



garden of virtues

A BAHÁ'Í INSPIRED SCHOOL

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The Purpose of Our Life

Bahau'llah says that when God made us He loved us.

<hidden word>

He also says that people are the best thing that God ever created – and that when he made us he put into our hearts many of the good qualities that He has Himself. We have been made in the image and likeness of God

<quote from the bible>

Some of these qualities are love, kindness, patience, justice, mercy... Can you think of some more.

He also gave us a mind for learning. For all of these wonderful gifts that God has given us have been for a reason. He gave us these gifts that we could be His servants and learn to know him and to worship Him.

Bahau'llah says in the obligatory prayer that that is the reason why we were created – to know and to worship God.

Have any of you ever made a toy or painted a beautiful picture? Do you remember how you felt about that thing that you created? In a sense, when a mommy and a daddy have a baby, they have come together to create and look after that baby? How do a mommy and a daddy feel about their baby?

This is the same way that God feels about us.

If you look at the world. Everything in the world is there for a reason. It all has a purpose. The purpose of a banana tree is to give us bananas, the purpose of a river to carry water to the ocean. The purpose of the sun is to shine... all the universe has been created in a perfect system of order that runs and works perfectly – and at the pinnacle of that system is man. If we read the story of creation from the bible... God created all the universe and on the last day He created man. He did this because He created the whole universe for man...

And what was the purpose that God created us for?

So how can we fulfill our purpose in our lives? What can we do to make God happy... to know and worship Him.

We can try to reflect the virtues that He has given us... to try and grow and develop those virtues in our hearts. We can try to love others and be kind and patient and live happy and fulfilling lives. Saying prayers also helps because it is

a way of talking to God and asking Him to help us live our lives in a way that will make Him happy.

So, who can explain what the purpose of our lives is and what we have been created to do...

The first prayer that we will learn today is called the short obligatory prayer – and we will learn it because in this prayer Bahauallah has described what we were created for...

Questions:

Why did God create us?

What is the most important thing in the whole universe that God ha created? (the answer is not ice cream)

We know that God put into our hearts many of the good qualittes that He has... name 3 of these good qualities?

Split into 2 groups. The first group is the bad qualities, the second group is the good qualities. I am going to give you a quality and a situation and you have to act out the good and bad qualities.

Helping an old lady cross the road.

When you mom asks you to clean your room

When you wake up in the morning and go to school

When a new child comes to school and they don't have any friends

Our Soul (quotes needed)

From the moment we start our life in this world we are different from all the other things God has created. We have a body to do different things, we have teeth to eat, feet to walk with, eyes to see with... but besides these things we have a very special gift from God. It is this gift that makes us the most important of all God's creations

Do you know what this gift is?

Without our soul we would be the same as animals. Animals spend all their lives taking care of their bodies. The things our bodies need are called physical or material needs. We also need to take a lot of time caring for our physical needs. We have to make food and make our homes comfortable and clean our bodies everyday... our parents spend a lot of time caring for us and giving us what we need so that our bodies can grow up strong and healthy.

But there is a much more important reason for which we live in this world. He says that in the same way we take care of our body, we must also take care of our soul. Our soul, just like our body, needs food and it also needs to grow and be healthy.

Let us talk about what kind of food our soul needs and how our soul grows. Does anyone know what Bahauallah says the food for our soul is?

Prayer is a very important food for our soul. Other important ones are obedience to God's laws, helping other people, being kind and loving, experiencing nature and living life with a happy and a radiant attitude. All these things are the things that make us happy deep down inside, the things that fill our soul with life and joy to be alive. This food is called spiritual food and it makes our souls grow strong and healthy.

It is important to have healthy and happy souls so that we can live our lives here on this planet as best as we can – and fulfill the purpose for which we were created. To know and worship God. If we are happy and healthy and inspired to live life to the fullest – then we can worship and love God in every moment we are alive

There is also another reason why it is important to have a healthy and strong soul. Many of the religions teach us that when we die, our bodies stop working, but our souls live on. Our soul continues to live in another world of God... this world is the spiritual world of God, it is a place where we don't need our bodies anymore to be alive.

Bahauallah explains that the spiritual worlds of God are like this world compared to the world inside our mummies tummy before we are born. He says that while

we are in our mummies tummy, we could never imagine the world outside or comprehend how big and magnificent it is... it is only when we are too big for that world that we are born into this world.

Then, the same is true for this world. We cannot imagine how glorious and beautiful the spiritual worlds of God are. Only once we die in this world and are born into the next world will be able to understand.

Also, while we are in our mummies tummy, we must grow and develop in preparation for this world. In our mummies tummy, we grow legs and arms and eyes – but we can't use these things in there because it is dark and there is no space. We are growing these things for the next world

The same is true for this world – in this world we must develop spiritual virtues that we will use in the next world of God. If we work hard in this world to grow our soul and be happy – then we will be ready for the next world and will have a strong powerful pair of spiritual arms and legs to walk around with there.

Activity: lets make a play about a person growing up from their mummies tummy into the next world and present it to the children next week.

Questions:

What is the most amazing gift that God has given us?

What is the same about us and animals, and what is different?

Give 2 reasons why we must take care of our souls and make them strong and healthy

God and His Messengers: Progressive Revelation

Have any of us ever seen God? No, why is that? It is because God is very difficult to see, or to contain and bring down and put inside a bottle.

Consider if a painting was painted by an artist, would that painting have the ability to understand and see the artist? If God is so huge and powerful, how are we ever going to understand Him?

Today we are going to learn how we come to know God and learn about Him... because remember one of the most important reasons we are alive is to know God – this basically means to learn about Him and come to know Him

As we go about our daily lives – we often wonder which of our actions will please God. We know that by doing the things that please God we make our souls strong and healthy and we also make the world a happier and better place to live in.

But how does God tell human beings what is good for us and what is good for this world?

He sends special messengers of prophets. Bahauallah tells us that God has always taken care of us. He has always sent us Messengers and Prophets to tell us what is good for us and what is good for this world.

Long long ago – He sent Abraham. Later He sent Moses. Who are the other Messengers that he sent us?

Now today we are going to discuss why God has sent us different Messengers. We all know that the things that the Messengers sent are always the same – things like we must love one another and obey God and be honest and be kind and work hard and say our prayers. But we also want to understand why some of the teachings of these Messengers are also so different...

Why do some religions say we can eat certain things but others say not to...? What is the explanation of all of this?

Well, do you remember your first pair of shoes that your parents bought you? Do you remember how beautiful and clean they were and how excited you were to receive them? What happened to those shoes?

You wore them, you enjoyed them, you walked in them... but slowly they became too small for you as your feet grew too big for them. There was even a time when instead of helping you – they actually hurt your feet because they cramped your toes up. Now those shoes were useless and a new pair had to be bought.

Many things in life are like this. With the passing of time, changes take place and old ideas do not work as well anymore. Imagine – what if someone from a hundred years ago popped into our world and said that the fastest way to send a message to someone was with a letter and the post office... it just wouldn't be true anymore would it. That idea has changed.

For the same reason as this – God sends us new teachings.

Abdul Baha used another way to explain why God sends us new teachers and different Messengers and why part of what They say is not the same. Abdul Baha tells us to think of the time we spend in School. First of all we have a teacher who shows us how to read and write. When we are older we move to another class and we have a new teacher who teaches us about mathematics and science. We still need to read and write but now we also need to learn about these new things.

It is not enough only to know how to read and write. We must learn the new things so that when we get older we can understand more – so our teachers need to teach us more.

Abdul Baha says that if we had stayed with our first teacher – we would not have learned about all the new things we are able to do in this world. Imagine what it would be like if you were still only learning to count... it wouldn't be very fun. If for the rest of your life all you could learn was how to count.

Because we have a soul there is no end to the marvelous things we can learn to do and the wonderful ways in which we can make this world a better place to live. That is why there have always been Messengers of God to teach us every thousand years or so...

