

Tiberias, Sea of Galilee
Syria

May 20th 1914

Dear friends!

The city of Tiberias is only once mentioned in the New Testament. (John VI. 23) Although there is no direct historical evidence that Jesus Christ ever visited this city, yet there is every good reason to believe that he did. For Capernaum, Magdala, the land of Gennesaret, Dalmanutha, Chorazin, Bethsaida etc, "wherein most of his mighty works were done" were cities built in and around the Sea of Galilee within a few miles distant from each other; - so that with a good sailing boat and a quiet, lovely day one can visit these scenes and dream of the "mighty works" performed by the Master of men and Angels. There are also two verses in the Gospel (John VI. 1, XXI. 1) which speaks of the Sea of Galilee as the Sea of Tiberias. This will give "a faint idea of the importance of Tiberias, even in those days. Tiberias was built by Herod Antipas, A. D. 20, and was dedicated by him to the Emperor Tiberius. According to the interpretation of Talmud it was RakKath ("shore") of

of the old Testament (Joshua XIX. 35). During the Roman occupation of Syria it became the chief province of Galilee; many handsome buildings adorned it, amongst them a royal palace and an amphitheatre. Although shunned by the Jews of the New Testament times, who considered the place unclean because built in part over ancient graves, it became after the destruction of Jerusalem, an important Jewish center. In the second century the Sanhedrin was removed here, and for a long time it was noted for its Rabbinical School. Here, the Mishna, the principal traditional work of the Jews, was published, and two centuries later the Gemara. Its subsequent is merely that of captures by Arabs, Turks, and Crusaders.

The modern town of Tiberias occupies a very much smaller space than the ancient, the walls of the Roman city may still be traced, extending up the slope to the West and also to the south; it is surrounded by a ruined wall and towers which were shaken and nearly destroyed in the great earthquake of 1837, when half the people of the town were perished. The population is about 9000, nearly 7000 of whom are Jews,

the rest Moslems and a few hundred Christians. The town is dirty, its streets extremely narrow and Ziggag. There is no attempt whatsoever in civic cleanliness. The offal and refuse are thrown in these narrow alleys and the evil odor is unbearable. Through the old, broken walls new buildings are rising up. The Death Hospital, the Hotel Tiberias, ~~the~~ Latin School for girls and a few other edifices quite quite modern. The Jews are easily recognized, many of them wear black hats, large, unkempt beards, dirty clothes and shabby ⁱⁿ appearance. They wear their hair in ^{curled} ringlets on both sides of their foreheads, in front of their ears, which give an ugly look. Nearly all are pale and weak. They belong to two sects, the Ashkenazim and the Sephardim; the former have five synagogues, and the latter two.

The Greek Church, close by the lake, dates from the time of Crusades, but was rebuilt in 1869. The Jews burial Ground is a very sacred spot with all Jews, as here are buried some of the most celebrated of their teachers, including Rabbi Joachanan, Rabbi Mier Baal Nes, a great reputed worker of miracles, and the celebrated writer Maimonides, whose learning and

abilities have been acknowledged by both Jews and Christians. He died in Egypt on the 13th December, 1204, ^{he} having founded a college at Alexandria for the instruction of his countrymen, ^{and} in which he delivered lectures on the Jewish law.

The hot baths, which we have not yet visited but are frequented yearly by thousands of Jews and other nationalities are about half an hour's walk to the south of the town; they are supposed to be an infallible cure for rheumatism and sundry other ailments. The temperature of the principal springs is 131° — 142° Fahr. The handsome buildings of the Scotch missions, including the fine hospital are on the north side of the town, through the streets and the long shore of which the Master takes his daily walk before sunset. The Citadel of the Roman days lays on a high hill to the south-west of the town. The Latin Convent is on the sea-shore, a short distance from the Jewish quarter.

+ Many legends are connected with Tiberias. One, specially dear to the heart of every Jew, is that, when Messiah comes, He will emerge from the lake, gather together His people at Tiberias and march

with them in triumph to Safed, (Canaan), the original land promised by the Lord to Abraham and his seeds, (see Genesis Chapter 12 v. 1, 7.) In Canaan, then He will establish his throne for ever. (The most celebrated Christian traditions are that the miraculous draught of fishes took place in the lake, close by where the Latin Monastery stands and the other is when walking along the shore he called into his service, Simon and Peter while they were "casting a net into the sea; for they were fishers.")

