

**HISTORY OF
BAHÁ'U'LLÁH**

**THE UNIQUENESS OF THE
BAHÁ'Í FAITH**

BY
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TRANSCRIPT OF AUDIO TAPE

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WINDOWS TO THE PAST

By Darius K. Shahrokh, M.D.

Regardless how hard one tries, it will be impossible for any speaker to portray and capture the true spirit of the majestic and yet tragic events of the life of Bahá'u'lláh.

This presentation will approach the history of the life of Bahá'u'lláh from different angles, in hope of giving you a glimpse of what actually transpired. We have less than one minute to talk about every year of His life which lasted seventy-five years, forty years of which were His ministry.

Let us go back in time about one hundred fifty years, and review a few events in Tehran and Baghdád in the nineteenth century. Tehran, as it is now, was the capital of Iran, known to Westerners as Persia. Baghdád is the provincial capital of Iraq. Iraq is like a state or province of the great Ottoman or Turkish Empire. The year is 1839 and we are in Tehran. The king is the inept Muḥammad Sháh who depends so much on his crafty and notorious prime minister, Ḥájí Mírzá Áqásí.

A prominent member of the court, Mírzá Buzurg, from Núr has died and must be replaced. As is customary, his position is offered to his most qualified son. One of his sons, Mírzá Ḥusayn-'Alí, though only twenty-two years old, seems to excel not only in knowledge and wisdom but also in character. Matter of fact, the prime minister has watched Him first hand when He represented His father in a court case. The prime minister's deputies pay a visit to Mírzá Ḥusayn-'Alí, and offer him the position. Disappointed, they return to the prime minister with negative response. The prime minister is not quite pleased, and somewhat puzzled as to why anyone in sane mind would refuse such a profitable position. He was heard

to tell his deputies, "I cannot understand Him. Leave Him to Himself. He has greater aims in mind." Only if he had known who this young nobleman really was.

About ten years later in a port town by the Caspian Sea called Bandar Gaz, in a beautiful early fall afternoon, a big reception is on its way in the honor of a well-known nobleman visiting that town. There is a rumor that he has joined a new movement called the Bábí Faith, but so what, there are so many sects of Islám, and this seems to be another sect. He still believes in Muḥammad, so it does not matter. It is His magnetic personality and charisma which shines like a jewel and attracts every one. All dignitaries are invited. Among them is a Russian officer. Russia, being a strong neighboring country, has a tremendous authority and influence over the government of Iran.

Before the reception begins, a messenger on horseback arrives from Tehran, handing the urgent and shocking message to the mayor. After reading it, with a pale face, the mayor looks at the messenger, who states, "It is true. I am told that the king has stated, 'I can no longer stand the activities of Mírzá Ḥusayn-'Alí. He must be arrested wherever He may be, and brought to the capital for execution.'" What is the mayor to do? Consulting with his deputies, they decide that the nobleman will not run away. Might as well not spoil the reception, and handcuff Him after the reception is over. They see to it that after He enters the mansion, the guards would prevent Him from leaving. The reception starts on time, and as usual, everyone praises each other, but carefully worded praise for the nobleman. After all, they are all the king's men. The Russian officer, hearing the word from one of the deputies, approaches the nobleman, telling Him the message for His arrest, and offers his ship which is anchored at the port as asylum. But to his utmost surprise, the nobleman declines his offer, stating no need to worry, everything will be all right. It doesn't make sense to the officer, why anyone should refuse such a generous offer, and willingly walk into a death trap.

Well! Before the reception is over, another messenger arrives with the news that Muḥammad Shāh had died, the prime minister gone into hiding, and the capital is in turmoil. The reception ends happily, and the order is not carried out. You see! It was not

the king who was tired of the nobleman, Mírzá Ḥusayn-‘Alí, but it was God who was displeased with Muḥammad Sháh and could not stand him any longer. He and his prime minister had to go. They already had caused the Báb, the fruit of the tree of Divine Revelation, to be imprisoned, and then brought to Tabriz for examination which was followed by bastinado. In the process of bastinado, we recall His blessed face was struck, and now they were planning to destroy the future bearer of the Light of God.

About three years later, the heavy-handed new prime minister, Mírzá Taqí Khán-i-Amír Kabír, who brought the young king, Nāṣiri'd-Dīn-Sháh, to the throne, and already had executed the Báb, now wishes to control Mírzá Ḥusayn-‘Alí's activities. He has witnessed how a group of three hundred Bábís valiantly defended themselves for seven months against the well-equipped royal army of ten to twenty thousand men, much better equipped with arms.

He tells the nobleman, who is now about thirty-three or thirty-four years old, "It was your leadership and intelligence that helped so few a number of Bábís in Shaykh Ṭabarsí keep the strong royal army frustrated for nearly seven months. It would be so helpful to the country and please his majesty if you would use your talent in the service of his majesty, and accept the post of Amír Díván, or the head of the court system, which is a prestigious position with side benefits, which we know is extortion and bribes. The nobleman denies having anything to do with the defense at Fort Shaykh Ṭabarsí, and gives the credit to selfless dedication of the believers, and declines the offer. Well, this prime minister had the blood of the Báb on his hands, and within a year was deposed by the king whom he had brought to the throne. His vein was opened in the bath, and his life slowly oozed away.

