



Zaynab's Courageous Heart

A young warrior rushed from the fort, raising a sword and crying out, "O Lord of the Age!" In the face of such courage and faith, the enemy soldiers ran in fear.

They didn't guess that their fearless opponent was Zaynab, a teenage girl disguised as a man!

Zaynab belonged to a community who followed a Messenger of God known as the Báb ("the Gate" in Arabic). The Báb taught that a new Messenger would soon come to bring peace to the world.

As the Báb's teachings spread, government and Islamic leaders grew angry and afraid of losing their power. They tried to crush the new faith with violence.

In Zanján, Persia (now Iran), the Bábís were led by Hujjat, a brave and passionate man. As soldiers gathered to attack, he told the Bábís to take shelter. About 3,000 men, women, and children moved to the Fort of 'Alí-Mardán Khán.

Thousands of soldiers opened fire on the fort. The Bábí men and women fought to defend their families. Some cared for the wounded, prepared the cannonballs, repaired damaged walls, and cooked meals. They lifted each other's spirits with prayer and song. When husbands, fathers, and brothers fell, sometimes women took their place.

Zaynab's heart was on fire. She yearned to stand with her friends on the battlefield.

The government sent more waves of troops. The Bábís' supplies dwindled. The governor promised safety and wealth to any Bábí who denied their faith and abandoned the fort. Despite hunger and fatigue, all the Bábís stayed loyal.

Zaynab came up with a bold plan. She cut off her long, beautiful hair and put on men's clothing. She grabbed a musket, sword, and shield. Then she leaped into battle!



People were amazed at her brave actions and thought she was a man. Zaynab was always at the forefront of battle and ran to anyone who needed help. She slept and ate little. Her voice struck enemies with fear.

The wise leader, Hujjat, recognized her and marveled at her skill. When he questioned her, she said, "My heart ached with pity and sorrow when I saw the suffering of my friends. I followed an urge I couldn't resist." She begged him to let her keep fighting. She said she was ready to give her life for the Báb's mission. Hujjat told her, "Not by their appearance, but by their faith and action, God judges both men and women. You have a vitality that few men could surpass."

Zaynab fought heroically for five long months. One day she revealed to Hujjat, "My life, I feel, is nearing its end."

With fierce determination, she charged the enemy barricades. The first one fell, then another, and another.

My heart ached with pity and sorrow when I saw the suffering of my friends. I followed an urge I couldn't resist.

— Zaynab



At the fourth barricade, a storm of bullets rained down on her. Zaynab gave her life as a martyr.

Her sacrifices lit a flame of courage. After her passing, her example inspired at least 20 women to join the Bábí Faith.

The fort was finally conquered and demolished by the army, but the Bábí Faith was not destroyed.

From the rubble, a spiritual movement grew stronger. Bahá'u'lláh announced that He was the Messenger of God promised by the Báb. He

revived the Bábí community. His new Bahá'í teachings called for global peace and unity. "Beware lest ye shed the blood of anyone," Bahá'u'lláh said. He told His followers to aid God "with the sword of wisdom and of utterance."

Today, Bahá'ís defend themselves not with weapons, but with words and acts of service. If we feel overwhelmed or afraid, we can think of the young girl who refused to hide. Like Zaynab, we all have a noble spirit to shine in the world!

A prayer for courage from Bahá'u'lláh:

O my Lord! I implore Thee to assist me and them that love me to magnify Thy Word, and to endow us with such strength that the ills of this world and its tribulations will be powerless to hinder us from remembering Thee and from extolling Thy virtues. Powerful art Thou to do all things; resplendent art Thou above all things.