

## AHMAD, THE FLAME OF FIRE

A transcript of audio-cassette from series

### WINDOWS TO THE PAST

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Let us gently open this window from these Windows to the Past to the enchanting warble of the nightingales...and yet better to the melody of human voice chanting these exalted words from the Tablet of Ahmad...

"He is the King, the All-Knowing, the Wise! Lo, the Nightingale of Paradise singeth upon the twigs of the Tree of Eternity, with holy and sweet melodies, proclaiming to the sincere ones the glad tidings of the nearness of God, calling the believers in the Divine Unity to the court of the Presence of the Generous One...Verily, this is that Most Great Beauty, foretold in the Books of the Messengers, through Whom truth shall be distinguished from error and the wisdom of every command shall be tested...O Ahmad! Forget not My bounties while I am absent. Remember My days during thy days, and My distress and banishment in this remote prison. And be thou so steadfast in My love that thy heart shall not waver, even if the swords of the enemies rain blows upon thee and all the heavens and the earth arise against thee. Be thou as a flame of fire to My enemies and a river of life eternal to My loved ones, and be not of those who doubt."

Was Ahmad truly a flame of fire and a river of life eternal? Indeed, he was the embodiment of both. How else could it be? When Baha'u'llah uttered the word BE, he became. The combination of fire and water, that unquenchable fire was the magic of Ahmad.

The phrase "flame of fire" could mistakenly give the impression of a destructive power given by Baha'u'llah to Ahmad. He did not become a flame-throwing torch destroying the enemies like the plague Moses brought to the Egyptians. Baha'u'llah, on His Declaration day a few years before the revelation of the Tablet of Ahmad,

forbade the use of the sword. Those allegorical words of the Tablet of Ahmad made him that unique believer whose life story you are going to hear.

The flame of fire was nothing but the force of his unshakeable faith and fire of his zeal with which he burnt away the veils of ignorance, and when subdued, he warmed their calloused and cold hearts with the warmth of his love.

The story of the Tablet of Ahmad and its honored recipient which you are about to hear is mostly extracted, and, in part, directly quoted from an article by the late Hand of the Case Jinab-i-Abu'l-Qasim-i-Faizi which appeared in the March and April issues of Baha'i News in 1967.

There are two tablets each bearing the name of Ahmad. One in Persian and the other in Arabic. The latter is the one used throughout the Baha'i world, which the Guardian characterized as being imbued with a special potency.

You might be curious to learn a little about the miserable and unfortunate Ahmad, the recipient of the Persian tablet which is quite long. Selections from this tablet appear in The Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, page 323. He was from Kashan. In that city, the first to embrace the Faith of the Bab, through no less a person than Mulla Husayn, was Haji Mirza Jani in whose home the Bab spent Naw-Ruz of 1847, and he was martyred in 1852 blood-bath of Tehran. Haji had three brothers. One never was moved by the Faith and died as a Muslim. The second was called Isma'il, entitled by Baha'u'llah as Dhabih, meaning Sacrifice, and also Anis, meaning Companion. This brother, Isma'il, was the recipient of Suriy-i-Ra'is by Baha'u'llah, admonishing Ali Pasha, the prime minister of Turkish Empire. He died of natural causes but so much had yearned to be a martyr that Baha'u'llah conferred the title of Dhabih upon him. He should not be confused with Siyyid Isma'il-i-Zavari'i, also titled Dhabih by Baha'u'llah, who saw a glimpse of glory and sacrificed himself by cutting his own throat. Two Isma'is and two titles of Dhabih.

According to Baha'u'llah, Abraham was going to sacrifice his firstborn, Ishmael, as a proof of his faith. It is interesting

to see in the history of religion three Isma'is whose names are associated with sacrifice.

We were talking about Mirza Jani of Kashan whose one brother stayed a Muslim, one was Isma'il, and the third one was Ahmad who went to Baghdad, and attained the presence of Baha'u'llah. When Baha'u'llah left Baghdad after His Declaration, He left one Ahmad behind and chose the other Ahmad to accompany Him to Istanbul. You should also realize that Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani, the mind behind Mirza Yahya's evil deeds, also accompanied Baha'u'llah.