Now it is four or five years later, and we are in Baghdád, which I told you is the provincial capital of Iraq, one of the provinces of the powerful Turkish Empire. As background information, the Báb was executed in 1850, and two years later, three deranged and revengeful Bábí youth tried to kill the young king, which failed. The nobleman, with about thirty other prominent Bábí leaders, was put into the underground dungeon called the Síyáh-Chál, or the Black Pit. Nearly all other prominent leaders were put to death with unspeakable brutality, but somehow the nobleman, Mírzá

Husayn-'Alī, was found to be innocent from plotting the attempt on the life of the king, and was freed, pending His immediate exile to Baghdád. His luxurious mansion had been ransacked, and all of His properties confiscated by the government. To purchase very inadequate provisions for the travel of the family in the dead of winter over icy and snowbound mountain passes of western Iran, His wife had plucked the jeweled buttons off some of her dresses before the mob attacked their mansion. She sold these to buy the scant equipment for their travel. The nobleman was recovering from typhoid fever, a deadly disease, and leech wounds on his ankles from the ankle-deep muck of the dungeon. Under severe hardship, they arrived in Baghdád, and the next act of this great drama is a few years after their arrival.

If you wish to watch it closely, all men must wear turban and women, the famous chador, or veil, peeking with one eye.

The nobleman is settled in a house, although not a mansion, but it has become the focal point of people from all walks of life, from Persian princes in exile to Christian, Jewish, and Muslim clergy or laymen. Material comfort is not there anymore. Matter of fact, His household barely makes the ends meet. If tea is served, make sure you don't take too much sugar. It is expensive.

We are in His reception room filled with people, some regulars, and some for the first time. You are among the first-timers, but I have been here before. The outpouring of the nobleman's wondrous words, illuminating any subject, has left everyone spellbound. Of a few large-turbaned clergy, there is one who appears quite restless, and has something on his mind. Who is he? His name is Mullá Hasan-i-Ámú, and is sent here by the doctors of Islám and clergy of the two holy cities of Karbilá and Najaf, the home of the largest theological schools of Islám about fifty miles from Baghdád. Are you with me or lost in wonderment? Mullá Hasan is seated on the floor like the rest, but gradually inches his way closer to the nobleman, and requests a private audience.

We are not permitted to be there anymore, but can hear the conversation through the door. Mullá Hasan, already being highly impressed by the nobleman's eloquence and authority, humbly speaks in a very low voice. We can't hear him so we put our ears to the

door. If your turban is in your way, push it to the side; they can't see us. He states, "I represent the chief clergy from the two holy cities. They have sent me to state..." Well! We know all of that, but come on, cough out the message. "Well, They acknowledge your superior knowledge and unmatched wisdom, even though you have not had any formal schooling, but they cannot easily acknowledge your Cause and accept it. Only if perchance you could perform a miracle or two to satisfy them."

We wish we could see the look on the nobleman's face. Mullá Ḥasan's face is seen through the keyhole. He is pale, quivering, and looking at the nobleman's feet. After a pause, the nobleman begins to speak with such authority that it vibrates the building. He states, "It is not your right to ask such a thing. It is for God to test His people, and not for the people to test God." Now His voice becomes merciful. "But since you asked it, we are willing to perform a miracle pending on two conditions. One is that all the clergy get together and agree on one miracle (listen to this) regardless of what it may be." You see, this is an open offer. "The second condition is that a letter should be written, signed and sealed, that should I perform the miracle they choose, without hesitation, they must accept and acknowledge the Cause for which I stand; and, if not performed, I be condemned as an imposter. The Cause of God cannot become a plaything of children, every day someone asking for a certain performance."

Mullá asks permission to be dismissed. He kisses the nobleman's knees and says, "I am satisfied." Make a guess about the clergys' response. Not only could they not agree about one miracle, but they became afraid of His power and backed off.

Mírzá Ḥusayn-‘Alí, the nobleman from Núr, was known to His followers as Jináb-i-Bahá, meaning His Honor Bahá. Bahá is the name He adopted for Himself in the Conference of Badasht ten years earlier when He conferred the title of Táhiriḥ on Qurratu'l-‘Ayn, and Quddús to Mullá Muḥammad-i-Bárfurúshí, the last Letter of the Living.

Jináb-i-Bahá was quite reluctant to show the power and glory which was concealed within Himself to those who wished to test Him, but at times, showed a measure of it to those who believed in Him to confirm and transform them.

While in Baghdád, one day as He was walking with a few followers a few steps behind Him, an officer approached Him, and said, "One of your followers has been murdered and his body has been thrown by the river." Jináb-i-Bahá stated, "He was not murdered. Through 70,000 veils of light, to an extent smaller than a needle's eye, We showed him the Glory of God, and he no longer could bear the burden of this life. He ended his own life." This person was Siyyid Ismá'il-Zavári'í, whom Bahá'u'lláh honored with the title of Dhabíh, or Sacrifice.

Who was Mírzá Husayn-'Alí, the nobleman from Núr, also known as Jináb-i-Bahá? He was not an ordinary man, a mystic, nor a magician. He was the embodiment of the Glory of God. His name was Bahá'u'lláh, meaning the Glory of God, the Supreme Manifestation, the Inaugurator of the Day of God, and the Promised One of all religions.

He was born on November 12, 1817, in Tehran to a noble and prominent family from the town of Núr. As a baby, He never cried. The stories of His childhood and youth testify to His having superior and innate knowledge and wisdom. At age eighteen, He married Ásíyih Khánum, the daughter of another wealthy statesman. When twenty-two years old, His father, Mírzá Buzurg-i-Núrí, passed away, and his position as minister in the royal court was offered to Him which He declined.

