**Ruhi Grade 4 Lesson 8**

**Baha’u’llah was at all times and under all conditions victorious, achieving God’s Holy Purpose; The Cause of God has the power to withstand all opposition**

*Slightly modified from original content*

**Reciting and Memorizing Prayers**

*Open the class in the usual way with prayers. The children will then proceed, with your assistance, to memorize the prayer presented in the last lesson:*

**“O my Lord and my Hope! Help Thou Thy loved ones to be steadfast in Thy mighty Covenant, to remain faithful to Thy manifest Cause, and to carry out the commandments Thou didst set down for them in Thy Book of Splendors; that they may become banners of guidance and lamps of the Company above, wellsprings of Thine infinite wisdom, and stars that lead aright, as they shine down from the supernal sky. Verily, art Thou the Invincible, the Almighty, the All-Powerful.”** –Abdu’l-Baha

Steadfast- firmly fixed in place; not subject to change

Thy mighty Covenant- Covenant is a pact or promise between two or more parties. God has made a Covenant with humanity. God’s part of the Covenant is that He will never leave us alone and without guidance. In each age, He sends a Messenger to make God’s Will known and to show us how to advance spiritually and materially. Our part is to seek truth in the age in which we live, to recognize the Manifestation of God, and to abide by His laws and teachings.

Manifest- clear, something that can be seen and known

Thy Book of Splendors- splendor means something that is brilliant, magnificent, glorious; this may be referring to the book of laws of Baha’u’llah called the Kitab-i-Aqdas

Banners of guidance- a flag that bears a message; like if you see a flag that has stars and stripes on it with blue and red and white- you know it is a flag representing the USA; we should be like banners of God’s guidance- can talk together about how to do that

Lamps of the Company above- a lamp holds light- we should be like lamps that shine forth with the light of the Kingdom and those holy souls in the realms beyond!

Wellsprings- a source of continual supply- my teacher was a wellspring of encouragement and information; we should be wellsprings of God’s infinite (which means unending) wisdom- sharing with others the Word of God

Supernal sky- supernal means heavenly, we should be like stars that guide people aright in the darkness, shining from the heavens- lofty, high, and heavenly

Invincible- too powerful to be defeated or overcome

**Introduction to the Lesson**

*It is hoped that in this lesson the children will get a glimpse of Baha’u’llah’s grandeur and majesty and gain an understanding that, even though He suffered the most bitter persecution without a day passing in which some fresh wave of tribulations did not come over Him, He was at all times and under all conditions victorious, achieving God’s Holy Purpose. You can begin by explaining the following ideas to them:*

As we have already learned, Baha’u’llah’s life on this earth was filled with suffering. He was imprisoned, put in chains, stripped of His worldly possessions, and exiled four times. But despite all the efforts to still His Voice and destroy His Faith, His Word became more firmly implanted in the hearts of the people and His Cause grew stronger and spread wider each day.

You will remember that when imprisoned and in chains in the Siyah-Chal, Baha’u’llah heard these words on every side: “Verily, We shall render Thee victorious by Thyself and by Thy Pen.” Years later He would arrive as an exile in Akka to the jeers and insults of its unfriendly inhabitants. But in reality what was happening was far different. Powerful spiritual forces were being released throughout the world that would affect all humanity. In a Tablet revealed many years earlier, long before the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire had decided to exile Him to that desolate spot, He had said: “Upon our arrival, We were welcomed with banners of light, whereupon the Voice of the Spirit cried out saying: “Soon will all that dwell on earth be enlisted under these banners.”

While outwardly a prisoner, Baha’u’llah was gaining more and more ascendancy over the powers of the earth. Each time His enemies devised a new way to silence Him, His fame and following grew. The ignorant rulers of Persia and the Ottoman Empire were too blinded by ambition to understand that they were powerless to inflict harm on the Cause of God or to see that their acts of injustice and oppression were contributing to their own destruction. Little did they realize that history would prove the Prisoner of Akka to be the King of Glory.

**Questions**

* What were some of the sufferings inflicted on Baha’u’llah?
* What happened, despite all of the effects to silence Him?
* How did Baha’u’llah describe His arrival in the prison-city of Akka?
* Can the enemies of the Faith ever stop its progress?
* In what ways was Baha’u’llah victorious?

**Songs**

* Soon Will All That Dwell on Earth

Other options…

* We Are The People of Baha
* The Source of Courage
* I Have Found Baha’u’llah
* Yes I Believe You
* I’ll Walk the Path
* The Promise

These songs are from <http://www.ruhi.org/resources/songs.php>

Lyrics and songs also available at [www.supportingthecoreactivities.org](http://www.supportingthecoreactivities.org) under this lesson.