The latest of God's Messengers is Bahauallah and He has brought special teachings that are designed for today. His most important teaching for today is that all of mankind is one. That we must learn to love one another – if we come from different parts of the world and speak different languages and have different customs. We must realize that ultimately we are all created by the same God and that deep down inside we are all the same.

Questions:

How did Abdul Baha explain why God has brought different Messengers?

What is another good way to explain this?

What are the names of the Messengers of God that have taught us all that we know about God and what is the same through all of their teachings?

What is special about the message that Bahauallah has brought for this day... why could it not have worked a long long time ago?

Activity: some kind of drawing thing

The Religions of God

The great religions of God such as Christianity, Islam, Hinduism are like different chapters in one big book. The Messengers who brought all these different religions all came for the same purpose. They came to help us grow closer to God and teach us, over a long period of time, more about Him.

When we read and understand the teachings of the Messengers of God we realize that their teachings are not always the same. Because the teachings they bring are sometimes different – some people try to divide them. These people say that the Messenger of God that they believe in is the only true and right one.

Just as a person goes through different stages of being a baby, a teenager and an adult – so too all of humanity goes through these stages. At one time we lived in caves and wore skins for clothes, but we have progressed. We have discovered new ways of doing things. At first we were new born babies feeding only on our mother's milk. As we grew a little older and started growing teeth we could begin to eat other food like vegetables.

When we got even older – our mother gave us meat and heavier food – because in her wisdom she knew that our bodies were ready for more grown up foods that we needed. If our mothers had given us meat when we were new born babies we would not have been able to chew it. It is not that meat is bad – but just at a certain stage in our lives we do not need it because our bodies cannot handle it.

Spiritual food is just the same. Do you remember learning that just as our souls need physical food – so our souls need spiritual food. God gives us spiritual food in stages according to what our bodies need. Long long ago in India a noble and Holy soul appeared – His name was Krishna.

Among the things that Krishna taught was that we should never hate those that hate us. He also taught that all religions are good. His teachings made the souls of people grow and develop. Time passed and people began to forget these good teachings. God saw that people needed new spiritual food – so He sent Abraham.

Like Krishna, Abraham taught us that we should forgive those that hurt us. Abraham also taught us that we should hide the bad things that others do. God gave a special blessing to Abraham – He caused most of the Messengers who came after Abraham to be His descendants.

After Abraham came Moses. Moses was born in Egypt and was brought up in the palace of the Pharaoh, the Egyptian king. Moses was known for His great kindness and His deep love for God. He gave us a set of laws called the ten commandments, which many people still try to live by. Part of these laws says "Thou shalt not kill" and "honor thy father and mother"

A few hundred years went by and people again began to turn away from the beautiful message that Moses had brought. They began to follow their own ideas and forget the ways of God. God was not pleased.

He knew that these people needed new laws to live by and new spiritual food. They needed new laws in addition to the ones that Moses had sent down. So God sent new laws with Zoroaster, and then with Buddha, and sometime later He sent Jesus. Zoroaster taught us to have pure thoughts and to love one another. When Buddha came He said "hate is conquered by love" And then just like all the Messengers of God who came before Him, Jesus told us "love your enemies ... do good to them that hate you"

The followers of Jesus are called Christians and they say a prayer revealed by Him, part of which says "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"

After Jesus, Muhammad appeared to the people of Arabia and said that He had come with a Message from God. At that time everyone had become so forgetful of the teachings of God that the people of Arabia sometimes even buried their baby daughters alive.

But the teaching of Muhammad had power and beauty. He taught us about the oneness of God and He said "God loveth the doer of what is excellent". The religion founded by Muhammad is called Islam and through its teachings science and mathematics were greatly developed and the civilization established influenced the peoples of Asia, Africa, Europe and the rest of the world.

Those who follow the religion of Muhammad are called Muslims. After Muhammad the Bab appeared in a country that was known as Persia. The Bab said His coming was like the beginning of a new and wonderful day. He taught us that knowledge is like light and that we should always try to the things that are pleasing to God.

The Bab also said that He had come to prepare us for the coming of a Person much greater than Himself, the One Whose coming had been foretold since the time of Adam. The One Whom Jesus spoke when He said "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven"

The One promised by the Bab came soon after the Bab had been killed by His enemies. His name is Bahauallah. Bahauallah brought the spiritual food that we need to develop our souls for today. He is the Messenger of God for this day. He is the Divine physician who has given us the spiritual medicine for all of our spiritual sicknesses. Bahauallah teaches that love and unity between all the peoples of the world is the medicine that will put and end to the sicknesses of hate and war and injustice.

He said “ regard ye not one another as strangers. Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch”

Bahau'llah told us that God will again send us a Divine Teacher to renew the spirit of religion and to give us the spiritual food we will need so that we can continue to progress and learn how to love God and each other, This new Teacher will not come until at least one thousand years have passed since the time of Bahau'llah.

Activity: color in the different symbols of the different religions.

Questions:

Why does God keep sendin us new Messengers?

What teachings did Moses bring?

What was the main teaching of Jesus?

What was one of the most important teachings brought by Muhammad?

What was the most important teaching brought by Bahau'llah?

Activity: let all the children act out a scene where they are each a different religion and they each insist that their religion is the only right one... then let another child come in and explain the idea of progressive revelation and resolve the situation.

Abraham and Moses

Abraham was one of the Messengers that was sent to earth by God that we know of. He lived in the land of Ur with His wife Sarah. Ur is a place in the region that we now call the Middle East. Abraham and Sarah had no children and it was when Abraham was an old man that God spoke to Him that He was a Messenger of God. God told Him that He must move to a new land. God said that He would have a family and that this family would become a great nation, the nation of the Hebrew people, later called the Jews.

Now just think of an old grandfather sitting around your village or city. Do you think it would be easy for Him to just pack up everything and leave? NO! God did not even tell Abraham where he was supposed to go! It took a lot of faith – but Abraham was a Messenger of God, so He obeyed and left His home with some of His relatives, His sheep and cattle.

When He came to the land of Canaan, God told Abraham that this was the land He would give to Abraham and His people. Today this land is called Israel. Abraham and his people did very well there. God spoke to Abraham and said that He would have a son and that from the descendants of this son many Prophets would be born.

Abraham and His wife were very surprised because they were very old. How was it possible for them to have a child. But just as God had said, Abraham and Sarah did have a son, a very good man called Isaac. Isaac had many children and grandchildren. Among the descendants of Abraham were Moses, Jesus, Muhammad and even the Bab and Bahauallah.

A long time after Abraham died, a large number of Hebrews from the family of Abraham were living in Egypt. The kings of Egypt were called the Pharaohs. One of these pharaohs was very cruel. He was angry that the Hebrews were so healthy and rich, so He made them his slaves. Since even this did not kill their spirit, he decided to kill all the male Hebrew children.

Well, one Hebrew woman just could not bear to have her baby killed, so she hid him for three months. When she couldn't hide him any longer, she put him in a special basket which floated, and left it in the river near the pharaoh's palace.

The pharaoh's daughter found the basket and named the baby Moses. She raised him as her own child and as a prince in the palace.

When Moses was a young man, He saw how badly the Hebrew slaves were being treated. One day Moses saw an Egyptian cruelly beat a Hebrew slave. He was so angry that He killed the Egyptian. This got him into trouble with the pharaoh and He fled into the wilderness and became a shepherd.

Many years later, whilst Moses was tending His sheep, God appeared before Him in the form of a burning bush. God told Moses that He was a Messenger from God and that He would have to go back to Egypt. God told Him to gather together His people, the Hebrews, and lead them back to the Promised Land, the land that God had given to Abraham.

Sp Moses went to the Pharaoh and said "Let my people go!" But he king would not let them go. Then God sent many sicknesses and hardships to the Egyptians until the pharaoh agreed to let the Hebrew people leave.