His family and Himself belonged to the Shí'ih sect of Islám, but at age twenty-seven He accepted the claim of the Báb who claimed to be the return of the Twelfth Imám, called the Qá'im, and also being the Gate, or the Báb, to yet a greater Manifestation to come.

Bahá'u'lláh's ancestry goes to the last king, Yazdigird, from Sássánian dynasty, and thus to Zoroaster, the prophet of ancient Iran.

In the course of promoting the Faith of the Báb, He was imprisoned three times and bastinadoed once. The third imprisonment was in the Black Pit, or the Síyáh-Chál, of Tehran along with thirty other Bábís whose prison-mates were one hundred fifty of the worst criminals. This was on August 15 of 1852, when He was arrested on accusation of conspiracy to kill the king. Barehead and barefoot

He was walked for a few hours under chains to that prison while the onlookers stoned Him and spat at Him. While under the heaviest chain of Qará-Gohar, weighing one hundred ten pounds around His neck with His feet in stocks, He received the intimation about His mission in the form of dreams and visions.

Once in a dream, He heard these exalted words on every side, "Verily, We render Thee victorious by Thyself and by Thy pen. Grieve thou not for what hath befallen Thee for Thou are in safety." At another time in a vision, He saw a Maiden of Heaven suspended in the air, pointing to His head, and addressing the peoples of the world, "By God! He is the beloved of the world, and ye apprehend it not." This intimation, according to the Guardian, took place in October 1852.

Four months after His arrest, when nearly all the leaders of the Bábí Faith were put to death, He proved to be innocent of any wrongdoing so He was freed pending exile to Baghdád. In the heart of winter, when His wife was expecting the fourth child, they crossed the snowbound mountain passes on foot or riding mules. The youngest son, Mírzá Mihdí, about four or five years old, had to be left behind, because he could not stand the rigors of the trip. The oldest son, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, about nine years old, was carried on his uncle's shoulders, and His blessed feet froze. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's feet used to hurt Him the rest of His life.

The timid and jealous half-brother of Bahá'u'lláh, Mírzá Yahyá, thirteen years younger, who had been in hiding, joined them after their arrival in Baghdád. He caused enough disunity among the believers that it forced Bahá'u'lláh to withdraw, and go into seclusion in the mountains of Sulaymáníyyih, two hundred miles northeast of Baghdád. In two years, when the family discovered His whereabouts and begged Him to return, He consented.

During seclusion, He lived in the caves in mountains, and as He stated Himself, His companions were the beasts of the field and the birds of the sky. Many nights He went to sleep on the cave floor without any supper. His luxury food was rice cooked in milk when the shepherds had their sheep in that area. His poetry of those days, Qaşídiyih Varqáiyih, are all about His sufferings. That was the poetry which moved the rowdy and rebellious young

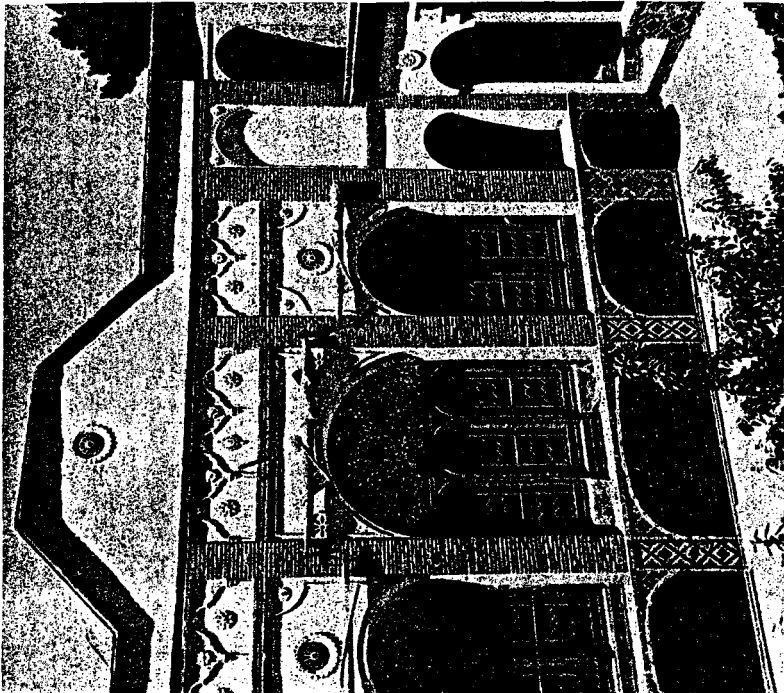
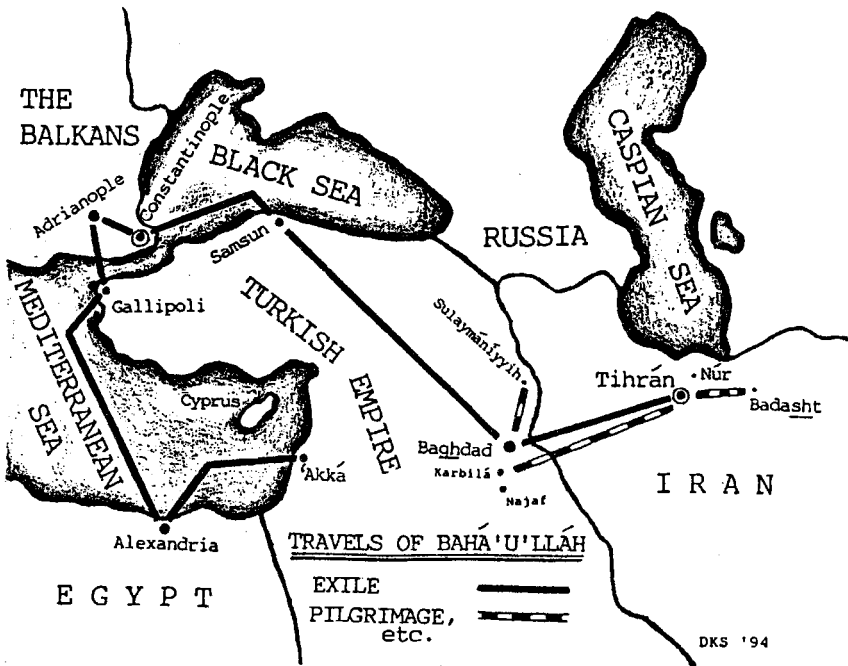
man who later became known as Badí', the Pride of Martyrs, or Fakhru'sh Shuhadá. Badí', the seventeen-year-old young man, was the one who delivered Bahá'u'lláh's message to the king of Iran.

