



# HISTORY OF THE BĀB

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## HISTORY OF THE BĀB

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### WINDOWS TO THE PAST

by Darius K. Shahrokh, M.D.

This very special window from these ageless Windows to the Past will open to the exciting and tragic life of the Báb.

The history of the awesome life of the Báb is presented in story form. To convey the spirit of the events, the long Persian names, which have a tendency to overwhelm the Western audience, are avoided. These names have been abbreviated or mentioned by their relationship to the Báb, or the individual's position. For instance, Hájí Mírzá Siyyid 'Alí, the uncle who raised the Báb, is at times referred to as "Uncle 'Alí," and 'Abdu'l-Hamid Khán-i-Dárúghih as "the police chief."

Before I talk about His history, I like to give an introduction by mentioning a few facts about Islám and the condition of Iran in that period. The sources used for this presentation are God Passes By by the Guardian, The Dawn-Breakers by Nabíl-i-Zarandí, and The Báb by Balyuzi.

The Prophet-Founder of Islám was Muhammad, who was followed by eleven Imáms. After Muhammad's death, the first Imám was Imám 'Alí, who was his son-in-law. These eleven Imáms succeeded Muhammad for two hundred sixty years. Five years before the death of the last Imám, supposedly a son was born, who, when his father died, presided over the funeral of his father and then disappeared and went to some underground passages in two mysterious cities called Jābulqā and Jābulsā. According to the Shī'ih sect of Islám, he is still living and is expected to come out of hiding at the end of time. For about sixty-nine years he communicated with the Muslims through emissaries called the Gates, or Abváb, which is the plural of the Báb. This period of sixty-nine years when four

of these Gates came is called the minor occultation. After the fourth Gate died, he did not appoint another gate, and this period of Islám is called the major occultation which means no communication with the twelfth Imám until the end of time.

This brief information about the Imáms of the Shí'ih sect of Islám was given because the Báb appeared among them, but by no means one should conclude that the Shí'ites were the only people whose scriptures prophesied His appearance. The Bahá'í belief, as expounded by the Guardian in God Passes By, pages 57 and 58, is that the Báb was the Qá'im (meaning He Who ariseth) promised to the Shí'ites, the Mihdí (meaning One Who is guided) awaited by the Sunni sect of Islám, the return of John the Baptist expected by the Christians, the Úshidar-Máh referred to in the Zoroastrian scriptures, and the return of Elijah anticipated by the Jews.

The time that the Báb appeared was one of the darkest periods in the history of Iran. Here was a country morally corrupt and intellectually bankrupt, having been ruled by greedy rulers and inept prime ministers. It must be rare in history to find three successive kings, Fath-'Alí Sháh, Muḥammad Sháh, and his son, Náṣiri'd-Dín Sháh, put to death their highest ministers who brought them to the throne. Muḥammad Sháh was the king in whose time the Báb appeared. Fath-'Alí Sháh, who reigned before Muḥammad Sháh, is known to have had about one thousand wives and two hundred sixty children of whom one hundred ten survived the king. The Persian proverb that says camels, fleas, and princes existed everywhere in the country was very true.

About fifty years before the appearance of the Báb, there were two luminaries who were very spiritual and had deep knowledge of Islam. These two were teaching in the holy cities of Karbilá and Najaf which are about fifty miles from Baghdád. They revolutionized some of the understanding of the Muslims with their doctrines. One doctrine was that resurrection is not of physical form but is of spiritual nature. Number two, the Promised One, or Qá'im, or Twelfth Imám, would be born of a mother and would not be coming from hiding after one thousand years. The third was very unusual for Muslims of then and today, which was about continuity of coming of Messengers of God. Muslims believe Muḥammad is the Seal of the Prophets and after Him no more Messengers of God would appear.

These luminaries, Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kázim, stated that Muhammad was the Seal of the Prophets, that means no more prophets coming to prophecy; however, this did not mean He was the Seal of the Messengers. God would continue to send Messengers for guidance of man. They expounded these three major doctrines to a large number of followers who were being prepared for the coming of the Báb.

The Báb was born on October 20, 1819. He was the son of a merchant in Shiráz, a southern city in Iran. His given name was 'Alí-Muhammad, and He was a siyyid, meaning a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad. His father died when He was quite young and He was raised by His uncle, Hájí Mírzá Siyyid 'Alí, His mother's brother. He had very little education but had innate knowledge. By age fifteen, He joined His uncle in trading in Shiráz, and a year later, He moved to the port city of Búshíhr to join another uncle in trading. When He was twenty-two, He made pilgrimage to the holy cities of Karbilá and Najaf in Iraq which lasted about seven months. Soon after His return to His hometown of Shiráz, He married Khadíjih Bagum. His marriage witnessed two tragedies. One was the death of His newborn son, Ahmad, and the other was His own abduction, never to see His wife and mother again.

As you recall, I told you that two teachers, Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kázim, came before the Declaration of the Báb to prepare people for the coming of the Promised One. Their doctrines were not actually new doctrines. They were true understanding of Islámic holy words. Before the last teacher, Siyyid Kázim, died, he told his students they should disperse and find the Promised One, or the Twelfth Imám, called by the Shí'ih sect the Qá'im. One of these students, Mullá Husayn, headed towards Shiráz, and the Báb met him outside the city and invited him to come to His house. Mullá Husayn, not knowing the Báb, thought He was another student of Siyyid Kázim. Mullá Husayn was about thirty-one years old and the Báb was twenty-five years old at that time.

In the Báb's house, after having tea, the Báb asked him, "Who are you expecting to come after your teacher?" Mullá Husayn said, "No one will teach us anymore and we are looking for the Promised Qá'im." The Báb said, "Did your teacher give any signs about the Promised One?" Mullá Husayn said, "He told us the Promised One would be of medium height, He would be a descendant of the Prophet,

and free of any bodily defect, and so on." The Báb looked at him and said with a vibrant voice, "Behold! All of these signs are manifest in Me!" This startled Mullá Ḥusayn who could not believe his ears. Then the Báb asked, "Did he give any other signs about the coming of the Promised One?" Mullá Ḥusayn replied yes, but he was not at liberty to say what they were.

You like to know that there is a chapter or súrih in the Qur'án, the Islámic Holy Book, which is called the Chapter of Joseph. It is about the brothers betraying Joseph and his life history. When Mullá Ḥusayn asked the last teacher, Siyyid Kázim, to write a commentary about this chapter, Siyyid Kázim said, "This is beyond me. The only one who will do it for you is the Promised Qá'im, and He will reveal the commentary without being asked.

While Mullá Ḥusayn was recalling that experience, the Báb looked him in the eyes and said, "Now is the time for Me to reveal the commentary on the Chapter of Joseph." You can imagine it was like a thunderbolt striking Mullá Ḥusayn. So the Báb, unasked, started to reveal the commentary to this chapter of Qur'án. Mullá Ḥusayn states, "He took pen and paper, and as He wrote the commentary, the manner, the rapidity of His writing was heightened by the gentle intonation of His voice." Mullá Ḥusayn, elated and exulted, was beyond himself. That evening was the evening of the Declaration of the Báb, on May 22, 1844. He told Mullá Ḥusayn, "This evening will be celebrated in the future throughout the world." He also said, "I am the Báb (or the Gate) and you are the Báb'ul-Báb (meaning the Gate to the Gate), but you must keep your discovery concealed until seventeen more people independently discover Me and then I will give you your instructions."

It took about forty days before the second person discovered the Báb by himself, and in about three months, the number eighteen was completed. These first eighteen people who believed in the Báb are called Ḥurúf-i-Hí or the Letters of the Living. One was a woman called Táhiriḥ, and one was from India. After their completion, the Báb gave them their assignments. He revealed a tablet in honor of each of them before sending them away. He took the last one, Quddús, with Him to go for pilgrimage to Meccá in fulfillment of Islámic prophecy. He gave Mullá Ḥusayn, the first to accept Him, an unusual assignment which was to deliver a letter

to a person in Tehran, the capital city, without actually mentioning any name. He told Mullá Husayn, "Do not be grieved that I have not chosen to take you with Me for pilgrimage. The city you will be going to will become the envy of all of the holy cities of the present time." That meant Islámic holy city of Meccá and the like.

The Báb and the last Letter of the Living, Quddús, did not start their trip until the Báb could hear that Mullá Husayn had successfully carried out his mission. Mullá Husayn, as instructed by the Báb, visited Işfahán and Káshán, and then directed his steps toward Tehran, and the rest of the sixteen Letters of the Living traveled throughout Iran and neighboring countries to spread the glad tidings of the advent of the Promised Qá'im. Mullá Husayn had a scroll to deliver but no name or address on it. After his arrival in Tehran, he lodged in a school where the director of the school was the leading Shaykhí in Tehran. The Shaykhí community was the followers of the two luminaries, Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kázim. After meeting the director and giving him the great announcement of the coming of the Báb with convincing proofs and arguments, the director not only refused every word Mullá Husayn had to say, but he also accused Mullá Husayn of betraying his teacher, Siyyid Kázim. Mullá Husayn tried to stay away from the school as much as he could because the director told him that he had brought shame to the name of their teacher with such outrageous and unacceptable words about the coming of the Promised Qá'im.

