**Grade 4 Lesson 5**

**Baha’u’llah suffered for the sake of humanity**

*Slightly modified from Ruhi Grade 4 Book*

**Opening Prayers**

Begin the class with opening prayers, and then the children can continue, with your assistance, to memorize a few more phrases from the prayer presented in the last lesson:

**“O my Lord! O my Lord! This is a lamp lighted by the fire of Thy love and ablaze with the flame which is ignited in the tree of Thy mercy. O my Lord! Increase his enkindlement, heat and flame, with the fire which is kindled in the Sinai of Thy Manifestation. Verily, Thou art the Confirmer, the Assister, the Powerful, the Generous, the Loving.”** –Abdu’l-Baha

See [www.supportingthecoreactivities.org](http://www.supportingthecoreactivities.org) under lesson 4 for this prayer in a 4 x 6 format.

Munirih Sparrow has set this prayer to a beautiful melody: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bl9GAST2Ha4>

It is so much easier for the kids (and teachers ☺) to learn it when it is set to music!

**Introduction to the Lesson:**

*The purpose of this lesson is to help the children realize that Baha’u’llah suffered for us and to give them a glimpse of the ordeals and hardship that He endured for the sake of humanity. The following ideas will assist you in your efforts to introduce this theme to them:*

Please pay close attention as I will be asking you some questions on what I share with you afterwards.

All the Manifestations of God have suffered in the hands of leaders concerned only with their own wealth and power. These self-seeking leaders used their influence over the ignorant people who blindly followed them to convince them to arise against God’s Manifestations. Baha’u’llah, too, lived a life of suffering and affliction. He was imprisoned and exiled. Lies were told about Him, His teachings ignored and rejected, and His loyal followers mercilessly persecuted. He accepted these afflictions because He was chosen by God and did only that which God commanded. He loved humanity and knew that the knowledge He brought from God would finally conquer ignorance. He showed loving-kindness to every human being, even to the worst of His enemies. He accepted His sufferings patiently. Not for an instant did He stop shedding God’s light upon the whole world. For forty years, under the most difficult conditions, He gave guidance to humanity.

Remembering the ordeals and hardships suffered by Baha’u’llah makes us firm in His love. Our hearts will not waver in moments of difficulty. We will learn to be as immovable as the mountain when ignorant people oppose the Faith. We have to act the same way during our own tests. Love is stronger than hate.

**Questions:**

* Who inflicts sufferings upon the Manifestations of God?
* Why did Baha’u’llah patiently accept His sufferings?
* For how long did Baha’u’llah give guidance to humanity and under what conditions?
* What effect does remembering Baha’u’llah’s sufferings have on us?

**Memorization of Quotation:**

*In the following quotation, Baha’u’llah asks us to remember the suffering that He endured and calls on us to remain firm in His love, no matter how severe the tests and trials that befall us in the path of God. Learning the passage will be a source of strength to the children.*

**“Remember My days during thy days, and My distress and banishment in this remote prison. And be thou so steadfast in My love that thy heart shall not waver, even if the swords of the enemies rain blows upon thee and all the heavens and the earth arise against thee.”**

–Baha’u’llah

(You can have a discussion about tests and trials that we may face and how to stay firm in God’s love during that time- prayer, service, striving to be loving, consultation with trusted family and friends, remembering Baha’u’llah’s sufferings, etc.)

**Songs:** Here are some options… Please see [www.supportingthecoreactivities.org](http://www.supportingthecoreactivities.org) under this lesson for songs and lyrics.

* **Soon Will All That Dwell on Earth**
* **The Prince of Peace** by Lloyd Haynes
* **The Shores of Akka** by Leslie Garrett
* **Baha’u’llah**
* **Nightingale of Paradise**
* **Will You Give Your Life to Baha’u’llah**
* **Source of Courage** by Joan Lincoln
* **There’s a New Wind Blowin’** by Phil Lucas and Russ Garcia

**Historical Episode:**

*Today you will relate to your students the events surrounding Baha’u’llah’s fourth and final exile, to the fortress-town of Akka. You already know, of course, that Baha’u’llah referred to Akka as the “most desolate of cities” and the “Most Great Prison”, so immense were His sufferings there. The narrative below, though brief, will capture the children’s attention. What will be important for you to get across is that Baha’u’llah allowed Himself to be imprisoned, and accepted so much suffering, so that humanity could attain true freedom.*

(Please see [www.supportingthecoreactivities.org](http://www.supportingthecoreactivities.org) under this lesson for pictures corresponding to the highlighted words).

In our last class I told you briefly about Baha’u’llah’s exiles to Constantinople and Adrianople (show map). With each exile the corrupt leaders of Persia and the Ottoman Empire had foolishly thought that they would succeed in putting an end to Baha’u’llah’s growing influence among the people. But you know, of course, that through the heroic efforts of outstanding believers like Ahmad, the number of Baha’u’llah’s followers was steadily increasing. And so the authorities decided to exile Him once again, this time to the fortress of Akka, a desolate prison-city in which, they were sure, the new Faith would soon die.