After His return, His home became the center of attraction in Baghdád, and people from all walks of life flocked to His door. Even the Kurds from the mountain area who had listened to Him in the coffee-house of the town where He used to go for the bath, were frequenting His house. Exaggerated reports would arrive in Tehran about His popularity and prestige. Once the Persian consul wrote that Bahá'u'lláh had amassed such a number of followers that on His signal, easily one hundred thousand people could take up arms and attack Iran.

Because of the plotting of the clergy and the Persian consul, the Persian government asked the Turkish Sultán to move Bahá'u'lláh farther away from the border. At the beginning, a deaf ear was given to these complaints from Tehran, since 'all governors of Baghdád had sent nothing but praiseworthy reports about Bahá'u'lláh to the central government in Istánbul (then Constantinople.) Finally with hesitation, the governor of Baghdád, Námiq Páshá, through his deputy gave the order of the central government to Bahá'u'lláh. This governor had great love and respect for Bahá'u'lláh.

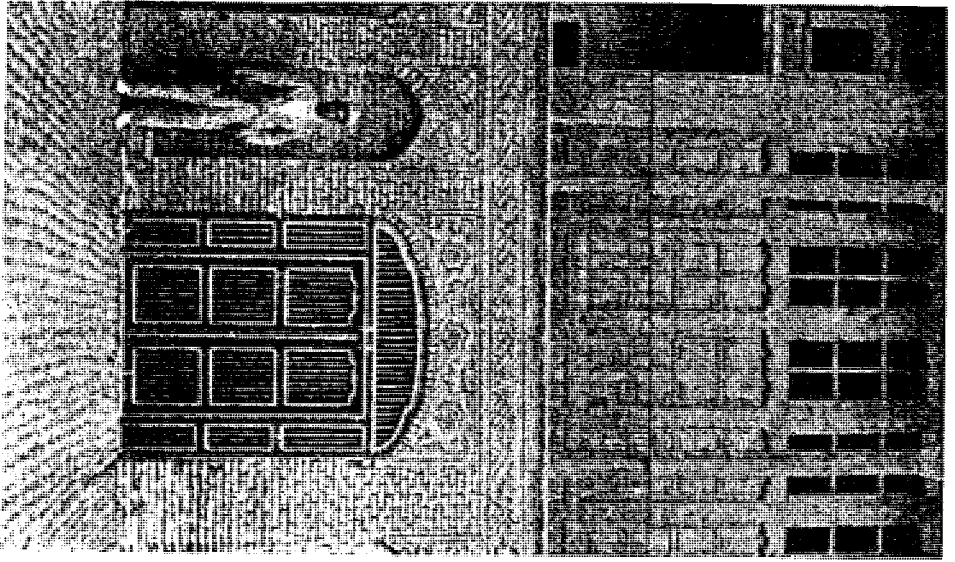
Before Bahá'u'lláh left Baghdád for Istánbul, on April 21, 1863, in the Garden of Riḍvân, He declared Himself to be the Promised One of all ages, and the One promised by the Báb.

The trip took four months, and was not free of incidents. One of them was the scary event when on a steep cliff, Bahá'u'lláh's mule lost its footing. The believers, with their hearts in their throats, saw Him and the mule almost tumbling down the cliffside. But remember, in the Siyáh-Chál, He was told, "Thou are in safety..." Miraculously, the mule regained its footing and disaster averted. The believers had to stop and celebrate His safety as a great festivity. Do you know what happened? A very large jug of rosewater broke and perfumed the air, adding to their celebration. No one could erase the memory of that event from their mind. After all, they saw the Hand of Providence at work.