A student in the school, who was very close to the director and had a room next to his, happened to hear all of their conversation and became very eager to meet Mullá Husayn. Late one night he sat up until he heard Mullá Husayn return to his room. He knocked at the door and Mullá Husayn greeted him. The student said, "I could not help but to hear your discussion with the headmaster and I was very surprised about his arrogance, refuting all of your clear and convincing proofs." Mullá Husayn said, "Well, I did not find the headmaster receptive, but I am glad to see at least one of his students blessed with a spiritual eye." Mullá Husayn asked, "What is your name and where is your home?" He said, "My name is Mullá Muḥammad-i-Mu'allim (means teacher), and I do home-tutoring of children. My hometown is Núr." Mullá Husayn, hearing of Núr, said, "What happened to the sons of Mírzá Buzurg-i-Núri (the father of Bahá'u'lláh)? Have any of them proven worthy of

his illustrious legacy?" The answer was, "Yes, one of his sons, Mirzá Husayn-'Alí, has distinguished Himself by the very qualifications which characterized their father." Mullá Husayn's eyes opened wide and he became all ears to hear more about Mirzá Husayn-'Alí. He asked the teacher, "Do you visit their house often?" The answer was yes. Mullá Husayn gave the scroll wrapped in a cloth to the teacher and requested that he deliver it to Mirzá Husayn-'Alí at the hour of dawn the next morning.

The next morning before sunrise the teacher went to Bahá'u'lláh's house and was ushered into the presence of Bahá'u'lláh by His brother, Mirzá Músá. He handed over the scroll to Mirzá Músá, who in turn gave it to Bahá'u'lláh. The scroll was a few pages from the first chapter of Qayyúmu'l-Asmá', the commentary on the Súrih of Joseph which the Báb had revealed for Mullá Husayn. Bahá'u'lláh read parts of it aloud and turned to His brother and said; "Músá, what have you to say? Verily, I say whoso believes in the Qur'án and recognizes its divine origin, and yet hesitates, though it be for a moment, to admit that these soul-stirring words are endowed with the same generating power, has most assuredly erred in his judgment and has strayed far from the path of justice." Then He dismissed the teacher with the customary gift of hard sugar cone and tea for the messenger, Mullá Husayn, with expressions of His appreciation and love. The teacher stated, "I hastened to Mullá Husayn and delivered to him the gift and the message. With tears of joy, he stood up and took the gifts with bowed head and fervently kissed it. Then he embraced me and kissed my eyes which had beheld the person destined to receive that scroll. Mullá Husayn told me not to breathe this event to any soul so no harm would come to the nobleman, Mirzá Husayn-'Alí."

In a short time, Mullá Husayn left for Khurásán which was his assignment from the Báb, and from there he wrote to the Báb about the gracious response of the nobleman. This message brought great joy to the Báb who told Quddús, "Now the Cause of God is in capable hands and we could start our journey to Meccá." You wish to know that Mullá Muḥammad-i-Mu'allim, the teacher from Núr, became a believer and was martyred in the episode of Shaykh Tabarsí.

It was in September of 1844 when the Báb, Quddús, and the Báb's faithful Ethiopian servant, Mubáarak, left Shíráz for the port city



of Búshihr to take a sail boat for the port city of Jiddah in Arabia. The ship, bearing many pilgrims, left Búshihr on 2nd of October to meet a very stormy ocean. The storm, tossing the ship in every direction, and later, shortage of drinking water, caused severe alarm for the pilgrims, but to their surprise, day after day, they watched the Báb, in serenity, was busy revealing verses taken down by Quddús. Among the pilgrims was the brother of the Imám Jum'ih of Shiráz. Imám Jum'ih was the leading clergy who had officiated at the wedding of the Báb and later proved to be the protecting hand of providence, but his brother, Abú-Háshim, was something else. Abú-Háshim was watching the Báb and Quddús very closely, and, being jealous of the Báb's reverence, became daily more arrogant and rude. He ill-treated all passengers but his main target was the Báb. The Arab captain could no longer tolerate his behavior so he gave order to his sailor to throw Abú-Háshim overboard. When the Báb noticed that the sailors were ready to throw him into the sea, He hurled Himself upon that miserable man and begged the captain for forgiveness. The captain could not believe his eyes because the Báb had been the main victim. The Báb told the captain that since people who behave in that manner harm only their own souls, others should be tolerant and forgiving. A new lesson for the captain and the rest of us.

That stormy trip took two months going around the Arabian peninsula. On their travel from the port of Jiddah to Meccá, the Báb rode a camel, but Quddús refused to ride and walked all the way. In that year the pilgrimage, or haj, was Haj-i-Akbar, or the greatest haj, because two dates coincided, and therefore the crowd was very large. Islámic tradition has it that the appearance of Qa'im will be in the year of Haj-i-Akbar. In fulfillment of Islámic prophecy, in the middle of the overwhelming crowd, the Báb stood against the structure of Ka'bih, the cubical structure, held the ring of its door and three times repeated, "I am the Qá'im whose advent you have been awaiting." which fell on deaf ears. They were by name Muslims, but did not understand Islám.

He sailed back to the port city of Búshihr and arrived sometime before Naw-Rúz in 1845. There He parted with Quddús with these words, "The hour of separation has struck, a separation which no reunion will follow except in the Kingdom of God, in the presence of the King of Glory."

Quddús left Búshihhr with a letter from the Báb to His uncle, Siyyid 'Alí, who, soon after receiving the letter and hearing convincing words of Quddús, embraced the Cause of his Nephew Whom he had raised. This uncle was the only relative, who during the lifetime of the Báb, became a believer. The Báb's wife, Khadíjih Bagum, before His Declaration, recognized His station. Soon after the arrival of Quddús in Shíráz, a distinguished believer, Mullá Sádiq, who was converted by Mullá Husayn, with his student arrived in Shíráz. Because of their activities, they were arrested and mercilessly beaten, Mullá Sádiq receiving no less than one thousand lashes on his bare back. They were sentenced by the governor to lose their beards by setting fire to them. The next day, their faces blackened, a hole was made in their noses and a string pulled through. The executioner paraded them through the streets and bazaars, collecting money from bystanders. At times, the executioner violently pulled on the string to hear them scream. After his pockets were filled with money, he led them to the city gate and expelled them. These three precious souls were the first to suffer in the path of God, opening the chapter of brutal tortures and never-ending martyrdoms until the number swelled to twenty thousand.

The Báb spent Naw-Rúz with His uncle, who did not recognize the station of the Báb until ten years later when through the Kitáb-i-Íqán, or The Book of Certitude, revealed by Bahá'u'lláh, became a believer. Towards end of June, the Báb left Búshihhr for Shíráz where another act of the divine drama took place.

The vicious and depraved governor, Husayn Khán, who already tormented and expelled the three Bábís from Shíráz, confiscated the writings of the Báb and became furious by their contents which were admonishments to the civic and religious leaders. When he heard that the Báb was in Búshihhr, he decided to humiliate Him so the people would realize the falsity of His claim and see that He had no powers. He dispatched his most trusted officer and sent him with a number of guards to arrest the Báb and bring Him as a prisoner in chains to the city for everyone to see. The Báb had already left Búshihhr for Shíráz. The leader of guards, who was of the 'Alíyu'lláhi sect of Islám, which are known for being tolerant, related this account. "Having gone more than midway between Shíráz and Búshihhr, we encountered a youth wearing a green

turban on horseback followed by His Ethiopian servant. As we approached Him, He saluted us and inquired about our destination. I tried to conceal it. He smilingly said, 'The governor has sent you to arrest me. Here I am.' I was startled and could not believe how anyone willingly would throw himself into the clutches of the mean and furious governor. I tried to ignore Him. As I prepared to leave, He approached me and said, 'I swear by God, that all My life I have uttered no word but the truth and had no wish except the welfare of my fellow men. I wish not to subject you and your companions to the annoyance of searching for me.' These words moved me profoundly. I dismounted my horse and kissed His stirrups and begged Him to grant my wish by escaping and not making me the instrument of delivering Him into the hands of the ruthless and despicable governor. I said, 'My companions are all honorable and our lips are sealed. I pray that you take the sanctuary of the shrine in Mashhad.' Here was His response, 'May God reward you for your noble intention. No one knows the mystery of My Cause. No one can fathom its secrets. I will never turn my face away from the decree of God. Until my last hour is at hand, none dare assail Me and none can frustrate the plan of the Almighty. Here I am. Deliver me into the hands of your master. No one will blame you.' I bowed my head in consent and carried out His desire."

What an awe-inspiring and moving incidence. With majesty, in front of His escort of guards, He entered the city. A marvelous sight for the multitude of bystanders to recognize Who was in command.