When our star, Ahmad, begged Baha'u'llah to go with Him, he was told by Baha'u'llah that He was taking some followers with Him to keep an eye on them. The unfortunate Ahmad, in the storm of tests and trials, departed from the right path and sided with Mirza Yahya. That is when Baha'u'llah revealed the Persian Tablet of Ahmad for him to warn him against such evil deeds which he was committing, causing great suffering for Baha'u'llah and His family. The miserable Ahmad stayed unchanged and went back to Baghdad where he found his old associates. He lived a wicked life. One of his worst habits was to insult and curse people in the most bitter and foul language. In one of his disputes with his evil friends, he lashed them with his sharp tongue, and so one night they got rid of him by killing him.

Now we go to the Ahmad in whose honor the well-known Tablet was revealed in Arabic. He was born in Yazd, a southern city in Iran, about 1805 to a very noble and rich family. His father and uncles were the chieftains of the town, but Ahmad, even at the age of fourteen, showed a great inclination toward mysticism and endeavored to find new paths to truth. When he was fifteen, he had already started his investigations during which he heard from some of the people that there are saints or holy men who knew special prayers, which if read and repeated so many times and in accordance with certain rituals, would definitely enable the reader to behold the countenance of the Promised Qa'im.

This flared up the fire of his ever-growing longings. He began to practice an ascetic life with long prayers, successive days of fasting and secluding himself from people and from the world. His parents and relatives never approved of such practices, nor

did they permit him to continue this seclusion which was contrary to their ways of life and ambition. Such opposition could not be tolerated by a man like Ahmad who was wholeheartedly searching and striving to reach his heart's desire; reunion with his eternal Beloved. Therefore, one day early in the morning he made a small bundle of his clothes and belongings, and under the pretext of going to a public bath, departed from his father's home and set out on his way to search for God's Manifestation.

In a beggar's outfit he roamed from village to village, and wherever he found a 'pir' (spiritual leader), with great devotion and rectitude of conduct he sat at his feet in the hope of finding a path to the mysterious worlds of truth. He invariably begged such people for the special prayer, the reading of which would draw him near the court of his Beloved. Whenever someone would suggest to him any practice, he was so ardent in his search that he would invariably carry out the instructions with absolute sincerity, no matter how time-consuming or arduous those practices were. But all of this was of no avail.

Losing hope and faith in such pursuits, he made his way to India, a land so well-known for its mystic teachers and hermits with special powers and spiritual gifts. He reached Bombay and took up residence there, still looking for someone to give him a glimpse of the glorious court of the Promised One.

He heard that if one would perform a specific ablution, put on spotlessly clean white garments, prostrate oneself and repeat the following verse of the Qur'an, "La ilaha il'allah" (There is no God but God), 12,000 times, he would definitely attain his aim and heart's desire. Not once, but several times Ahmad prostrated for hours to repeat the above verse 12,000 times, but still found himself in the darkness. In his dismay he returned to Iran, but did not return to his hometown of Yazd. He settled in Kashan, got married, and started his own craft of cloth-making in which he became an expert. In no time he became a successful businessman, but still in his heart he was searching.

It was in Kashan where the rumors about a person claiming to be the Promised Qa'im were heard by him. Ceaseless in his search, Ahmad asked many people in many different ways. No one ever gave

him a clue. Then one day an unknown traveller arrived in Kashan and stayed in the same inn where Ahmad had established his business. A certain inner urge drew Ahmad close to this stranger. In their conversation Ahmad brought up the subject of the rumor about the Qa'im. "Why do you ask such question?" the traveller inquired. "I like to know if it is true" was Ahmad's response, "and if it is, I shall pursue it with all my might." The traveller, with a smile of triumph, instructed him to go to Mashhad and find a certain learned man called Mulla Abdu'l-Khaliq who would tell him the whole truth. The very next day Ahmad was on his way to Mashhad. The owners of the neighboring shops were very much surprised when they did not find Ahmad at his shop as usual. "What transpired between him and the unknown traveler?" they asked one another, but no one had the right answer.

Ahmad crossed deserts and mountains on foot, and his heart was overflowed with joy and longing. Every step he took he found himself nearer to his reunion with his Beloved. He reached Mashhad exhausted and so ill that he had to stay in bed. After two months he mustered the last ounces of his strength and courage and went directly to the door of the desired house. Here are his own words, "When I reached the house, I knocked at the door and the servant opened the door. He asked, 'What do you want?' 'I must see your master,' was my answer. The servant went in, and mulla himself came out. He admitted me to his house, and when I explained everything that happened to me, he grasped my arm and said, 'Do not say such things in this house!' and pushed me out of his house. My sorrow had no limit. Heartbroken and utterly astounded, I told myself, 'Are all of my efforts in vain? To whom shall I turn?' But I was sure of one thing; I will never leave this man, and I will persist until he opens his heart to me and gives me guidance. The next morning I was at the door of the same house. I knocked harder than the previous day. This time the mulla himself opened the door and the moment I saw him I said, 'I will not go away until you tell me the whole truth.' This time he found me earnest and not there to spy or cause difficulties for him and his friends.