They had to pass through a desert before entering the promised land. They spent forty years in the desert. During this time God sent the people His laws through Moses. We call these laws the ten commandments. We call the followers of Moses Jews. Moses knew He would die before His people entered the Promised Land, but He gave them courage to go on because they had God's commandments to guide them.

We can read more about Moses and the Jews in the old testament of the Bible. The Bible also talks about Abraham.

It was through Abraham that God first explained that we are very special to Him. He loves and protects us by giving us His laws. In return we must show our love and respect for God by obeying Him.

This is called the Covenant. Do know what a Covenant is? It is the promise that God gave us that He will always guide us through His Messengers if we always follow and obey them.

The Covenant of God

We have learned that God is so big and so glorious and so far above us that we can never understand Him, and it is for this reason that God sends us His Messengers. These Messengers are special and Holy persons who come from God and tell us about Him and to tell us what He wants us to do. When we look at the Messengers of God, or study their lives, we understand much more about God. This is why God sends them to us.

As God is so great and far above us, it is very difficult to know and love Him. It is even more difficult to know how to love Him. But when we learn more about these Messengers of God, and are able to see and appreciate Their beauty – we become able to see and appreciate the beauty of God.

When we see how the Messengers of God have suffered for us – we can feel how much they love us. BY loving God's Messengers we are able to love God Himself. It is almost like they are the doorway to God. They act like perfect mirrors – reflecting the light of God in this world. When we turn towards them – we are turning towards God. When we obey their counsel and command, we are obeying the counsel and command of God. And when we love them we are loving God.

They are our connection to our Creator. If we grow and develop the connection between these Messengers and ourselves, then our bond and connection to God will become very strong.

We also know that we are not always perfect. God, because He loves and cares for us, has created a wonderful shelter to care for and protect us. What is this shelter – it is called the Covenant.

It is there to care for and protect us and keep our love for God strong. When we are under the shelter of the Covenant we made with God, nothing can harm the love and faith we have for God. This shelter is like a promise or agreement which we make with God and which if we stick to we will always be close to God.

Now when you make an agreement with someone, each one of you agrees to keep up your side of the agreement. It is just like this with a Covenant. God has promised to always look after us and , in return, we must promise to do certain things for God.

God's part in this Covenant is that He will never leave us alone. He will always send us His Messengers when the world is in need of them. In fact, when we read the books of the different religions, we see that each Messenger of God has promised that another Messenger will come after Him and that all His followers should accept the new Messenger when He comes.

Our part of this agreement is that when God sends His Holy Messengers, we will accept and obey them with joy and happiness. He has told us clearly that it is not enough just to accept and love His Messengers – but we must obey everything they say. It is not enough just to say “I am a Bahai or I am a Christian or a Jew” but we must live out this statement everyday and every moment of our lives. We must act as Bahai’s or Christians or Jews.

We now know that the Covenant is the agreement that God makes with mankind. Our part of the agreement is that when a new Messenger of God comes, we will accept Him and follow Him. If we do not accept the new Messenger of God, then we have not kept our part of the Covenant. If we accept the Messenger but do not obey every law that he has brought – then this too means that we have not kept our part of the Covenant.

We can only receive God’s love and blessings if we are obedient to His Covenant. This is very important. Let us remind ourselves of the two things we must do to be faithful to the Covenant of God.

First we must accept the Messenger of god when He comes. And second we must obey the teachings and laws that He brings us.

Obedience: the story of Anis (supplement with the story of Abraham and Isaac)

In the last lesson we learned about two things we must do to be faithful to the Covenant of God. These two things are to accept the Messenger of God and to obey his laws and teachings.

Our love and adoration for the Messengers of God must be so great that we should obey everything They say with great joy and happiness. Now we will hear a wonderful story about the kind of obedience that we must have towards the wish of the Messengers of God, and how our love for Them must be so great that we will do anything They ask us.

Perhaps you have heard the story of the Martyrdom of the Bab. Martyrdom means that the Bab was killed by His enemies just because He was teaching people about a new religion from God. We will not tell the whole story now, but just one small part of it.

When the Bab was brought by soldiers to the city of Tabriz, just before His martyrdom, large crowds of people had come out to see Him. An order was made that anyone who attempted to speak to the Bab would be arrested too, and many soldiers stood around Him to stop people from coming close to Him.

However there was one Babi youth, called Anis, who was on fire with the love of God – soon fire that he could not control himself. He ran past the soldiers and throwing himself at the feet of the Bab held his clothes. He cried “Send me not away from Thee, O Master, Wherever Thou goest suffer me to follow Thee” With the greatest love, the Bab answered, “Arise and rest assured that you will be with Me. Tomorrow you shall witness what God has decreed”

Anis with a few others, who in their love for the Bab rushed towards Him, were arrested and placed in the same cell as the Bab. That night the face of the Bab shone with a brightness that His believers had never seen before. Then suddenly He announced that He would prefer to be killed by one of His own followers rather than be killed by His enemies. He asked one of them to get up and take His life.

Tears rained from the eyes of his followers. How could they do such a thing as to take the life of their loved one. They refused sadly and remained silent. Anis however suddenly sprang to his feet and courageously declared that he was ready to do whatever the Bab might desire. At this the Bab announced “This same youth who has risen to comply with My wish, will, together with Me, suffer martyrdom. Him will I choose to share with Me its crown.”

The next day Anis was martyred with the Bab. The Bab and His faithful disciple, Anis, were tied together to a nail on a wall and then shot by the rifles of 750

soldiers. Their bodies were bonded together as one by a shower of bullets. Through this act of obedience, love and courage, Anis will be with His Beloved through all the worlds of God.

Let us think. Why did Anis suddenly agree to kill his own Master. Did he really wish to kill the Bab, as the Bab had asked? No, how could that be? Perhaps the last thing on earth he would have wished to do was kill his Beloved. And yet he agreed – he was ready to do it. Why?

It was because his heart was on fire with the love of the Bab, and in his love Anis forgot about himself. He forgot his own desires, his own likes and dislikes. He thought only of what his dear Master wanted. In his love, he was willing to carry out any wish of his Master, no matter what it was.

Children, this is the meaning of true love. This is the meaning of what it is to obey. Our hearts must be so filled with the love for God that we will be willing to fulfill their wishes with happiness and joy.

We know the wishes of God because we learn this through the Messengers of God that He has sent to us. If we live our lives with the desire to serve and love God, we will be living lives that are happy and healthy.

Questions:

What do you do when your parents ask you to do something you disagree with?

Did the Bab really want someone among his followers to kill Him?

Why was Anis ready to kill the Bab, even though he loved Him so much?

Activity:

Think of a situation in which you should obey your parents and act it out as a charade for us to guess.

Why God gives us Laws

Now children- we know that the Messengers of God have given us laws. Muhammad said that muslims must pray 5 times a day, Moses gave us the 10 commandments. Other laws are that we must not lie or steal. Can you think of some other laws that religions have given us?

Why do the Messengers of God give us laws. Bahauallah explains that God's laws are like light. Let's see what a light does. One way to understand this analogy is to imagine ourselves on a dark road. We want to reach a safe place. Let's imagine that one side of the road, the land is covered with bush and is full of dangerous animals. The other side of the road is a swamp and is covered in mud and water.

Without light it would be a very dangerous place. We might easily fall into the water or get lost in the bush. With a light we can avoid these dangers because a light shows us a straight and safe path. Do you see how the light gives us safety and protection?

This is exactly the same with the laws of God. God always know which laws we need to keep us safe. So although sometimes it seems very difficult to obey these laws, we must obey them with all our heart. We would never throw away the light in a dark place – would we? In the same way we should not forget about God's laws in our life and how important they are.

Now I will tell you a short story. Once there was a four year old boy who lived near a very deep and dangerous river. The parents never told the boy that the river was dangerous and they let him do whatever he wanted. What do you think happened to him? He played in the river one day and drowned. Do you think his parents were good parents? NO! what would good parents have done? They would have told him not to go near that river. And what would they have done if they had found their son playing in that river? They would have punished him because they want to protect him so that he will remember that he should never go near the river alone when he is young.