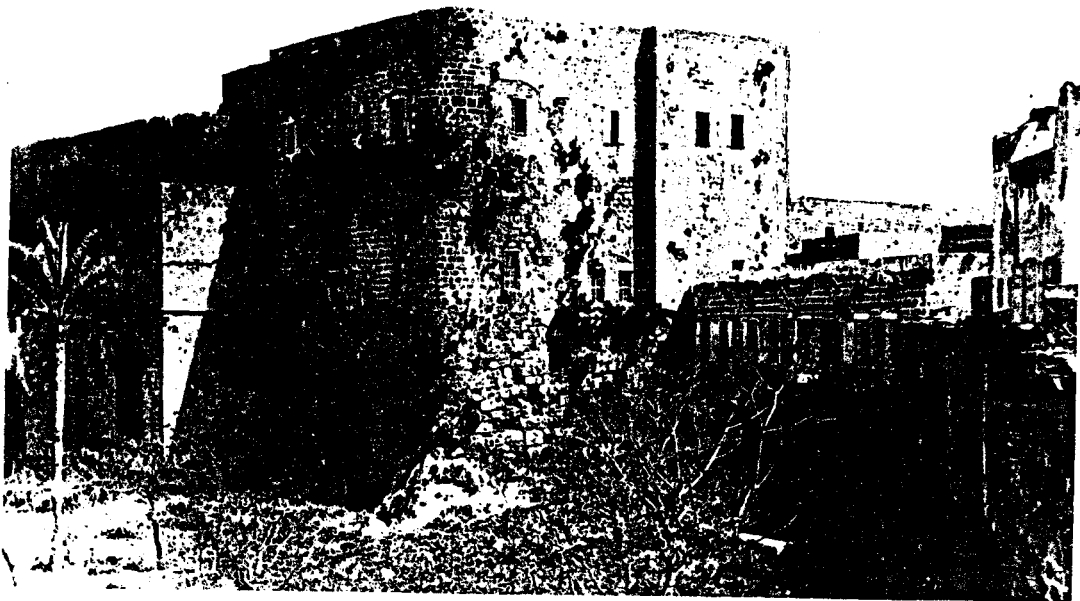


THE HOUSE OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH IN TEHRAN

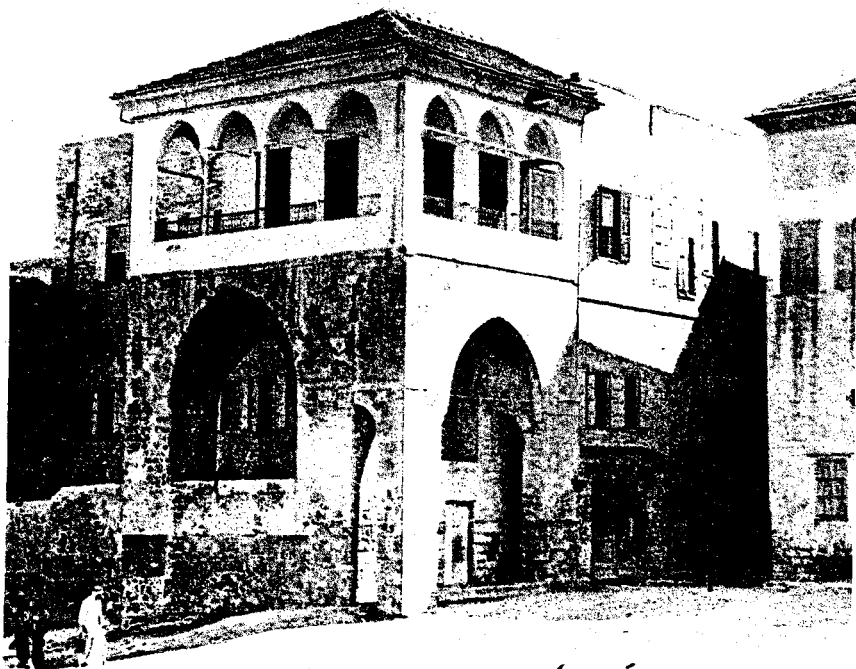
THE HOUSE OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH
IN BAGHDÁD



THE HOUSE OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH IN ADRIANOPLE



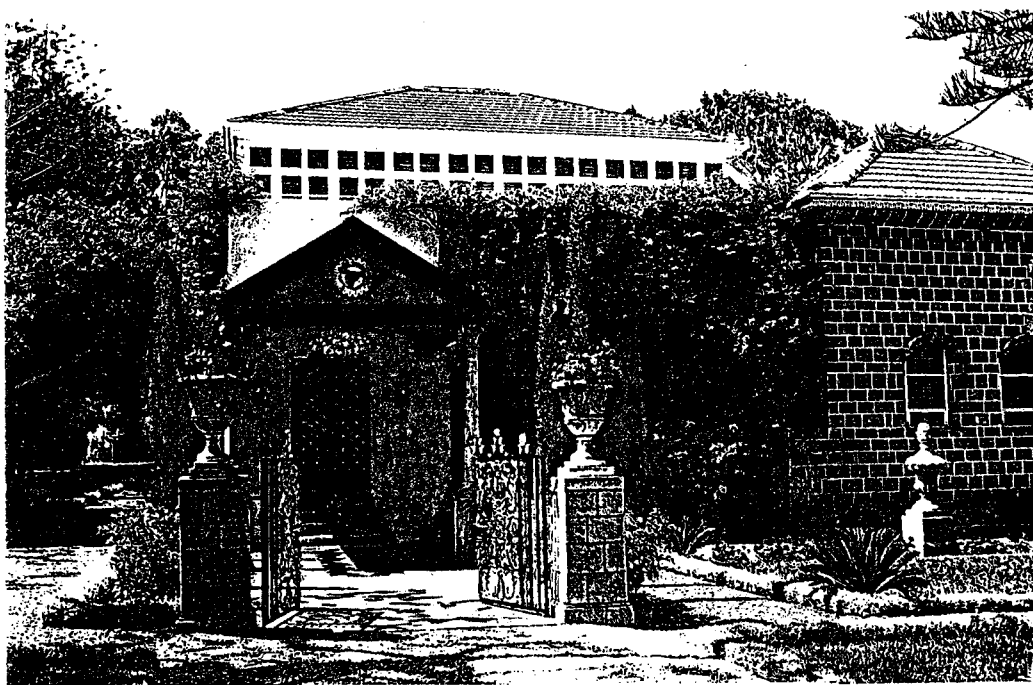
TWO UPPER RIGHT WINDOWS BELONG TO THE
PRISON CELL OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH IN 'AKKÁ