He instructed Ahmad to attend the evening prayer at a certain mosque where he led the congregational prayer followed by a sermon. Then he should follow the mulla. Ahmad followed the instructions; however, when the mulla finished his sermon he was surrounded by

such a large crowd which made it impossible for Ahmad to locate him. The next day when the two met again, Ahmad was instructed to go to another mosque at night where a third person would show him the way. Ahmad was there at sunset, and as promised after the evening prayer, a certain person came and beckoned him to follow. Without hesitation or fear Ahmad followed. They were joined by the mulla and began to walk like shadows in the darkness of night through narrow streets of Mashhad. His resolve was unshaken. He took every step with great determination and was ready for any outcome.

At last they reached a certain house. The mulla knocked at the door very gently and it was opened immediately as if they were expected. They went in very quickly and passed through a covered passage way, reached a small courtyard, climbed a few steps, and were at the door of an upper chamber where a dignified man was seated. The mulla approached him with absolute reverence and courtesy, and quietly said, "This is the man that I told you about," pointing to Ahmad who was standing at the threshold. The host welcomed and invited Ahmad to come in. So he entered the room and sat down on the floor.

The host was no less a person than Mulla Sadiq-i-Khurasani, an early believer who in Shiraz received one thousand lashes on his bare back, and along with Quddus and another believer, was paraded in the streets of Shiraz by a string pulled through a hole made in their noses. He had gone there to attain the presence of the Bab, but was expelled from Shiraz before the Bab returned from His pilgrimage and proclamation in Mecca. The host, Mulla Sadiq, was a very distinguished Babi, well-known for his erudition, audacity and steadfastness. During Baha'u'llah's ministry he displayed such zeal that Baha'u'llah conferred the title of Asdaq, meaning the most truthful, upon him.

Ahmad, now about forty years old, who for twenty-five years had been wandering in the valley of search and had nowhere found even a drop to quench his thirst, found himself on the path to the main spring. Three sessions were sufficient, and he embraced the Faith with all his heart and soul. So elated and over-enthusiastic he looked that Mulla Sadiq advised him to calm down, return to Kashan, and insisted that he should not mention the Faith to the people,

not even to his own wife. You see, those days were the days of extreme danger to the newly-born Cause of God. Those who embraced the Cause were forever the target of many atrocities. Even the air was imbued with suspicion, spying, and slander. Therefore, the believers had to be very careful. Quddus, Mulla Sadiq, and a third person were the first ones in the history of the Faith who endured torture at the hands of the enemies. Mulla Sadiq, knowing how Ahmad had suffered and realizing that he had no money to return home, gave him money and small gifts for his family, and again stressed wisdom and discretion.

Commenting on his return to Kashan, Ahmad recounts, "When I reached Kashan everyone asked what had happened that I left everything so abruptly. I told them, 'My longing for pilgrimage was too great to resist, and I was right.'" Here I wish to let you know that the city of Mashhad where he met Mulla Sadiq is the holiest Islamic city in Iran where the shrine of the eighth Imam is located, and people go there for pilgrimage, so his answer had double meaning.

In Kashan he resumed his work, but longed to teach the Faith. He heard rumors that a man in Kashan by the name of Haji Mirza Jani had changed his religion and had become the follower of a new and obscure religion. Ahmad searched for him and when the two found each other their joy had no bounds. They became constant companions and were the only two Babis in Kashan. Mirza Jani had been converted by Mulla Husayn when he visited Kashan on his way to Tehran to deliver the scroll from the Bab to Baha'u'llah.

