

Faithfulness

When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was a young boy, His family, which was part of the nobility of Persia, had a servant by the name of Isfandiyár. He was very loyal to the family, and they trusted him a great deal. When the authorities, out of prejudice and ignorance, had ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s beloved Father, Bahá’u’lláh, arrested, all of the family’s possessions were taken away. They were left with nothing, and anyone close to Bahá’u’lláh was in danger. Still, Isfandiyár continued to look after the family. Knowing that many officers would be looking for Isfandiyár, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s mother urged him to leave the city. But Isfandiyár would not leave.

“I cannot go,” he said, explaining that he owed money to many shopkeepers for items he had purchased. “How can I go?” he asked. “They will say that the servant of Bahá’u’lláh has bought and consumed the goods and supplies of the storekeepers without paying for them. Unless I pay all these obligations, I cannot go. But if they take me, never mind. If they punish me, there is no harm in that. If they kill me, do not be grieved. But to go away is impossible. I must remain until I pay all I owe.”

For one month Isfandiyár went about in the streets and bazaars, selling small things he owed. When he had paid every last debt, he went to the family and said good-bye, for he knew he could stay with them no longer. A minister agreed to take him in and protect and shelter him during this dangerous time.

Many months later, Bahá’u’lláh was released from prison and He and His family were exiled from Persia by the authorities. They went to Baghdád, a city in the neighboring country. Isfandiyár, ever faithful to Bahá’u’lláh, journeyed to Baghdád to ask whether he could once again serve in His household. Bahá’u’lláh said to him, “When you left us, there was a Persian minister who gave you a place to stay when no one else could give you protection. Because he gave you shelter and protected you, you must be faithful to him. If he is satisfied to have you go, then come to us; but if he does not want you to go, do not leave him.”

Of course, Isfandiyár was so upright, so trustworthy and loyal, that the minister did not want him to go. “O Isfandiyár!” he exclaimed, “I am not willing that you should go, yet, if you wish to go, let it be according to your own will.” But Isfandiyár remembered Bahá’u’lláh’s words. He remained in the minister’s service until, some time later, the minister passed away and Isfandiyár once again returned to the family he so loved, serving ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to the end of his days.