

MULLA HUSAYN-I-BUSHRU'I

A transcript of audio-cassette from series

WINDOWS TO THE PAST

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No introduction more befitting, no words more expressive for opening this window other than these awesome words of Baha'u'llah uttered in the Book of Certitude about Mulla Husayn -

"But for him, God would not have been established upon the seat of His mercy, nor ascended the throne of eternal glory." (Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 223)

In another tablet, Baha'u'llah has asserted that the Bab pronounced Mulla Husayn to be the return and resurrection of Muhammad because he was invested with the command of God the same way that Muhammad was. Then Baha'u'llah states,

"This station is sanctified from every limitation and name, and naught can be seen therein but God."

(Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 185)

Now we can understand why, with praises given to Mulla Husayn by his teacher, Siyyid Kazim, the other disciples suspected him to be the promised Qa'im which was the station of the Bab. (God Passes By, p. 50)

He was eighteen when he went to Karbila, a holy city in Iraq, and in those nine years he spent at the feet of his illustrious teacher, Siyyid Kazim, one wonders if he had any idea about the glorious mission awaiting him.

As you recall, Siyyid Kazim was the second and the last luminary who appeared before the Declaration of the Bab, foretelling the nearness of the advent of the promised Qa'im.

Although the doctrines of these two teachers were clearly in accordance with Islamic holy writings, some prominent divines in Iran contested them and showed indication of withdrawing their support, bordering on open opposition. One such divine was in Isfahan, once the capital of the Safavid dynasty in Iran.

Siyid Kazim, in his lectures, made references to those divines, and once he said if only a capable student of his could rise to the occasion and convince those divines of the truth of his teachings. You would guess that Mulla Husayn would be the one who raised his hand, but his humility surpassed his greatness. This paradox of greatness in humility has been repeatedly seen in the history of the Faith.

The task was challenging and even dangerous since each of those divines had a large number of followers who believed in them and could not tolerate anyone challenging them. Of all the disciples who wished to rise to the occasion, one student rose up and volunteered his services. Siyyid Kazim appreciated the offer, but said, "This task is like playing with the lion's tail. Only an equal could tackle these divines." Another day he gazed into the eyes of frail Mulla Husayn, then twenty-seven years old, and said, "Of all my disciples, only you have the capacity for such a task, and I will choose no one but you."

Soon Mulla Husayn left for Isfahan, where in a short time he disarmed and convinced that influential divine, carrying his written testimony to other parts of the country. He communicated his successes to his teacher who showered him with boundless praise, but alluded that they would not meet again in this mortal world.

Then on that 31st day of December 1843, the year before the Declaration of the Bab, as predicted by himself, Siyyid Kazim passed away. About three weeks later Mulla Husayn, unaware of the passing of his teacher, arrived in Karbila only to receive the shocking news.

Being the most prominent disciple of Siyyid Kazim, he was visited by high and low who offered their condolences. Then he gathered the students and inquired about the last words of their departed teacher, which were to disperse and find the promised Qa'im; that there would not be another teacher to succeed him.

As soon as he heard the expressed wishes of their teacher, he asked, "Why haven't you left?" Acknowledging their failure, they said, "Such is our confidence in you that should you claim to be the Promised One, we will all accept your claim."

You see, their excitement and reverence for Mulla Husayn temporarily blinded them to the features specified by their teacher for the Qa'im. Mulla Husayn was thirty-one years old and was not a siyyid which means a descendant of Muhammad.

Two of the egotistical disciples excused themselves under the pretext of one wishing to protect the vacant seat of the departed teacher, and the other felt obligated to stay in Karbila to care for the children of the teacher, but really they had their eyes on successorship.

All the devoted disciples and Mulla Husayn's brother and nephew, who had recently accompanied him from Iran, followed his example and retired to a mosque where they fasted and prayed for forty days. Then Mulla Husayn, his brother and nephew entered Iran through the southern port city of Bushihr.

Mulla Husayn never married. His sister and mother stayed in Karbila. As you know, Tahirih was also an admirer of Siyyid Kazim by correspondence, but arrived ten days too late to see that illustrious teacher. She stayed with the wife of the teacher and later converted her.

Now we find Mulla Husayn and two relatives in the southern part of Iran directing their steps towards Shiraz, or shall we say their steps were directed to Shiraz by the Hand of Providence. How else could it be? The Bab was near the gate of Shiraz to greet Mulla Husayn upon his arrival. The two were apparently total strangers, but spiritually connected.

Now the memorable day is at hand, and the momentous hour ready to strike. The birth of a new Dispensation, the exact account of which as related by Mulla Husayn shall be treasured by generations to come. On that beautiful twenty-second day of May, 1844, a few hours before sunset, Mulla Husayn and company arrived at the gate of Shiraz, when he sent his brother and nephew to go

to a certain mosque for lodging, promising that he would join them later.

Outside the gate, his eyes fell upon the radiant face of the Bab who greeted him. He embraced Mulla Husayn as if they had been lifelong friends. His first thought was that the Bab was another disciple of Siyyid Kazim. The exact details of the Bab's Declaration have been graphically mentioned by Mulla Husayn and recorded in The Dawn-Breakers, but in the interest of time, only its highlights will be recounted.