Here with your permission I will digress to a side story. The guards who were taking the Bab from Isfahan to Tehran had strict orders to bypass every village and town. For disguise, they replaced the Bab's green turban with a merchant's hat so no one would recognize Him. It was the eve of Naw-Ruz of 1847 when they were approaching Kashan. The night before, Haji Mirza Jani dreamt that as he was standing by a certain gate of the city he saw the Bab, escorted by the guards, was approaching. The Bab told Haji, "For the next three nights We will be your guest, prepare yourself." He woke up, and though he had never seen the Bab, he considered it to be a true dream. He cleaned the house and prepared a room for the Bab. He went by the same gate, and to his surprise his dream came true. As they approached, Haji went to kiss the Bab's

stirrups, but the Bab prevented him and said the exact words heard in his dream. The guards thought he was an old friend of the Bab. The chief guard had no objection for permitting the Bab to enter the city, but the other guards stubbornly resisted the idea of disobeying their strict orders. Finally, with persuasion of the chief, they consented. Haji wished to host the guards as well, but the Bab told him, "I, alone, will be your guest."

During the visit, one day Haji went to Ahmad and with great excitement told him, "Would you like to behold the countenance of your Lord?" Ahmad became overjoyed and immediately arose and asked how and when. Haji broke the overwhelming news of himself hosting the Bab and invited Ahmad to his house. At the appointed hour Ahmad arrived at Haji's house, and beheld the countenance of the promised Qa'im for whom he had yearned all his life. He saw a young Siyyid sitting with such meekness, majesty and grandeur, truly reflecting the light of God. Some of the divines and dignitaries of town were seated on the floor and the servants stood at the door.

One of the mullas faced the Bab and said, "We have heard that a certain young man from Shiraz has claimed to be the Qa'im. Is that true?"

"Yes," answered the Bab.

"Does he reveal verses?" asked the same mulla.

The Bab responded, "We reveal verses, too."

Ahmad states, "This clear answer was sufficient for anyone to find the whole truth, but the audience, and particularly that mulla, did not have a hearing ear. Then they served tea and a cup was offered to the Bab who took the cup, called the servant of the same mulla, and graciously gave it to him." Next day the same humble servant came to Ahmad and deplored the stupidity of his master. With a little explanation about the station of the Bab, he embraced the Cause, and their number grew to three.

At this juncture, I can't help but to digress again and tell you the story of conversion of Muslims supposedly by serving tea, dates and so on. Since so many Muslims became Babis, and later on, Baha'is; the clergy, ignorant of the truth of the Faith, suspected tea served in firesides to be the factor. So drinking of tea by Muslims in such meetings was strictly forbidden by the so-called

doctors of religion for their spiritual health. This remedy proved to be unsuccessful. If anything, the number of converts to the Faith increased, a very serious and disappointing side effect! As simple as these firesides were, the believers used to serve dates. Being blind to the real truth, the clergy concluded that it must be the dates. So it was added to the forbidden list.

The final comedy was the statement of a high clergy in Tabriz at the presence of the crown prince, Muzaffaru'd-Din Mirza, the son of Nasiri'd-Din Shah. This was related by Varqa, the martyr. Varqa, having knowledge of many sciences as well as being a gifted poet, the crown prince used to enjoy his company in different gatherings. In one of these gatherings Varqa states this clergy got up and boasted about his new discovery about how Muslims become Baha'is. To the audience eager to hear about his masterpiece, he stated, "I was prompted to do my research when we all realized that forbidding of eating dates has not cured the conversion problem." Now the audience is all ears. He said, "Baha'is have made extract from dates and have made them in form of small pills. In their meetings as their teachers speak and people's jaws drop, these speakers, like sharp-shooters, using their fingertips shoot the pills into the mouths of the innocent Muslims." Varqa, after being granted permission by the crown prince to speak, deflated the clergy by stating he was a physician and knew of many extracts in pill form, but never had heard about extract of dates; and for a teacher to become a sharp pill-shooter, it would take so much practice that no time would be left to become an awe-inspiring speaker. Finally, even if all the above is refuted, the act of swallowing the pill should be felt, but no one so far has mentioned it. The clergy boiled, but the crown prince was amused. No wonder Varqa was not so popular among the clergy, and he, together with his twelve-year-old son, Ruhu'llah, drank the cup of martyrdom.

Now we go back to the story of Ahmad. After the visit of the Bab, this nucleus of only three believers in Kashan began to grow. The rapid increase in the number of believers angered the divines who used everything in their power to stop the flow. They instigated the cruel, ignorant mob to plunder, confiscate, and kill all those who bore the name of the Bab. Every day they would go to a house, break its door and windows, loot the contents and destroy the building. In the evening one would find the bodies

of the believers in the streets, or even scattered over the neighboring mountains and the plains. This continued, and Ahmad's house was no exception. Ahmad had to hide in a draft tower where friends would take food to him. The draft towers, call bad-gir, were common in that part of Iran to produce air current in summer. After spending forty days in that tower and hearing that Baghdad had become the point of attraction, he decided to leave.

