religions

MDPI

Article

"From 'the Most Great Prison' to the 'Holy Land': The Transformation of 'Akká in Bahá'í Sacred Geography"

Sivan Lerer

Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem 9190501, Israel; sivan.lerer@mail.huji.ac.il

Abstract

This study traces the profound transformation of the city of 'Akká in Bahá'í perception, from its early depiction as "the Most Great Prison" and a place of desolation and exile to its reimagining as a holy city and spiritual center. Drawing on the writings of Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and Shoghi Effendi, the article examines how successive Bahá'í leaders reconceptualized 'Akká through scriptural reinterpretation, theological discourse, and communal memory. Special attention is given to the appropriation of Islamic *faḍā'il* traditions and the reapplication of biblical and Qur'ánic imagery to 'Akká. By analyzing this symbolic and textual evolution, the article sheds light on the dynamic interplay between narrative, authority, and geography in the formation of Bahá'í sacred landscapes.

Keywords: 'Akká; Bahá'í Faith; Bahá'u'lláh; *faḍā'il*; Ottoman Palestine; pilgrimage; religious geography; sacred space

> *Then Acre spoke, saying, I am earth's cornerstone,*
> *the field where holiness was sown, lily of Sharon,*
> *my fragrance blown to the mountains of Carmel, Lebanon, Tabor, and Hermon …*
> *Acre am I, the pride of the world,*
> *Splendour's unchallenged lord.*[1]
> (Alharizi 2003, p. 358)

1. Introduction

For Bahá'ís around the world, 'Akká is revered as a holy city, a destination of pilgrimage, and a locus of profound spiritual longing. Yet within the relatively brief history of the Bahá'í Faith, the city's status has undergone a remarkable transformation: from a loathsome, isolated penal colony to a sanctified center of the highest order. This study traces the evolution of 'Akká's sacred status, examines the historical and theological catalysts that propelled this shift, and situates the case within broader theoretical models of sacred place-making. In doing so, it explores how textual authority, collective memory, and religious geography interact to produce new landscapes of sanctity. The case of 'Akká is especially illuminating within the wider field of religious studies because it illustrates how a site previously associated with disgrace, marginalization, and exile can be figuratively reshaped as a space of divine presence and holiness. It demonstrates this cross-cultural phenomenon, offering insight into how religions engage in the processes of sacralization and spatial re-signification. By situating the Bahá'í experience within comparative theories of sacred space, this article contributes both to Bahá'í studies and to the broader discourse on religion and (sacred) space.

check for updates

Academic Editors: Robert H. Stockman and Moojan Momen

Received: 26 August 2025
Revised: 18 September 2025
Accepted: 20 September 2025
Published: 25 September 2025

Citation: Lerer, Sivan. 2025. "From 'the Most Great Prison' to the 'Holy Land': The Transformation of 'Akká in Bahá'í Sacred Geography". *Religions* 16: 1231. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16101231

Copyright: © 2025 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

2. Theoretical Perspectives of Sacred Space

Scholars offer several complementary frameworks for explaining how places become sacred. One influential view emphasizes that sacred places are not born but made; they are created through human action, communal memory, and ritual performance. As Tomlinson and Zhu note, "people … declare particular places to be sacred" (Tomlinson and Zhu 2025, p. 18). Jonathan Z. Smith similarly stresses that nothing in the physical world is inherently sacred; sacrality emerges as a "category of emplacement," a meaning ascribed by human labor (Smith 1992, p. 104). Émile Durkheim long ago observed that the sacred is what society sets apart and invests with collective significance (Durkheim [1912] 2001). Recent scholars, building on this foundation, analyze sacred space as the product of storytelling, repeated cultural acts, and the assignment of religious authority (Barth 2013, pp. 68–69). From this perspective, shrines, cities, and landscapes become holy not by intrinsic nature but through socially sustained consecration—through acts such as recounting sacred histories, building temples, and undertaking pilgrimages.

A second perspective highlights that sacred places often carry layered histories, having been consecrated and re-consecrated by different groups over time. The co-opting or reappropriation of another group's sacred site is a widespread historical practice. Conquerors and new religions frequently have claimed predecessor shrines rather than destroy them, effectively re-signifying new sanctity onto old. As one study notes, "reusing places of worship by other communities… is a common practice" in religious history (Coomans 2012, p. 225). Early Christians, for example, built churches atop pagan temples; later, medieval mosques rose on the foundations of churches, and vice versa. Such spatial "inheritance" both capitalizes on the existing aura of holiness and asserts the supremacy of the later faith. When a new group takes over a revered location, it often reinterprets the site's religious or spiritual meaning while physically appropriating the site. The result is an overlay of veneration: a single sanctuary layered with multiple religious identities over centuries. From Jerusalem's Temple Mount—home to Israelite, Christian, and Islamic sanctuaries—to the Cathedral-Mosque of Córdoba in Spain, the historical record abounds with revered places that have been successively claimed and transformed by different communities. Rather than seeing sacred space as fixed to one tradition, this perspective emphasizes sanctification as an ongoing, contested process: holy places are made and remade through the interplay of memory, narrative, and authority across time (Barth 2013, pp. 68–69).

A contrasting theoretical view, famously articulated by Mircea Eliade, posits that certain places are regarded as sacred in themselves, independent of human designation—they are locations where the holy has manifested and thus carry an innate sanctity. Eliade argued that for *homo religiosus* (religious man), space is not homogeneous; there are fixed "centers" of spiritual power revealed by the divine. The sanctity of a certain place is inherent by and of itself (Eliade 1974, pp. 1–48). In this paradigm, human beings do not create holy ground per se, but rather they recognize and commemorate it. A site becomes sacred first and foremost because something numinous happened there—a "hierophany" or divine appearance, a miracle, a prophet's presence—which marks that spot as extraordinary. The classic example is the *axis mundi* or cosmic center: a point where heaven and earth are believed to connect. Eliade noted that sacred mountains, temples, or cities often function as an *axis mundi*, deemed the spiritual "center of the world" and thus intrinsically sacred. Such a place exerts a magnetic pull on successive religious groups. Later communities may be drawn to an already-sacred locale not merely for its strategic value, but because they, too, perceive the inherent holiness of the site. In Eliade's view, this helps explain why different religions across history gravitate toward the same sacred spots—for example, why an ancient holy city or shrine might be continuously venerated under new guises. The

sanctity of the location is thought to emanate from the divine reality itself (independent of any one creed), and new arrivals simply tap into that enduring sacred presence. This perspective complements the constructionist view: while human action indeed sanctifies, often it does so in response to a pre-existing "sacred quality" of the place. Thus, a site like ʻAkká could be seen not only as consecrated by Bahá'í pronouncement, but as a locale whose sanctity was in some sense destined or inherent, revealed through the events of Bahá'u'lláh's life there.

