

Memoire of Nourollah “Norman” Gabay

Leaf No 23

Translated by Elham Yaghoubian

Life is comprised of a collection of memories,
some of which bring joy and others bring sorrow,
We are all travelers on this journey, passing by each other and leaving our marks.
All that remains, in the end, is the goodness we leave behind.

Foresight is an essential and crucial aspect of human life, playing a significant role in one's success. It involves attentiveness to the consequences of actions, the unfolding of events, and seeking counsel from others.

The Jewish community, having endured suffering and hardships throughout the centuries, has developed a keen sense of foresight. This skill has aided them in preserving their identity and ensuring their survival. Unfortunately, they have also experienced tragic incidents, such as the murder of Dr. Soleiman Berjis in Kashan.

Decades ago, Dr. Soleiman Berjis, the son of Hakim Yaghoub Berjis, who had converted to the Baha'i faith, was killed by a fanatic in Kashan. Dr. Soleiman Berjis was known for his kindness and love for others, and he also actively promoted the Baha'i religion.

On a fateful day, someone visited Dr. Berjis's house and informed him that his mother was gravely ill, urging the doctor to accompany him. Dr. Berjis, carrying his bag, agreed and went with the individual. Upon entering the house, he was suddenly attacked by a group of people wielding knives. Despite his resistance, they inflicted severe injuries upon him. They then took his half-lifeless body to the rooftop and callously threw it down into the yard. The doctor, still clinging to life, was subjected to another knife attack. It is said that he sustained 80 stab wounds during this barbaric act. Shockingly, many neighbors participated in the assault, believing that killing a Baha'i person would bring them blessings.

Following this crime, the perpetrator voluntarily turned himself in at the police station and confessed to the murder. He was sent to Tehran but was later acquitted in the show trial and returned to Kashan. On the day of his return, many people, even from surrounding areas, gathered to greet him and slaughtered a cow at his feet.

These show trials, exemplified by the acquittal of the murderer Ahmad Kasravi and his accomplice, can be attributed to the prevalence of superstitious beliefs that have infiltrated society, including within the Pahlavi court. Over time, these beliefs eroded the foundations of the Pahlavi monarchy, replacing reason and justice with Islamic superstitions.

This inhumane and brutal murder served as a wake-up call for the Jewish community in Kashan. Many community members, no longer feeling safe, decided to flee the city. However, another event, of even greater impact, compelled the Jews of Iran to not only leave their city but also their homeland Iran.

In 1979, during the first few months of the Islamic Revolution, the ruthless execution of the late Haj Habib Elghaniyan, the leader of the Jewish Community of Iran at the time and a prominent wealthy industrialist, made headlines in Iranian newspapers. The late Elghaniyan, had been a dedicated servant and intellectual of the Iranian nation, playing a significant role in the modernization of the country's industry and economy. Although he was abroad during the 1979 Revolution, he returned to Iran to continue his service, however, he was arrested and, after a brief trial, swiftly sentenced to death. He was handed over to a firing squad. Recently, I received an email that raised concerns about certain inhumane practices, and shared a story attributed to Nasir al-Din al-Tusi. According to the narrator of the story:

"Every day in Baghdad, there were numerous reports of theft, murder, and rape involving Muslims in Muslim countries. This led Nasir al-Din al-Tusi to ask me a thought-provoking question: Do you know why Muslims seem to commit more sins than any other community, despite considering their religion moral and noble? As a student of Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, I eagerly responded, expressing my willingness to learn something new.

Nasir al-Din al-Tusi explained: In Muslim ethics, commands often come with a conditional nature, expressed through the words 'but' and 'if.' For example, in Islam, followers are instructed: 'Don't lie, but you don't have to adhere to this when dealing

with enemies of Islam.' Similarly, they are told, 'Do not backbite, but it is permissible to do so when speaking about a bad person.' The instructions continue, 'Don't kill, but it is acceptable to kill non-Muslims.' 'Don't rape, but it is not considered wrong to rape non-Muslims.'

This misleading interpretation has led Muslims astray, causing everyone to perceive others as evil and non-Muslim based on their own opinions. Consequently, they justify committing any evil act, believing that it pleases and satisfies God.

It is important to note that this duality is not exclusive to Islam. Contradictions can be found in various other religions as well."

These two tragic events, among many others experienced by the last generations in Iran, profoundly affected the Iranian Jewish community. Those who possessed greater foresight and were more attuned to the events unfolding around them compelled to consider leaving their homeland as a solution. They recognized the circumstances in Iran and sought safety for themselves and their children. However, it is worth noting that many others chose to stay. Their love for their country and hometown was deeply rooted, and despite the hardships, they preferred to remain in their homeland.

These two tragedies serve as mere examples of the hardships endured by past generations in Iran. May we hope, as our elders have expressed, that everything will eventually end well and one day, humanity will come to understand that our shared humanity transcends racial, religious, and ethnic backgrounds. Discrimination and divisions only serve to create unnecessary conflicts among people. We are all human beings, and it is essential to recognize this fact.