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Pilgrimage to Haifa

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In.....when everybody else saw him in Baghdád I never thought that I would be able to see him but He said “Come and bring your mother.” Well Bill sent the letter to me immediately and of course I had to try and find the ways and means to get to Haifa and we begged, borrowed, and saved enough money to get there — to get this excursion ticket to Haifa because we weren’t able to get a ticket that would take us all around to enjoy everything and see everything hand see everybody. We got this ticket that let us stay over in Rome for 2 hr for refueling and Paris for another hour for some more fuel and to remain in Haifa for 9 days and we set out on this trip. Such a trip it was because I had never been on a plane but once before and you know an older person they are just scared of their shadows anyhow and I was just terrified. Of course he was young and young people are daring and he had been over in the army - he’d flown everywhere and done everything. Bill is one of these people who contrives - I think he has some of the ingenuity of Shoghi Effendi. He went everywhere because he was a Bahá’í in the army and I don’t know how he got too much time off but he went to all the summer conferences in Europe and Switzerland and everywhere while he was in the army so he knew all the places in Paris to go in Rome and whatnot but I didn’t know anything. So I was scared on the way and he took much of his time to comfort me on the plane trying to keep me from being so terrified. But there was one thing we talked about on this trip — I said Bill you know I know Shoghi Effendi’s going to say to us — he’s going to ask us — I have always felt very sensitive because there were so few Negroes in the Faith and we have had such difficulty bringing the Faith to them. I said Bill I know he’s going to say to us. “Why Mrs. Allison aren’t there more Negroes in the Faith.” And I said what are we going to tell him. Let’s figure out something now while we have time - figure out some rational thing to say to him and so we did. We took a long time that night trying to figure out the things that would sound reasonable to Shoghi Effendi why there weren’t many Negroes in the Faith. A Y We got to Tel Aviv and I was curious to see how the people looked - we stopped over in those two places for two hours - I didn’t see g anything but the airport you know and I said well I guess its really bad to come through Paris — women want to see Paris and to see some of the smart things there. Maybe I had no business to think of those things - maybe I should just think of my pilgrimage and not let that worry me. But you know it did just

a little. We finally got to Tel Aviv and I was interested to see that the Israeli people looked just like the people in America. I mean the women had on that time-they had on peasant blouses way down-they had on these flats that the children the teenagers wear — and the wide peasant skirts and they looked like other people. They were bustling along fast and whatnot but they all did have a(-....?....)and they were all very relaxed looking. They all seemed very happy. The people travel by way of busses there. There are no street cars, no means of conveyances comparable to the ones we have in America so we had to get to Haifa from Tel Aviv by way of this Sherut they call it - it's a taxi.

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We arrived there in time for lunch at the Pilgrim House - the western Pilgrim House. To me it was a very lovely place the doors the bedroom doors, no that's Bahjí I am talking about, but the western Pilgrim House is very much more elaborate than Shoghi Effendi's own home. It's the place he lives is simple, very simple, very simple and very almost rigid. I mean there are so few conveniences there. They live very simply and to think that Amelia Collins, the beautiful Amelia who has all of this money, all of this stuff who lives in this one little cramped room with a basin and a single bed and the beds are something to talk about. They are you wouldn't want, honestly your worst enemy wouldn't be able to get a good night's rest on them. But she sleeps there and is so happy to be in the house with Shoghi Effendi and who can blame her. Today I- Shoghi Effendi is the last he was the last the last remnant of God on earth and she was just radiant all day every day all night just to be near him. And he was radiant to have her near him. He called her he managed to say something to her at every meal and it made her so happy for him to say something - he called her our Amelia". Well we got there in time for lunch and they asked us to have lunch and honestly I hadn't had a decent meal since I left the plane so I thought maybe here was lunch and I would enjoy that. But they had a lunch made from soup and the soup was made from eggs — some boiled eggs of some kind — and then they made a sort of paste and they cut these eggs up in it. Well by that time I began to think that Shoghi Effendi saw (I didn't eat?) it didn't matter. But if I had been hungry it would have been awful because he had the soup and cucumbers and they have lovely small fresh cucumbers and Arabian, not Arabian, its bread that—I don't know where it comes from Turkey, Israel, someplace- but its just bread but I didn't like it maybe you would have liked it. I didn't get much of a lunch but they were so hospitable and so glad to see Bill and me and they made us so happy. They made us so welcome and we were conducted to our rooms and we rested until about 9:00 o'clock I that is when Shoghi Effendi has dinner and he eats only one time every I day and that is the