Together, these perspectives—sacred space as constructed, contested, and inherent—provide a rich theoretical framework for understanding how ordinary locales become hallowed ground. They remind us that sacred place-making involves both creative human engagement and a consciousness of continuity with a numinous past. In the case of the Bahá'í sanctification of ʻAkká, we shall see how these dynamics converge. The veneration of ʻAkká in the Bahá'í Faith did not occur in a vacuum; it entailed deliberate acts of sacralization and reflected the belief that Bahá'u'lláh's presence imbued the site with a transcendent significance. Reviewing the major theories on the making of sacred places prepares the groundwork for analyzing ʻAkká's elevation from a former Ottoman penal colony to a focal point of pilgrimage and holy memory in the Bahá'í Faith. The following discussion will trace how ʻAkká was "made" sacred—in word, in deed, and in connection with the enduring landscape of sacred geography—illustrating in practice the theoretical principles outlined above.

Central to this inquiry is the question of how key Bahá'í figures—Bahá'u'lláh, ʻAbdu'l-Bahá, and Shoghi Effendi—systematically reshaped the perception of ʻAkká through their authoritative texts, public pronouncements, and administrative decisions. While Bahá'u'lláh's earliest letters invoked the city's infamy to underscore the severity of his imprisonment, his later Tablets progressively endowed ʻAkká with eschatological significance and scriptural epithets formerly reserved for Jerusalem. Building on this resignification, ʻAbdu'l-Bahá mobilized the theological argument by amplifying his father's exalted language in devotional treatises and other writings, thereby weaving sanctity into the consciousness of the burgeoning community. Shoghi Effendi further codified these emergent meanings in authoritative historical narratives and communications. By analyzing this textual corpus, the paper demonstrates how successive Bahá'í leaders converted a place of exile into a site of sacred geography, thus illuminating the interaction between scripture, authority, and space in the formation of religious landscapes.

3. Historical Overview

"A city of antiquity and many hardships," maritime historian Meir Sas (d. 1993) famously called ʻAkká (Sas 1981). Although inhabited for millennia, the city is mentioned only twice in the Hebrew Bible: explicitly in Judges 1:31 ("[the Israelites] did not dispossess the inhabitants of ʻAkká" and—according to later exegetes—implicitly in Job 38:11 ("thus far [עַד־פֹּה, ʿad po ≈ ʿAkko/ʿAkká] you may come and no farther"). The brief survey that follows situates the city's late-Ottoman transformation, the principal focus of this study.

Located on the Levantine shoreline, ʻAkká (Acre) long served as a strategic location coveted by successive powers, from the Crusaders to regional strongmen such as Ẓáhir al-ʿUmar (1689–1775) and Aḥmad Páshá al-Jazzár (c. 1720–1804). Under uninterrupted Ottoman sovereignty from the sixteenth century until the First World War, it functioned simultaneously as military bulwark and economic gateway. Yet between roughly 1850 and 1900 the city commercial standing deteriorated markedly, especially in competition with the ascendant port of Haifa.

The destabilization began with the occupation of Syria–Palestine by Muḥammad ʿAlí's (Ottoman governor and ruler of Egypt during 1805–1849; d. 1849). Egyptian

forces captured Jaffa in 1831 and soon besieged ʻAkká, only to be ousted by an Anglo-Ottoman fleet whose bombardment in 1840 left the city in ruins. Austrian traveler Ida Pfeiffer (d. 1858) observed in 1842 that "the town of St. Jean d'Acre and its fortifications were completely destroyed … houses and mosques are full of cannon-balls and shot-holes. Every thing stands and lies about as though the enemy had departed but yesterday" (Pfeiffer 1852, entry for 26 May).

Although stability was gradually restored, ʻAkká never regained the regional primacy it had enjoyed under Ẓáhir al-ʿUmar and al-Jazzár. Its administrative importance likewise ebbed. Once a de facto provincial capital whose governors resided inside its walls, by mid-century the city had been reduced to a sub-district center (Kidron and Yarkony 2024, pp. 13–14). The population—about 8000—was chiefly Muslim, Christian, and Jewish; a small Bahá'í community appeared only at the century's close. Ottoman regulations prohibited building beyond the walls, forcing residents to crowd into crumbling quarters until the law changed in the early twentieth century.

Contemporary travel literature emphasizes the decay. The British author and traveler James Silk Buckingham (d. 1855) complained in 1816–1817 of "narrow and dirty" streets lined with "ruined buildings [and] heaps of rubbish" (Buckingham 2011, p. 78). Henry Baker Tristram (d. 1906), visiting in 1863–1864, pronounced the town "squalid and miserable" (Tristram 1865, p. 92). Even the hinterland fared no better: touring the Naʿaman plain in 1891, proto-Zionist leader Menachem Ussishkin (d. 1941) lamented "swamps and sand dunes, desert bushes and thorns… Sad and awful was the present of bygone days" (Ussishkin 1947, p. 197).

Finally, ʻAkká served the Ottoman state as a place of confinement. Political detainees and common prisoners were housed in a complex erected by Ẓáhir al-ʿUmar atop the Crusader citadel—premises that remained a penitentiary well into the British Mandate.

4. ʻAkká in the Bahá'í Tradition

Mírzá Ḥusayn ʿAlí Núrí, better known as Bahá'u'lláh (1817–1892), the prophet-founder of the Bahá'í Faith—endured a series of state-imposed banishments that shaped both his life and the early development of the religion. Arrested in Tehran in 1852 after the Bábí uprising, he was expelled by Qajar authorities and Ottoman allies to Baghdad, where he spent a formative decade (1853–1863) refining the movement's doctrines. In 1863 the Ottoman government transferred him first to Constantinople (Istanbul) and, a few months later, to Edirne (Adrianople). Five years afterward, in 1868, he and his companions were sent to the fortified prison city of ʿAkká in Ottoman Palestine, where he remained—initially within the fortress and later in nearby estates—until his death in 1892.