Time-wise, we are about six years after the martyrdom of the Bab, and midpoint of Baha'u'llah's stay in Baghdad. In the darkness of night, Ahmad came out of hiding and escaped by climbing the city wall on his way to Baghdad. As he traveled on foot he came across another man travelling in the same direction. Both of them pretended that their destination was the holy city of Karbila. The subject of religion was well-avoided for fear of further molestation. On arrival in Baghdad they separated, but soon to see each other walking in the same direction on streets of Baghdad, and the joyous surprise came when they found each other in the house of Baha'u'llah. It was a breathtaking experience for Ahmad to look at Baha'u'llah's countenance for the first time, a face full of charm and freshness with penetrating powers. Well, Ahmad was overwhelmed and came to his senses only when he heard Baha'u'llah stating, "He becomes a Babi, and then hides in the tower." Baha'u'llah allowed Ahmad to remain in Baghdad, and have his residence near His. Ahmad immediately assembled his cloth-weaving frame and went to work, and was the happiest man on earth. What else does one expect? To live at the time of the Supreme Manifestation of God, adore Him, be loved by Him, and be so close to Him in heart, soul, and residence.

When once asked about the events of the years he spent in such proximity to Baha'u'llah, with tears in his eyes, Ahmad said, "How innumerable and great were the events of those years. Our nights were filled with memorable episodes and days with joyful and, at times, sorrowful events. For example, one day as the Blessed Beauty was walking with us behind Him, a government officer approached Him, stating that one of His followers had been murdered and his body was thrown by the river. Baha'u'llah replied, 'No one has killed him. Through seventy thousand veils of light We showed him the Glory of God to an extent smaller than a needle's eye, and he could no longer bear the burden of his life, so he offered himself as a sacrifice.'"

"Another time, when the Caliph's decree was conveyed to Baha'u'llah, and He had to leave Baghdad for Istanbul, He left the city on the thirty-second day after Naw-Ruz for the Ridvan Garden. On that same day after He crossed the river it overflowed, but on the ninth day it was possible for His family to join Him. Then the river overflowed for the second time, and on the twelfth day it subsided, and all the people went to Him."

Ahmad begged Baha'u'llah to be allowed to accompany Him in His exile, but Baha'u'llah did not accept his request. He chose some followers, and instructed the rest to remain and teach. He emphasized that this would be better for the Faith. At the time of His departure, those who were left behind stood in a row, and all were so overcome with sorrow that they burst into tears.

"Baha'u'llah again approached us stating, 'It is better for the Cause of God. Some of these people who accompany Me are liable to do mischief, therefore I am taking them with Me.' Then He mounted His horse, and one of the friends placed a sack of coins in front of the saddle, and Baha'u'llah started to give coins to the crying poor who were standing by. When they began to push one another, He plunged His hand into the sack and emptied the sack by pouring the coins on the ground, saying, 'Gather them yourselves.'"

Ahmad saw his Beloved disappear from his sight never to see Him again in this mortal life. Very sad and distressed, he returned to Baghdad which to him seemed devoid of any attraction. The sun was reaching its zenith in Adrianople. He tried to keep himself busy and happy by gathering the friends and encouraging them to disperse and teach the Faith which just had been declared. Though actively serving the Cause, he was not happy.

After a few years, in 1865 Ahmad again left his home and work, and set out on foot to Adrianople, the city of his love and desire. When he reached Istanbul he received a Tablet from Baha'u'llah which is known to us as the Tablet of Ahmad. He describes receipt of this Tablet in these words, "I received the Tablet of the Nightingale of Paradise, and reading it over and over I realized that my Beloved desired me to go and teach His Cause. Therefore, I preferred His wish above mine." Ahmad was specially commissioned

to travel throughout Iran, and give the glad tidings of Baha'u'llah's declaration to as many Babi families as he could find.