The Báb went straight to the seat of the government, and as soon as the governor heard about His arrival, he summoned Him. He rudely ordered the Báb to sit in a chair at the center of the room across from himself. Other officials and clergy were also present. He, angrily with abusive language, denounced Him, and after the Báb quoted from the Qur'án, he ordered an attendant to strike the Báb in the face so violently that His turban fell to the ground. Shaykh Abú-Turáb, the kind Imám-Jum'ih strongly disapproved the conduct of the governor and gently replaced the Báb's turban and invited Him to sit by his side. After further questioning, the Báb was released upon demand of the governor for heavy bond which was produced by Siyyid 'Alí, the Báb's uncle. Uncle 'Alí took the Báb to his own house, but later the Báb went to His own home under the custody of His uncle.

In this period, for the first time, the Báb had a group of followers around Him. The eighteen Letters of the Living discovered the Báb independently, and soon after their completion, they dispersed. Now the Báb was back in Shíráz, and, in spite of strong measures of the governor, many Bábis came into His presence, receiving tablets and instructions. His hometown saw the birth of the first Bábí community.

With the spread of the news of His claim, agitation of the clergy heightened to the stage of issuing the death sentence which was rejected by the hand of providence, Shaykh Abú-Turáb, the Imám-Jum'ih. Imám-Jum'ih means the Friday prayer-leader which also signifies the leading clergy. With the clamor of the clergy and the outcry of the ignorant, the Imám-Jum'ih felt obliged to fulfill the pledge he had given during the first meeting where the Báb was abused and insulted by the governor. So he approached Uncle 'Alí and invited the Báb to the mosque on Friday, requesting a statement from the Báb to ease the tension.

On that Friday, the large mosque, called Masjid-i-Vakíl, was crowded beyond capacity. The courtyard, rooftops, and even minarets were filled. After all, by the order of the governor and the divines, the criers had invited all the people to witness the Báb's renunciation of His claim. Who could afford to miss that event?

The Báb, accompanied by His uncle, arrived. A sudden hush descended upon the crowd as if you could hear a pin drop. The Imám-Jum'ih was seated on top of the twelve-step marble pulpit. He invited the Báb to climb the pulpit. The Báb went on the first step but Imám-Jum'ih invited Him to come higher so He climbed a couple more steps. There He denied being a representative, emissary, or gate to the Twelfth Imám. You should realize that He did not deny Who He was. Earlier I mentioned that according to Shí'ites, after the Twelfth Imám disappeared, he sent four gates or emissaries. So the Báb denied being another gate to the Twelfth Imám. He was the Twelfth Imám, or the Qá'im Himself, and also a Gate to Bahá'u'lláh. Following that pronouncement, which temporarily calmed the crowd, He wished to stay for the prayer but the Imám-Jum'ih requested that it would be preferable if He offered His prayer at home with His family. He was afraid that after the prayer, the mob might harm the Báb.

The message of the Báb was spreading fast, and with the event in that mosque, the king, Muḥammad Sháh, became interested to investigate the Cause of the young Siyyid 'Alí-Muḥammad, now only twenty-six years old, a delicate man with gentle voice and fair complexion.

While the curtain is opening to this momentous act of the drama, and before the act unfolds, you should realize that it is one of the acts which the Guardian refers to as "His influence exerted on the most eminent among His countrymen." Muḥammad Sháh chose Siyyid Yahyá Dárábí, who was residing in Tehran, to go to Shíráz to investigate the Cause of the Báb because his erudition was unmatched. He was known to have memorized no less than thirty thousand traditions of Islám. On the way to Shíráz, he planned the approach. With his vast knowledge, he was confident that he could easily overcome the Báb in argument and could induce Him to retract His claim. He arrived in Shíráz as the guest of no less a person than the governor himself, who felt honored hosting such a distinguished agent of the king.

Three interviews with the Báb were arranged to take place at His uncle's home. You can well imagine the temporary joy of the governor and the excitement in his mansion, soon to be shattered. Before the first interview, an old friend of Siyyid Yahyá, by the title of 'Azím, meaning Great, who was a follower of the Báb, told Siyyid Yahyá, "Be most considerate and respectful in your visits or you might regret it the rest of your life."

At the first session the interview lasted about two hours. Siyyid Yahyá brought out one abstruse point after another from the Qur'án, traditions, and the work of the learned. The Báb let him present all of his points, and then one by one, gave brief but convincing answers to each. This session excited both admiration and humility in Siyyid Yahyá. In the course of the second interview, Siyyid Yahyá, to his amazement, discovered that he had forgotten all of his important questions, so he conversed about unrelated subjects. To his surprise, he found that the Báb was answering the questions he had momentarily forgotten. Arrogance had not vanished yet. He told himself this might have been a mere coincidence. But he was too agitated to collect his thoughts so he asked to be excused. Don't you wish you could hear what he

reported to the governor, so anxiously waiting for his conquest.

For the third and final interview, he resolved that in his heart he would request a commentary on Súriy-i-Kawthar, a chapter from the Qur'án, without breathing a word. Should the Báb reveal it without being asked in a manner superior to other commentaries, then he would accept the divine character of His Cause. He himself states, "As soon as I was ushered into His presence, a sense of fear suddenly seized me and my limbs began to quiver. I had never experienced the slightest trace of timidity while in the presence of the king. I could hardly remain standing on my feet. The Báb, noticing my condition, came towards me and helped me to be seated next to Him. The Báb said, 'Ask whatever is your heart's desire.' I was speechless and powerless to respond. He gazed at me and said, 'Should I reveal a commentary on the chapter of Kawthar would you recognize My Cause as divine?' Tears flowed from my eyes as I heard Him utter those words. He requested His uncle to bring his pen-case and some paper. The speed of His writing and the soft and gentle murmur of His voice bewildered me. He did not pause until the whole commentary was finished.

For three nights Siyyid Yaḥyá did not return to the governor's house. He stayed as the guest of the Báb's uncle. As instructed by the Báb, with the help of a scribe, they transcribed and verified every part of that commentary and found it correct. When he returned to the anxious but suspicious governor, he was impatiently questioned about his possible conversion, to which he replied, "No one but God, Who alone can change the hearts of men, is able to captivate the heart of Siyyid Yaḥyá and whoever ensnares his heart is of God."

The Báb's conquest was total. Siyyid Yaḥyá became a devoted follower with the title of Vahíd, meaning the Unique One, conferred upon him by the Báb. The curtain falls, but Siyyid Yaḥyá, behind the scenes, became one of the greatest promoters of the Faith of the Báb until in another valiant act in Nayríz, he offered up his life only ten days before his Master, to join Him eternally.

How could the news of such a momentous conversion be kept from the outspoken Hujjat, an erudite and audacious divine of Zanján. Hujjat, whose name was Mullá Muḥammad-'Alí, was as eminent as

Vahíd. He, who had boldly condemned the whole ecclesiastic hierarchy from the four gates to the Twelfth Imām to the humblest mullá, had to investigate the Cause of the Báb. He sent Mullá Iskandar, a trusted man to Shíráz, who after investigation, returned with writings of the Báb at a time when a number of divines were in his lecture room. As soon as he read some pages from the Báb's writings, he gathered and closed the books and said, "The season of spring and wine has arrived." He began to summon from the pulpit-top with his penetrating speech all of his followers to embrace the Cause. He also offered up his life in the path of his Lord with eighteen hundred companions in Zanján six months after the martyrdom of the Báb. Vahíd and Hujjat are among the brilliant stars of that period.

It is interesting to know that many eminent and uncorrupted divines at the time of the Báb embraced His Cause, a Cause whose principles were quite revolutionary in nature. The Báb's severe laws were meant to undermine the foundations of Shí'ih orthodoxy and to clear the way for the coming of Bahá'u'lláh. As stated by Himself, His laws were provisional and dependent on acceptance of Bahá'u'lláh to Whom He was the Gate. As Muslims expected the Qa'ím to appear with a sword in his hand, the sword of the Báb was His Cause separating good from evil, and as the Guardian stated, "to administer a sudden and fatal blow to obsolete and corrupt institutions."

While under house arrest the Báb was with His family, and the believers had easy access to Him. His mother did not become a believer, and some time after the Báb's departure from Shíráz, she went to Karbilá with the Báb's servant, Mubáarak. When Bahá'u'lláh was in Baghdád, He sent a few believers who knew her to visit her and give her the glad tidings. She became a Bahá'í and thus recognized the station of the One to Whom she had given birth.

The Báb spent Naw-Rúz of 1846 in relative peace with His family, but had foreknowledge of what was ahead. In that summer, He bequeathed His property jointly to His mother and wife and moved to Uncle 'Alí's house, for another chapter in His ministry, another breathtaking act in this moving drama. The call for this curtain is the Divine intervention.

After the conversion of Siyyid Yahyá, or Vahíd, the king was heard to say, "We have heard that our emissary, Siyyid Yahyá, has accepted the Cause of the Báb. We can no longer ignore that Cause." The crafty and notorious prime minister, so afraid for the security of his own position in case of the conversion of the king, sent an order to the governor of Shiráz to kill the Báb. The assignment was delegated by the governor to the police chief, who with his men in the middle of the night by way of rooftop, entered Uncle 'Alí's house and arrested the Báb. Their instruction and intention was to take the Báb to the governor's house for the shameful act. As soon as they reached the streets, they found the city in turmoil with dead bodies being carried towards the city gate. Soon they learned that the deadly disease of cholera had struck, and the governor had left the city for safety.