Acting on Sultan ʿAbd al-ʿAzíz's orders, Ottoman officials transferred Bahá'u'lláh to ʿAkká in August 1868 after accusing him of sedition. The exile party consisted of Bahá'u'lláh himself, members of his immediate family, some three dozen Bahá'í followers, and—at the Porte's insistence—two adherents of his half-brother and rival, Mírzá Yahyá Ṣubḥ-i-Azal (d. 1912; he was deported to Famagusta, Cyprus). On arrival they were locked in the coastal fortress, where overcrowding, foul water, and malnourishment exacted a heavy toll. In late 1870 the authorities relaxed the terms of confinement: the prisoners were released from the fortress, placed under house arrest, and permitted limited movement inside the walled city. For nearly a decade Bahá'u'lláh resided in the House of ʿAbbúd (where he completed his *al-Kitáb al-Aqdas*, often considered his "most important work" (Vafai 2021, p. 9)). In June 1877 he was allowed to relocate to a house in Mazraʿih, where he resided for two years, and in 1879 he again relocated to the Mansion of Bahjí, an estate just north of the walls (now within the municipality of ʿAkká), where he remained

until his death in May 1892. For occasional respite he also frequented the nearby Riḍván Garden, a rural retreat that offered relief from the congestion of the former prison city.

4.1. First Impressions of 'Akká

'Akká first appears in Bahá'u'lláh's writings shortly before his forced exile from Edirne in 1868, specifically in a series of Tablets he addressed to contemporary monarchs and rulers. These tablets were subsequently compiled and published as *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts* (Bahá'u'lláh 2002). Composition of these texts began in Edirne and, in some instances, continued after Bahá'u'lláh's arrival in 'Akká (Phelps 2021). In his Tablet to Queen Victoria (r. 1837–1901), Bahá'u'lláh describes himself as "imprisoned…in the most desolate of cities" (Bahá'u'lláh 2002, p. 92, para. 177). Similarly, in his Tablet to the Persian ruler Náṣiru'd-dín Sháh (r. 1848–1896), he articulates his deep apprehension regarding his impending exile to 'Akká:

> According to what they say, it is the most desolate of the cities of the world, the most unsightly of them in appearance, the most detestable in climate, and the foulest in water. It is as though it were the metropolis of the owl, within whose precincts naught can be heard save the echo of its cry (Bahá'u'lláh 2002, p. 133, para. 267)

In this passage, Bahá'u'lláh vividly conveys his profound distaste and apprehension regarding his exile to 'Akká, emphasizing the city's notorious reputation. His use of emphatic superlatives—describing 'Akká as the "most desolate," "most unsightly," "most detestable," and possessing the "foulest" water—clearly reveals his dread and reluctance to reside in such a locale. Furthermore, his evocative metaphor of the city as "the metropolis of the owl," where only the owl's eerie cries resonate, symbolically reinforces his perception of profound isolation, abandonment, and despair. The imagery conveys his anticipation of hardship and isolation, reflecting his deep concern over his impending exile to a city characterized as utterly inhospitable and bleak. In Islamic and Iranian folklore, the owl is identified as a harbinger of misfortune or ill fate: its nocturnal call evokes unease, and the tendency of certain owl species to nest in ruins has further reinforced the association of owls with impending destruction or calamity (Homerin 1985; Talattof 2000, p. 59). By invoking the image of the owl as emblematic of 'Akká, Bahá'u'lláh thus deepens the symbolic portrayal of the city as a site of ruin and despair, amplifying his apprehension about his exile there.

In many of Bahá'u'lláh's works from this period—late Edirne and early 'Akká (1868–1876)—he uses the phrase "the Most Great Prison" (*al-sijn al-aʿẓam*) in order to describe Akká. Thus, for example, in the Tablets addressed to Napoleon III (r. 1852–1870) and to the Russian Tsar Alexander II (r. 1855–1881), to such an extent that the phrase became the description of the city of 'Akká in Bahá'í perception. By consistently employing such stark terminology, Bahá'u'lláh emphasizes his deeply negative perception of 'Akká, underscoring the city's harshness, isolation, and profound desolation. The recurring metaphor of imprisonment thus vividly reflects his distress and apprehension about the conditions awaiting him, reinforcing the city's depiction as an oppressive site of exile and hardship.

It should come as no surprise that Bahá'u'lláh was distressed and apprehensive about his forced relocation to the neglected and unwelcoming city of 'Akká, which at the time functioned primarily as a penal colony for the Ottoman Empire, housing political prisoners and other personae non-gratae. His apprehensions regarding the harshness of imprisonment conditions proved justified. In a letter dated 20 November 1869, the Persian ambassador in Istanbul, Mírzá Ḥusayn Khán, described these conditions vividly to the Persian Foreign Minister, Mírzá Saʿíd Khán:

> He [Bahá'u'lláh] is prohibited from fraternizing with anyone other than his own family and children and it is absolutely forbidden to let him outside of the house where he is imprisoned (*ikhtiláṭ-i ú-rá bá ghayr az ʿayál va awlád-i khúdash mamnúʿ dáshtih va ikhráj-i ú-rá dar hamán khánih kih maḥbas-i ú-st bi-wajh min al-wujúh, tajvíz na-nimáyand*) (Amanat and Vahman 2016, p. 230, document no. 31)

This negative portrayal is further reinforced by 'Abdu'l-Bahá (d. 1921), Bahá'u'lláh's eldest son and closest aide, in his work *Memorials of the Faithful* (based on talks delivered in 1914–1915; English translation published in 1971). He vividly describes 'Akká as a city marked by decay and ruin, whose desolation is symbolically intensified by the unsettling cries of owls echoing through its abandoned structures. In doing so, 'Abdu'l-Bahá not only echoes his father's depiction of the city's harsh conditions but also deepens the symbolic resonance of the owl imagery, further emphasizing the pervasive sense of gloom, isolation, and imminent calamity associated with 'Akká during their early period of exile.