Now you know why such glorious reference to the Bab in this Tablet. The task was arduous beyond description, and therefore such exhortations as "Be thou as a flame of fire to my enemies and a river of life eternal to My loved ones, and be not of those who doubt." The path to be walked by him was thorny and filled with tribulations, thus these comforting words, "And if thou art overtaken by affliction in My path or degradation for My sake, be not thou troubled thereby." To understand the meaning of sincerity in the following promise, "By God! Should one who is in affliction or grief read this Tablet with absolute sincerity, God will dispel his sadness, solve his difficulties and remove his afflictions," one can find the answer in an earlier verse in the same Tablet. In this earlier verse, the condition for Baha'u'llah's above promise is revealed in these exalted words, "...and be thou so steadfast in My love that thy heart shall not waver, even if the swords of the enemies rain blows upon thee, and all the heavens and the earth arise against thee." It means a believer can reach to such heights of certitude and faith that when facing martyrdom his heart shall not waver. That is the stage of absolute sincerity which is achieved only by truly recognizing the station of Baha'u'llah.

With this Tablet in the handwriting of Baha'u'llah in his possession, a Tablet invested by Baha'u'llah with a special potency, and clad in the simple garment of a beggar, Ahmad made his way back to Iran. He entered the country through the province of Adhirbayjan where most of the captivity and the Martyrdom of the Bab had taken place. He was like the breeze of life to many disheartened Babis in that region and enabled them to see the Sun then shining from Adrianople. Even many Muslims embraced the Faith wholeheartedly. Ahmad became the embodiment of his own Tablet. Such undaunted spirit, tenacity, and steadfastness were difficult to match. He would not easily give up even when facing affliction and degradation, but to return again and again to finish what needed to be done.

For example, when traveling in the province of Khurasan he went

to the house of a well-known Babi family, the head of which was no less a person than Furughi, one of the survivors of the Tabarsi upheaval. Ahmad went in and gradually opened the subject in a frank and emphatic manner. He told them that the One promised by the Bab was none other than Baha'u'llah Who was then in Adrianople. Furughi, who had so audaciously fought in Tabarsi, started to fight here, too. The discussion became more intense as the hours went by, and in the heat of discussion, Furughi punched Ahmad in the mouth and broke one of his teeth and physically threw him out of his house. Ahmad left broken-hearted, but his resolve unshaken, he returned later and told them that he would not leave until the subject was fully discussed and concluded. We should bear in mind that in those days, the Babis were in such danger that even a piece of paper with writings of the Bab was sufficient enough for the house to be demolished and the occupants sent to prison or to the executioner. Therefore, many of the believers did hide their books and writings in the walls of their houses or under the ground. When Ahmad went to Furughi's house for the second time, he said emphatically that the Greatest Name of Baha had often been mentioned by the Bab in His writings. Furughi challenged him and to prove to Ahmad that he was wrong, he tore a part of the wall open and brought out a bundle containing the writings of the Bab, and promised not to say a word against the explicit text. Ahmad states, "The very first one we opened referred to the name Baha." As promised by Furughi, he and all of the members of his family accepted the Faith of Baha'u'llah and became overzealous defenders and outstanding in its propagation and protection. Furughi is one of the Nineteen Apostles of Baha'u'llah so designated by the Guardian.

After covering the whole large province of Khurasan with its holy city of Mashhad blessed two decades earlier by the footsteps of Quddus and Mulla Husayn, Ahmad decided to go once more to Baghdad and convey the message of love and greeting on behalf of Baha'u'llah to all his friends. Unfortunately, while on his way he became ill and could not reach Baghdad.

In addition to Tehran, some of the divines of Kashan recognized him and filed complaints against him at the court of the king, Nasiri'd-Din Shah, who was ever ready to inflict hardship on the followers of the new Faith. Ahmad was consequently arrested and

committed to the hands of a young officer whose orders were to investigate the case, and if the victim proved to be a heretic to put him to death at once. The young officer did not wish to kill Ahmad so he tried to persuade Ahmad, of all people, to recant his Faith. Ahmad states, "I was at the height of my faith and enthusiasm and not even for one moment the thought of recantation had crossed my mind." He told the officer that he was not a Babi but a Baha'i, meaning the follower of the Supreme Manifestation. He was kept in prison, and there he heard that a sudden and serious illness had struck the officer's wife. In extreme distress, the officer came to Ahmad and said, "Should my wife recover, I will release you!" After three days the young officer, heedless of severe consequences to himself, took Ahmad to the gate of Tehran and set him free. If that intervention was not from the Power behind that tablet, what else could it be?