The chief decided to take the Báb to his own house when, to his extreme dismay, he learned that his own son was on his deathbed. He pleaded with the Báb not to punish his son for his wrongdoing. Now it was the hour of dawn, and the Báb, in preparation for his prayer, was performing His ablution. He gave the water from His ablution to the chief for the son to drink. The police chief was so overwhelmed with joy at his son's recovery that he sent a message to the governor to release the Báb before the whole province get wiped out by the disease. The governor responded with his consent, pending that the Báb immediately leave the city.

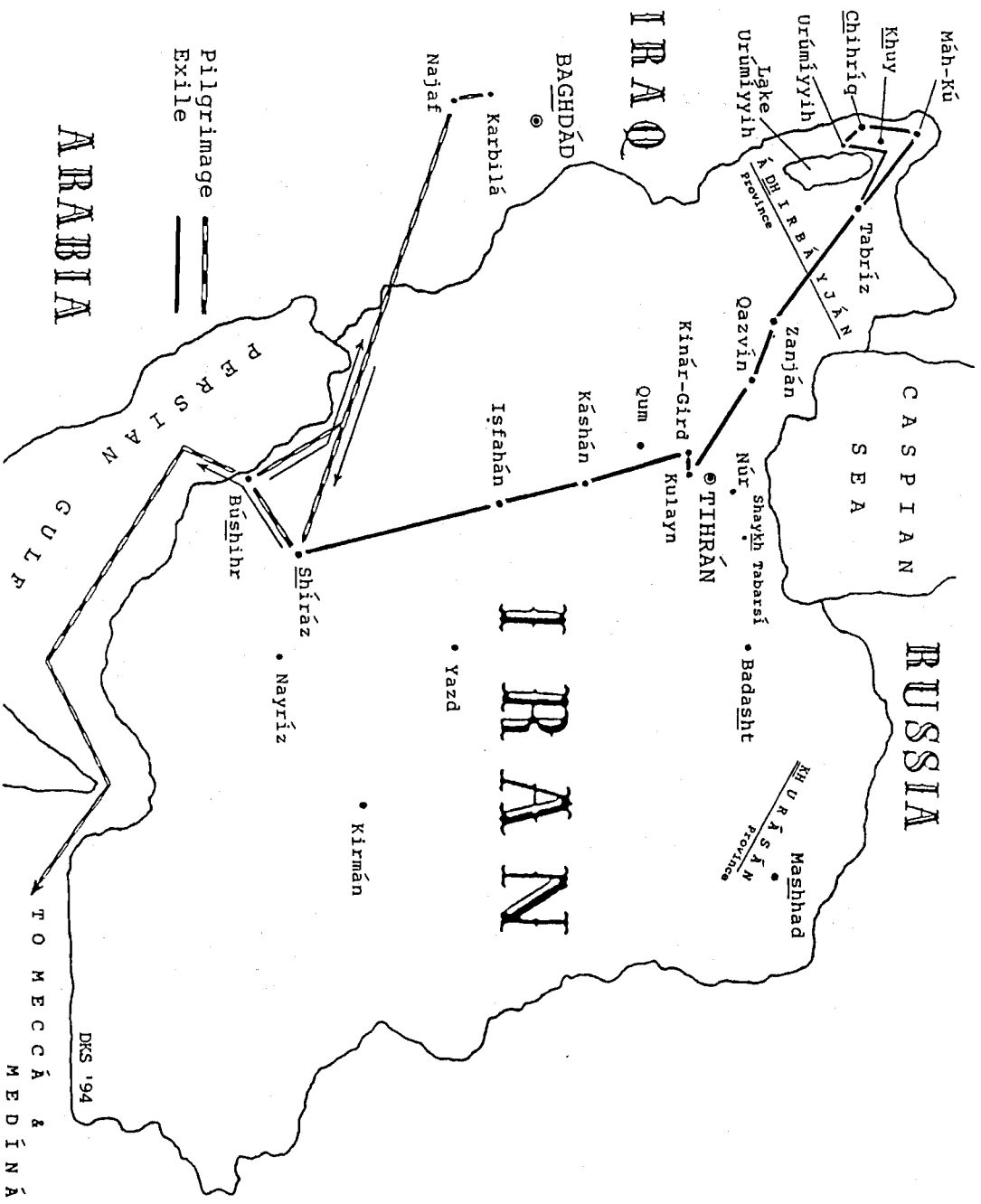
What gratitude for His curing the young man! They did not have the decency to let Him go home and say His final farewell to His mother and wife. The Báb, not wishing to alarm His wife and mother, sent a message to His uncle to come and see Him. He broke the news of His immediate forced departure, and entrusted both His mother and wife to the uncle's care with expressions of His love and assurance.

That final farewell, that last embrace with His uncle who had raised Him, was both overwhelming and revealing. He told His uncle, "I will meet you again in the mountains of Adhirbáyján when I will send you to obtain the crown of martyrdom. I, Myself, will follow you with one of My loyal disciples and will join you in the realm of eternity." In that September of 1846, another chapter was closed, and a page was turned to a more peaceful chapter.



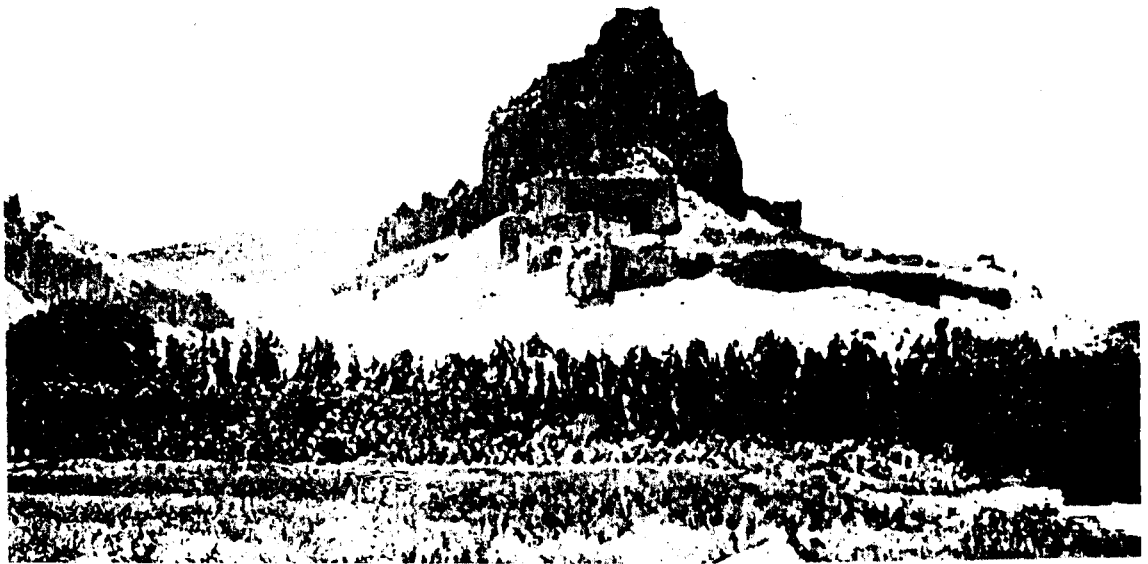


The upper room where the Báb declared His mission before total destruction by the present Islamic regime in Iran.