> That is how the barracks were, when we came to 'Akká. There were a few trees inside the walls, and on their branches, as well as up on the battlements, the owls cried all night long. How disquieting is the hoot of an owl; how it saddens the heart ('Abdu'l-Bahá 1971, p. 21)

These portrayals of 'Akká were further reinforced and firmly integrated into Bahá'í tradition by Shoghi Effendi (d. 1957), the third leader of the Bahá'í Faith. In one of the most influential and widely read texts among Bahá'í believers, *God Passes By* (Shoghi Effendi 2012), he vividly echoes and amplifies earlier descriptions, thereby establishing a canonical representation of the city within Bahá'í collective memory:

> [A] penal colony to which murderers, highway robbers and political agitators were consigned from all parts of the Turkish empire. It was girt about by a double system of ramparts; was inhabited by a people whom Bahá'u'lláh stigmatized as "the generation of vipers"; was devoid of any source of water within its gates; was flea-infested, damp and honey-combed with gloomy, filthy and tortuous lanes … So putrid was its air that, according to a proverb, a bird when flying over it would drop dead (Shoghi Effendi 2012, pp. 185–86)

Bahá'u'lláh remained confined in the fortress of 'Akká for approximately two years, after which Ottoman authorities required the space for housing troops, prompting his transfer to house arrest within the city at the residence of ʿUdí Khammár. In 1876, following repeated petitions by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'u'lláh was permitted brief visits to the nearby Riḍván Garden, and by 1879 he was granted permission to move freely beyond the city walls (Momen 2021, pp. 47–48). This transition from the oppressive conditions of strict imprisonment to relative liberty represented a pivotal turning point in Bahá'u'lláh's perception of 'Akká. Consequently, this shift profoundly influenced the broader Bahá'í community's evolving conceptualization of the city, transforming it gradually from a site of hardship and imprisonment into a sacred space of spiritual significance.

4.2. Changed Perception

Following Bahá'u'lláh's release from prison, the conditions and social standing of the small Bahá'í community gradually improved, largely due to the sustained efforts of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Through persistent and effective diplomacy, 'Abdu'l-Bahá cultivated cordial relationships and established a respected reputation among the residents and local authorities of 'Akká (Lincoln 2023). However, this relative stability was severely disrupted by an unusual incident in 1872, when seven Bahá'ís murdered three followers of the Azalí faction (named after Mírzá Yahyá Ṣubḥ-i-Azal). This event reignited tensions, provoking anger and suspicion among local authorities and residents alike. 'Abdu'l-Bahá was conse-

quently arrested, renewed restrictions were imposed upon the community, and Bahá'u'lláh himself was summoned by the governor and military authorities for questioning. Eventually, however, the situation stabilized, tensions eased, and conditions gradually returned to normal (Momen 2021, pp. 47–48).

One significant outcome of this episode was the composition of a Tablet titled *Lawḥ-i Istinṭáq* ("Tablet of Interrogation"), written by Bahá'u'lláh in ʿAkká around 1880. In this text, Bahá'u'lláh reflects on the events that followed the 1872 murders, offering his account of the tensions and developments that ensued, while also addressing the longstanding hostility between himself and his half-brother, Mírzá Yahyá Ṣubḥ-i-Azal. Within the broader context of this Tablet, Bahá'u'lláh discusses the characteristics of the *dajjál*—the figure known in Islamic eschatology as the false messiah or anti-Christ. Stephen Lambden has proposed that Bahá'u'lláh's descriptions in this passage draw upon Arabic translations of Greek traditions, particularly those related to the *Apocalypse of Elijah* cycle, which may have been accessible to him through existing manuscript or oral transmission (Lambden 2018).

> Satan shall appear in the Island of Qáf and will bar the people from the Merciful [Lord]. And when it is time, they will turn towards the Holy Land, from which wafts the breath of God (*sa-yaẓhiru ash-shayṭán fi jazírat Qáf wa-yamnaʿu an-nás ʿan ar-raḥmán idhá ḥán dháka al-ḥín tawajjahú ilá al-arḍ al-muqaddasa minhá tamurru nasamat Alláh*) (Bahá'u'lláh 1972b, p. 259)

Bahá'u'lláh then explains that: "Qáf is Cyprus. This is known, because all the Turks call Cyprus 'Satan's Island', and it is also known that the Holy Land is the abode of the [divine] Throne" (*va Qáf Qibris ast ín mashúr ast chunán-chih jamiʿ turk Qibris-rá shayṭán jazírası mí-gúyand va arḍ-i-muqaddasih ham maʿlúm ka ḥál maqarr-i-ʿarsh váqiʿ shudih*) (Bahá'u'lláh 1972b, p. 259). It is clear that Bahá'u'lláh identifies the *dajjál* with Mírzá Yahyá, using the geographical connotation as proof.

The subsequent tradition cited in the *Lawḥ-i Istinṭáq* elaborates on the external characteristics of the *dajjál*, offering a vivid description consistent with Islamic apocalyptic motifs. This portrayal is followed by a striking directive addressed to the believers: they are instructed to turn (perhaps in prayer?) toward Mount Carmel.

> Satan will appear in the island attributed to him. He is short, his beard is thick, his forehead and chest are narrow, his eyes and hair are yellow, his back is wooly like a deer, and on his chest his hair is falling out. When that time comes, you should approach the Carmel, even if only with your chests; turn to the holy valley, the land of gathering, the white dale (*yaẓharu al-ḥubáb fí jazíratin al-mansúba ilayhi annahu qaṣír al-qáma, kathír al-lihya, ḍayyiq al-jabha wa-'l-ṣadr, asfar al-ʿayn wa-'l-shaʿr, li-ẓahrihi wabr ka'-ayyil, wa-bi-ṣadrihi shaʿr ka-'l-maʿar. idh atá dhalika al-waqt taqarribu ilá al-karmil wa-law bi-'l-kalkal. thumma aqbilu ilá al-wád al-muqaddas, arḍ al-mahshar, buqʿat al-bayḍáʾ*)

This injunction, embedded within a discourse on falsehood and divine guidance, predicts the emerging spiritual centrality of the region and anticipates the later establishment of Mount Carmel as a focal point of Bahá'í sacred geography. Moreover, the terms applied here—"the holy valley, the land of gathering, the white dale" (*al-wád al-muqaddas, arḍ al-mahshar, buqʿat al-bayḍáʾ*) are used in the Islamic tradition in descriptions of holy places and occasions, and the word "gathering" (*mahshar*) in particular refers to the Day of Resurrection, when the people will be gathered for their final judgment and physical and spiritual revival.