Free as a bird, he went to nearby villages where the Babis showed him hospitality, and in return he guided them to the right path. One source states that Ahmad resided in Kashan until his wife died. Then he went to the province of Fars with Shiraz, its capital. He remarried in Shiraz and lived in that province for twenty years or more. He became the companion and comforter of the oppressed and the afflicted which were many in view of never-ending persecutions. His humble abode was open to the downtrodden as well as to many travel-teachers. One of the most touching incidents as related by himself is as follows, "One day a travel-teacher barely clad and barefoot came to my door. He was truly exhausted and his clothes were stiff and brownish with the mixture of sweat and dust. He happened to be Haji Mirza Haydar-Ali, named by Abdu'l-Baha the Angel of Carmel. I fed him and asked him to go to rest while I washed his clothes and spread them in the sun to dry. At evening the friends were invited so they could meet such a great believer and listen to his inspiring words."

Many eventful years passed and when, again, the wave of persecutions spread all over Iran, Ahmad's life became in danger. The believers, full of love and admiration for Ahmad, suggested to him to leave that forsaken corner of the country at once and head for a more populated area. He was so well-known that he could not be anywhere throughout the country without being recognized. After changing many residences, he decided to settle in Tehran which had been

the wish of his daughter all along. His daughter was married and had settled in Tehran for years.

After having lived a century and always enjoying good health, he passed away in 1905 in Tehran. He never wavered, nor was he ever anything but the flame of fire and a river of life eternal. That was his mandate and identity with which he passed on to the presence of his Beloved.

You might wonder what happened to the original Tablet of Ahmad in the handwriting of Baha'ullah which Ahmad carried close to his heart all the time. The rest of the story might have the answer.

From his first marriage in Kashan, Ahmad had two children. A son called Mirza Muhammad and a daughter, Khanum Gowhar. When Ahmad's house was ransacked in Kashan, his son, who was married and had a five-year-old son, decided to take his family from Kashan to Tehran. The little boy's name was Jamal. On the way to Tehran, he and his wife died and the little Jamal remained all by himself. The mule-drivers who used to take food from provinces to Tehran, not knowing that Jamal was from a Baha'i family, took pity on the helpless boy, placed him on one of the loads and took him to Tehran. In that large city Jamal was all alone until his aunt, Khanum Gowhar, the daughter of Ahmad, arrived in Tehran. In process of searching for any trace of her brother and his family, luckily she found Jamal. She and her husband raised Jamal until Ahmad came to settle in Tehran and took his grandson, Jamal, under his wing. Jamal grew to become an excellent Baha'i. His two most outstanding characteristics were iron determination and untiring energy.

Towards the end of his life, Ahmad entrusted the original Tablet to Jamal, who, in turn out of the purity of his heart and devotion to the Faith, offered it as a gift to Jinab-i-Valiyyu'llah-i-Varqa, the late Hand of the Cause and the trustee of Huququ'llah. Jinab-i-Varqa was the son of Varqa, the martyr, whose name was mentioned earlier and the father of Jinab-i- Ali-Muhammad-i-Varqa, the present Hand of the Cause and the trustee of Huququ'llah. Jinab-i-Varqa, who had received the original Tablet from Jamal, under the instruction of the Guardian, attended the opening ceremony of the House of Worship in Wilmette in 1953. He brought with him this most

precious Tablet as his offering to the Archives of the Baha'is of the United States.

May you and I, the believers in these United States of America, who have the privilege of being the present trustees of such a potent Tablet written by the Pen of Glory, be infused with the same vigor, fire, and love which infused and transformed its original trustee and bearer, the immortal Ahmad.

I know you only wanted to hear the story behind the Tablet of Ahmad and its recipient. Well, that was the main course. The menu will not be complete without saying a few words about Ahmad's glorious daughter, Khanum Gawhar. She was a very daring woman for her time and was blessed with a mirror-like pure heart. During the lifetime of Baha'u'llah there were some outstanding teachers who were almost worshipped by the believers. One of them, who had so many exalted tablets from Baha'u'llah, often went to Khanum Gawhar's house. She respected him to the point of cleaning his shoes. Such respect and adoration by the believers, together with the tablets from Baha'u'llah, went to the head of some of them who thought of assuming an independent rank in the Cause.