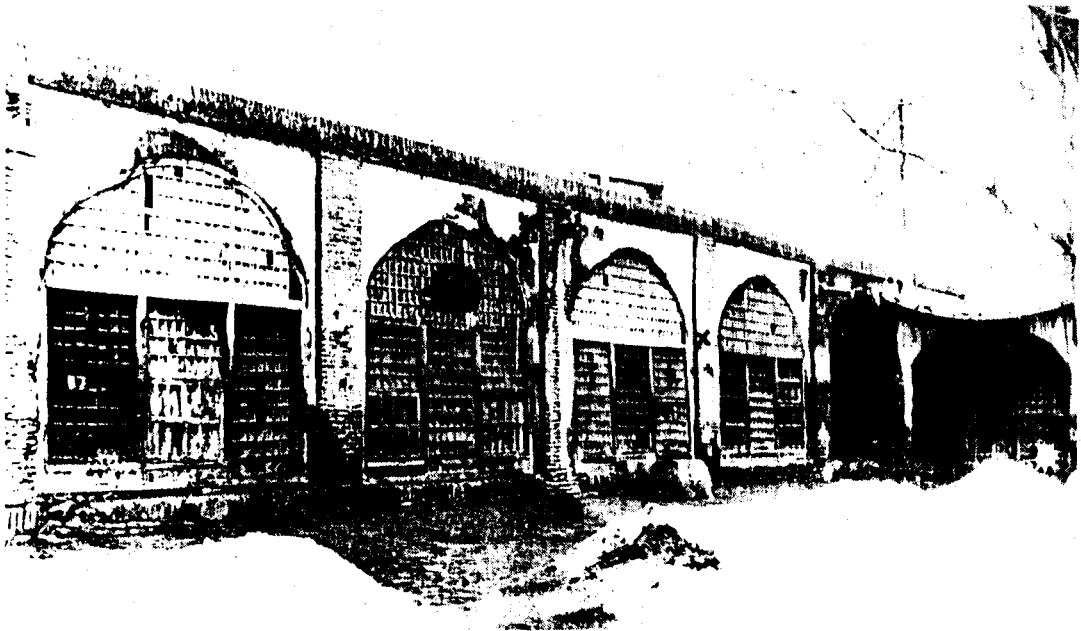


TRAVELS OF THE BĀB

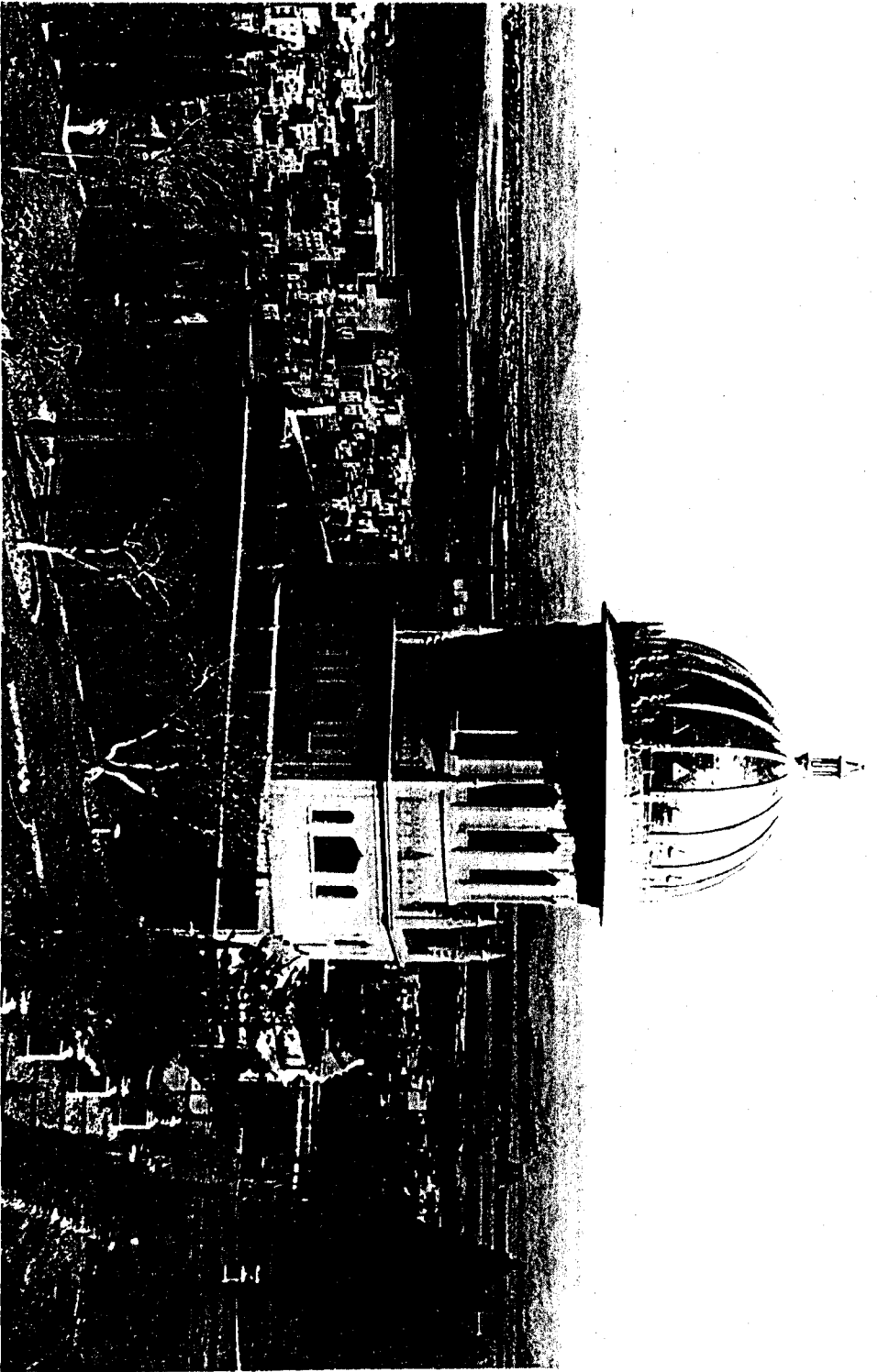
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T O M E C C Ā & M E D I N Ā



THE FORTRESS OF CHIHRIQ



The barracks square in Tabriz where the Báb was martyred. The spot where He and His disciple were suspended before the firing squad is marked with an 'X'.



THE SHRINE OF THE BAB IN HAIFA, ISRAEL

As He directed His steps towards Iṣfahán, once the capital of the Safavíd dynasty, He wrote to the governor, Manúchihhr Khán, who was of Christian background, asking for shelter. Highly impressed with the hand-delivered letter, he appointed the Imám-Jum'ih of Iṣfahán to open his home to the Báb. Imám-Jum'ih sent his brother and people close to him to go some distance in advance to welcome the Báb, and he, himself, greeted the Báb at the city gate. He showed such dedication that instead of asking a servant, he, himself, poured water on the Báb's hands. Gatherings of people of all ranks were held. The people were so impressed by His words and superhuman power that in one occasion people came to take away the water He had used for ablution. Manúchihhr Khán, the governor, also paid a visit when he asked the Báb to write on the specific station and mission of Muḥammad. Within two hours, He wrote fifty pages, ending it with the appearance of the Qa'im to be followed by return of Imám Ḥusayn, which Bahá'u'lláh fulfilled. The governor, in praise, testified to the superhuman power of the Báb, and that no learning could match it. What a difference between two governors, the typical contrast of good and evil.

It is obvious that soon the jealousy of the clergy was aroused. With reports regularly going to the prime minister, a letter of reprimand came to the Imám-Jum'ih for harboring the Báb. As the situation tensed up, the governor invited the Báb to his mansion for a meeting when he decided to keep the Báb. This was forty days after His arrival in Iṣfahán. The divines carried their hostility to the point of signing the Báb's death sentence. This Imám-Jum'ih, unlike the one in Shiráz, was somewhat timid and did not agree with the death sentence because he found the Báb to be without reason and judgment (meaning insane). But whatever his reason, the danger was averted.

Manúchihhr Khán became a perfect host to the Báb Who spent four peaceful months in a special quarter of his mansion. To mislead the clergy soon after the Báb went to his mansion, under pretext of transferring the Báb to Tehran with five hundred guards, he had the Báb return in disguise to his mansion. The rumor was spread that the Báb had been executed in Tehran, but many believers, who on the Báb's instruction had moved to Iṣfahán, knew His whereabouts and had access to Him.

The governor was among the very few in influence and wealth which was estimated at forty million francs, translating into many billion dollars of today. In spite of all that pomp, he waited in person on the Báb and served His meals. He was so devoted to the Báb that he offered his immense wealth to the Báb as well as his army so they could march to Tehran for a meeting with the king. He hoped the king, who trusted him so much, would listen and recognize the truth of the Báb's Cause so it could spread fast in the country and beyond its borders. To this the Báb replied, "May God reward you for your noble intention which to Me is more precious than the act itself. Your days and Mine are numbered and too short to witness the realization of your hopes. The triumph of this Cause will be accomplished through the poor and lowly of this land and their blood which will be shed. Of your earthly life, there remains only three months and nine days."

Manúchihr Khán died exactly when the Báb had predicted, and although in his will he left everything to the Báb, his nephew and successor expropriated everything. Muhammad Sháh, being informed of the whereabouts of the Báb, ordered His transfer in disguise to Tehran for a meeting. In one source, it is mentioned that the Báb had offered to cure the king's uncontrollable and worsening gout. No doubt, if this is true, the king was more than anxious to meet the Báb. What did Mírzá Āqásí, the prime minister, think about all of this? Well, you need to listen to the rest of the story.

On the way to Tehran, an interesting incident occurred. There is a city on the way called Káshán in which only two believers were living; one Hájí Mírzá Jání, and the other, the famous Ahmad, in whose honor later on Bahá'u'lláh revealed the tablet of Ahmad. It was right before approaching that city when Mírzá Jání dreamed that the Báb, whom he had never seen, on horseback with others, was riding towards a certain gate when Mírzá Jání approached the Báb, and was told by the Báb, "We will spend Naw-Rúz at your home and will be your guest for three days." Prepare yourself. Mírzá Jání woke up and knew that this was a true dream so he cleaned the house and prepared a room and went by that gate which was called the gate of 'Attár. Late in the afternoon, he saw horsemen approaching and soon discovered that they were guards, and the Báb, exactly as seen in his dream, was among them. He went to kiss the stirrup on the horse of the Báb, but the Báb prevented him and told him the same words heard in his dream.

Muhammad Big, the chief guard, thought they were old friends and had no objection to let the Báb enter the city, but the rest of the guards resisted the idea, not wishing to deviate from their orders not to enter any city. However, Muhammad Big persuaded them to withdraw their objection. Mirzá Jání invited the guards also to spend the days at his place, but the Báb said, "I alone will come to your home." What happened in those three days and Ahmad seeing his Lord for the first time is beyond the scope of this talk.