**Memorizing Quotations**

*Following your discussion of today’s theme with the children, you can help them memorize the quotation from Baha’u’llah below, which assures us that the Cause of God has the power to withstand all opposition.*

**“Thou the forces of the nations be arrayed against Him, though the kings of the earth be leagued to undermine His Cause, the power of His might shall stand unshaken. He, verily, speaketh the truth, and summoneth all mankind to the way of Him Who is the Incomparable, the All-Knowing.”**

**Historical Episodes**

*In this lesson you will speak to the children about the period of Baha’u’llah’s life spent in Akka and its vicinity. In whatever way you choose to narrate this part of His life to your students, you should strive to convey a sense of His majesty and grandeur and the power of His Cause to achieve its purpose.*

Pictures for the highlighted words in the story are available at [www.supportingthecoreactivities.org](http://www.supportingthecoreactivities.org) under this lesson*.*

You know that Baha’u’llah’s suffering in the fortress-town of Akka was so immense that He designated it the **“Most Great Prison”**. Under strict confinement in the army barracks by order of the Sultan, He and the small band of exiles that accompanied Him were subjected to the severest hardship. **“None”**, He Himself has written, **“knoweth what befell Us, except God, the Almighty, the All-Knowing…From the foundation of the world until the present day a cruelty such as this hath neither been seen nor heard of.”**

Some two years after His arrival there, the loss of His beloved son Mirza Mihdi, the Purest Branch, was added to His tribulations. His cup of sorrow seemed to be filled to overflowing. But four months later, He and His companions were asked to leave the army barracks to make way for troops. They were moved from house to house, staying only a few months in each and kept watch over by guards. Baha’u’llah and His family finally settled in what is now known as the House of Abbud. They remained there for several years, and it was in that house that He revealed His Most Holy Book, the Kitab-i-Aqdas, (can have the Kitab-i-Aqdas to hold up) which you will learn more about in the next lesson. Gradually the restrictions on them were relaxed, as the inhabitants of the city began to recognize their innocence and to admire and revere Baha’u’llah. An increasing number of pilgrims from Persia were able to attain His presence during this period, and thus the wish of the Purest Branch that the gates of the city would be opened wide to his Father’s followers was fulfilled.

People of influence and authority, too, eventually grew friendly towards the Faith and came to respect Baha’u’llah. There was even a governor of Akka who seemed to have caught a glimpse of His Station. He was so deeply moved by Baha’u’llah’s majesty that he begged Him to be given the privilege of serving Him in some way. Baha’u’llah refused, not wanting anything for Himself, but instead suggested that he restore a disused water canal. The water in Akka at that time was foul beyond description and the restoration of the canal allowed the people of the city to have fresh water.

Although Baha’u’llah and the believers enjoyed much freedom in Akka, He remained confined within the city walls, for the order of the Sultan was still in force. But this situations was not to last. One day, Baha’u’llah mentioned that He had not seen greenery for nine years. The country, He commented, was the world of the soul and the city the world of the body. When Abdu’l-Baha heard these words, He realized that His Father longed to pass time in the countryside and surround Himself by the beauty of nature He so loved.

There lived a prominent man in Akka at the time who owned a lovely place in the country called Mazra’ih. Unfortunately the man was no friendly to the Faith. Abdu’l-Baha went to his home and asked to rent Mazra’ih from him. The owner was taken aback by this bold offer, but surprisingly agreed. Abdu’l-Baha acquired the place at a low rent, repaired it, and beautified the garden. (can show a picture of Mazra’ih) He then went to the presence of Baha’u’llah and informed Him that Mazra’ih was ready for Him and that there was a carriage waiting for Him outside. But Baha’u’llah refused to go saying that He was still a prisoner. There was a highly respected religious leader in Akka who loved Baha’u’llah and was greatly favored by Him. Abdu’l-Baha explained the situation to the man and asked him to go to the presence of Baha’u’llah, fall on his knees, take hold of Baha’u’llah’s hands and not let go until He promised to leave the city. The man did exactly as Abdu’l-Baha had asked him to do. But Baha’u’llah refused again, repeating that He was a prisoner. “God forbid! Who has the power to make You a prisoner?” insisted the man. “You have kept Yourself in prison. It was Your Own Will to be imprisoned…” He begged Baha’u’llah to leave the confines of the prison-city and go to Mazra’ih. “It is beautiful and verdant,” he told Him. “The trees are lovely, and the oranges like balls of fire!” For a whole hour the man pleaded until finally his patience and persistence were rewarded, and Baha’u’llah agreed to move to Mazra’ih. The next day, Abdu’l-Baha brought the carriage and drove Baha’u’llah to His new residence. While everyone knew that Baha’u’llah was still a prisoner by the order of the Sultan, no one dared raise any objections. He was, in reality, as loved and respected as a king.