THE HOUSE OF 'ABBÚD



THE MANSION OF BAHJĪ
OUTSIDE WALLED CITY OF 'AKKÁ



THE SHRINE OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Upon His arrival in the capital, Istánbul, many dignitaries paid Him a visit which He did not return as was customary in those days. The only places He visited were mosques and public bath. Just four months later an order came for His further exile. Up to this time, the treatment by the Turkish government was not considered hostile. Even the order to move from Baghdád to Istánbul was in the form of invitation rather than an order, but when this order came, Bahá'u'lláh's response changed, and He called this order unjust because He was innocent of any wrongdoing, and that He was exiled without being heard.

You see! Three opportunities for mankind were badly missed. One was when the Báb came within thirty miles from Tehran to meet the king, but the notorious prime minister, Hájí Mirzá Aqasi, the Anti-Christ of the Bábí Faith, being afraid for his own position, interfered and sent the Báb to the fortress of Máh-Kú. The second opportunity was when Bahá'u'lláh was in Baghdád, only fifty miles from the center of Islámic learning. These doctors of Islám, instead of interviewing Him, sent their agent to ask for a miracle. The third was when Bahá'u'lláh was in Istanbul. The least the Sultán, who was also the religious head, could have done was to ask for a discussion or debate with the clergy to see what His Cause was about.

But the people of power had to be the pawns in the Divine Plan for fulfillment of prophecies, and yet the history does not show a single incidence that anyone who tried to kill or injure Him escaped the punishment of God in this life.

Again history repeats itself. In the middle of a blizzard, inadequately prepared, He, the family, and followers moved to Adrianople, the most eastern corner of Europe. This is the first time in the history of religion that a Manifestation of God has stepped on European soil and lived there for awhile.

His five years in Adrianople were stormy. His desperate half-brother, who thirsted for leadership, poisoned Him, but He recovered and was left with shaking hands. Since He had been a master of penmanship, He did not take the pen any more except for what He wrote to His son, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and His will.

While He was proclaiming His Cause worldwide by addressing the rulers and the ecclesiastics, the troublemakers did not rest until one hot summer morning the soldiers surrounded His house, and no one knew what was coming. Were all being sent back to Persia, or drowned in the sea, or what?

When they were moved under guard to the seaport in preparation for final exile to 'Akká, Bahá'u'lláh revealed His well-known Súriy-i-Ra'ís (Ra'ís means the chief), addressed to 'Álî-Páshá, the prime minister of the Turkish Empire. In it, Bahá'u'lláh severely rebuked 'Álî-Páshá, and forecast their downfall with Adrianople passing out of their hands, and blood flowing everywhere which were all fulfilled within eight years.

Another hot August day, similar to the day He was taken to the Siyáh-Chál, after having been shipped to Haifa, He, His family and followers, a total of sixty-seven people, were put on a sail boat towards 'Akká, and His half-brother to Cyprus. To make it more miserable, the government ordered a few of the followers of each to go with the other. When one of Bahá'u'lláh's followers heard that he should go to Cyprus with Mírzá Yaḥyá, he shouted "Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá," and jumped in the sea to drown himself, but was rescued and resuscitated enough to be sent to Cyprus. After a few years, he escaped and joined the believers near Bahá'u'lláh.

That August day was so windless that it took all day for that sail boat to cross the bay. Without any shade and inadequate water, the suffering, particularly that of children, needs no description.

Bahá'u'lláh was placed in a solitary cell behind bars, and the rest, in crowded rooms. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, then twenty-five years old, and seeing the crowded situation, chose to sleep in the morgue room on a slab of cold stone. What atrocities! Soon sickness of every kind struck, and some died. It was during that time when a believer, badly ill, took his last breath, and the message of death was taken to Bahá'u'lláh. He brought him back to life by advising His secretary to go and chant the healing prayer by his death bed.

It was a couple months short of two years since His imprisonment in the cell when a great tragedy happened. It was the death of

Bahá'u'lláh's twenty-two year old son, Mírzá Mihdí. While deep in prayer, pacing on the rooftop, he fell through an open skylight. Bahá'u'lláh asked him what his wish was. He could have granted any wish. However, Mírzá Mihdí begged that he could be accepted as a sacrifice so the gates would open, and the believers could attain the presence of their Lord. His wish was granted. In a few months the government, needing the barracks for military purposes, put the believers in various houses within the city under house arrest. Bahá'u'lláh was confined to the house of 'Údí Khammár, also known as the house of 'Abbúd, where He revealed the Kitáb-i-Aqdas in 1873, twenty years after His intimation in the Síyáh-Chál, and in the midpoint of His ministry.

Soon the downfall and assassination of Sultán 'Abdu'l-'Azíz occurred, and the course of events eased the restrictions after spending nine years in the disease-ridden and desolate city of 'Akká, called by Him "the Most Great Prison."