truth and how he manages to go all day long with one' meal I don't know and that is very late. Sometimes after 9 o'clock and sometimes a little before 9. He has this old Japanese man, Fujita, I think they call him, he knew 'Abdu'l-Bahé- He does everything for him. He waits on him, he I don't know what he does for him. I suppose he does I they say he does everything but he announces him — Shoghi Effendi has come, he says ~ he comes upstairs, that's where we live, and the dining room is downstairs. I had figured well I am going to come behind all the rest of them. When we got there, there was a Canadian pilgrim there, T the Grossmans from Germany were there, Mrs. Kinney I know she's an American but she's in France now she was there and there was a young I Persian pilgrim there. Then the regular household which is made up of the Reveal sisters, and Mr. Ioas and his wife, and Rúhíyyih, and Mason Remey. So when he came for us I started getting in back, getting myself back of Bill, back of anybody I could get back of because I knew this was, the time and I just didn't want to get out in front, I just didn't want to see him then I was scared, I just didn't want to that's all but I was pushed forwardsay every new pilgrim has to get in front so you get in front and Bill comes behind you and that's the way they shoved me into the dining room.

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Well it was too late then to get nervous I just had to go forward. There comes a time when you just have to move and I moved and there was this beautiful man standing there. Beautiful I think you would think so too especially if you had seen that picture of in Time magazine that also I guess it was Time and Newsweek you were exposed to it. I had just, I don't know what I was looking for but I certainly wasn't looking for the beauty, the beautiful piece?) of humanity that I saw. The Guardian he was a beautiful man. He looked like - not to me — now Jackie and there are other people here who have been to Haifa too land this is just my impression. You know we are all different people and the impression is colored by the personality so you just bear with me other people might have a very different impression. This is mine only. To me he looked like a tan nordic - he looked like-a very nordic - he didn't look like an oriental to me. His eyes were, I know they weren't black, they weren't an orientals eyes + they were blue and grey, and he was tan with the most delicately chiseled features. Most orientals to me have A mouths.' You know they do have you noticed it — they sometimes they do but his lips were thin and his nose was carved and he was just angelic. He wore this fez ~ a black one with a black - I don't know what you call those robes – and then he had a tan one then he wore his tan robe. And he stood there until I came into the room. He embraces the men he doesn't embrace the women. He put his hands on your shoulders and

takes your hand the greatest love on his face and he says “Won’t you sit down there Mrs. Allison opposite me?” The newest pilgrims, of course were given the honor of sitting at the head of the table and I was the newest pilgrim, Well I sat at the head and he sat on my side on my right—hand side and everybody else there were about 15-16 people at table. Mason Remey always sat in front of him because he is especially fond of Mason Remey and he doesn’t hear very well so I I think he reads he is able to read his lips. So he always sat there and he let me sit at the head of the table but by that time I was speechless. I just sat P» and I didn’t even raise my head to look at him - about the 4th one around the table and finally I did I think it must have been the 3rd night before I was able to say something - to ask question or anything of the kind. As I said before he would talk to you ~ he asked me questions and I would nod and many times during that first night he would ask me something and I looked up at him and when I looked up at him — trick in a moment I would say it was a trick — I thought it was a mannerism like he would raise his eyes - that whole eye would the whole thing would go back and the whole eye - the light of the eye would just blind you with its beauty. He would just look at you with compassion and love and the whole thing was there and the lashes were back and they were it was just beautiful and you would just be lost in that eye in the sight of his eyes. That only happened about once every night because you couldn’t stand it — at least I couldn’t. Now the people who were not impressed that way - who didn’t think of it at all - that is What it did to me and I couldn’t eat hardly that night at all.

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I didn’t feel anything particular — I wouldn’t say that I was all didn’t eat much that night — I just could not wrought up and whatnot - the life had just gone out of me. It was just like I was when he said on the second night he said “Mrs. Allison did you go to the Shrines today?” I said “Yes Shoghi Effendi I went.” He said But what did you feel? What did you feel when you went into the Shrines to pray? How did you feel? What struck you?” Well I sat there for a minute and I said what should I say to him to sound as if I were really impressed - what shall I say — what words shall I bring out and I said to myself I am going to say the truth. I didn’t feel anything — I was drained - absolutely - there was no feeling I just laid there without any life at Bahá’u’lláh’s Shrine. Just lay there for 20 minutes - just laid there with no thought no nothing and I said that to him I said “Shoghi Effendi I just didn’t feel anything. There was no life in me even. I just lay there with no feeling” and I don’t know what I expected him to say but he said “Mrs. Allison” after a few minutes he said “you old people are fine people. He said they are talented people” he said they are