Back on route, they bypassed Qum, an Islámic holy city, and on March 28, arrived at the fortress of Kinár-gird, only twenty-eight miles from Tehran. Here the antichrist of the Bábi Dispensation, Háji Mirzá Áqási, the prime minister, intervened and sent an order for their transfer to the village of Kulayn, which was his property. He told them to raise his own tent for the Báb. It was a delightful spot, particularly at that time of year, with orchards and streams. Days passed without any instruction from Tehran. A few believers joined the Báb there. Two believers came from Tehran. One had a letter and presents from Bahá'u'lláh for the Báb which brought Him great joy.

One night an unusual incident occurred. A believer recounts that he woke up with the sound of running horses. It was some time after midnight. Soon everyone was informed that the Báb's tent was vacant. Muhammad Big, the chief, was heard to scold his men about their worry regarding His possible escape. They all began to go on the road towards Tehran, some on foot and guards on horseback, when by the dim light of dawn they saw the distant figure of the Báb walking towards them. He told the guards, "Did you believe I had escaped?" Muhammad Big flung himself on the Báb's feet and said, "Far be it from me." No one knows what transpired that night. The change in the Báb, the serene majesty of His radiant face, the power of His words, and a remarkable change in His speech left a question in everyone's mind, but no one dared to question Him. Could it have been a spiritual rendezvous with Bahá'u'lláh? 'Abdu'l-Bahá states that the two never met physically.

Nearly three weeks had passed since their arrival when the Báb wrote to Muhammad Sháh asking for a meeting. But the wicked prime minister had it all planned. He had unusual persuasive power

over the king. Being so afraid of losing his own position should that meeting take place, he made the king answer the Báb in the following terms, "Since we are at the verge of departure from Tehran, a befitting meeting is not possible. You go to Máh-Kú and rest there for a while and pray for our prosperity. We will summon you upon our return." This was in April of 1847 about three years since His Declaration.

Mírzá Ágásí was not alone when he made his evil move. The depraved and mad governor of Shíráz, who witnessed the conquest of Siyyid Yahyá by the Báb and outbreak of cholera preventing him from killing the Báb, had a lot to say about the powers of the Báb. The Báb was permitted to take two of His followers with Him. He chose two brothers from Yazd, one of whom was a Letter of the Living, Siyyid Husayn, who became His scribe. The brother, Siyyid Hasan, became the attendant.

On the road north, one stopping place was a village close to Qazvín, the birthplace of Táhirih, the only woman in the eighteen Letters of the Living. In His one night stay there, He wrote a letter to the prime minister and the divines. Mullá Iskandar, the trusted attendant of the audacious Hujjat, visited the Báb there and was given a letter to be delivered to a fervent supporter of Siyyid Kázim who was in Zanján. In it, the Báb stated His station and told him to arise and deliver Him from the hand of the oppressor. That man received the letter but did not heed it. At that time Hujjat was in Tehran under surveillance. The moment he received information about the content of the letter, he sent a message to Zanján for the Bábís to march and rescue the Báb. A sizeable number of Bábís from Zanján and Qazvín reached the Báb's stopping place, and when the guards were asleep, they informed the Báb about their intention, but the Báb told them that He would not run away and stated, "The mountains of Adhírbáyján, too, have their claims." Before the end of his assignment, the chief of guards, Muhammad Big, became a believer in the Báb, and later his son became a Bahá'í. Grief-stricken, he apologized and begged for forgiveness for any shortcoming in his care.

As they were leaving the last stop in Milán, a small village before Tabríz, an incident happened quite worthy of mentioning. An old woman brought a child whose head was covered with scabs. She was



trying to get to the Báb, but the guards prevented her when the Báb told them not to interfere. She came close and begged Him to heal the child. He opened a handkerchief, laid it on the child's head and repeated certain words. When the handkerchief was removed, the child's head was healed. In that place two hundred people became sincere believers. The Báb did it as a mercy to the child and not as a miracle. Bahá'u'lláh stated that claiming miracles as a proof of a Manifestation of God degrades His station.

Another time, as the journey to Tabríz was coming to an end, possibly to show some humor, the Báb galloped His scrawny horse so fast that the guards with much stronger horses could not catch up with Him. They were overtaken with apprehension that at this stage of travel He might escape. Then He stopped the horse and when they reached Him, with a smile He told them that if He wished to escape, no one could stop him.

His entry into Tabríz was something to behold. The streets were crowded. Among this mass were a number of His followers who were seeing Him for the first time. The cry of Alláh-u-Akbar, God is the Greatest, echoed throughout the city, which alarmed the officials. Soon criers warned the people against attempting to see Him. He was kept there strictly secluded for forty days.

Another page is turned to a new chapter of His captivity. The prime minister had it well planned. The fortress of Máh-Kú to which He was transferred was the choicest prison as far as the prime minister was concerned. It was as hot in summer as it was cold in winter. It was on the side of the mountain with a massive rock overhang so one could not see the sky above. That is where the name Máh-Kú comes from. Máh means moon and kú means where is, together means "where is the moon?"

There could not have been anywhere else in Iran less friendly. The town at the foot of the mountain was the prime minister's birthplace so its inhabitants were quite devoted to him and did their best to please him. Add to this another factor. They were of the Sunní sect of Islám, a minority in Iran. They had animosity towards the Shí'ih sect, particularly those who were descendants of the Imáms, which the Báb was, because they do not believe in Imáms as true successors to Muḥammad. To complete the package,

'Alí Khán, who was a Kurd, was the warden of the prison, very rough and arrogant. Surely, with all of these factors plus its remote location, the Báb's isolation would be total, and out of sight, out of mind. Well! He was dead wrong.

Let the curtain rise to another captivating act in this drama. This is another theater. The Guardian calls Adhirbáyján province the theater of agony and martyrdom. When you see the size of that fortress in the picture, you can't believe that its occupants, as stated by the Báb, were only two guards and four dogs. His solitary room did not have a door, neither was there a lighted lamp after dark. To tell you about winter, it is enough to know that when He did ablution before saying His prayers, water froze on His blessed face. What you are about to hear is one act of many in that fortress. It happened two weeks after His arrival.

The warden was so mean and tough that he would not permit any followers of the Báb to stay in town even for one night. They slept in a mosque outside the town. When a heavenly soul, Shaykh Hasan-i-Zunúzí, arrived, he was treated like the rest of the followers. The attendant of the Báb, who daily would go to town to purchase provisions, secretly took letters from Shaykh Hasan to the Báb. One day the Báb sent a message that these secret contacts were to end and promised that He (the Báb) will instruct 'Alí Khán, the warden, to permit visitors to come and go as they wished. They were quite astonished, knowing the attitude and character of 'Alí Khán.

The Báb's attendant recounts that the next morning at dawn, they were awakened by loud pounding on the castle door with 'Alí Khán shouting to the guards to open the door. Soon to our surprise, one guard came and requested that the warden wished to see the Báb. The warden was visibly shaking. He threw himself at the feet of the Báb and begged to be relieved of his misery. What had made the unbendable tyrant so miserable was the experience he just had.

He told the Báb, "This morning as I was riding my horse outside the town, all of a sudden I saw you standing by the river with outstretched arms deep in prayer. I stood still waiting for you to finish your prayer to scold you for leaving the fortress without

my permission. Then I quietly approached you but you were unaware of me. I was suddenly seized with fear about interrupting your prayer, so I decided to come to the fortress to scold the guards for their disobedience and neglect. I found out that both doors were locked and you are here. Maybe I have lost my mind."

The Báb told him, "What you have witnessed is true. You belittled this Cause and its Author. God, through His mercy, has revealed this to your eyes so to save you from punishment by recognizing the power of His Cause." All the arrogance vanished. A humble 'Alí Khán was recreated. The first words he said were, "A poor man is yearning to attain Your presence. He lives in a mosque outside the town. I beg to be allowed to bring him to Your presence." So Shaykh Hasan, as foretold by the Báb, was brought to His presence by 'Alí Khán, and the gates opened for all believers, including Mullá Husayn, who came on foot, traveling hundreds of miles. He celebrated Naw-Rúz of 1848 in the presence of His Beloved.

The revelation of the Mother Book, the Persian Bayán, began in that fortress and was completed in the early part of His captivity in the fortress of Chihriq. As He revealed it, according to one believer, His chanting echoed on the mountainside. What an enchantment for the hostile inhabitants of the town of Máh-Kú who now showed utmost reverence towards the Báb. Their morning began by gazing towards the fortress and receiving the Báb's blessing. Presently, there is a copy of the Persian Bayán in the handwriting of His scribe, the Letter of the Living, Siyyid Husayn, at the Bahá'í International Archives in Haifa, Israel.

'Alí Khán's devotion was such that he begged the Báb to honor him by marrying his daughter whom he had refused to give in marriage to the crown prince. He even went to the extent of asking Mullá Husayn, during his visit, to intercede on his behalf, but of no avail. As if 'Alí Khán's devotion and the town people's reverence towards the Báb, regularly reported by the agents to the prime minister, was not enough to boil him with rage, the ultimatum of the Russian minister in Tehran topped it off. It is interesting that Prince Dolgorukov, who four years later offered asylum in Russia to Bahá'u'lláh upon His release from the Siyáh-Chál, now showed alarm of his country about the flow of the people near the border, where Máh-Kú was located.

