I REMEMBER

I don't know why but for some reason I have been thinking about my youth and my upbringing.

When I compare my priorities today and those of my youth, Oh my God! It seems I have lived multiple lives.

First of all, I was raised in Egypt where I was born in 1947, as well as my parents, grandparents and the multitude of ancestors before them. We are Jews of the Karaite denomination (you can Google that).

My family was not religious; however the men in my family attached a great importance to Passover and Yom Kippur. Because I love my family and respect their tradition, I too followed in these rare rituals, hardly understanding why we did them. I only went into a Synagogue twice, once, accompanying my father for Yom Kippur and the second time assisting the Bar Mitzvah of my friend Elio Zarmati.

Being Jewish for me meant more feeling solidarity with the persecuted people we were part of and taking pride in being God's chosen people. Although, during my youth in Egypt I felt we were chosen to be persecuted, and I deplored that.

Family was the most important thing for me. My parents and grandparents, cousins, uncles and aunts were my world. They were my friends, my refuge and my only close contacts in that country.

I did not befriend the Egyptian Muslims or Christians as they never missed the occasion to make me feel inferior.

Needless to say school was a test for me. I found solace in a few compassionate teachers who looked at me beyond my race.

When I reached the age of fifteen, my family had to leave Egypt with a laissez-passer, a 24-hour visa to Switzerland and $ 100.00 in our pocket. The government dispossessed us of all our belongings and obliterated all living trace of our Egyptian life. In the space of a few years thousands of Jewish families endured similar treatment and left Egypt not knowing where to go, how will they live and by what means.

My family's exodus took us to Switzerland, Italy and finally to the United States. All through these hard years, although the need was there, I never felt religious nor did I pray.

The year was 1974. I have just been sworn in as a US citizen. Boy was I proud! I worked in a posh shoe store in Westfield, New Jersey and although living at home with my

parents, I was quite autonomous and had little care in the world. I had friends, I had a job, my parents loved me, I was a citizen, what more did I need?

Then I met "her". Paule is French, born in Algeria (Pied-Noir) and living in Canada. She was also a Bahá'í.

My heart, my limbs, my mind and my spirit underwent a dramatic revolution. I fell in love. I had never felt like that before. I had to live the rest of my life with her, otherwise, otherwise… otherwise nothing. There was no otherwise. I just had to marry the girl.

Our courtship lasted one week, at the end of which I became a Bahá'í and asked her to marry me. She said yes and we were married three months later.

Now wait a minute, not so fast. I became what? A Bahá'í? Did anyone force me? Did I investigate what it meant? Was I looking for a religion? No, no, and no. So how come I became a Bahá'í? Truly I cannot explain with ration as the whole thing ran very fast in my heart and truly not in my brain. In the space of one hour thinking, I just HAD to become a Bahá'í.

OK Moro, explain to me what attracted you to the Bahá'í Faith? I don't know.

I knew absolutely nothing about this religion, not its history; its organization, its teachings, nothing and it took me two years to truly become a confirmed believer.

Today I look at my life. I am 70 years old. Egypt is so far away and my only connection with it is a few other Jews who suffered similar persecutions, whom I met on social media. My life in Italy and the USA also feel far away. My wife and I have made Haiti our home for the past 38 years.

Prayer is part of my life in a way that I could never imagine as a youth.

My father passed away many, many years ago and my mother only a few years ago, yet through faith I not only feel their love but their assistance as well.

Thank God I embraced the Bahá'í Faith.