still asleep and pure. Now I don't know what that meant. Maybe because I didn't fabricate, because I just said what was true. I just don't know. That's what he said to me – because I told him that I had no feeling — I was spent. Well the next time I went to the Tomb it was different of course but the first time that was the truth I just didn't do anything. I just laid there and prayed. Until..... and I looked at Bill and he looked at me and then we knew we were in the presence of something that was different. "I don't blame the Negroes in the South for not being Bahá'ís" he said "Maybe if I were a Negro and in the South and in America, I would not be a Bahá'í either." He was most militant on the race question and I think he talked so much about race because we were Negroes probably he wouldn't have been so talkative about that if we had not been Negroes but that was the first thing he said to me. And the first thing and plus Bill being very vocal and young I don't know whether it was because I wasn't hungry or what but I and daring - you know Bill - when he got, when there was a lull in the conversation I think he wanted to say something to him so he would say "Oh Shoghi Effendi — he said, "the youth in Chicago (he was living in Chicago then) he said, "the youth in Chicago told me to ask you a question. "He said "May I ask it?" and he said "Yes." And he said They wanted me to ask you how to promulgate the Word in Chicago — how better to attract the youth" and before he could finish his sentence - he didn't allow him to finish it — he said "Oh young man, you're wasting your time in Chicago. He said "Oh young man you're wasting your time" just like that he threw his hands up — "you're wasting your time in Chicago" and poor Bill - I felt so sorry for him. Because he shut him up right away and Bill had nothing to say for 2 or 3 nights after that because Shoghi Effendi was very impatient. I don't know why perhaps it's because he told you to get out of Chicago - he told us get out Chicago - he said you're wasting your time there. And the boy I went back to Chicago and stayed 2 or 3 months and he left.

Well we as I said I'd like to tell you how Bahá'u'lláh — how He (bountly?) extended to even the vanity of an old woman - I got sick while I was - on the last night we were there as we were sitting at table and all at once I got very cold - I had been feeling all right I got

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Very cold and I said "Bill I wish you would go up" I whispered to him "go up stairs and go up and get me something to put around me and immediately he looked back he said "Mrs. Allison you are ill." I said "Oh no Shoghi Effendi" I was afraid to be ill - I didn't want to be ill and be in the presence of him — I said "Oh no I am not ill." He said "You are." and he said "Take her upstairs and put her to bed and get a doctor." So I went upstairs and Amelia took me

and got a doctor and I had a temperature of 104 and the doctor said I must not move under 5 days. So Bill had 5 extra days with the Guardian and I wasn't sick at all. I didn't feel anything. The temperature was there I suppose but I just stayed in the room and then when we were ready to go home the airline couldn't find anything for us but a ticket that would permit us to spend a night in Paris and 2 days at the expense of the airline. The grandest hotel you could imagine - I couldn't — I'd never been in anything like it before and was all out of place - the beds were just as long as they were wide - just as wide as they were long and the pillows were just as long as they were wide and you could just bury yourself in them they were so wonderful. And I said to Bill I we could never afford this and he said "Mother maybe the airline." I said the airline couldn't afford to do this for us and when we were ready to go we asked what the expenses were and they said "Well you've been the guest of Air France." Breakfast and all of that wonderful room and dinner. Well to me that was a sign of great bounty because I'll never be able to get to Paris again and I never would have gotten there this time but we spent the whole day visiting all of Paris - we did all of Paris - Bill knew every place to go and it was just wonderful for his old mother.

I'll tell you what a pilgrimage consists of - it's 9 days of course - and the weekend is spent at — you go to 'Akká — at Bahjí that's where you live - Bahjí is the beautiful palace - it is a mansion really this man (name inaudible) says it's a palace and it is where Bahá'u'lláh I spent His last days. A beautiful place. Great vaulted halls and a bedroom off of each — I mean about 10 bedrooms off of this great vaulted hall - these magnificent rugs that the pilgrims bring — they bring gifts. They all come and they bring gifts to Shoghi Effendi whenever they come and usually they are these beautiful rugs - Persian rugs and they decorate these rooms - these places. The Bahá'ís have many places that they keep up in the East. We are rich in spots and houses and mansions - I mean places where Bahá'u'lláh once walked or once lived and they are all kept up beautifully by the Bahá'ís and they are all K decorated beautifully with these gifts that the pilgrims have brought- and this Mansion of Bahjí is just a beautiful place. And we stayed there 2 nights — the pilgrims go there and stay 2 nights and there that is your headquarters. You go to Mazra'ih that is one of the places? That is the place that Bahá'u'lláh went directly from 'Akká and then from Mazra'ih. He went to Bahjí. And then you went to 'Akká to the old 1 prison where they knew where He lived. They keep this room under lock and key. It's sealed for the Bahá'ís to make their pilgrimages to.