The desperate prime minister, his plans well frustrated, chose the fortress Chihríq in another mountain and ordered the Báb's transfer. This happened shortly after Mullá Husayn's visit and nine months after the Báb's imprisonment in the fortress of Máh-Kú which He had named Jabal-i-Básit or the Open Mountain. The transfer took place in April of 1848, a most memorable month for the brigadier who was in charge of this transfer. It should not surprise you that he became an overzealous believer in the Báb. Now you can realize how the history was written. High and low, from learned clergy to the ruthless wardens and guards, were all captivated by the Báb, embraced His Cause and first-hand related the accounts of the period when the Báb was near them.

As in this theater of captivity and agony, the stage of martyrdom gets closer, the beat of the drums get faster and louder. What a moving history. Who could do justice to it. I feel unworthy and incapable of relating such immense happenings to you. Shall we turn the page to another chapter? Don't even think of feeling sad for the Báb. He knew the whole thing before it occurred. He begged God to be accepted as a sacrifice in the path of Bahá'u'lláh. The suffering was only for His human side when He experienced His agonies. His spirit transcended them all.

Now He is handed over to Yahyá Khán-i-Kurd, the warden of the fortress of Chihríq. Chihríq was called by Him Jabal-i-Shadíd or the Grievous Mountain. The warden was a Kurdish chieftain whose sister was married to the king. He was harsh and unpredictable. His loyalty was not in question, being an in-law to the king. Soon he was captivated by the same power that made 'Alí Khán spellbound. So many Bábís came to the fortress that it was impossible to house them in town and they had their accommodations in another town.

The next three scenes are part of the act which boggles the mind and drove the prime minister out of his mind. There is a town not too far from Chihríq called Khuy. Not too long after the Báb's incarceration in Chihríq, a number of prominent citizens of Khuy, from divines to officials, became Bábís. Mírzá Ásádu'lláh was a proud man, high in the government. He had a vast knowledge and fluent pen as well as mastery of five languages which was unusual in that area. He was quite hostile and loud when the Bábís

attempted to convert him. Then he had a dream which induced him to write to the Báb. Before he wrote the letter he concentrated on two verses from the Qur'án, and wrote to the Báb that he had certain things in his mind, and if the Báb could write him what they were. The Báb answered in His own handwriting about his dream, what it was about, as well as the two verses from the Qur'án. The exactness and precision of the answer brought him such unshakeable certitude that he refused to ride a horse to climb the steep mountain to attain the presence of the Báb. There he gave the Báb his devoted allegiance. His father was a personal friend of the prime minister. Such zeal and fervor alarmed his father who wrote to the prime minister. The Báb gave the title of Dayyán which means the conqueror or the judge to Mirzá Asadu'lláh and later honored him with a tablet.

In another scene, a distinguished and holy-looking dervish arrived on foot from India, the eastern neighbor of Iran. Many followers of the Báb honored and revered him. He said he was a navváb in India (like a spiritual leader) when the Báb appeared in a vision and told him to leave everything behind and come on foot to meet Him in Chihríq in the mountains of Adhjirbáyján. The Báb gave him the title of Qahru'lláh and instructed him to go back on foot to his native land. Well, this easily showed that the extent of the Báb's spiritual powers went way beyond the borders of Iran.

All of the ordinary plans of the evil prime minister did not work against this extraordinary Being, the Báb. You see, when the prime minister, Hájí Mirzá Áqásí, is called the antichrist of the Bábí Dispensation, it means he really knew who the Báb was, but yet so proudly wished to show his own ascendancy. But as it was decreed, every move he did accelerated his own downfall, materially and spiritually. At this time one blow came after another to Mirzá Áqásí. The health of the king, only forty-three years old, was rapidly deteriorating, and not being sure of his own standing, the prime minister decided to put an end to the Báb by official examination by the divines in the presence of the seventeen-year-old crown prince for the purpose of condemning the Báb to execution.

The Báb had been in the fortress of Chihríq only three months when an order came for His transfer to Tabríz, the provincial capital; but, by all means, the guards had to avoid the town of Khuy where

He had many followers. Are you ready for the third scene of this awe-inspiring act? It was decided to take Him through Urúmiyyih, a town near the lake by the same name. Here the governor received the Báb reverently, but his mischievous nature wished to pose a test to his Guest. On Friday when the Báb decided to go to the public bath, the governor ordered a particularly unruly horse to be brought. Everyone who heard about this plan was present to watch what they expected to be an unsuccessful struggle of the Báb to stay on the wild horse. Miraculously, the horse stood quietly for the Báb to mount him and carried the Báb gently to the bath. The governor was so ashamed that he walked on foot next to the horse until the Báb asked him to return home. After the bath, people rushed to the bathhouse and took every drop of the Báb's bath water as sacred water.

The governor's house became the focal place and had never seen such a flow of people. It was there that an official artist wanted just to see the Báb, but upon seeing the Báb posing, he felt that the Báb wished for His portrait to be drawn. The only portraits of the Báb in black and white and later in water color are from that incident. How would you like to receive that news as the prime minister?

It was in the summer of 1848 when the Báb was brought to Tabríz for interrogation. Before leaving the fortress, He told a believer to collect all of His writings from the two fortresses and give them to a believer in Tabríz for safekeeping. In this last scene of this act, you will witness a dramatic move in the history in Tabriz, the provincial capital of Adhirbáyján, and in the same summer hundreds of miles away in a resort place near Tehran called Badasht. Yes, in that memorable year of 1848 so many things happened which is beyond the scope of this talk.

It was at the end of July when the Báb was brought to the seat of the government at a meeting of the top divines of the province in the presence of the crown prince, not yet at the meeting. To intimidate the Báb in this mock trial, they had not placed a chair for the Báb, expecting Him to stand while being questioned. He went straight for the special chair reserved for the prince. Soon after the prince arrived, upon questioning of the presiding clergy, a public proclamation took place. He declared three times,

"I am the Qá'im for Whom you have waited one thousand years, and you rise upon mention of His name." Soon the clergy began their foolish questioning about Arabic grammar from the Revealer of Qayyúmu'l-Asma', containing one hundred ten chapters all in Arabic and numerous other writings. Shortly after, to put an end to their abuse, He got up and left without being officially dismissed. Now they had to do something about it, or His ascendancy easily would be established. A sentence of death was close, if the physicians were to report that He was sane. This was the time that the only Westerner came in contact with the Báb. Dr. McCormick, a Christian missionary from England, with two Persian physicians, examined the Báb. Their report was such to save His life. Dr. McCormick's is the only pen portrait by a Westerner, describing the Báb as a very mild and delicate-looking man, rather small in stature and very fair for a Persian. He also mentions His melodious soft voice which he states "struck me much." The verdict was to punish the Báb by bastinado which the official attendant refused to do, but a clergy volunteered for it. In the process of striking His feet, one rod hit Him on the face which caused injury and a physician had to be called. The Báb indicated His desire for Dr. McCormick to treat him for a few days. The clergy who inflicted the bastinado, in the same year, became paralysed and died after enduring most excruciating pain.

The same summer under the direction of Bahá'u'lláh in the conference at Badasht, Táhirih, that immortal heroine, declared the advent of the New Day when she appeared without a veil. With leadership of Bahá'u'lláh, a clear separation was made from Islám. After all, the Báb's Faith was an independent religion, and its Holy Book was just completed, abrogating all of the Islámic laws.

The Báb was returned to the fortress of Chihríq on the first day of August 1848. From there, He wrote Khuṭbiy-i-Qahriyyih, or the Sermon of Wrath, to the prime minister which has hand-delivered to him by Hujjat.

By this time the death of Muḥammad Sháh was near, and the prime minister had fallen. Muḥammad Sháh died in September of 1848, and in less than a year the despicable Hájí Mirzá Áqásí, deposed of his position and immense wealth, died in obscurity in Iraq.

The first page of the new chapter of the last two years in the life of the Báb is so connected to the last page that we can recognize how these pages were written by the same Author, the Divine Pen.

When the Báb was taken to Tabríz, there was a young man called Muḥammad-‘Alí Zunúzí who wished so badly to see a glimpse of the Báb. However, the demonstration of his uncontrollable love provoked his parents to the point that they locked him in his room during the days of the Báb's examination in Tabríz. His relative, Shaykh Ḥasan-i-Zunúzí, who was the one ‘Alí Khán took to the presence of the Báb in Máh-Kú, relates the following awe-inspiring story. "Following the return of the Báb to Chihriq, I went to visit my relatives in Tabríz when I noticed such a change in Muḥammad-‘Alí. He was happy and at peace. To my inquiry about such unusual change, the youth stated, 'One day as I was confined in my room, I turned my heart to Him and implored Him to dispel my gloom. What tears of agony that I shed that hour. I was so overcome with emotion that I seemed to have lost consciousness. Suddenly, I heard the voice of the Báb calling me. He told me to arise. He smiled as He looked into my eyes. I rushed forward and flung myself at His feet when He said, "Rejoice, the hour is approaching when in this very city, I shall be suspended before the eyes of the multitude and shall fall a victim to the fire of the enemy. I shall choose no one except you to share with me the cup of martyrdom. Rest assured that this promise shall be fulfilled." What a revealing page! Two years before His martyrdom in that vision, He told the youth how He would be martyred.

