



1. Me and My Envelope

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



God hath, at all times and under all conditions, been wholly independent of His creatures.

—The Báb

If a person is willing to make his offering with utmost contentment, its acceptance is permissible, otherwise our merciful Lord is independent of all mankind.

—Bahá'u'lláh

This is the story of a personal journey to discover the wisdom in the Bahá'í Writings about offerings made in the path of God. It should be kept in mind that the stories and experiences shared in these newsletters are inspired by one's exploration of the spiritual nature of Bahá'í contributions. Each person should independently study the sacred Writings and extract gems of divine guidance from his or her own life journey. For me, it took a very conscious decision to quell my fear of giving and to wholeheartedly, generously and sacrificially give in the path of God. My journey started with the study of the [Sacred Texts](#), and at first I did not experience a shift in consciousness. I had to sincerely plea to Bahá'u'lláh to guide me in fulfilling my spiritual obligations to the Bahá'í Fund. Only then did I reap the spiritual rewards.

Were the people to perceive the sweetness of the commandments enjoined by God and to discover the benefits arising therefrom, they would certainly, one and all, carry them out with the utmost joy and eagerness. We entreat the one true God to aid everyone to observe that which is pleasing and acceptable unto Him.

—Bahá'u'lláh

In all these journeys the traveler must stray not the breadth of a hair from the “Law,” for this is indeed the secret of the “Path” and the fruit of the Tree of “Truth” ... he must cling to the robe of obedience to the commandments.

—Bahá'u'lláh

Today I write about my personal experience with the Bahá'í Fund. I came to believe that *the secret of the ‘Path’* is reserved for those who cling to the robe of obedience and carry out God's commandments with the utmost joy and eagerness. Simply acknowledging that contributions are good does not reveal the mystical benefits hidden therein. ‘Abdu'l-Bahá says: *“To admit that health is good does not constitute health.”* Therefore, on this journey the traveler must fearlessly embark on the path of sacrificial giving before partaking of its marvelous spiritual benefits.



‘Abdu'l-Bahá, Center of the Covenant of the Bahá'í Faith

Think not that We have revealed unto you a mere code of laws. Nay, rather, We have unsealed the choice Wine with the fingers of might and power.

—Bahá'u'lláh

If “God hath, at all times and under all conditions, been wholly independent of His creatures,” then why are we contributing to the Fund? What happens when we generously or sacrificially give? Is contribution towards the Bahá'í Fund a simple transaction of cash? How does it help us perceive the sweetness of the commandments enjoined by God and discover the benefits arising therefrom? In what way is it a drop of the choice Wine?

From the Bahá'í Holy Writings, it is absolutely clear that God is independent of worldly material. Then, surely contribution is not for the prosperity of God! There must be another purpose. As human beings, we see a “Fund-box”, a few “envelopes”, and someone titled “Treasurer” who collects the envelopes and reports back to the community what he found in them. Is this what our great God is doing? Is He just collecting cash from His creatures?



Treasurer

Some of us place our money inside the envelope, give it to the treasurer, and then focus our entire attention on how the Assembly spends “our money.” Sometimes, the friends even develop the courage to discuss the matter with each other. If in agreement with the Assembly’s expenditures, they give more; otherwise they stop contributing altogether. This reaction gradually leads the community away from the spiritual blessings and transformation promised by the Holy Writings. Obviously this reaction isn’t universal, but it does happen. I, myself, was victim to it. Even though I had physically given “my envelope” to the treasurer, a part of my consciousness was attached to “my envelope.” I used to even sit with friends over a cup of tea and discuss the areas where I thought the Assembly could have spent the funds better—printed more books, bought better materials, hired better contractors, etc. This is not to say that the Assembly should not spend the funds wisely, but is that the purpose of giving? Is making an offering in the path of God like buying a new phone, where one is only content if the phone suits his or her desires?

Sadly, this was how I perceived contributions in the path of God. My attitude veiled my spirit, and the more questions I raised about “my envelope,” the more I began to question the institutions. I was truly on the wrong “path.” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says, “*As ye have faith so shall your powers and blessings be.*” Instead of imploring Bahá’u’lláh to accept my contributions, I psychologically held on to “my envelope!” and wanted to know what happened to it. That was my preoccupation. In fact, I never even begged God to accept my offerings until one day, in the presence of a distinguished Bahá’í speaker, I heard a verse that changed my life forever. The speaker said that if the contributor gives with even a grain of discontent, the contribution will not be accepted in the sight of God.

If a person is willing to make his offering with utmost contentment, its acceptance is permissible, otherwise our merciful Lord is independent of all mankind.

—Bahá’u’lláh

The acceptance of the offerings dependeth on the spirit of joy, fellowship and contentment that the righteous souls who fulfil this injunction will manifest. If such is the attitude acceptance is permissible, and not otherwise. Verily thy Lord is the All-Sufficing, the All-Praised.