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'Akká is a dirty - it's a filthy city - it's just an awful place and the old prison now is being used by the Israeli government as a hospital for the insane. And

you go there and it takes you just about the weekend to make these places with living at Bahjí. Of course you know that the Oriental, the Eastern believers are much more reverent — they have something that we Americans don't have. They have so much humility and so much reverence you can see it in their faces. "We are so brash — I mean you could tell it at table. You could just see it at the table even when we were with Shondi Effendi. The American pilgrims would just talk and they were just gabbering and talk and carry on and the Orientals would wait and ask his permission to ask questions as they would humbly ask the question. But no American would ever do that. They would be talking all out of turn when somebody else was trying to talk, they would be talking too. I was very ashamed of myself and the way as were doing. I was ashamed of Bill for wanting all at once to know something right away and that's spirit. But as I said before the Orientals were very different — they were very humble. And we had the - on this pilgrimage we had a gentleman from Persia and his family who were making the pilgrimage — he had his family - his wife and his daughter and his small son. And they had lived and tried to live in Turkey to pioneer but he hadn't been able to make a living for his family so he went back — he had to go back to Persia and he learned how to make wigs and then he went back to Turkey again and made these wigs and he had accumulated enough to bring his family on this pilgrimage. He was just so reverent and Shoghi Effendi at one time at the table said that he had had a nice afternoon because-I don't remember his name-because he had such a beautiful time with this Persian gentleman. Now he - I just can't imagine his ever saying that about an American that he had had a beautiful time because of an American. But just to show you how their humility is — that night at the - in the Mansion - Dr. Ḥakím ~ he always conducted the pilgrimage tours — he assigned the rooms to the pilgrims. And he was very gracious; he gave me Shoghi Effendi's room to sleep in that night. "I want you to have his room tonight" and I was just dumbfounded and just honestly I just don't know what happened but I had his room. In giving the rooms out and in considering the women-when it came to this gentleman they gave him the room where the Covenant-breakers ~ the pictures of the Covenant-breakers were — well the rooms were all with pictures in them. These were members of Shoghi Effendi's family too but they were Covenant—breakers and he didn't say anything then but all night long his wife didn't sleep. She said "He prayed and hollered all night because he said those eyes were following him. All night the eyes of the Covenant-breakers." And the poor gentleman was, the next morning he was worn out from his tears and his praying because he had to sleep in that room. Jessie Reveal left the next day so they gave him that room. But just to show you how effective — how emotional they are and how reverent and how they love Shoghi Effendi. We could never appreciate the love that these people these Eastern pilgrims show for Shoghi Effendi because to us he was great I mean he was the "sign of God on earth" but he was a man and he is a man and he doesn't want you to do that but they see more in him than we do. At least it seems that way to me.