God is like a good parent to us. He cares so much for us that He sends His Messengers with laws to show us the right way. This is how God protects us from doing things that will harm us.

Let us think about some of the universal laws that God has given us – laws that are common between all the religions. God gave us the law about praying. Why do you think He did that? Yes, so that we can learn to be closer to Him and to be more spiritual. God has also told us not have sex before we get married – why is this law important? It is important if we want to have a truly powerful and long lasting marriage one day... if we keep our husband or wife very special and don't give ourselves to someone else –then they will feel very special to us and we can

have a wonderful and happy family. What about the law of respecting our parents. That is a important one because our parents are there to help us through life and it is very important for us to respect them and their decisions.

Sometimes we can understand right away why God gave us a certain law... but what about when we can't understand why God gave us a law or what the wisdom is behind it. Should we obey this law as well... what if God told us to eat banana's every Tuesday afternoon?

Well – this is a difficult one... but if we accept the Messenger of God as being from God and having divine wisdom, then even if we can't understand what He is telling us – we can still listen to Him. It is like if you go to the doctor and he makes you better – then you accept his wisdom as a doctor and you begin to trust him and what he says.

Then one day you get sick and he tells you that he needs you to let him cut you open and do an operation. You might not understand what he is going to do – but you trust him because he is your doctor.

The messengers of God are like doctors from God who have come to heal our world and our lives. They know the divine remedy to make our lives happy. It is important for us to listen to the doctor and do what he tells us to make us better – in the same way it is good for us to listen to the Messengers of God even if we don't understand what they are asking us.

Questions:

How are the laws of God like a light?

What are some of these laws we can think of?

Why are these laws important?

Jesus: the Spirit of God

Today we are going to learn about Jesus Christ. I am sure that you remember the story of Moses and the Hebrew people. Do you remember what the followers of Moses are called? Jews. Do you remember what the Holy book of the Jewish people is called? Do you also remember how after 40 years in the desert the Jews went back to the Promised Land.

Now, the old testament of the Bible (which is the same as the holy book of the Jewish people) promised that one day God would send a new Messenger to the Jews. Do you know who that Messenger was? It was Jesus.

Jesus came to the Promised land to give the people more teachings from God.

I will tell you about the birth of Jesus. About two thousand years ago a couple named Joseph and Mary were about to have a Baby. Both of them had dreams that told them that their child would be very special. But just before that baby was born, Joseph and Mary had to go on a journey to Bethlehem. When they arrived there – they found that all the hotels were full, so they had to stay in a stable – which is a place where animals live. That same night, the baby Jesus was born, and since Mary and Joseph did not have a bed for Him, they laid him down in a manger, which is a container filled with hay for cows and horses to eat.

Such a wonderful thing! A Messenger of God had been born. But most of the people did not know this. There He was without even a proper bed to sleep in. That is how God always sends His Messengers, in ways that people never expect.

Just outside Bethlehem, there were some shepherds in a field looking after their sheep. Suddenly they saw a great light and angels came down and told them that God's new Messenger had been born. The angels told the shepherds where He could be found and they went to the stable and bowed down and worshipped the Baby Jesus.

Joseph and Mary knew that their Son was a gift from God because so many wonderful things happened when Jesus was a child. But it was not until Jesus was a grown man that He began to teach people about God's new Religion.

Because Jesus's father was a carpenter, Jesus became a carpenter too. When Jesus began to teach His new religion, many people were surprised and did not believe Him. This was because the people thought that the Messenger of God would be rich and powerful like a king, and not a poor carpenter. They did not see that Jesus was greater than any earthly king could ever be.

He was a spiritual king. He was poor and traveled on foot to teach His message, and He did not even live in a house. People laughed at Him. They did not know that God had made Him poor on purpose, in order to test the people.

Only those with pure hearts could see that Jesus was their Lord. Jesus taught the people to love and be kind to everyone. He taught that we must love our neighbours as we love ourselves. He taught through many stories how we must take care of each other, whether we are rich or poor, whether they are sick or from another place.

Many people would gather around Jesus to listen to His teachings. He promised that if we all love one another, a wonderful day would come when God would help us to build His Kingdom here on earth.

He taught people that to be good Christians they had to prepare themselves for the coming of the Kingdom of God by loving each other so much that they would even give their own lives for one another if they had to. It was not long before many people loved and believed in Jesus.

But what do you think happened next? What is it that always happens when many people start to believe in God's new Messenger? The people who have power try to turn all the people away from Him and His teachings. The Jewish priests were jealous and afraid that everyone would become Christians and not listen to them anymore.

Eventually, a terrible day came when the priests persuaded the king to kill Jesus. Jesus's hands and feet were nailed to a great wooden cross and He was left to die. So we can see that Jesus sacrificed His own life to help the world prepare for the coming of the God's Kingdom on earth.

The Holy Book of the Christians is the New Testament of the Bible and this is where you can read about the life and teachings of Jesus.

Questions:

What happened when Jesus was born?

Why do you think God sent His Messenger as a poor man?

What did Jesus teach?

Love your enemies

Today we are going to learn how Bahauallah loved everyone – including people who didn't love Him. He sets a good example for us to follow.

Now, when the Bab told everyone that He was a Messenger from God, many people became His followers, and this made the leaders of religion in Persia very angry, so they decided to start killing and imprisoning all of the Bab's followers. One of the most famous of all the Bab's followers was Bahauallah. Bahauallah was so popular that the leaders of religion wanted to imprison Him more than anyone else.

One day, Bahauallah heard that soldiers were looking for Him so that they could arrest Him. Bahauallah's friends wanted Him to hide and begged Him to run away. Do you think He ran away? No, He was not afraid. In fact, instead of hiding, He went out to meet the soldiers so that they would not have too much trouble finding Him. They were very surprised.

Bahauallah was arrested, the soldiers chained Him, took the turban off His head, removed His shoes and made Him walk in the hot sun. A large crowd gathered to insult Him and to throw stones at Him as He walked by because He was a follower of the Bab. IN this crowd there were even some poor people with whom Bahauallah had always shared His riches.

One woman in this crowd was an old woman with a stone in her hand. She wanted to hit Bahauallah with it but she was too weak to catch up with Him. "Give me a chance to fling my stone in His face!" she cried.

Bahauallah turned to the guard and told Him to stop so that the old woman could throw her stone. He said "Suffer not this woman to be disappointed. Deny her not what she regards as a meritorious act in the sight of God." Bahauallah was saying that He did not want the woman to be disappointed. This woman did not understand that the Message from the Bab was from God. She thought that those who followed the Bab were against the Muslim faith. IN throwing her stone she thought she was doing something good in the eyes of God. Bahauallah, even in His sufferings, understood this. This shows us what love Bahauallah had for everyone – including His enemies.

The best way to make the world a better place is to show love to our enemies and friends alike. When you heard the story about how Bahauallah showed love to the old woman, how did you feel? Wasn't your heart touched?

What if we could do the same? If we tried to follow His example wouldn't we be making the world a better place?

What can we do to follow the teachings of Bahauallah? If someone is unkind to us, instead of just hating this person, we can try to understand why they are being unkind to us. It could be that this person has parents who always hit him. Maybe he has problems that make him feel angry and frustrated. Maybe he is a poor student because he has noone at home to help with his studies. This could be the reason why he is not kind to you. If there is no-one at home who tries to understand him – you could try to understand him and show him that you care?

We have learned how Bahauallah understood why people did bad things to Him – and through that understanding He was able to still love them and make the world a better place. If we try to understand why people act the way they do – then we can also make the world a better place like Bahauallah did.

A story about 2 angels and how things are not always what they seem...