Mulla Husayn's concern over joining his companions was overcome by the gentle but compelling invitation of the Bab to follow Him to His home. At the threshold of the door, Mulla Husayn prayed that the first house he visited in Shiraz would be the instrument to lead him to the object of his quest. If he only knew that that was the House.

Friends, this was not an ordinary hour approaching. It was the culmination of the six thousand years Cycle of Prophecy, and the opening of the five thousand centuries of the Cycle of Fulfillment, the two greatest religious cycles known to mankind. The significance of that hour demanded no less capacity and character than that of Mulla Husayn, without whom the Dispensation would not have been born. (Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 223)

Unaware of what was awaiting him, he followed his Host and entered that modest House. Remember! Mulla Husayn still considered his Host to be another disciple of his departed teacher. Answering the inquiry of his Host, Mulla Husayn told Him what were the last wishes of his teacher, and how he was searching for the Promised One. Further, he enumerated the distinguishing features of the Promised One. The Bab paused for awhile like the calm before the thunder. Then the silence was broken with the vibrant voice of the Bab proclaiming, "Behold, all these signs are manifest in Me!"

Thunderstruck, Mulla Husayn could not believe his ears. Not quite convinced, he referred to the vast and innate knowledge of the Promised One and his unsurpassed holiness repeatedly specified by his late teacher. Suddenly he was struck with fear and remorse. Upon the start of his search, Mulla Husayn had set two standards

that the Promised One must fulfill. The first was an explanation of the mysteries of a long treatise written by himself, and the second was producing a commentary on the chapter of Joseph in the Qur'an, unasked. You see, during Mulla Husayn's days with his teacher, Siyyid Kazim, once he asked his teacher to write a commentary on the chapter of Joseph, but the teacher said, "This is way beyond me. A commentary unlike any one before will be revealed by the Promised One without being asked.

Mulla Husayn, with trepidation, gave his own treatise to the Bab for perusal. The Bab glanced at certain pages, and in a short time unravelled all the various mysteries in that treatise, the like of which Mulla Husayn had never heard. Can you imagine Mulla Husayn's state of mind? His heart surely was ready to leap out of his chest. Whether speechless or not, we do not know, because he did not have to utter a word when the final bolt of lightning from Heaven struck. Friends, this was not just another ordinary man-to-man talk. It was the power of the Holy Spirit giving birth to a new cycle, a new dispensation.

The Bab said, "Now is the time for Me to reveal a commentary on the chapter of Joseph." The impact of release of that force would have crushed any mortal, but Mulla Husayn was blessed with fortitude to withstand it. Mulla Husayn states, "He took up the pen and with incredible rapidity revealed the first chapter of that commentary. The overpowering effect of the manner in which He wrote was heightened by the gentle intonations of His voice which accompanied His writing. Not for one moment did He interrupt or pause until it was finished." Then, when Mulla Husayn begged the Bab to be permitted to leave, the clock registered two hours and ten minutes after sunset. The Bab smilingly said, "Should you leave in such a state surely whoever sees you will say, 'This poor youth has lost his mind.'"

The Bab told him, "I am the Bab (meaning the Gate) and you are the Babu'l-Bab" (meaning a gate to the Gate.) It is interesting that the Bab did not declare to Mulla Husayn that He was the Qa'im which was obvious. Right then and there, by adopting the title of the Gate, He alluded to the coming of a greater Manifestation. After supper they sat up all night with Mulla Husayn taking in every word uttered by the Bab. At dawn Mulla Husayn was dismissed.

That night the Bab instructed Mulla Husayn not to breath his discovery to anyone until seventeen more people would independently discover and recognize the Bab. He alluded to His oncoming trip to Mecca after the completion of the first eighteen disciples, and also instructed Mulla Husayn to go to the mosque which he had chosen for lodging and teach Islamic courses.

It took forty days before the next person discovered the Bab, and in about three months, their number reached eighteen. These eighteen disciples were called the Letters of the Living, one of whom has a woman named Tahirih.

On several occasions, the Bab sent His servant to the mosque to invite Mulla Husayn who joyously accompanied him, and every time sat up all night in the presence of the Bab until the break of day. In those forty days Mulla Husayn's lectures were like a magnet to the divines and theological students, not knowing what the source was. Of course, when the Bab's Faith came to open, his fame became a liability for him a couple years later when he returned to Shiraz.

It is safe to assume that with Mulla Husayn's depth in Islamic holy writings he was expecting another Manifestation, and the Bab's assuming the title of the Gate further confirmed it. Did he ever wonder if that Manifestation was born or not? No one knows, but he did not have to wait too long to find out.