Suddenly one morning, the house of Baha’u’llah in Adrianople was surrounded by soldiers, and everyone was told to prepare for immediate departure. For some time, no one knew what their destiny would be. The greatest fear of most was to be separated from their Beloved, for there were rumors that Baha’u’llah and His family would be exiled to one place and that the others would be forced to disperse. Finally it became clear that Baha’u’llah was to be banished to Akka, together with some seventy of His companions.

Baha’u’llah and His family left Adrianople on August 12, 1868 and, after a difficult journey by land and sea, arrived in Akka on August 31. The inhabitants of Akka were told that the new arrivals were not mere criminals, but enemies of God’s religion. The Sultan had given orders for them to be kept in strict confinement. His orders had been read publicly in the mosque, and it was understood by all that these Persians had been condemned to life imprisonment and that association with them was strictly forbidden.

Upon disembarking at Akka, the exiles were taken to the army barracks, a section of which was to be their prison. The first night, they were deprived of food and drink, and afterwards they were each assigned three loaves of low quality bread a day. Soon everyone, except for two, fell sick and, shortly after, three of them died. The guards refused to bury the dead without receiving money to cover the necessary expenses. A small carpet was sold, and the sum was given to the guards. Later it was learned that they had not kept their word and had buried the dead unwashed, unshrouded and without coffins. They had in fact been given twice the amount required for the burial.

The most tragic event of this period was the sudden death of Baha’u’llah’s son Mirza Mihdi, known as the Purest Branch, as the tender age of twenty-two. Mirza Mihdi was Abdu’l-Baha’s youngest brother. When his Father was first exiled from Persia, he was too small a child to make the difficult journey and had to be left behind with relatives. Eventually he was reunited with his parents in Baghdad some years later and accompanied Baha’u’llah on the rest of His exiles. He had a beautiful character, and all the friends were attracted to his noble spirit. By the time he and his family reached Akka, he served his Father as a scribe, writing and copying the Tablets He ceaselessly revealed.

Often, after transcribing Baha’u’llah’s Words in the evening, Mirza Mihdi would go to the roof of the prison to walk and pray. One evening, about two years after he and his family arrived in that forsaken place, he was pacing up and down the roof-top (which were flat in that part of the world), wrapped in devotions, when he failed to notice the open skylight in front of him. He fell through it and landed on a wooden crate on the floor below that pierced his chest. Hearing the sound of his fall and the cries of the friends, Baha’u’llah rushed to His son’s side. Mirza Mihdi explained to his Father that he had always counted his steps to the unguarded skylight so that he knew when to stop, but had become so engrossed in prayer that he had forgotten to do so. Baha’u’llah asked the Purest Branch what he wished. He replied, “I wish the people of Baha to be able to attain Your presence.” “And so it shall be,” Baha’u’llah said; “God will grant your wish.” (You can explain that the Bahais who travelled on pilgrimage to see Baha’u’llah were unable to attain His presence because the doors of the prison were closed to them. Mirza Mihdi wished for the Bahais to be able to be in the presence of Baha’u’llah and chose to sacrifice himself so that the friends could attain the presence of Baha’u’llah (can show picture of Baha’u’llah’s prison window). Very shortly after- his wish was granted- you will learn about that in our next lesson).

Within twenty-two hours of the fall, Mirza Mihdi’s soul had winged its flight to the next world. Now the loss of a son He loved so much was added to Baha’u’llah’s many other sufferings. Those initial years of imprisonment in Akka were among the harshest. This is what Baha’u’llah Himself has said about that period:

“Know thou that upon Our arrival at this Spot, We chose to designate it as the ‘Most Great Prison’. Though previously subjected in another land to chains and fetters, We yet refused to call it by that name. Say: Ponder thereon, O ye endued with understanding!”

*(Can also share in conversation with your students about how much we should treasure this Message that was brought to humanity with such sacrifice on the part of Baha’u’llah and His companions.)*

**Facts:**

* Baha’u’llah and His family were exiled from Adrianople to… Akka in 1868.
* Baha’u’llah and His family left Adrianople on… August 12, 1868.
* Baha’u’llah and His family arrived in Akka on… August 31, 1868.
* In Akka, Baha’u’llah and His companions were imprisoned in… an army barracks.
* The phrase “the Most Great Prison” refers to…Akka.
* Mirza Mihdi was…Abdu’l-Baha’s youngest brother.
* Mirza Mihdi was known as…the Purest Branch.
* The Purest Branch was…twenty-two years old when he died.

**Drama:**

As in the case of the previous lesson, either you or one of the children with the necessary ability could act as a narrator of this historical episode. While the narrator recounts the scenes related to Baha’u’llah’s arrival in Akka and the events surrounding the death of the Purest Branch, small groups of the children can act them out as appropriate, making sure that no one portrays the Manifestation Himself.

**Drawing:**

You have probably seen pictures of the barracks in Akka, where Baha’u’llah and His companions were imprisoned upon their arrival there. If not, you can refer to the drawing found in Book 4. Describe the barracks to the children and ask them to draw it. (See picture under this lesson at [www.supportingthecoreactivities.org](http://www.supportingthecoreactivities.org))

**Review:**

**“Be not forgetful of the law of God in whatever thou desirest to achieve, now or in the days to come. Say: Praise be to God, the Lord of all the world!”**

–Baha’u’llah

**Closing Prayers**