There were two angels sent to earth to walk as men for a time, one older . . . one younger. After a long day they came upon a very nice home where they asked if they might spend the night and rest. The owner, a person of substantial means finally gave into the request and let them use the old cellar in the back of the property. It was cold and damp and as they prepared for sleep the older angel caused a minor miracle to be performed in repairing one wall that was degraded to the point of collapse. The younger angel asked "why did you do that for people that are obviously greedy and self indulgent?". The older simply replied "things are not always as they seem".

The next evening they came upon a small dwelling in the woods and upon inquiring found the farmer and his wife very accommodating . . . to the point of requiring them to use their bed and share their meager meal as they appeared to be very tired and in need of rest. Upon leaving the next morning they noticed the farmer and his wife in the small side yard grieving over the death of their only cow.

As they walked down the road the younger angel became angry and asked, "How could you allow that to happen? Night before last you do good for a person that would barely lift a finger to help and last night you allow this poor but gentle farmer and his wife to loose something of such value." The older angel turned to the younger angel and said "the other night I noticed that the old cellar wall was barely holding back the riches of an old vault, filled with treasures and gold so I

repaired it knowing that more of such finery for one such greedy person would not help others. Last night while we slept the angel of death came to take the farmer's wife. I convinced him to take the cow instead.

"THINGS ARE NOT ALWAYS AS THEY SEEM"

Forgiveness

Matthew 18:23-35

"Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. 25 Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

26 "The servant fell on his knees before him. "Be patient with me,' he begged, "and I will pay back everything.' 27 The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

28 "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. "Pay back what you owe me!" he demanded.

29 "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, "Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.'

30 "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. 31 When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened.

32 "Then the master called the servant in. "You wicked servant,' he said, "I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. 33 Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?" 34 In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

35 "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

Muhammad: The Chosen One of God

Muhammad was a Messenger of God sent by God before the Bab and Bahauallah. He was born around Arabia (which is called Saudi Arabia today)

The tribes of Arabia lived in separate towns when God sent Muhammad to them. These tribes did not get along with each very well at all and were always fighting with one another. IN fact, they made war with each other for most of the year. They were a savage people and they had many bad and cruel habits.

One habit they practiced was to bury baby girls alive because they preferred to have boys. When Muhammad came and taught them God's new religion, they stopped many of their bad habits.

Before Muhammad announced that He was a Messenger of God – He was a camel driver, and used to lead caravans across the desert. A caravan is a long line of camels carrying goods for sale. When He received God's new religion – He began to teach it to those around Him. What do you think the people did when He began to teach His Religion.

Yes, most of the people did not believe Him at first because they were no pure enough to see the truth behind what He said. Whenever God sends a new Messenger, most of the people rise up against Him. But God always protects His Messengers.

Here is story about how God protected Muhammad from some people who wanted to harm Him. One day Muhammad's closest followers came running to Him. He could see that they were frightened and He asked them whats wrong? They told Muhammad that people from all the tribes had come together and were going to kill Him. Muhammad had to leave the city and find a place to hide. So His followers wrapped Him in a roll of clothe and carried Him away.

By nightfall Muhammad and His friends had found a cave and they lay down inside it. Later that night, Muhammad and His followers could hear the shouts of His enemies coming nearer and nearer. At that moment a spider began to make a big web across the front of the cave. The spider must have worked all night because by the morning the web was complete. Suddenly Muhammad's enemies appeared outside the front of the cave certain that they would find Him here, but when they saw the spider's web across the cave's entrance, they said to each other that Muhammad could not possibly be inside or else the spiders web would have been broken. They thought that Muhammad must be somewhere else and they left. With the help of a little spider, God protected His Messenger.

At first Muhammad had very few followers, but His faith spread very quickly, until all the tribes of Arabia united as Muslims and stopped fighting against one

another. Do you remember what the people who believe in Muhammad are called? As a result of His teachings, all the people came to love and respect Muhammad. The tribes began to see each other as brothers who should work together to make their nation strong.

Now, lets say that you lived amongst people who had very cruel habits and fought all the time. Do you think they would change their habits just because you told them to? No, never! The only reason why the Arabian people changed so much was because Muhammad was a Messenger of God and He brought the Word of God. Only the Word of God has power to changes the hearts of people so much.

We can find the word of God revealed by Muhammad in His Holy Book the Quran. In this book, Muhammad gave the law of God to the people. He taught them that there was only one God and that Moses and Jesus were also Prophets.

Muhammad also taught his followers that they should treat other people of other religions with kindness. Muhammad's teachings put an end to the cruel habit of burying baby girls alive.

Muhammad said that daily prayer was obligatory, which means that Muslims have to prayer every day. He taught them that they should come together to pray on Fridays in their mosques. Muhammad also taught that Muslims should fast for one month of every year. During this month they should not eat or drink during the daylight hours.

The name of the religion that Muhammad brought is called Islam. Islam made many people civilized. For a long time the Muslims were the most educated people in the world.

Questions

Which country was Muhammad born in?

What is the name of His Holy Book?

How did Muhammad change the people of Arabia?

Prayer

Today we are going to have a very important lesson – a lesson on prayer.

Can each of you tell me who you think is very special in your lives and who you love very much? Now tell me, when you love that person very much – how do you like to show your love for them? There are many ways to show your love aren't there? We can show how thankful we are. We can try do the things that we know will make them happy. But also we can tell them how much we love them.

Now, I want to ask you – do you love God? Wouldn't you want to show God that you love Him too? How can we do this?

We can thank God for the world He has created and we can do the things God wants us to do. But we should also tell God how much we love Him and the best way to do that is by saying prayers. By saying prayers each and every day we will gradually feel more and more love for God, and also know that He loves us too.

Have you ever planted a seed and watered it? Did that seed suddenly grow up into a plant five minutes after you watered it? NO, it took time and you had to keep watering it. Think about a time you were sick and the doctor gave you medicine. Did this medicine work straight away instantaneously – or did you have to take it quite a few times before it made a difference?

Well, prayer is like this. Learning to love God, learning to prayer, learning to open our hearts take time and practice. That is why we must prayer every day. It is good to prayer in the morning and in the evening.

Bahau'llah, the Bab and many of the Prophets have given us many special prayers that help us in all kinds of situations. They help us when we are in difficulties, or when we are traveling, or when someone is sick. If 2 people are fighting and we want them to become friends – there are prayers for unity. We have prayers for old people, for middle people and even for children.

What else might we want to prayer for? Do you think we should prayer to be rich, to have good food and nice clothes and a beautiful house? Well, actually there isn't anything wrong with praying for the things we want... as long as they are not the only things we prayer for. As long as we don't begin to think they are more important than the really important things in life like being happy and loving others and serving God.

Now, there are many times in life when we or our families or friends are having difficulties and we need help. What do you think is the first thing we should

do...? We should try and remember that the first thing we should do in times of difficulties is turn to God and ask for His assistance by saying a prayer.

Sometimes we can see the result of a prayer immediately, and sometimes we might not. We might think that God is not helping us if we don't see anything straight away. Have you ever prayed for something really special – something you really wanted to happen... and then after you prayed that thing never happened? Did that mean that God never answered your prayer?

No, it just means that even though God heard your prayer, it was not the right time for whatever you asked or that it was wrong for you. It is like a two year old who wants to play near the fire. Because his parents love him and want to protect him – they don't let him play by the fire. God is like a loving parent. He always gives us what we need to be truly happy and only He knows what is absolutely best for us.

Questions

How can we tell God that we love Him?

Why should we say prayers everyday?

What should we expect when we pray to God for something?

Helping Those in Need

Abdul Baha is the eldest son of Bahauallah. Bahauallah use to call Him the Master and He said that Abdul Baha was the Perfect Exemplar – which means that Abdul Baha was the most perfect example of how a Bahai should be. His love for each and every human being was so great that people could feel it immediatly. Many people who would enter His prescence would say that it was like meeting a true and loving father.

Whenever Abdul Baha would enter a room or walk down a street, people would notice him and feel the power of His love.

