise glorified.”*

I wanted to imagine the day Jesus stood there in Person and fed the people. As I kept my eyes closed, I reflected that the story may not necessarily be about feeding 5,000 people, but about something much deeper than 2 fish and 5 breads. Perhaps Jesus wanted to reveal to His disciples that our Lord’s blessing is eternal, never ending, abundant, and rich. Perhaps Jesus wanted His followers to see, with their own eyes, that when God gives, it never ends and there will always remain extra on their plates. Perhaps on that historical day, Jesus wanted to give His followers *“the secret of right living.”*

We must be like the fountain or spring that is continually emptying itself of all that it has and is continually being refilled from an invisible source. To be continually giving out for the good of our fellows undeterred by fear of poverty and reliant on the unfailing bounty of the Source of all wealth and all good—this is the secret of right living.

—Shoghi Effendi



The Journey Continues...

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The Roaring Fountain Bulletins

Stories about the Fund

Fundraising Projects



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