The Mansion of Bahjí, built by the wealthy 'Údí Khammár outside the walled city of 'Akká by an oasis, was deserted because of outbreak of disease, and was rented for a nominal fee, and later purchased. Bahá'u'lláh's last thirteen years of ministry were spent in the comfort of that mansion with its doors open to all believers.

He ascended at the age of seventy-five on May 29, 1892, about a century ago, and was laid to rest the same day in a building adjacent to the Mansion.

Friends! This is the first time in the history of religion that detailed, recorded history of the birth of a religion, and minute accounts of the lives of its Authors is left for posterity. What a bounty for us to have access to this knowledge.

Let us elaborate on three questions about Bahá'u'lláh's response to the hostile environment, kind gestures of the well-wishers, and the impression of a curious Westerner. The first question. Was His life in danger? Yes, every minute of it. The incident of Muḥammad Sháh's order for His arrest and execution was mentioned earlier. His imprisonment in the Síyáh-Chál was for the intention of killing Him. His arch-enemy was the venomous mother of the

young Sháh whose murder had been attempted. While in the Síyáh-Chál His food was poisoned by her order, but was so obvious that He did not eat it. During exile in Baghdád, twice He escaped an assassination attempt by a hired gunman. The Persian consul had hired this professional and fearless assassin, offering high rewards. But to the gunman's own account, every time that he faced Bahá'u'lláh, he became filled with awe and remorse, and could not use the gun. Once was in the public bath when Bahá'u'lláh was alone, and the second time was on the street at a vantage point.

When in Baghdád, a large number of fanatic Muslims, riled up by the consul and clergy, wished to attack His house and kill Him after dark. That afternoon, He walked with His servant to the coffeehouse where the ruffians' leaders used to frequent. As He approached the coffeehouse, with vehemence He told His servant, "Our life has been threatened. We have no fear. We are ready for them. Here is our head." All who heard Him were struck dumb. He stayed in the coffee shop until dark and walked home. No one dared to touch him.

When in Adrianople, He was poisoned by His half-brother. He became seriously ill with pain and high fever. His condition was so bad that Dr. Shíshmán, who visited Him, called it hopeless and terminal. In a few days the doctor became ill, and when Bahá'u'lláh's secretary visited him, he stated that he wished to offer his life as a ransom for the recovery of Bahá'u'lláh. This offer was accepted by Bahá'u'lláh, so the doctor died and Bahá'u'lláh recovered, but He was left with shaking hands. Dr. Shíshmán really did not die. He became immortal in the history of the Faith.

Bahá'u'lláh was the target of the wrath of three monarchs; two kings of Persia and the powerful Sultan of Turkey. Their intent was to destroy Him and crush His Cause. All they did was to fulfill the prophesies. The disease-ridden and foul-aired 'Akká did not kill Him. The greatest volumes of His writings were revealed during twenty-four years of His life in 'Akká.

The second question; did He take asylum? The incidence of the reception in Bandar Gaz, and the Russian officer offering his ship as asylum was mentioned earlier.

When the attempt on the life of the Sháh was made in 1852, Bahá'u'lláh had just returned from a year of visit to the holy cities of Karbilá and Najaf, and was hosted by the brother of the prime minister who was also from Núr. The prime minister, through marriage, had a distant relationship with Bahá'u'lláh. As soon as the prime minister informed them of what happened and the pending danger, the friends offered horse, money and provisions for Bahá'u'lláh to take asylum in a holy shrine which He refused, and rode His horse towards the trouble spot.

Just released after four months in the Siyáh-Chál, ill with deadly typhoid and leech wounds on his feet and ankles and the order of exile issued, Prince Dolgorúky of Russia, who knew the family, offered Him asylum in Russia, but it was not accepted. He followed what the Hand of Providence had destined for Him.

Then in Baghdád, being the target for fanatical Muslims with their ignorant clergy; and worse, the Persian consul whose main assignment was to kill Him, the consul-general of England visited Bahá'u'lláh, and offered British citizenship which was normally unattainable, and also safe transfer to India, then a British colony. But Bahá'u'lláh had the calling from the Most Great Prison in 'Akká to suffer so mankind could be liberated.

In one tablet called Shikar Shikan Shavand, He wrote in Baghdád, "We shall not run away. We pray for calamity. Until the time ordained has come, no one has power over us," which astonished His enemies and assured His friends.

The third question; what was His contact with the Westerners? It was the consul-general of England, Colonel Sir Arnold Kemball, who paid a few visits to the home of Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdád. The British were so proud that they rarely visited the homes of dignitaries; therefore, visiting a banished person was very unusual. He paid his respects to Bahá'u'lláh, but to his disappointment, Bahá'u'lláh did not accept his offer of British citizenship and safe passage to India. Sir Kemball did not leave anything in writing for posterity, neither did Dr. Shishmán; but fortunately Professor Edward G. Browne, the famous British orientalist, did so with his capable pen, capturing the effect of that momentous event.

I will read only a very small portion of his impression when he interviewed Bahá'u'lláh in the Mansion of Bahjí two years before His Ascension. "The face of Him on Whom I gazed I can never forget, though I cannot describe it. Those piercing eyes seemed to read one's very soul; power and authority sat on that ample brow. No need to ask in whose presence I stood, as I bowed myself before the One Who is the object of a devotion and love which kings might envy and emperors sigh for in vain!"