Here is a quotation from Abdul Baha about the power of love. “The first sign of faith is love. The message of the holy, divine Manifestations is love, the phenomena of creation are based upon love, the readiance of the world is due to love, the well-being and happiness of the world depend upon it”

Because of His great love for people, Abdul Baha easily felt the needs and sufferings of others. He was always aware that people around Him were sad or cold or hungry. Abdul Baha showed us that we must always help other people. He always thought about what people might need or be feeling. So we too must always care about others. He and His family were always happy to share what they had to help others.

Abdul Baha loved the beautiful things that God has given us in this world, but He always told His wife and family that He did not want to have more in His house than He needed. He also did not like to worry too much about Himself. He preferred to have something simpler for Himself so that He could give to others.

Because people loved Him so much, they often gave Him great gifts. But Abdul Baha who was always thinking about the poor, would often give these gifts to people who needed them more than He did.

Abdul Baha always had only one coat at a time, and if He didn't give it away to the poor, He would wear it until it was old. His wife was always worried about Him. At one time she knew that He had an appointment with a very important person called the governor and she wanted Him to look nice. So, without telling Him, she had a beautiful coat made for Him. She thought He would not notice that the coat was very new. On the morning that Abdul Baha was to visit the governor, His wife, who was called Munrih Khanum, put the new coat out for Him. But Abdul Baha went searching for his old coat, saying that the one laid out for Him was not His.

Munrih Khanum told Him what she had done. The Master, Abdul Baha, said that for the price of that one coat, the tailor could have made five cheaper ones, then

He would have had four to give away to the poor. In the end, He made Munrih Khanum go and change the coat.

In this story we learn that Abdul Baha was always thinking of the poor people who had less than He did. He could not bear to wear the beautiful, expensive clothes when He knew poor people had nothing. Abdul Baha is our perfect example, so we must always keep looking around us to see if there are people who need out help... just as Abdul Baha did.

Questions:

Who is Abdul Baha?

What did people feel when they were near Him?

How did He show His love for others in the way He lived?

Tell me the story of Abdul Baha and the new coat?

The Bab: the Messenger of God

From the beginning of time, God made us a promise. He promised us that He will never leave us alone and that whenever there is a need, He will send us a new Messenger. About 160 years ago, when there was a great need for spiritual teachings, God sent us a new Messenger called the Bab. Let me tell you about this great Messenger.

The Bab lived in a country, which was called Persia and is not called Iran. In Persia, the main religion was Islam, so most of the people were Muslims. IN the time of the Bab, there were many people who were sure that God's new Messenger would be coming soon. From the time the Bab was a young child, many people noticed that He was humble, wise and devoted to God. When He grew up, He went into business and became a merchant, and so no one ever imagined that He could be a Messenger of God.

In the year 1844 the time came when at last the Bab could tell the new people about the Message from God. His first follower was called Mulla Husayn. Mulla Husayn had been searching for the new Messenger of God in many parts of Iran. He knew that God was about to send a new Messenger and He decided to spend all his time trying to find the new Messenger.

After saying many prayers, He went to a beautiful city in the south of Iran called Shiraz. As He reached the gate of the city, a gently young man came towards him. Mulla Husayn felt very very happy when the young Man welcomed him into His house, and then served him tea.

The young man turned to Mulla Husayn and asked him how he would know the Messenger of God when he found Him. Mulla Husayn told Him some of the qualities He would have. The young man then greatly surprised Mulla Husayn by telling him that He was in fact the Messenger of God he was looking for. Can you guess who this young Man was? Yes, He was the Bab.

Mulla Husayn was full of excitement, but he still wanted to ask the Bab the questions that He knew only the Messenger of God would be able to answer. Then, without being asked, the Bab started to write a special book all about the story of Joseph, a very special person talked about in the Bible and in the Quran. This is just what Mulla Husayn's teacher told him would happen if He found the Messenger of God.

Mulla Husayn's heart was filled with happiness because now He knew he had found the new Messenger of God. The Bab wrote beautiful verses all night. He told Mulla Husayn that He was called the Bab, or gate, because He was like a gate through which all human beings would enter a new time in the history of man. This was the time when the Promised one of all religions would come, and it would soon come. The Bab said that His whole purpose was to prepare the

people for the coming of that Promised One and He said that He would even sacrifice His own life for that great Messenger. But the Bab kept the name of the Promised One a secret, and only He knew that the great Messenger of God Who would come after Him would be Baháulláh.

Soon after Mulla Husayn had found the Bab, 17 other people who were looking around and searching for the Bab found Him. We call these first 18 believers in the Bab the "letters of the living"

The Bab sent Mulla Husayn and the other Letters of the Living out to teach and spread His new Faith. Their great love for the Bab set a fire in their hearts, which made them brave. Their love shone like the sun and soon thousands of people also came to love the Bab. They too became followers of the Bab and were called Bábis.

Now, as we know there are always people who do not want to accept God's new Prophets when They come. These are the same kind of people who crucified Jesus Christ when He came, and the same kind of people who made Muhammad suffer. The religious leaders of Iran were afraid that if everyone believed in the Bab, no one would listen to them anymore. They were jealous. SO they spoke against the Bab and tried to make the people hate Him and His followers.

Soon they began killing the Bábis (men women and children) all over the country. About 20 000 Bábis were killed, but the Bábis were not afraid. Their fire of love for the Bab was so strong that they just went right on teaching the new religion.

Then the day came when those jealous people killed the wonderful, Holy person of the Bab. That day is called the day of the Martyrdom of the Bab, because He gave His life so that his religion would spread across Iran and prepare the people for the coming of the Promised One. It was a terrible day for His followers who loved Him.

But they did not stop teaching, and they did not stop looking for the new Messenger... "The Promised One" that the Bab told them would soon come.

Questions:

Who was the Messenger of God that the people were waiting for about 160 years ago?

Who was the first person to recognize the Bab, and how did He come to recognize Him?

What did the Bab call His first 18 believers and what did He tell them to do?

What did the Bab want to prepare the people for?

Sacrifice

Today's lesson is about sacrifice. I want to tell you a story that will help you understand what sacrifice means.

Bahais in a community called Kigoma, in Tanzania, decided to celebrate Naw Ruz for three days in the village of Kibrizi, and to invite Bahai's to invite Bahais from the nearby villages to participate in the celebration. The Bahai's had been preparing for this occasion for many months, and had even built another hut besides the Bahai center in Kabrizi to accommodate two to three hundred people. The community was ready to receive its guests on the day before Naw Ruz. The huts were decorated with green branches and fresh flowers, and the evening meal was prepared.

The Bahai's from nearby seven villages came in groups of men, women and children. IN the last group to arrive, there were eleven tired dusty adults carrying their luggage on their heads and their children on their backs. They had walked for three days to get there. Someone had asked them, are there no buses that come here from your village? "There are", they answered, "but if we had paid for the bus, we would no money left to give to the fund"

Saying this they proudly produced 440 shillings that they had saved from the bus tickets to give to the Local Spiritual Assembly of Kigoma, which was hosting the Naw Ruz party.

Let us think about some of the meanings of sacrifice that we can see in this story. How did the people sacrifice? Yes, they walked in order to have money to give to the fund. So one meaning of sacrifice is to give. But they did not only sacrifice money. Was it easy to walk for three days? NO... so another meaning of sacrifice is to give something that is not easy to give.

Now let us think of a different example of sacrifice. Let's say that my poor neighbor sacrificed his money to help his sister who needed to buy medicine for her sick child. What does sacrifice mean here? It means that he had given his sister money. It means to give. But this poor neighbour of mine has five children himself. Do you think that he had extra money to spare? No, it was difficult for him to give his money. Maybe giving his money meant that he could not buy shoes for his own children, but he still gave it away. Why? Because he put the urgent need of his sister above his own need. This is the other meaning of sacrifice. That we put others before ourselves.