Bahá'u'lláh further explains that

> *ḥubáb* is the name of Satan and the snake… and 'Carmel' is a mountain facing 'Akká … 'the holy valley, the land of the gathering, the white dale'—these three

> titles refer to the land of ʻAkká (*ḥubáb ism-i-shayṭán va ḥayya ast … va karmil jabli ast muqábil-i-ʿAkká … al-wád al-muqaddas, arḍ al-mahshar, buqʿat al-bayḍáʾ ín sih laqab arḍ-i-ʿAkká ast*).

This marked a turning point in Bahá'u'lláh's portrayal of ʻAkká. Whereas earlier references emphasized its desolation, harsh conditions, and symbolic association with suffering and exile, here, for the first time, he presents the city in a positive light. Rather than being depicted solely as a neglected prison outpost, ʻAkká begins to emerge in his writings as a site of spiritual significance and divine purpose—a transformation that reflects not only a shift in Bahá'u'lláh's own experience but also a broader reimagining of the city within the sacred geography of the Bahá'í Faith.

This shift in Bahá'u'lláh's view of ʻAkká continues in his later writings, most notably in the "Tablet on the Mission of Moses" (Lawḥ dar bárih-yi Baʿthat Músá, c. 1889, Late ʻAkká Period). In this text, Bahá'u'lláh explicitly associates ʻAkká with a series of biblical epithets and expressions that had traditionally referred to Jerusalem. Terms such as "the new Jerusalem," "a tabernacle that shall not be taken down," and "the strong city" are reinterpreted and applied to ʻAkká, signaling a significant reconfiguration of sacred geography. This sanctified vision of the city stands in stark contrast to his earlier references, where ʻAkká was described as "the Most Great Prison," as clearly stated by Bahá'u'lláh's words: "this blessed city which was previously called 'the Most Great Prison' by the King of Oneness" (*ín madína-yi mubárakih kih az qalam-i-málik-i-aḥadiyyih bi-sijn-i-aʿẓam námídih shudih*) (Bahá'u'lláh 1972a). Through this theological reimagining, Bahá'u'lláh redefines the city from a place of suffering and exile into one of divine blessing and eschatological fulfillment.

In this Tablet, Bahá'u'lláh draws an explicit connection between "the Most Great Prison"—a phrase he had previously used to describe ʻAkká—and exalted terms such as "the Holy City" and "the Promised Land," which would come to define ʻAkká's place in Bahá'í sacred geography. By doing so, he effectively reclaims and reassigns titles traditionally reserved in Jewish, and later Christian, scripture for Jerusalem, applying them instead to ʻAkká. This act of theological appropriation signals a deliberate and profound reconfiguration of sacred space, positioning ʻAkká not as a site of punishment and exile, but as a divinely chosen locus of spiritual revelation and fulfillment.

The process of transformation in the symbolic and theological status of ʻAkká—from a desolate prison to a sanctified locus of divine revelation—is articulated in Bahá'u'lláh's final major work, the *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*. Composed near the end of his life, it brings together many of the themes, texts, and revelations that had shaped his ministry across successive periods of exile.

In this work, written shortly before his death in 1892, Bahá'u'lláh offers a retrospective account of his life, outlining the central tenets of his teachings and reaffirming the foundational principles of the Bahá'í Faith. Throughout the work, he extensively cites from his earlier writings—among them *The Hidden Words*, a mystical and aphoristic composition from the Baghdad period; the *Tablets to the Kings and Rulers* and the *Tablet of the Temple*, written in Edirne; as well as later works such as *Ishráqát* and *Tajallíyyát*, composed in ʻAkká. The recurrence of these texts emphasizes their authoritative status and continued relevance. While recounting his ordeal in the Siyáh-Chál (the Black Pit) in Tehran, where he was imprisoned for several months, Bahá'u'lláh describes the visionary experiences that accompanied his suffering: "One time [I beheld myself] on the heights of mountains; at another in the depths of the prison of Tá [Ṭihrán], in chains and fetters." Following his release, he sought to publicly proclaim his divine mission, yet met widespread indifference: "and yet the people are in a state of strange stupor" (Bahá'u'lláh 1979, p. 79). It is in the wake

of this impasse that a decisive turning point is narrated—a divine summons that signaled the beginning of a new spiritual era:

> Great is thy blessedness, O ʻAkká, in that God hath made thee the dayspring of His Most Sweet Voice, and the dawn of His most mighty signs. Happy art thou in that the Throne of Justice hath been established upon thee, and the Day-Star of God's loving-kindness and bounty hath shone forth above thy horizon (Bahá'u'lláh 1979, p. 79)

He once again equates ʻAkká with the Jerusalem of the Bible, reiterating his earlier invocation of Psalm 60:9 ("Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom?") and then states explicitly:

> The Strong City is ʻAkká, which hath been named the Most Great Prison, and which possesseth a fortress and mighty ramparts (Bahá'u'lláh 1979, p. 144)

The subsequent paragraphs of this composition are devoted to extensive quotations from the Hebrew prophets—among them Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Joel—whose words Bahá'u'lláh interprets in ways that reinforce his theological identification of Jerusalem with ʻAkká. These reinterpretations serve to reframe biblical prophecy through a Bahá'í lens, locating the fulfillment of messianic expectation not in the historical Jerusalem but in the site of Bahá'u'lláh's own exile and revelation. For instance, the well-known passage from Isaiah—"Get thee up into the high mountain, O Zion, that bringest good tidings; lift up thy voice with strength, O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings. Lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah: 'Behold your God! Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him'" (Isaiah 40:9–10)—is interpreted by Bahá'u'lláh as a direct reference to his own person and mission, now manifest in the city of ʻAkká:

> "This Day all the signs have appeared. A Great City hath descended from heaven, and Zion trembleth and exulteth with joy at the Revelation of God, for it hath heard the Voice of God on every side. This Day Jerusalem hath attained unto a new Evangel, for in the stead of the sycamore standeth the cedar. Jerusalem is the place of pilgrimage for all the peoples of the world, and hath been named the Holy City. Together with Zion and Palestine, they are all included within these regions. Wherefore, hath it been said: "Blessed is the man that hath migrated to ʻAkká. (Bahá'u'lláh 1979, p. 145)

Following his engagement with the Hebrew prophets, Bahá'u'lláh proceeds to cite a number of Islamic traditions that extol the virtues and spiritual merits of ʻAkká and its surrounding region. A few examples will suffice here:

> ʻAkká is a city in Syria to which God hath shown His special mercy." …
>
> Of all shores the best is the shore of Askelon, and ʻAkká is, verily, better than Askelon, and the merit of ʻAkká above that of Askelon and all other shores is as the merit of Muḥammad above that of all other Prophets (Bahá'u'lláh 1979, p. 178)
>
> A month in ʻAkká is better than a thousand years elsewhere. (Bahá'u'lláh 1979, p. 179)

These references serve to further anchor his revaluation of the city within both Abrahamic scriptural frameworks, presenting ʻAkká not only as the fulfillment of biblical prophecy but also as a site of long-standing Islamic reverence.