In connection with the legend of the emerging of Messiah from the lake the ^{Abdul Bala} Beloved related to me the other night ~~while we were sitting at the table~~ the following story: - "It ^{was} ~~has been~~ reported many years ago that a young Moslem fell desperately in love with a beautiful Jewish girl. Of course it is forbidden in the laws of Moses to intermarry with strangers - so all his attempts to reach the girl proved abortive. Finally, in an accidental manner he stumbled over this legend and evolved a way to accomplish his aim. He hired a boat and ^{on} a dark and stormy night when hardly anything could be seen he sailed for away. When it was about nine or

ten o'clock he lighted a lamp and made for the shore.
 He raised the sails which ^{was} of snowy white stuff.
 Many credulous Jews seeing in the far off a dim solitary
 light and the faint outline of a white sail rushed toward
 the shore and watched ^{eagerly} its slow approach. Before
 reaching the shore, suddenly the boat stopped and the
 Jews heard a tremulous yet distinct voice: - 'I am the
 angel of ^{the} Lord! I have brought for you good tidings of
 deliverance! Rejoice and be of good courage! Thus saith
 the Lord of Hosts, the Lord ~~who~~ delivered you out of the ~~from~~
^{the} tyranny of Pharaohs, brought you out of Egypt and
 gave you the land flowing with milk and honey; the
 God of your fathers Abraham, Jacob, Isaac
 and Joseph. ^{Rahel's daughter} ~~So and so~~ has a virgin daughter. She
 is indeed comely and of a good Countenance. There is
 a young man of the Lord ^{by the name of} ~~such and such~~ ^{Mohamed aldan,}. He has
 found grace in the sight of the Lord. Let these two
 servant and maid servant, enter into the bond of
 matrimony. Unto them a son will be born who
 will be your promised Messiah. This is the
 Command of your Lord! Beware lest ^{you} ~~you~~ disobey
 the order of your God and be of those who are

stiffnecked. This is the Covenant of the Lord with you.' Then bringing down the white sail and extinguishing the light, like the last glimmer of sunset, the boat vanished into the dark, stormy night. The next day the lover and the loved one were united in happy wedlock. " +

When I asked ^{a Rabbi} about the coming of Christ from Lake Tiberias he said this is true, because the sea of Galilee is 680 feet below the Mediterranean and this is one of the lowest ground in Syria and as God loves lowliness and humility, therefore we expect our Messiah to appear in Tiberias.

In the morning the Master called on Ali Mansour Pasha who arrived yesterday from Damascus and is living in the Hotel. He is an old friend of the Beloved, for in his youth he had a military position in Acca and thus he became under His divine influence. He talked with him for sometimes. Then on account of the quieter part of the hotel He changed his room from No 17 to No 20. Before noon, two of the daughters of the Master and Mrs Haagg and Miss Sanderson arrived from Hogaib. Our Western sisters took their lunch in the hotel, while the

Beloved with his daughters ate at Mirza Inoneer's house. They left in the afternoon for Haifa. In the afternoon Mirza Hadi and Haji Mohamad arrived from Adassayeh and will spend the night with Mirza Inoneer. In the evening Khussa cooked rice and meat for our Turkish Pasha. Before sunset a significant meeting was brought about all by itself in the veranda of the Hotel. There were two American gentlemen, three Jewish Rabbis, the Moslem judge and a few other Turkish officers. They have all come to pay their homage to "Sarnakate' Ma'ilana" - His Holiness Our Master. "From him we learn all knowledge" whispered the judge to his friend. He is the protector of the poor and he uplifts the down-trodden" said one of the Rabbis. "Tiberias is honored with His Holy Presence" said the governor. And the Master in the fading light of the glorious sunset spoke to them on Love, Unity, Spirituality, Cleanliness, Oh! How I wish their eyes were open, their ears unstopped so that they may see the Majesty of the Lord, and hear the words of Truth!