I would like to tell you a story about the time Abdul Baha arrived in Akka. The house where Abdul Baha and the other Bahai's stayed was very wet and dirty. Abdul Baha repaired the rooms for the other Bahai's. When He got to His own room which He had saved until last, there was no more money left. So His room was not repaired. The walls were damp, the roof leaked and the floors were

covered with dust, no matter how much it was swept. Abdul Baha slept on a mat and covered Himself with a sheepskin. The room was full of fleas and when He slept the fleas gathered under the sheepskin and began to bite Him. So He would turn the sheepskin over so that the fleas would be on the outside. Every night He would have to turn the sheepskin over 8 or 9 times. Here we see how Abdul Baha always thought about others before Himself. He saved His room until last to be repaired even though He knew there might not be enough money left over. In all His suffering He was patient and happy. It was His sacrifice for others that made Him happy.

Putting others before ourselves is something we have to practice. It is not easy to do this, but when we do, it brings us real happiness and makes us become more like Abdul Baha. It makes us true Bahai's. So we can see that sacrifice is not only giving money. There are many other ways we sacrifice. Whenever we put the comfort and well being, or the feelings of others before our own, this is sacrifice.

Although sacrifice often brings discomfort and deprives us of things that we enjoy, we can see how it also brings happiness to others. In our everyday life there are many opportunities for us to make sacrifices. Let us try to always be ready to take advantage of the opportunities to sacrifice. This will make Abdul Baha happy and will cause His love for us and our love for Him to grow.

Questions:

Who can tell the story of sacrifice of the Bahai's at the Naw Ruz party?

How did Abdul Baha sacrifice?

What do you think sacrifice means?

What special things happen to us when we sacrifice?

Bahauallah: The Glory of God

Today we will learn more about Bahauallah and His life. From the earliest childhood Bahauallah showed signs of greatness. As a baby He never cried. He was always calm.

One day, when He was about 7 years old, His parents watched Him as He walked by. His mother said to His father that Bahauallah seemed a little bit short for His age. His father quickly replied that His size did not matter even a little bit, because their Son was very intelligent and had a wonderful mind.

As a young man, Bahauallah often surprised many older and more experienced people by His ability to explain difficult spiritual questions. He loved nature and would spend His free time walking in the woods and observing the trees and the birds. He loved the beauty of God's creation.

When He was almost 18 years old, Bahauallah married a wonderful and very beautiful young lady. Her name was Asiyih Khanum. Although they both came from wealthy families, they did not show much interest in doing the things that rich people felt were important. Instead, they spent their time looking after the needs of the poor. The people gave Bahauallah and His wife the titles "father and mother of the poor"

As you already know, in Iran in 1844 the Bab began telling the world He was sent by God with a very great message. He said He had come to prepare the hearts of the people for the coming of a very great Manifestation of God.

When Bahauallah heard of the teachings brought by the Bab, He immediately declared His belief in Him. The name "Bahauallah" means "the Glory of God". Although They never met, the Bab sent Bahauallah a letter on which 360 different meanings of the title Bahauallah were written.

Bahauallah deeply loved the Bab and His new Message and began to tell His family and many other people about the beautiful teachings of the Bab. He was so successful in spreading these new teachings that the religious leaders and the government put Him in prison. The authorities were not happy just to imprison Him. They also tortured Him and took away all that He owned.

While in this prison in Tihran, Bahauallah had a vision. A vision is like a dream that appears when a person is awake. In this vision a beautiful angel appeared before Bahauallah and told Him that He was the Messenger of God promised by the Bab.

After being released from prison, Bahauallah was sent from His home in Iran to a nearby country called Iraq because those who oppressed Him felt that if He went far away he would no longer have any influence on people around Him.

It was in Iraq that Bahauallah gathered His followers together in a garden called Ridvan, which means Paradise, and then told them that He was the One promised by the Bab. The year was 1863 and His followers now became known as Bahai's.

Bahauallah revealed many wonderful teachings that will guide mankind for at least the next 1000 years. He wrote over 100 volumes of books, including messages to the kings and rulers of the earth, asking them to listen to His message and bring peace to the world. But they did not listen. Because they did not listen to Bahauallah, it is our turn to bring the message of Bahauallah to the attention of people and bring peace and unity to the world.

All the teachings of Bahauallah are about unity. The unity of God, the unity of mankind and the unity of religion. He said "Let not a man glory in this that he loves his country; let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind"

We are very fortunate to have recognized Bahauallah. His teachings can truly bring peace to the world.

Miracles: The Bab and the Wild Horse

Today our lesson is about miracles. Do you know what a miracle is? Does anyone remember the about the miracle the Bab performed during a terrible plague?

Well, now we are going to hear another story about how the Bab show His special power from God. The Bab was arrested and sent to a mountain prison far far away from His home. Later, He was moved to another prison because His enemies thought that if they sent Him further away, His religion would end. But His religion continued to grow. More and more, people began to love the Bab. This made the Muslim priests very angry with Him. They decided to call the Bab to the city of Tabriz in order to ask Him some questions. They thought that if they could make fun of Him and prove Him wrong in front of a big crowd of people, the people would no longer believe in Him.

ON His way to Tabriz the Bab reached a town where many people knew about Him and were excited and curious to see Him. A prince in the town who was curious about the Bab's powers warmly received the Bab. The prince decided to test the Bab.

On a certain day, the Bab decided to visit the public bath of the town. The prince heard of this and sent a very wild horse for the Bab to ride. Do you know anything about a wild horse? It does not like people to sit on its back. If anyone tries to ride on a wild horse, the horse kicks and lifts its legs, throws its head back and tries to bite the rider. It tries to do anything to make the person fall off. The bravest and best horsemen in the town were not able to ride this horse which the prince sent to the Bab.

The attendant of the horse was worried that the Bab would be hurt and warned Him about the horse. But the Bab only said "Fear not. Do as you have been bidden and commit us to the care of the Almighty" The Bab was telling him to do what he had been instructed and leave the rest to God.

BY this time the whole town had heard about how the prince was planning to test the Bab. The public square was filled with anxious people waiting to see what would happen. The Bab approached the horse, took its rope. Gently touched it and got on. The horse didn't move. The crowd was astonished and knew that this was a miracle. They followed the Bab who rode calmly to the bath.

When the Bab came out of the bath, the people rushed in to take away the water the Bab had used to wash Himself. They believed this water to be Holy and to have special power.

When the Bab heard that the people believed in Him because of this miracle, He calmly said "Think men that when they say "we believe" they shall be let alone

and not be put to proof?" BY this He meant that it is easy for people to say they believe, but God always tests us to see if we are sincere, and if we really believe.

The Bab was right when He said this. The time soon came when the government started killing the followers of the Bab. Of all the people who had rushed to take the water that the Bab had bathed in that day, only a few remained as true followers of the Bab. Do you know why? Because most of those who said they believed in Him did not really recognize the importance of the Bab. They were attracted toward Him because of the extraordinary thing they had seen, not because of their love for Him and His teachings.

This story shows us that we should not believe in the Messengers of God just because they perform miracles. Many people can do things that look like miracles. We should believe in God's Messengers and love Them because of the power of Their teachings and exemplary lives.

Abdul Baha: The Servant of Bahauallah

Do you remember that because Bahauallah taught many people about the teachings of the Bab, He was arrested and put into a terrible prison in Tehran called the Black Pit or Siyal Chal. When Bahauallah was taken to the prison, Abdul Baha was a young boy of eight years old. The people attacked Bahauallah's house and took away everything. Abdul Baha, his mother, his brother and his sister had nowhere to go. They hid in the ruins of an old house, wondering if at any moment the angry crowd would attack them. At night time, Abdul Baha would be left alone to look after his frightened brother and sister while His mother would leave under the cover of darkness to see if she could find out any news about her husband. From one to the next she never knew if she would find Bahauallah alive or not.