4.3. Faḍā'il Literature and the Sanctification of ʻAkká

As Moojan Momen notes, many of the traditions cited in Bahá'í texts can be traced to a work entitled *Faḍā'il ʿAkká wa ʿAsqalán* [Praises of ʻAkká and Ashkelon], compiled at the end

of the 6th century AH (12th century CE). This compilation, based on lectures delivered by the Muslim scholar Bahāʾ al-Dín Abú Muḥammad al-Qásim (d. 600 AH), who visited ʻAkká in 586 AH, contains numerous traditions that highlight the city's religious significance and merits. However, it remains uncertain whether Bahá'u'lláh had direct access to this text or whether he consulted it during his time in the city (Momen 2003).

A possible intermediary source may have been Shaykh ʿAlí Mírí al-Azharí, the Mufti of ʻAkká during Bahá'u'lláh's residence there. Initially one of the Bahá'í community's fiercest adversaries, Shaykh ʿAlí Mírí gradually moderated his stance and ultimately became a sympathizer. According to Shoghi Effendi, he took an active interest in collecting Islamic traditions that spoke to the spiritual status of ʻAkká, a gesture that may have contributed to the body of materials that Bahá'u'lláh would later engage with (Shoghi Effendi 2012, pp. 303–4).

The appropriation and reconfiguration of sacred space, as discussed above, often relied not only on new narratives but also on the creative use of existing religious traditions. It is within this broader context that the Islamic *faḍāʾil* literature becomes especially relevant to understanding the sanctification of ʻAkká in Bahá'í thought. The *faḍāʾil* genre—devoted to the "virtues" or "merits" (*faḍāʾil*) of particular places, individuals, or practices—served historically as a means of promoting the spiritual status of these elements within the Islamic world.

Specifically, the subgenre known as *Faḍāʾil al-buldán* (Merits of States/Cities) highlights the virtues of holy sites such as Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem, and other important locations (Enderwitz n.d.). It is noteworthy that within this corpus, ʻAkká also appears as a city praised for its exceptional merits. M. J. Kister mentions ʻAkká as "a city distinguished by the most favorable utterances of the Prophet," citing several *ḥadíths* transmitted by different authorities that extol the city's virtues—even suggesting, in some cases, that certain ritual acts performed there surpass their counterparts in Jerusalem (Kister 1996, pp. 47–48). While Kister acknowledges that some of these traditions are likely to be later fabrications, he argues that they nevertheless represent "a convincing case of the rise and growth of small local religious centers and their rivalry with the established great localities" (Kister 1996, p. 48). This phenomenon, whereby emerging sacred centers developed their own religious prestige in competition with more established sites, provides crucial context for understanding how the sanctity of ʻAkká could be both constructed and reinforced within the Bahá'í tradition.

Around the same time that the *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* was composed, ʻAbdu'l-Bahá authored an exegetical treatise exploring the theological significance of the *Basmala* (*bism Alláh al-raḥman al-raḥím*, "In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful") (ʻAbdu'l Bahá n.d.). During this period, and under the guidance of Bahá'u'lláh, ʻAbdu'l-Bahá regularly held study sessions devoted to the reading and interpretation of sacred texts, particularly the Qur'an. It is reasonable to surmise that this exegetical work on the *Basmala* emerged from the context of these gatherings. One section of the treatise addresses the notion that the various places mentioned or alluded to in earlier scriptures as sites of divine revelation are, in essence, one and the same. ʻAbdu'l-Bahá elaborates on this idea by explaining that:

> This holy place … is … the white valley, within it [is] the sand hill (*jarʿáʾ*) at the Tuwa valley (cf. Q 20:12; 79:16), within it [is] Mt. Sinai (cf. Q 23:20), and the places of revelation of your supreme Lord upon the prophets of inflexible purpose (Q 46:35); within it is the right bank of the valley (Q 28:30), the blessed basin, and the holy dale (Q 20:12). [It is where Moses, son of Amram, heard the Merciful call from the blessed tree, "whose root is firmly fixed, and its branches (reach) to the heavens" (cf. Q 14:24). From there called Yahyá b. Zakariyyá: "Oh, people! Re-

> pent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2) … Wherein stands the farthest mosque, which Allah blessed its surroundings, where Muḥammad journeyed during the night of *isrá'* … Indeed Allah honored, blessed, and sanctified this illumined valley with his manifestations, the appearance of his signs, raising of his banners, mission of his messengers, and bestowing his scriptures; there is not a single prophet nor a messenger who was not sent from, immigrated to, honorably circumambulated, or ascended to this valley. ('Abdu'l Bahá n.d., pp. 56–57)

'Abdu'l-Bahá contends that all the aforementioned sites of divine revelation throughout human history are essentially manifestations of a single, transcendent locus—one not constrained by the limitations of time or space. Despite apparent shifts in geographical setting or historical context, the essential nature of the revelatory site remains unchanged. According to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, these scriptural references ultimately converge upon and symbolically refer to one specific place: 'Akká. In this view, 'Akká becomes the metaphysical axis of divine disclosure, retroactively imbued with the sanctity previously attributed to other holy locations.

This concept is further elaborated by Shoghi Effendi, who builds upon this theological framework in *God Passes By*. At the beginning of Chapter IX, following a general tribute to the spiritual distinction of the Holy Land, he recounts the unique merits of 'Akká, thereby reaffirming its centrality in Bahá'í sacred geography and consolidating its status as a preeminent site of divine manifestation:

> 'Akká, itself, flanked by the "glory of Lebanon," and lying in full view of the "splendor of Carmel," at the foot of the hills which enclose the home of Jesus Christ Himself, had been described by David as "the Strong City," designated by Hosea as "a door of hope," and alluded to by Ezekiel as "the gate that looketh towards the East," whereunto "the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the East," His voice "like a noise of many waters." To it the Arabian Prophet had referred as "a city in Syria to which God hath shown His special mercy," situated "betwixt two mountains … in the middle of a meadow," "by the shore of the sea … suspended beneath the Throne," "white, whose whiteness is pleasing unto God." "Blessed the man," He, moreover, as confirmed by Bahá'u'lláh, had declared, "that hath visited 'Akká, and blessed he that hath visited the visitor of 'Akká." Furthermore, "He that raiseth therein the call to prayer, his voice will be lifted up unto Paradise." And again: "The poor of 'Akká are the kings of Paradise and the princes thereof. A month in 'Akká is better than a thousand years elsewhere". (Shoghi Effendi 2012, p. 291)

Milka Levy-Rubin described this kind of "concentric geographical format" when describing the "Islamization" of places and lore in Samaria as "defining sanctity as beginning from the sanctified country, then focusing on a sanctified territory, and reaching finally the point of pivotal sanctity" (Levy-Rubin 2019, p. 375).

