**Ruhi Grade 4 Lesson 2 Story**

**Historical Episode:**

*Today you will relate to the children the events surrounding Baha’u’llah’s stay in Baghdad. The story of His declaration in the Garden of Ridvan, just prior to His departure for Constantinople, will be reserved for the next lesson. In whatever manner you choose to narrate this historical episode, you should* ***make sure that the children get a glimpse of the influence that Baha’u’llah’s teachings have on humanity****.*

Baha’u’llah was imprisoned in the Siyah-Chal for four months. Finally He was released and exiled with His family to Baghdad, a city in the Ottoman Empire. At the beginning, His life in Baghdad was filled with difficulties. After the Bab and so many of the Babis were martyred, His remaining followers became confused and lost. They did not know where to turn or which direction to take. And unfortunately, some of them began to forget the high standards to which the Bab had called them. They quarreled and became a very disunited people. The greatest cause of difficulty was Baha’u’llah’s own half-brother, Mirza Yahya, and ambitious and cowardly man who was jealous of the influence Baha’u’llah had on everyone that came into contact with Him. Working with a partner more shameless than himself, Mirza Yahya tried to turn the believers against Baha’u’llah. The situation grew worse daily, and Baha’u’llah’s soul was filled with sadness.

A year after their arrival in Baghdad, Baha’u’llah’s family woke one morning to find that He was gone. He had left the city without telling anyone where He was going or why. Seeing that Mirza Yahya was creating so much disunity, Baha’u’llah had chosen to retire to the mountains of Kurdistan, northeast of Baghdad. “The one object of Our retirement”, He Himself has later said, “was to avoid becoming a subject of discord among the faithful, a source of disturbance unto Our companions, the means of injury to any soul, or the cause of sorrow to any heart.”

In the wilderness, at some distance from the town of Sulaymaniyyih, Baha’u’llah lived alone. He was content with little food. At times He received some milk from the shepherds in the surrounding area and, occasionally, visited the town to obtain the minimum necessities of life. The conditions were extremely harsh, but He was happy to be in communion with God. Here is how He describes those days of physical hardship:

“We betook Ourselves to the wilderness, and there, separated and alone, led for two years a life of complete solitude. From Our eyes there rained tears of anguish, and in Our bleeding heart there surged an ocean of agonizing pain. Many a night We had no food for sustenance, and many a day Our body found no rest. By Him Who hath My being between His hands! Notwithstanding these showers of afflictions and unceasing calamities, Our soul was wrapt in blissful joy, and Our whole being evinced an ineffable gladness.”

As you can well imagine, Baha’u’llah’s greatness could not be kept hidden from people’s eyes for long. One day, for example, He saw a young student sitting by the road crying. He asked the reason for this sadness and was told that the other boys at the school had each received from their teacher a sample of penmanship to practice their handwriting but that the did not have a copy. Baha’u’llah offered with tenderness and kindness to write a sample for him. When the young boy showed the sample to his teacher at school, everyone was astonished at the beauty and excellence of Baha’u’llah’s penmanship and the news of this spread throughout Sulaymaniyyih.

Gradually, more and more of the inhabitants of Sulaymaniyyih came to know of Baha’u’llah and to respect Him. Some of the wise leaders of the city sought His presence and requested Him to explain to them difficult spiritual questions. Baha’u’llah’s Words had on these people their usual effect. Many a heart was transformed by His love and many a mind was illumined by His knowledge. His fame began to spread to the neighboring areas. News of a man of extraordinary wisdom and eloquence living in that region of Kurdistan finally reached Baghdad. The family, realizing that this Personage could be none other than Baha’u’llah, sent a trusted believer to beg Him to return. Baha’u’llah accepted their request, thus ending His two-year voluntary withdrawal.

During those two years of Baha’u’llah’s absence from Baghdad, the fortunes of the Babis had gone from bad to worse. Mirza Yahya had shown his total incompetence and done nothing to stop this rapid decline. Baha’u’llah set out to educate the Babis and to renew in them the spirit of faith they had once possessed. Over the years, through His love and wisdom, and the power of His Words, He changed the behavior of the followers of the Bab. Under His guidance, the Babis became, once again, righteous people who were the well-wishers of humankind. They put aside conflict and became promoters of unity and peace.

As time passed, the Babi community was spiritually revived, and admiration for Baha’u’llah grew. He was loved and respected by the inhabitants of Baghdad. During this period, those who were near Him were tasting the fruits of paradise. They were surrounded by His love and immersed in the sea of His Words. This is how Nabil, the great historian of the Bahai Faith, has described those days:

“Many a night, no less than ten persons subsisted on no more than a pennyworth of dates. No one knew to whom actually belonged the shoes, the cloaks, or the robes that were to be found in their houses. Whoever went to the bazaar could claim that the shoes upon his feet were his own, and each one who entered the presence of Baha’u’llah could affirm that the cloak and robe he then wore belonged to him. Their own names they had forgotten, their hearts were emptied of aught else except adoration for their Beloved…O, for the joy of those days, and the gladness and wonder of those hours!”

How fortunate are human beings when they can immerse themselves in the ocean of God’s mercy and become united through the love of His Manifestation! How powerful is the Word of God to transform the souls that are awakened by the glad-tidings of the dawn of a new Day. Yet, although those close to Baha’u’llah enjoyed the bounties of His presence and the people of Baghdad were attracted by His nobility and wisdom, some of their leaders were blinded to His greatness because of their own ambition and pride. They saw Baha’u’llah’s growing prestige as a threat to their power. And so opposition to the new Cause steadily increased.

In one instance, a group of religious leaders decided to send a learned man to Baha’u’llah and to submit to Him a number of questions in order to test Him. When Baha’u’llah replied to all the questions satisfactorily, the learned man accepted, on behalf of the group, the vastness of His knowledge. Then he presented the group’s request that Baha’u’llah perform a miracle to convince them of His extraordinary powers.

“Although you have no right to ask this,” Baha’u’llah replied, “for God should test His creatures, and thy should not test God, still I allow and accept this request.” He told the man that first the group should choose one miracle and in writing declare that, after it had been performed, they would no longer have any doubts about Him and would all recognize Him and accept the truth of the Cause. They should seal the document and bring it to Him. The man was profoundly struck by this clear and challenging reply. He instantly arose, kissed the knee of Baha’u’llah and departed. He delivered Baha’u’llah’s message to the group. For a few days these power-hungry men discussed how they should respond, but they could not come to any decision. Finally, they had no other choice but to drop the matter. Alas! They had come so close to being awakened by the light of knowledge that Baha’u’llah shed upon all. But their ambition and fear were like a veil that kept them from recognizing the Sun of Truth.