After the Ascension of Baha'u'llah, one day this teacher visited Khanum Gawhar who, as usual, brought tea and sweets and stood at the door with folded arms in absolute humility. She noticed that the teacher was quite gloomy and bitter, so she asked for the reason. He said, "I must go to the Holy Land and see to the affairs of the Cause myself. The Faith is left in the hands of a young man." The last phrase was stated with indignation and pride. You like to know that when Baha'u'llah ascended, Abdu'l-Baha was forty-eight years old. Khanum Gawhar, contrary to the usual protocol, raised her voice and said, "Do you think Baha'u'llah did not know who to appoint after Himself?" With these words she took the refreshments away, and ordered the arrogant man to leave her house and never come back. She warned all of the neighboring Baha'i families about his attitude and cautioned them to wait until they hear from Abdu'l-Baha. It did not take too long before that man was cast out as a covenant-breaker, and all who had adored him, abandoned him. What a miserable ending!

As for the purity of her heart, this last story will give you an example. Khanum Gawhar heard that a young girl belonging to a Baha'i family was seriously ill. She went by her bedside and prayed to God with these words, "O my Lord! I have had my share of life. Please take me and leave this child for her parents." That same night she died, and the girl began to recover. A true daughter to that illustrious father.

This was the moving and touching story of Ahmad, his family, and best of all, the Tablet which was revealed in his honor, but truly was for the whole world. He used to call it the Tablet of the Nightingale of Paradise, not realizing that the Baha'i world, for years to come, will know it as the Tablet of Ahmad.

**THE TABLET OF AHMAD**  
**REVEALED BY BAHA'U'LLAH**

He is the King, the All-Knowing, the Wise!

Lo, the Nightingale of Paradise singeth upon the twigs of the Tree of Eternity, with holy and sweet melodies, proclaiming to the sincere ones the glad tidings of the nearness of God, calling the believers in the Divine Unity to the court of the Presence of the Generous One, informing the severed ones of the message which hath been revealed by God, the King, the Glorious, the Peerless, guiding the lovers to the seat of sanctity and to this resplendent Beauty.

Verily, this is that Most Great Beauty, foretold in the Books of the Messengers, through Whom truth shall be distinguished from error and the wisdom of every command shall be tested. Verily, He is the Tree of Life that bringeth forth the fruits of God, the Exalted, the Powerful, the Great.

O Ahmad! Bear thou witness that verily He is God, and there is no God but Him, the King, the Protector, the Incomparable, the Omnipotent. And that the One Whom He hath sent forth by the name of Ali was the true One from God, to Whose commands we are all conforming.

Say: O people be obedient to the ordinances of God, which have been enjoined in the Bayan by the Glorious, the Wise One. Verily, He is the King of the Messengers, and His Book is the Mother Book, did ye but know. Thus doth the Nightingale utter His call unto you from this prison. He hath but to deliver this clear message. Whosoever desireth, let him turn aside from this counsel, and whosoever desireth, let him choose the path to his Lord.

O people, if ye deny these verses, by what proof have ye believed in God? Produce it, O assemblage of false ones. Nay, by the One is Whose hand is my soul, they are not, and never shall be able to do this, even should they combine to assist one another.

O Ahmad! Forget not My bounties while I am absent. Remember My days during thy days and My distress and banishment in this remote prison. And be thou so steadfast in My love that thy heart shall

not waver, even if the swords of the enemies rain blows upon thee, and all the heavens and the earth arise against thee. Be thou as a flame of fire to My enemies and a river of life eternal to My loved ones, and be not of those who doubt.

And if thou art overtaken by affliction in My path, or degradation for My sake, be not thou troubled thereby. Rely upon God, thy God and the Lord of thy fathers. For the people are wandering in the paths of delusion, bereft of discernment to see God with their own eyes, or hear His Melody with their own ears. Thus have We found them, as thou also dost witness. Thus have their superstitions become veils between them and their own hearts and kept them from the path of God, the Exalted, the Great.

Be thou assured in thyself that, verily, he who turns away from this Beauty hath also turned away from the Messengers of the past, and showeth pride towards God from all eternity to all eternity.

Learn well this Tablet, O Ahmad. Chant it during thy days and withhold not thyself therefrom. For verily, God hath ordained for the one who chants it the reward of a hundred martyrs and a service in both worlds.

These favors have We bestowed upon thee as a bounty on Our part and a mercy from Our presence, that thou mayest be of those who are grateful.

By God! Should one who is in affliction or grief read this Tablet with absolute sincerity, God will dispel his sadness, solve his difficulties and remove his afflictions.

Verily, He is the Merciful, the Compassionate. Praise be to God, the Lord of all the worlds.