In those two years many events transpired. Of course, the flow of His followers was uninterrupted, the most special was His Uncle ‘Alí to whom He had foretold their oncoming meeting as He was taken from Shiráz. The visit of the uncle who raised Him as a child brought great joy to Him, but within a few months after the uncle's visit towards June of 1849, the news of the massacre in Shaykh Ṭabarsí, including nine Letters of the Living, among them Mullá Ḥusayn and Quddús (the first and the last), brought Him unbearable sorrow. You need to know that after his visit, the uncle went to Tehran, and with six other Bábís, was beheaded - the crown of martyrdom that the Báb had promised him.



The Báb's scribe states that after the Báb received the news of Shaykh Ṭabarsí, the grief silenced His voice and stilled His pen. For nine days He refused to meet with anyone and would not touch any food or drink. Tears rained continually from His eyes. For five months He languished. He communed in the privacy of His cell, and when I tried to jot down the effusions of His sorrow as they poured forth from His wounded heart, He instructed me to destroy them. You see this was His human side which lamented so deeply.

With the death of Muḥammad Sháh in 1848, the crown prince took the throne as Násiri'd-Dín Sháh and his prime minister was the heavy-handed Mírzá Taqí Khán, also known as Amír-Nizám, who really ruled the country. It was Amír-Nizám who decided to execute the Báb, and not only that, but in about three years of his ruling, brutal and unspeakable atrocities happened, from the Seven Martyrs of Tehran to the events in Shaykh Ṭabarsí, Nayríz, and Zanján, which wiped out thousands of followers including the erudite Vahíd and fearless Hujjat.

This curtain rises to the final act in the great drama, such as history had never witnessed before. Conscious of His own end fast approaching, the Báb put all His writings, pen case, seals and rings in a box, and through a Letter of the Living, sent them to Bahá'u'lláh. Included was a very finely written three hundred sixty derivatives of the word Bahá in the shape of a pentacle. During the last few months of His captivity in that fortress, He revealed the Arabic Bayán.

Now is the midsummer of 1850, to be exact, the first days of July. Amír-Nizám sent the order to the governor, Ḥamzih Mírzá, to transfer the Báb to Tabriz which he did. Then the second order came to execute the Báb which Ḥamzih Mírzá refused to do. Two years earlier in another province, Ḥamzih Mírzá had admired Mullá Ḥusayn and had given great consideration towards him. He absolutely refused to slay an innocent descendant of the prophet. Amír-Nizám assigned his own brother, who was the messenger to the governor, to carry out the task.

The Báb's green turban and sash which indicated His lineage were removed by the attendants who took Him on foot from the house the governor had put at His disposal to the barracks. On the way to

the barracks, a barefoot youth threw himself at the feet of the Báb, beseeching Him, "Send me not from Thee, O Master, wherever Thou goest suffer me to follow Thee." The Báb replied, "Muḥammad-ʿAlí, arise and rest assured that you will be with Me. Tomorrow you shall witness what God has decreed." As you recall, this had been promised to him two years earlier in a vision and foretold about four years earlier when He said His farewell to Uncle ʿAlí.

That night in that room by the square of the barracks, the Báb was joyous. His mission, in spite of the opposition and tyrannies, was fully accomplished, and the next day, to the utmost desire of His heart, He would be sacrificed in the path of Bahá'u'lláh. He told His disciples on His last night on earth, that He preferred to meet His death at the hand of a friend rather than at the hands of the enemy which dumbfounded His disciples. Only Muḥammad-ʿAlí dared to accept the task as his companions tried to restrain him. The Báb said, "This very youth who has risen to comply with My wish will, together with Me, suffer martyrdom. Him will I choose to share with me its crown." Then He added, "Verily, Muḥammad-ʿAlí will be with Us in paradise." What a priceless bounty.

The sun hesitatingly arose that infamous summer day, but by noon covered its face to the shameful crime committed by men similar to that day on Calvary centuries before. The Báb instructed His scribe and his brother to recant their faith to be able to relate the final events and words for posterity. The scribe, Siyyid Ḥusayn-i-Yazdi, later was martyred during the blood-bath of Tehran in 1852, the year Bahá'u'lláh was put in the Siyáh-Chál. As the Báb was talking to His scribe, the chief attendant came, pushing the scribe aside, and said he had to take the Báb for His death sentence from the clergy. The Báb told him, "Not until I am finished, even if all the armaments of the world arise against Me, they would be incapable to deter me from what I have to do." The attendant ignored His admonishment and took Him and the youth for their sentencing. This walk through the streets of Tabríz was in contrast to His entry into the city three years earlier. As they went from house to house, each clergy refused to see the Báb face-to-face and had the death warrant signed and sealed, ready to give to the attendant. The stepfather of the youth tried to persuade him to change his mind by bringing his young boy to him but his resolve remained unshaken.

While they were taken for their death sentence, the commander of the Armenian regiment, Sâm Khán, who had the assignment for the execution, ordered his regiment of seven hundred fifty men to the square, but felt more and more uneasy about the task.

On that July 9, 1850, close to noon, the Báb and the youth were returned to the square. Sâm Khán could no longer resist the voice of his conscience. The prisoner looked kind and compassionate and, after all, He had not done any crime. So he approached the Báb and said, "I am a Christian and have nothing against you. If your Cause is divine, enable me to free myself from the obligation to shed your blood." To this, the Báb replied, "Follow your instructions. If your intention is sincere, the Almighty is surely able to relieve you from your perplexity."

The square and surrounding rooftops were packed with ten thousand spectators. A nail was driven in the wall to which the Báb and His disciple were suspended with ropes. At the youth's request, his head was placed on the chest of his Master to shield it. The soldiers were lined in three rows. The order was given. One row fired after another. When the smoke of the musket guns lifted, the Báb had disappeared and Muḥammad-'Alí was standing by the wall under the nail, smiling and unconcerned. The onlookers cried, "Siyid-i-Báb ghá'ib shud." "Siyid-i-Báb has gone from our sight." A frantic search followed. The Báb was found in the same room He had spent His last night, finishing His earlier interrupted conversation with His scribe. He told the chief attendant, "Now I am finished. Carry on your duty." He remembered the words of the Báb earlier, and terror-stricken, ran away and resigned his post. Sâm Khán, also stunned, removed his men from the square and refused to repeat it even if his refusal meant the loss of his own life.

Áqá Ján-i-Khamsih, a Muslim, volunteered to perform the shameful act. As his regiment lined up for firing, they tied up the Báb and the youth in the same manner on the same spot. The Báb addressed the crowd with these final words, "O wayward generation! Had you believed in Me, every one of you would have followed the example of this youth, who stood in rank above most of you, and willingly would have sacrificed himself in My path. The day will come when you will have recognized Me; that day, I shall have ceased to be with you."

At noon on July 9, 1850, seven hundred fifty bullets united their two bodies but the face of the Báb was untouched. The curtain falls on the final act with a gale of sandstorm darkening the day until the evening. When night fell they dragged the bodies through the streets of Tabríz and threw them at the edge of a moat surrounding the city with guards stationed. Next morning the Russian consul took an artist who made a drawing of the remains. Sulaymán Khán, the prominent and faithful disciple who had attained the presence of the Báb in Chihriq, had come from Tehran to rescue his master, but that was not to be. Knowing the mayor of Tabríz and through his help, the bodies were rescued under the eyes of the guards and taken by Sulaymán Khán to a silk factory of a Bábí in Milán. They were enshrouded and hidden under bales of silk, and the next day placed in a wooden casket and carried away to safety. As soon as the news of rescue reached Bahá'u'lláh, He assigned Sulaymán Khán to move them to Tehran.

Shíráz, the Báb's birthplace and where He declared Himself but treated Him so harshly, experienced that same year an earthquake, aggravated by cholera and famine. Mirzá Taqí Khán-i-Amír-Nizám and his brother met their death within two years by the order of the young king. Of the firing squad who slayed the Báb, two hundred fifty with their officers died the same year in an earthquake. The rest of the five hundred, as punishment for mutiny, were shot twice by a firing squad and their bodies pierced with lances and spears.

Forty years after His martyrdom, Bahá'u'lláh, standing by a cluster of cypress trees on Mount Carmel, pointed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá where the Holy Dust should be laid to rest. 'Abdu'l-Bahá built the shrine on that spot.

After fifty lunar years of keeping the remains in various hidden locations in Iran, it arrived in 'Akká on January 31, 1899. Ten years later on Naw-Rúz of 1909, 'Abdu'l-Bahá deposited the casket containing the remains of the Báb and His companion within the vault of the shrine He had built. Shoghi Effendi, forty years later, adorned the shrine built by 'Abdu'l-Bahá with a beautiful superstructure crowned with a golden dome.

The memory of the sacrificial life of the Báb will be forever remembered and revered by all Bahá'ís throughout the world.