Two years after Baha’u’llah went to live in Mazra’ih, a beautiful mansion not too far distant fell vacant. It had been built as a country home for a wealthy man and his family. The mansion was called “Bahji” which means delight. When an epidemic broke out in the area, killing many, people panicked and abandoned their homes. Abdu’l-Baha was thus able to rent Bahji for His Father, and in the tranquility of its surroundings Baha’u’llah would pass the remaining thirteen years of His life on this earth. (you can show a picture of Bahji) He was now held in esteem and veneration by people of all backgrounds, and the prestige of the community of His followers was well established. Leaders and local officials would often request the honor of attaining His presence. And although His Faith had not yet spread to the Western world, there were some who were aware of the Prisoner of Akka and the great influence He had on all those with whom He came into contact. One of these, Edward Granville Browne, a well-known British scholar, visited Bahji in 1890 and was granted four interviews with Baha’u’llah. Here is what he has recorded of his historic first meeting:

“…my conductor paused for a moment while I removed my shoes. Then with a quick movement of the hand, he withdrew, and, as I passed, replaced the curtain; and I found myself in a large apartment, along the upper end of which ran a low divan, while on the side opposite to the door were placed two or three chairs. Though I dimly suspected whither I was going and whom I was to behold (for no distinct intimation had been given to me), a second or two elapsed ere, with a throb of wonder and awe, I became definitely conscious that the room was not untenanted. In the corner where he divan met the wall sat a wondrous and venerable figure, crowned with a felt head-dress of the kind called ‘taj’ by dervishes (but of unusual height and make), round the base of which was wound a small white turban. The face of him on whom I gazed I can never forget, though I cannot describe it. Those piercing eyes seemed to read one’s very soul; power and authority sat on that ample brow; while the deep lines on the forehead and face implied an age which the jet-black hair and beard flowing down in indistinguishable luxuriance almost to the waist seemed to belie. No need to ask in whose presence I stood, as I bowed myself before one who is the object of a devotion and love which kings might envy and emperors sigh for in vain!”

Professor Browne recorded some of the words spoken to him by Baha’u’llah during his interviews, and there is one passage, in particular, that is now well known among Baha’is everywhere:

“A mild dignified voice bade me be seated, and then continued:- **‘Praise be to God that thou hast attained! Thou hast come to see a prisoner and an exile…We desire but the good of the world and the happiness of the nations; yet they deem us a stirrer up of strife and sedition worthy of bondage and banishment…That all nations should become one in faith and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened; that diversity of religion should cease, and differences of race be annulled- what harm is there in this?...Yet so it shall be; these fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the ‘Most Great Peace’ shall come…Do not you in Europe need this also? Is not this that which Christ foretold? … Yet do we see your kings and rulers lavishing their treasures more freely on the means for the destruction of the human race than on that which would conduce to the happiness of mankind…These strifes and this bloodshed and discord must cease, and all men be as one kindred and one family…Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country; let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind.”**

During this period of His life, Baha’u’llah visited the nearby town of Haifa four times. It was during His last visit, while standing on the slopes of Mount Carmel, that He pointed out to Abdu’l-Baha the spot where the Shrine of the Bab was to be built. You know that, later, in the vicinity of the Holy Shrine of the Bab the Seat of the Universal House of Justice was established. Today the twin cities of Haifa and Akka have become the administrative and spiritual world center of the Bahai Faith, which has spread to countries throughout the globe.

Baha’u’llah raised the banner of universal peace and brotherhood, and revealed the Word of God to humanity. Although the powers of the earth combined their forces against Him, He was victorious over them as God had promised Him when under chains in the Siyah-Chal. During His own lifetime, His Message revived the hearts of thousands of people, and today His Cause continues its onward march. The forces of the entire world are not capable of preventing it from achieving its ultimate goal, which is to unify humankind in one universal Cause and in one common Faith.

*Can have the quote: “The Ancient Beauty hath consented to be bound with chains that mankind may be released from its bondage…” on a poster in the room to refer to if you wish.*

**Facts**

* Baha’u’llah spent twenty-four years in Akka and its vicinity, from...1868 to 1892.
* After nine years of confinement in Akka…Baha’u’llah consented to leave its gates.
* Baha’u’llah spent the last thirteen years of His life on this earth…in Bahji.
* Professor Edward Granville Browne had his historic interviews with Baha’u’llah…in April 1890.
* In one of His visits to Haifa, Baha’u’llah pointed out to Abdu’l-Baha…the spot on which the Shrine of the Bab was to be built.
* The twin cities of Haifa and Akka are…the administrative and spiritual world center of the Baha’i Faith.

**Drama**

You could begin this period of the class by explaining that, today, hundreds of people from around the world go on a nine-day pilgrimage to the Holy Land each year and visit many of the places in Haifa and Akka mentioned in the lesson. Then ask one or two of the children to pretend that they have just returned home from pilgrimage and are discussing with a group of friends what they did and saw. In doing so, they could speak about the significance of each of the places they visited, while the other children ask them questions that elicit from them information about different aspects of the history of the Faith. If you do not feel any of your students have the necessary ability to assume the role of the pilgrims, you could act the part out yourself.

**Drawing**

You may wish to have your students draw a picture of the Seat of the Universal House of Justice as a symbol of the triumph of Baha’u’llah’s Cause over the forces that rose up against Him. If they have never seen a picture of the Seat of the Universal House of Justice, you could show them a photograph of it or briefly describe it to them.

**Review**

**“A good character is, verily, the best mantle for men from God. With it He adorneth the temples of His loved ones. By My life! The light of a good character surpasseth the light of the sun and the radiance thereof.”** –Baha’u’llah

**Closing Prayers**