Abdul Baha longed to see His father, so He was taken to the prison where Bahauallah was kept. The Siyal Chal was an underground pit called a dungeon, and as Abdul Baha walked down the dark steps, Bahauallah told the guard not to let Him come down. Instead Bahauallah went up to the courtyard of the prison. When Abdul Baha saw His father come up, filthy, weak and bent by the terrible chains that were put on His back, He fainted and had to be carried home. But at the same time Abdul Baha saw the wonderful change that God had made in His father in the prison and Abdul Baha, still only a young boy, was one of the first to see that His father was one of God's messengers on earth. From that day onward – He devoted His life to serving Bahauallah.

After four months Bahauallah was let out of that terrible prison. He was told that He had to leave His country forever. When someone is sent out of His country, he is called an exile. Bahauallah decided to go to Baghdad in Iraq. He was very weak and all the family riches and most of His clothes had been taken away from them. They had only one month to prepare for the journey, which was across high snowy mountains.

When they left they did not have enough warm clothes for their journey. Sometimes on the journey, all that Abdul Baha had to eat was a little flower put into the palm of His hand. It was so cold that to get water they had to heat some ice so that it would melt.

Altogether, Bahauallah was exiled four times in His life. First to Baghdad, then to Constantinople and then to Adrianople. The last place He was exiled to was the prison city of Akka in Israel. Bahauallah called this the most great prison. Bahauallah, His family and followers had to make a long and difficult journey by ship to get to Akka, but the worst part was when they arrived. The people of Akka had been told terrible lies about Bahauallah and were angry that He had come to live in their city. When the boat came to the gate of the prison, the people gathered at the shore to insult and laugh at Bahauallah and His followers.

All the Bahai prisoners were put together in a very filthy part of the prison. The water they had to drink came from a dirty pool and it made them sick. They were given only dry black bread to eat. Many of the friends became very sick and some died. Abdul Baha, at that time a young man, was always busy taking care of sick people.

Abdul Baha was the eldest son of Bahauallah. He shared His father's sufferings all throughout His forty years of exile and imprisonment. More than anyone else, Abdu Baha understood the greatness of Bahauallah's message.

As Abdul Baha grew older, He helped Bahauallah more and more. When people came with their problems, Abdul Baha would listen to them and guide them, so that His father could spend more time revealing the Message of God and teaching His followers.

Bahauallah respected and trusted Abdul Baha so much that He said He should be called the Perfect Exemplar. This means that Abdul Baha is a perfect example of what a Bahai' should be. He was wise, kind, generous, humble and loving. Everywhere He went, He helped people, whether they were rich or poor, healthy or sick. Abdul Baha is an Arabic name which means "Servant of Bahauallah"

He wrote many beautiful books and tablets to explain the teachings of Bahauallah and He also wrote many beautiful prayers.

The Greatness of the Manifestations of God

Do you remember learning that God is so great and so glorious and so far above us that we can never see or hear Him or understand Him?

This is why Manifestations of God are sent to us by God, to show us clearly what God is like and what He wants us to do in this world. Can you imagine what it would actually be like to meet a Manifestation of God. Someone who is filled with the spirit of God. We are going to hear about one person who lived in the time of Bahá'u'lláh and had the great bounty of meeting Him. This man had a chance to be with Bahá'u'lláh many times.

While on pilgrimage in Akka, this believer was allowed to enter into the presence of Bahá'u'lláh every other day for nine months. Each time he met Bahá'u'lláh, he would say to himself "If only I could get a good look at His blessed face so I could describe it to my family and friends when I get back home" But every time he came into the presence of Bahá'u'lláh, he seemed to lose the courage to carry out his plan.

One day Bahá'u'lláh asked His servant to serve this man some tea. When the man looked up to take the cup from the servant's hand, his eyes fell upon the face of Bahá'u'lláh. He was lost in wonder at what He saw. He could not take His eyes off the face of His beloved and He knew He would never be able to describe it.

A few minutes passed and then Bahá'u'lláh said to Him "oh, look what you have done, you have spilt the tea and ruined your robe" It was true. The man had dropped the cup and the boiling tea had spilt and burnt him. But he had not even realized what he had done. This was because when he looked into the eyes of Bahá'u'lláh, he saw such love and compassion and power that he forgot everything else.

One of the servants of Bahá'u'lláh, who often took the friends to see Him, said that he noticed that none of the Bahá'ís could look straight into Bahá'u'lláh's face. Just as we find it impossible to look directly into the sun. The spiritual power and majesty of Bahá'u'lláh were just too great.

Try to imagine what it would have been like to have lived in the time of the Manifestation of God. To have been in His Presence and to have recognized His station. That would have been the most wonderful gift that God could ever give to us. Imagine how you would feel if you could have been in the same room as Bahá'u'lláh and heard the sweet melody of His voice and received from Him your share of His loving kindness.

We know that Bahá'u'lláh is a Manifestation of God. We know that those who saw Him saw that He had a human form. He had eyes and a mouth and He bathed

and ate and married just like other human beings. But the soul of a Manifestation of God is different. Their souls are filled with the spirit of God and are directly linked to Him. They are perfect reflections of the attributes of God. We can recognize Manifestations of God from the things they do and say during their lives.

Although Bahauallah lived on this earth in a human form, just as we do, He had the soul of a Manifestation of God and was filled with the Spirit of God. The Word of God flowed through Him to man.

Truthfulness

Today children I want to tell you one of the very important teachings of religion. Do you know what it means to be truthful? It means not telling lies. Abdul Baha teaches us that "Truthfulness is the foundation of all human virtues" Virtues are good qualities such as honesty, kindness, love and obedience to God.

Abdul Baha tells us that when we are truthful we can develop all the other good qualities, but if we are not truthful then all the other good qualities are impossible to get. Now we are going to hear a story that tells us exactly how truthfulness helps us to be good.

There was once a man named Simon who had three very bad habits. One day Simon went to talk to the village chief. "oh Chief" he said "I have come to ask you to help me get rid of three very bad habits that I have. I don't know how to get rid of them by myself" "what are these bad habits?" the chief asked. "well, I steal, I drink and I lie," replied Simon "but I don't think the lying is bad as the first two"

"Actually you are wrong" said the chief "Lying is the worst of all these things. You should decide from this very moment never to tell another lie". "Is that all?" Simon asked. "Yes, that is all" replied the chief. "You mean that I can continue to steal and drink?" Simon asked. "Yes, answered the chief". "Oh, what an easy solution!" exclaimed Simon. "I promise that from this moment, I will not tell any lies"

With this promise, Simon left the chief's house to go home. On the way he saw a nice, big fat goat. "What a nice goat" he thought "My wife can mil it and then we can have nice food. Thank God the chief told me that I musn't steal" Simon carried the goat to his house. After a while, there was a knock on the door and a shepherd came into the house.

"Have you seen my goat?" the visitor asked. Simon realized that the shepherd was the owner of the goat he had stolen. He didn't want to return the goat so he decided to tell a lie. But then he remembered his promise to the chief not to ever tell a lie again. How disappointed he felt that he was going to have to admit the truth and lose the goat. Simon told the shepherd that he had his goat. The shepherd was astonished and shouted "you STOLE my goat! Here is your punishment" and he hit Simon very hard.

"Oh, it seems that I can no longer be a thief" said Simon painfully "so let me go and have a drink of beer" Suddenly his wife asked "where are you going dear" "Oh no!" he thought to himself "I have to keep my promise to the chief. I must tell the truth. "Well my dear wife" he admitted "I am very tired so I think I will go and have a beer"

“What” she exclaimed “You wish to spend all your money on drinking and leave us without any food” IN her anger, Simon’s wife started shouting at him. “Oh dear, now I can’t even drink anymore” the man mourned.

“I cannot steal or drink because I always tell the truth. Now I understand the wisdom of the chief”

That is why Abdul Baha says “Truthfulness is the foundation of all human virtues”

Questions:

Can you name some virtues?

What is the foundation of all other virtues?

How does this story make it clear that truthfulness is the foundation of all human virtues?