—Bahá’u’lláh

If Bahá’u’lláh was unwilling to accept my contributions, then to whom was I giving “my envelope”? The speaker’s address that night shook my spirit and I became disappointed—even embarrassed—with myself. I felt as if I was sinking into my chair as the speaker continued his talk. After the meeting, I decided to dedicate the entire month of the Fast to implore Bahá’u’lláh to have mercy on me and open mine eyes. I will never forget the Fast prayer I recited that year on page 294-298 of my Azerbaijan Bahá’í prayer book.

Open Thou, O my Lord, mine eyes and the eyes of all them that have sought Thee... Number me not with them who read Thy words and fail to find Thy hidden gift which, as decreed by Thee, is contained therein, and which quickeneth the souls of Thy creatures and the hearts of Thy servants.

—Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'u'lláh graciously guided me. A few years later in the presence of another Bahá'í speaker, who addressed the youth with a great sense of humor, I heard this story of Hájí Amín. The speaker said that Bahá'u'lláh had appointed Hájí Amín as the Trustee of Ḥuququ'lláh (the Right of God). Hájí Amín used to travel through different cities and countries to visit the friends, and since he was appointed by Bahá'u'lláh as His Trustee, friends made their contributions to him to deliver to Bahá'u'lláh. Hájí Amín was an ardent servant and served for decades until the time of Shoghi Effendi. In one of his trips during the time of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Hájí Amín traveled thousands of kilometers on foot, despite bad weather and difficult road conditions. He prayed continuously for protection against road robbers and finally arrived in Akká with a large sum of contributions. After settling down, Hájí Amín meticulously prepared his report, placed all the contributions in a nice cloth bag, and waited to be summoned by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Hájí Amín must have been joyous in his heart to present a much needed sum of money to his Lord.



Hájí Amín with a group of friends in Baku around 1915

On the day of his meeting with 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the speaker said, Hájí Amín entered the room where His Holiness was present. He respectfully placed the elegant contribution bag in front of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Who graciously confirmed that God had already accepted the generous and sacrificial contributions of the friends in the path of God and wished them blessing. Hájí Amín patiently waited to be asked about his report, but instead 'Abdu'l-Bahá asked about the beloved friends in each locality, their unity, their steadfastness—sometimes calling them by their first names. As the conversation continued a man entered the room and begged for financial assistance, stating that he was in a difficult bind. 'Abdu'l-Bahá sympathized with the man and prayed that God resolve his difficulties. He then pointed at the cloth bag in front of Him and bid the man to take it. With gratitude, the man took the bag and left. While 'Abdu'l-Bahá continued with the conversation, Hájí Amín fell into a state of distress. He could not focus and became deeply troubled by how 'Abdu'l-Bahá decided to give away such a large amount of money intended for the Cause.

God hath, at all times and under all conditions, been wholly independent of His creatures.

—Bahá'u'lláh

The speaker continued with the story, stating that Hájí Amín left the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in utter confusion, vexed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá's use of the money. Hájí Amín's unwavering faith—the same faith that led him to walk for thousands of kilometers—faced a test. It is impossible to divine the meaning of

the test, but the experience certainly helped shape Ḥájí Amín's perspective on giving. Perhaps Bahá'u'lláh's call for the friends to contribute is not centered on collecting cash, but rather on allowing a much more profound transformation—the development of love, sacrifice, and generosity in our hearts. The primary purpose of giving may be fulfilled at the moment we begin to manifest these qualities, not when our desire for the use of the funds is realized.

When an offering was adorned with the glory of His acceptance and reported by Jináb-i-Amín, twice that amount was ordered to be paid out to the poor and the needy. Unto this beareth witness every fair-minded man of insight, and those that are truthful and trustworthy.

—Bahá'u'lláh

Ḥájí Amín was reported to have joked, “Abdu'l-Bahá is the Center of the Covenant of God, and the Mystery of God on earth, but not an accountant!!” And he was right. Bahá'u'lláh's statement above and 'Abdu'l-Bahá's gesture toward the poor man do not seem to be made for the sake of accounting. Not only is God independent of the contributions offered by His creatures, but He gives to the poor and the needy twice the amount He receives. The story of Ḥájí Amín made me think of the days I used to question the Assembly's expenditures for months after I had given “my envelope” to the treasurer. The story taught me that “my envelope” reached its destination at the moment God accepted my attitude, just as a fetus was assigned a spirit at the moment of conception, not nine months later when the child is born. My approach to my envelope changed after I realized it had the potential to be confirmed with divine blessings at the moment of giving. All I had to do was to develop the attitude of utmost pleasure and gladness, nay ... insistence, to partake of God's blessings.

If someone, with utmost pleasure and gladness, nay with insistence, wisheth to partake of this blessing, thou mayest accept. Otherwise, acceptance is not permissible.

—Bahá'u'lláh



The Journey Continues...

Next Chapter: Degree of Sacrifice...

The Roaring Fountain Bulletins

Stories about the Fund

Fundraising Projects



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