This section includes excerpts from the Islamic traditions previously cited by Bahá'u'lláh in the *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, which Shoghi Effendi integrates into his own narrative in *God Passes By*. Continuing in the same theological vein, Shoghi Effendi accentuates the paradoxical outcome of Bahá'u'lláh's exile to 'Akká. While the intent of both Ottoman authorities and hostile figures was to marginalize and suppress Bahá'u'lláh's influence, their efforts ultimately had the opposite effect—amplifying his stature and reinforcing the significance of 'Akká in Bahá'í history. This is expressed by his quotation of the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá: "His light at first had been a star; now [in 'Akká—SL] it became a mighty sun" (Shoghi Effendi 2012, p. 310). The chapter concludes with a powerful quotation from Bahá'u'lláh himself, who reflects on the spiritual transformation of his place of con-

finement: "The Almighty … hath transformed this Prison-House into the Most Exalted Paradise, the Heaven of Heavens" (Shoghi Effendi 2012, p. 310). This statement not only encapsulates the reversal of worldly intentions but also reaffirms the theological revaluation of ʻAkká as a sanctified center of divine revelation.

Thus, following Bahá'u'lláh's release from the fortress of ʻAkká and his subsequent relocation first within the city and later to its outskirts, ʻAkká became firmly established in the Bahá'í consciousness as a site of beauty, sanctity, and splendor. The earlier depictions of neglect and desolation gradually receded from collective memory or were invoked only to highlight the dramatic transformation of the city's status. This shift is clearly reflected in the accounts of Bahá'í pilgrims from the early twentieth century onward. For example, Younes Khan Afroukhtih (d. 1948), who served as ʻAbdu'l-Bahá's personal secretary and interpreter between 1900 and 1909, recounts:

> From the day that this fortress became the place of exile of the Beloved of the world [Bahá'u'lláh], the climate gradually began to improve, the pollution of the atmosphere by those odious fumes ceased, the air quality improved and even the water from the city well turned fresh and drinkable (Afroukhtih 1952, p. 292)

This idealized image of ʻAkká continued to be reinforced in the personal testimonies of early Bahá'í pilgrims, who increasingly depicted the city not only as a place of historical importance but as a living center of spiritual power. These accounts extended beyond the immediate Bahá'í community of the Middle East to include the experiences of Western believers as well. In 1908, the travel diary of Thornton Chase (d. 1912), one of the first Western Bahá'ís, was published, offering his impressions from his pilgrimage to Haifa and ʻAkká. In his narrative, Chase describes a moment of profound sanctity experienced between Haifa and ʻAkká:

> looking toward Acca … a beautiful thing appeared. … a splendid double rainbow shone forth. … its further end was directly at the gate of Acca … There was the ancient symbol of the creative Holy Spirit brooding over that Place of Promise, and I seemed to see beneath its arc of glory temples of silver with domes of gold, gates of pearl and all precious stones, and I realized that—"The city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb" [Book of Revelation 21:23]" (Chase 1985, pp. 11–12)

5. Conclusions

The city of ʻAkká underwent a profound transformation in Bahá'í perception. Initially remembered as a place of exile, deprivation, and desolation—a symbol of hardship both physical and spiritual—it was associated above all with suffering and marginalization. Early Bahá'í attitudes toward it were distinctly negative, reflecting Bahá'u'lláh's own descriptions of the city as "the most desolate" and "the Most Great Prison." Yet this perception began to shift as Bahá'u'lláh's confinement eased, as the small Bahá'í community established roots within and around the city, and as it became clear that the prophet-founder of the Faith would spend his final years there. Over time, the memory of ʻAkká as a place of degradation was gradually reinterpreted, its very past of isolation and hardship reimagined as a setting for divine triumph and spiritual renewal.

Through deliberate theological acts, such as associating ʻAkká with scriptural epithets traditionally reserved for Jerusalem and the Holy Land, Bahá'u'lláh redefined the city's symbolic meaning. In this reimagining, ʻAkká was no longer merely the place of exile but the locus of fulfillment of messianic prophecies. Sanctity once linked to distant biblical landscapes was transferred to this formerly neglected outpost, thereby repositioning ʻAkká at the center of the Bahá'í sacred geography. This process was further reinforced

by ʻAbdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi, who consolidated and elaborated Bahá'u'lláh's vision through their writings, devotional activities, and historical narratives. Islamic *faḍā'il* traditions extolling the merits of ʻAkká, some originating centuries ago, were also drawn upon to strengthen this emergent sanctity. Although the authenticity of certain traditions was questioned even by contemporary scholars, their symbolic value was clear: they provided a historical and scriptural foundation that connected Bahá'í claims to earlier religious memories of the land. In this way, the sanctification of ʻAkká mirrored broader patterns of sacred place-making in religious history, combining the creative reimagining of space with an appropriation of inherited sacred lore.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the transformation was complete. ʻAkká was no longer viewed merely as a site of suffering; it had become, in the Bahá'í perception, a place of beauty, promise, and divine grace. Pilgrims' accounts from both Middle Eastern and Western Bahá'ís reflect this new perception, describing ʻAkká not only in terms of historical reverence but as a living source of spiritual blessing. Thus, the city that had once been synonymous with abandonment and exile came to embody, for the Bahá'í community, the very fulfillment of sacred history: the place where divine revelation found its ultimate earthly home. In tracing this evolution, the case of ʻAkká exemplifies how sacred spaces are made: through suffering and memory, through narrative and re-signification, and through the dynamic interplay of tradition and innovation. It shows how a city once seen as a "Most Great Prison" could, through the power of prophetic vision and communal devotion, be transfigured into the "Holy Land."