Friends! This talk will be incomplete without a glance at Bahá'u'lláh's writings. There are fifteen thousand documents at the World Center, either written in His own handwriting, or by His secretary, bearing His seal. Some of these are in the size of a book such as the Kitáb-i-Aqdas and the Kitáb-i-Íqán, some in form of a short letter or tablets. What other religion can claim such a bounty?

In Baghdád, He revealed His mystical writings, such as The Four Valleys and The Seven Valleys, spiritual and moral exhortations, such as The Hidden Words, the interpretation of the prophecies of the Holy Books, and proof of the station of the Báb, titled Kitáb-i-Íqán, or The Book of Certitude.

In Adrianople and later in 'Akká, He addressed the kings, emperors and the ecclesiastics, thus proclaiming His Faith worldwide. In 'Akká in 1873, when half of His ministry was over, He revealed His Most Holy Book, or the Kitáb-i-Aqdas which addresses the following four subjects: 1. The laws and ordinances; 2. The institution of successorship; 3. The Universal House of Justice; 4. Prophecies including the New World Order and the next Manifestation.

Following the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, His major tablets such as Ishráqát (Splendors); Bishárát (Glad Tidings); Tajalliyát (Effulgences); Tarázát (Ornaments); Kalimát-i-Ferdawsiyih (Words of Paradise); Lawh-i-Maqṣúd (Tablet of Maqṣúd); Lawh-i-Aqdas (The Most Holy Tablet); and Lawh-i-Dunyá (Tablet of the World) were written. This group of Tablets are considered supplementary to the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. The Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, an anthology of His writings and glance at His life, was written in 1891, one year before His Ascension, the same year that the last Tablet, or the Tablet of the World, was revealed. The Book of His Covenant,

appointing 'Abdu'l-Bahá as the Center of the Covenant, was opened and read nine days after His Ascension.

This was a brief account of the life of Mírzá Ḥusayn 'Alí-i-Nurí, known as Bahá'u'lláh, the Supreme Manifestation of God.

May I be forgiven for any shortcoming in this presentation.

THE UNIQUENESS OF THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH

The Bahá'í Dispensation is distinguished from all other dispensations with its unique and matchless features, the greatest of which is the unrivaled station of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. All Manifestations of the past appeared during various stages of the evolution of man's collective life; namely, from the childhood period of tribal life to the stage of youth or statehood. The last Manifestation in the Adamic Cycle, the Seal of the Prophets, Muḥammad, stressed the significance of nationhood. The Bahá'í Revelation, as testified by the Guardian, should be viewed as marking the last and the highest stage in the evolution of man's collective life on this planet; or, in other words, the stage of maturity which comes only once to mankind. The Golden Age of the Bahá'í Era should be regarded, as far as this planetary life is concerned, as the furthestmost limits in the organization of human society.

The second glorious feature is the Twin Manifestations. These two Suns of Reality, being in essence as one, by release of spiritual energies revolutionized and revitalized the life of mankind, to bring about in fullness of time the Most Great Peace when the Kingdom of God shall reign. One Manifestation, the Báb, or the Primal Point, through the potency of Whom all things originated, and the Cycle of Fulfillment was inaugurated. The other, Bahá'u'lláh, the Supreme Redeemer of mankind, Who is the Desire of the World and the King of Kings, and whose reign will overshadow all Manifestations in the next cycle of five thousand centuries.

The third indisputable feature is the fulfillment of the prophecy, "The Day that shall not be followed by night." The Báb states that

the 'Day' is the life of a prophet on this earth, and the night is the period from His death to the time of the next Manifestation when only luminaries will shine. In this Day of God, the light of Bahá'u'lláh continues to shine through His Covenant in its sublime resplendency, and is the source of unity of mankind. This covenant with its twin interpreters, 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi, succeeded by the Universal House of Justice, is unparalleled in history. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Center of the Covenant, the Most Great Branch, has a station above that of an ordinary man in position of successorship. He possessed such powers that truly personified the title given to Him by His Father, "The Mystery of God."

Shoghi Effendi, the only Guardian of the Faith, the last authorized interpreter, the Sign of God on earth, was the most precious gift and indeed a 'Priceless Pearl.' Shoghi Effendi states in The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh that the gulf that separated the station of 'Abdu'l-Bahá from the station of Bahá'u'lláh also exists between himself and that of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, but much wider.

The fourth feature is the existence of original texts of the sacred writings, the like of which no religion can claim. In the most recent dispensations of Islám and Christianity, we find that only parts of the Qur'án were written during the lifetime of Muḥammad, and the rest within a few years after His passing. The Gospels were probably written some forty to sixty years after the Ascension of Jesus. This sharp contrast is manifested by the existence of more than fifteen thousand documents written or dictated by Bahá'u'lláh during forty years of His ministry, and preserved in the Archives of the Bahá'í Faith at the World Center.

The fifth unique feature is the divinely ordained administrative system which is unlike man-made systems in Islám and Christianity which were subject to abuse of power and corruption. This new administrative order was originated by Bahá'u'lláh more than a century ago, and presently is in its embryonic form. It will safeguard mankind from all evils inherent in the past systems; and, being the fruit of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, guarantees the unity of mankind and its survival.

Examination of the lives and the times of the Manifestations of the past bring to light the sixth unique feature of this Faith. Even

in the history of the most recent religions such as Islám and Christianity, the birthdate of Muḥammad and Jesus are not known. In the Bahá'í Faith we have detailed recorded history of the life of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh which will be a relief to the future religious historians.