



day or two later I remember walking at night near the Shrine of the Bab, its peaceful luminescence gracing the gardens as I begged for some indication or sign from God. I wanted confirmation--something to clear the dismay and bewilderment.

On one of the final days, we had a free day, to do as we wished. A Swedish fellow and I went to Akka for a few hours and then separated. I made my way to Baji for one last visit to the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh--it had been very busy when we were there as a group. Upon arrival I found the gardens vacant. I made my way to the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh, which was also empty.

The Shrine is very simple, yet exquisitely beautiful. The serenity is unmatched. Persian carpets of great beauty rest on the floor. Simple benches line the wall. Rose petals embellish the threshold while dozens of fresh flowers from the surrounding gardens ornament the room, their natural aroma gracing the small chamber. That day sunlight filtered through a skylight, adorning the flowers and rugs with a pristine vibrancy. I found it very soothing to trace intricate patterns in the carpets while absorbing the delicate scents.

I sat in a corner, enjoying the peaceful beauty, and casually flipping through a copy of Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, reading a few lines here and there. An unfamiliar passage caught my eye, "When a true seeker determines to take the step of search. . ." Without warning, the words of the passage began to blur and dance on the page. The shafts of sunlight became animated, not like a moving spotlight, but agitated and alive. The entire room was brighter, the fragrances more intense. All colors, all aromas, everything sensory was illuminated, more acute, and vibrating with a tangible power. Entranced, I saw the words surging on the page, followed by what seemed to be a furious, almost violent transfusion of knowledge from the book directly through my forehead--and while this torrent of blurred and frenetic words streaming from the printed page made those words seem inconsequential, they simultaneously carried an import and authority unlike anything in my experience. Suddenly it ended. I sat breathless and stricken, almost choosing not to believe what I had seen.

Then a calm settled in my being, unlike anything I have felt before or since. This serenity and the shock of the experience combined to subdue my thoughts. I stayed as long as physically possible. Leaving was one of the hardest things I have done. While walking the long distance from the Shrine to the Collins Gate and out of the gardens, the sound of gravel grating under my feet grew louder until it reverberated in my ears. Tears streamed, I dared not look back, as I fought every tendency to retreat to the Shrine. I was terrified to go back to the world.

This event occurred over twenty years ago. It gives me no special distinction for events similar to this happen to many Bahá'ís. In the same sense that miracles have special import only for those who behold them--this is my own special miracle. One of the most amazing parts of the story is that after such a dramatic experience I spent well over a decade trying to forget it. My contact with the Bahá'ís was somewhat regular for a year or two, but became fleeting and sporadic until it almost ceased. Eventually the force of circumstance, combined with a bit of maturity, enabled me to embrace this event and acknowledge its import in my life. In recalling this story I have done everything to not embellish it with imaginations accumulated over time. I believe this is an accurate picture of what happened, if not every detail, certainly the feelings and impressions are precise. For try as I did to erase this event from my past there has not been a day go by that I have not contemplated this encounter. As I write this my family and I await what for me will be a second pilgrimage. I try to have no expectations. What I do know is, that in this life, a dearer homecoming could not be possible.

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