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Acknowledgments: I would like to extend my thanks to the editors and the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

[1] The Jewish Andalusī poet and belletrist Judah Alharizi (d. 1225) visited Akka in 1216.

References

ʻAbdu'l Bahá. n.d. Tafsír bism Alláh al-raḥman al-raḥím. In *Makátíb ʻAbd al-Bahá*. Cairo: Kurdistán ʻIlmíyyih, vol. 1, pp. 33–62.

ʻAbdu'l-Bahá. 1971. *Memorials of the Faithful*. Translated by Marzieh Gail. Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust.

Afroukhtih, Younes. 1952. *Memories of Nine Years in Akka*. Translated by Riaz Masrour. Oxford: George Ronald.

Alharizi, Yehuda ben Shelomo. 2003. *The Book of Tahkemoni: Jewish Tales from Medieval Spain*. Translated by David Simha Segal. Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization.

Amanat, Abbas, and Fereydun Vahman. 2016. *From Tehran to Akka. Bábís and Bahá'ís in the Official Records of Qajar Iran*. New Haven: Ashkaar Publishers.

Bahá'u'lláh. 1972a. Lawḥ dar bárih-yi Baʿthat Músá. In *Má'ida-yi Ásmání*. Edited by ◎Abdu'l-Ḥamíd Ishráq-Khávarí. Tehran: Baha'i Publishing Trust, vol. 4, pp. 38–41.

Bahá'u'lláh. 1972b. Lawḥ-i Istinṭáq. In *Má'ida-yi Ásmání*. Edited by ◎Abdu'l-Ḥamíd Ishráq-Khávarí. Tehran: Baha'i Publishing Trust, vol. 4, pp. 220–60.

Bahá'u'lláh. 1979. *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*. Translated by Shoghi Effendi. Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust.

Bahá'u'lláh. 2002. *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts: Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre.

Barth, Christiane. 2013. In Illo Tempore, at the Center of the World: Mircea Eliade and Religious Studies' Concepts of Sacred Time and Space. *Historical Social Research* 38: 59–75. [CrossRef]

Buckingham, James Silk, ed. 2011. Description of the Town of Acre. In *Travels in Palestine, Through the Countries of Bashan and Gilead, East of the River Jordan: Including a Visit to the Cities of Geraza and Gamala, in the Decapolis*. Cambridge Library Collection—Travel, Middle East and Asia Minor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 71–85. [CrossRef]

Chase, Thornton. 1985. *In Galilee*. Los Angeles: Kalimat Press.

Coomans, Thomas. 2012. Reuse of Sacred Places: Perspectives for a Long Tradition. In *Loci Sacri. Understanding Sacred Places*. Edited by Thomas Coomans, Herman De Dijn, Rajesh Heynickx, Jan De Maeyer and Bart Verschaffel. KADOC Studies on Religion, Culture and Society 9. Leuven: Leuven University Press, pp. 221–41.

Durkheim, Émile. 2001. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Translated by Carol Cosman. Oxford: Oxford University Press. First published 1912.

Eliade, Mircea. 1974. *The Myth of the Eternal Return, Or, Cosmos and History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Enderwitz, Susanne. n.d. "Faḍāʾil.". In *Encyclopaedia of Islam Three Online*. Leiden: Brill. [CrossRef]

Homerin, T. Emil. 1985. Echoes of a Thirsty Owl: Death and Afterlife in Pre-Islamic Arabic Poetry. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 44: 165–84. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

Kidron, Anat, and Shuli Linder Yarkony. 2024. *The Jewish Community of Acre in Mandatory Palestine: The Story of a Forgotten Community*. Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH.

Kister, Meir Jacob. 1996. Sanctity Joint and Divided: On Holy Places in the Islamic Tradition. *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 20: 18–65.

Lambden, Stephen. 2018. Antichrist-Dajjal III: Bábí-Bahá'í Interpretations. Hurqalya. Available online: https://hurqalya.ucmerced.edu/node/3661 (accessed on 26 December 2024).

Levy-Rubin, Milka. 2019. Islamization of Space and People: The Case of Samaria in the Early Muslim Period. *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 46: 359–91.

Lincoln, Joshua. 2023. *'Abdu'l-Bahá 'Abbás: Head of the Bahá'í Faith: A Life in Social & Regional Context*. Idra Series of Psychology and Religion; Tel-Aviv: Idra Publishing.

Momen, Moojan. 2003. Akka Traditions (Hadith) in the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf. *Lights of Irfan* 4: 167–78.

Momen, Moojan. 2021. Bahá'u'lláh. In *The World of the Bahá'í Faith*, 1st ed. Edited by Robert H. Stockman. London: Routledge, pp. 40–50. [CrossRef]

Pfeiffer, Ida. 1852. *A Visit to the Holy Land, Egypt, and Italy*. Translated by Henry William Dulcken. Available online: https://www.gutenberg.org/files/12561/12561-h/12561-h.htm (accessed on 29 May 2022).

Phelps, Steven. 2021. The Writings of Bahá'u'lláh. In *The World of the Bahá'í Faith*, 1st ed. Edited by Robert H. Stockman. London: Routledge, pp. 51–71. [CrossRef]

Sas, Meir. 1981. "Maritime Akko." *Nautical College of Akko Newsletter*. (In Hebrew). Available online: https://benyehuda.org/read/10930 (accessed on 8 June 2022).

Shoghi Effendi. 2012. *God Passes By*. Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust.

Smith, Jonathan Z. 1992. *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual*. Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Talattof, Kamran. 2000. *The Politics of Writing in Iran: A History of Modern Persian Literature*, 1st ed. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

Tomlinson, Matt, and Yujie Zhu. 2025. *Making Places Sacred: New Articulations of Place and Power*. Elements in New Religious Movements. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [CrossRef]

Tristram, Henry Baker. 1865. *The Land of Israel: A Journal of Travels in Palestine Undertaken with Special Reference to Its Physical Character*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. Available online: http://archive.org/details/landisraelajour01trisgoog (accessed on 6 June 2022).

Ussishkin, Menachem. 1947. *Final Words*. Jerusalem: Jewish National Fund.

Vafai, Shahin. 2021. Overview. In *The World of the Bahá'í Faith*, 1st ed. Edited by Robert H. Stockman. London: Routledge, pp. 7–16. [CrossRef]

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.