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Now on the-just before I got ready to come I had been there about 5 days, Mr. Ioas said to me one day - we always talked but he left because we just had a fest of talking - you know how you do. You can let down your hair then and talk so he said one day he said "Mrs. Allison I think we've got some chickens. I think the Persian pilgrims have brought some chickens in there. Do you think you could fix us some chicken?" everybody all the pilgrim women, contributed something before they left to a dinner. I know Mrs. Grossmann fixed some icecream and somebody else would do something for the dinner. You know everybody tried. And he said "Do you suppose you could fix us some - do something with those chickens that we have?" He said "Shoghi Effendi loves chicken" and when he said that of course I said "Yes I'll do my very best with them" Well when they brought the chickens out and I saw them I said "My Lord, Bahá'u'lláh You are going to have to help me, I can't do anything with those things" They had been in the freezer for about a month and they were just the color of that fireplace back there and they were just two small chickens and then they had a turkey that had been there a long time. So they dumped the three things in my lap and said now "You see what you can do with them - Shonhi Effendi likes them and he likes gravy" I said Bahá'u'lláh you are going to have to help me" I did a lot of praying with my cooking I had a lot of children and I had to make the oatmeal and Prunes all around all of my life so I knew that I had to pray about them. And another thing they cook on oil stoves. You know if you know anything about oil stoves you know you've got to start before day to get breakfast they are so slow. Well I started with these chickens all the way up in the day and I prayed and I cooked and I prayed and I cooked and then she came over. Rúhíyyih said he likes onions Mrs. Allison — do you suppose you could put some onions in there?" I said yes I'll fix it up as best I can well I stewed and stewed and I put the onions in last so that they would be just crunchy and right and Bahá'u'lláh really was with me because when we got to the table the chickens were just nice — of course they weren't Southern fried chicken — that was what Leroy was talking about — Southern Fried Chicken — and you couldn't fry those things at all but they were stewed so that I put all turkeys and chickens together so that it didn't taste like turkey, it didn't taste like chicken. But it was a mixture of the two. But the gravy was delicious and Shoghi Effendi calls onions Ahnions that's the only Oriental thing I could detect about him. He said ahnions. And he had two or three helpings of the chicken. And I couldn't eat I was so thankful I just sat and thanked Bahá'u'lláh and the next day he said "Ms. Allison I went to thank you I slept last night I slept better than I slept in a long time. I don't know whether he doesn't eat enough or what abut he slept because he had eaten the chicken he said. And'He enjoyed them so much.

Well now that was all I wanted. I was just blessed from then on. Well Rúhíyyih wouldn't let that be enough. The next night she said Mrs. Allison could you make me some corn bread?" I said yes I'll try." Well you know they don't have much — they don't*have much in Israel. I mean they don't have any chickens at all they have all the eggs you could eat but I don't know where the eggs come from because there are no chickens. Just eggs on eggs but no chickens. And the meal (?) wasn't very good — they have milk too. And they have butter. And Shoghi Effendi makes this great concession to the western pilgrims - we have coffee. Every morning you have all the "Nescafe" you can drink. But that's about all and they have these delicious small cucumbers

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That you have for dinner always - they always have cucumbers for dinner. They have parsley, a lot of parsley and they make an omelet out of the eggs and the parsley and they cut it - it's green. It's very tasty. And then they eat lots and lots and lots and lots of rice. Big patties of rice they set in front of Shoghi Effendi and he would he just loved it and it was very dry — they put a (end first side)

Shoghi Effendi he just loved it and it was very dry - they put a saffron on it that turns it yellow and then they brown it in that and when it's brown it's crisp and to him that's a delicacy. "Oh let me give you some of this brown saffron Mrs. Allison" and I didn't want it but I took that and tried to eat it — he put all of that stuff on my plate and I'd sit there and try to eat it because put it there. And not until the second or third day when she said to me "You don't have to eat all he gives you. Just because he gives it to you don't try to eat it all" and then of course I stopped. But I would just sit there and eat and eat until I was stuffed up to here with just rice. And then if you want something over it you know what they put over it? Yogurt. And I would try to eat it and I just finally she was merciful enough to tell me I didn't have to eat it and I stopped eating it. But the day we had the corn bread she said "Shoghi Effendi this is something else Mrs. Allison has made - I know you'll like this corn bread." He looked at it and it wasn't nice at all because the meal was — you know how you make corn bread and it sticks together — it wasn't light at all - I couldn't make it light. I don't know why but it wasn't as soggy and (big?) and he looked at it and said "Oh no. I don't want that." He said that, "that is too much starch in that" which was right of course. He could tell. He said "No I don't want that" and I said to myself well I don't care whether you eat it or not I fixed it up with the but they enjoyed it because they hadn't had any corn bread before. Well that was just a little something to tell you how Bahá'u'lláh how good He was to me to allow me to do that for Shoghi Effendi. He was very nice

to Bill and me he told me right away that he wanted me to know + “Did you realize that the colored peoples of the world were the apples of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s eyes. That they were the apples of Bahá’u’lláh’s eyes --He loved them” and he said “Do you know how much I love them?” Well I just shook my head and the tears just flowed but I think that was a welcome — that he was trying to assure me that we belong too. He said he loved them, Bahá’u’lláh loved them, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá loved them and I love them too. He was very nice in that way. He was very militant -)He said “Go back” - some of the things I can’t think of and I don’t have any notes on — you had a review -(I mean people told you about the pilgrimage last year so I didn’t think there would be anybody who’d want to hear it again so I didn’t bring any notes. Maybe