The seventeenth Letter of the Living was a woman called Tahirih. The last one, called Quddus, was also a student of Siyyid Kazim and nine years younger than Mulla Husayn. Being the last disciple or younger is meaningless in the realm of spirit. His discovery of the Bab was as exciting as was his life, superior rank and martyrdom. After the seventeenth disciple was accepted by the Bab, He said, "Tomorrow the eighteenth will join us." The next day as Mulla Husayn was following a few steps behind the Bab, he met the twenty-two-year-old Quddus who just had arrived from a long journey. Knowing each other from school days, they embraced. Quddus asked Mulla Husayn, "Have you found the object of your quest?" Mulla Husayn was not at liberty to reveal the secret, so he gave a vague answer. Suddenly the traveller said, "Why do you try to hide Him from me. He is no one but that Man," and pointed to the back of the Bab who by then had walked a little distance.

Mulla Husayn pleaded with him to calm down until he could enlighten him. Mulla Husayn hastened and joined the Bab. When he reported what Quddus said, the Bab said that in the world of spirit, He had been communing with that youth, and to go and summon him.

For your information, only three of the disciples or followers of the Bab during His ministry recognized the identity of Baha'u'llah. They were Mulla Husayn, Tahirih and Quddus. All drank the cup of martyrdom, but their short and extraordinary lives adorn the pages of history.

Before opening the next chapter in the life of Mulla Husayn, the following information is timely. Baha'u'llah was two years older than the Bab, and lived in the capital city of Tehran. His given name was Mirza Husayn- Ali, the middle son of a prominent and noble man. The mysterious and spiritual connection between Baha'u'llah and the Bab, although the two never physically met, is beyond explanation and our comprehension.

To continue the story, soon after the eighteenth disciple joined the Letters of the Living, the Bab revealed a tablet for each, and instructed them to disperse and spread the Word. The first and the last had the bounty of the greatest honor; one to accompany Him for pilgrimage to Mecca where He would declare His Cause publicly, and the other on a special mission to Tehran. I let you guess for a couple seconds which one He chose to be with Him on His long journey to Mecca.

One clue might help or mislead you. Do you remember at the night of His Declaration, the Bab told Mulla Husayn about His oncoming pilgrimage after the eighteenth person would complete the Letters of the Living, and Mulla Husayn was counting on being His companion. Well! The following statement addressed to Mulla Husayn by the Bab will give us the answer, "Grieve not that you have not been chosen to accompany Me on My pilgrimage to Hijaz (meaning Arabia.) I shall, instead, direct your steps to that city which enshrines a Mystery of such transcendent holiness as neither Hijaz nor Shiraz can hope to rival." Hijaz and Shiraz in the last sentence referred to Islam and the Bab's Faith. Also He had told Mulla Husayn, "A secret lies hidden in Tehran. When made manifest, it shall turn the earth into paradise. My hope is that you may partake

of its grace and recognize its splendor." As we shall see, later Mulla Husayn did recognize Baha'u'llah and partake of His grace.

Mulla Husayn left Shiraz with the assignment to visit a few cities on his way to Tehran, and then to proceed to his native province of Khurasan. The thoughts of "I wish He had chosen me to go to Mecca" or "I wonder what happened that the Bab chose Quddus as His companion" never troubled Mulla Husayn. Absolute faith means absolute submission. May we all attain to some degree of it.

At his first stop in Isfahan, where a few years earlier he had gained the support of a prominent clergyman for his teacher, the situation was different. His words not only fell on deaf ears, but antagonized some fanatics, who fortunately were unable to harm him. His first convert was the lowly sifter of wheat who was immortalized by his steadfastness and heroism. Baha'u'llah praises him in the Kitab-i-Aqdas.

After going through couple more cities and converting a number of people, he arrived in Tehran, the mysterious city. You should know that the Bab had sent with Mulla Husayn a package containing His commentary on the chapter of Joseph to be delivered to the person for whom it was intended. No name or address on it. Remember, one of the Bab's final words was, "I shall direct your steps." Mulla Husayn had full confidence in the force which guided him to Shiraz, and now to the mysterious receiver of the package. All he had to do was his day-to-day best decisions and leave the rest to God. If all of us do the same, we will be content and happier beings.

Well! What better place to lodge than a theological school where the leader of the Shaykhi community was an instructor. Shaykhis were the followers of the two great teachers, Shaykh Ahmad and Siyid Kazim. Visiting the instructor in his room at the school, Mulla Husayn gave him the news of the advent of the Bab and brought forth valid arguments and proofs to which the instructor gave evasive answers. When he found himself at the dead end, he became abusive by telling Mulla Husayn, "Instead of protecting the best interests of the followers of Siyid Kazim, you have betrayed his cause, and with such subversive claims you easily could destroy what is left of the Shaykhi community in Tehran." Mulla Husayn

assured him that he had no intention of staying long in Tehran. During those days of his stay in that city, Mulla Husayn would leave his room early in the morning and would return after sunset, keeping a low profile. The Hand of Providence had placed everything in the right place for the accomplishment of his mission.

There was a man by the name of Mulla Muhammad-i-Mu allim, residing in that school who was a native of Nur, Baha'u'llah's ancestral hometown. Mulla Muhammad was very closely associated with the arrogant instructor. Matter of fact, his room was next to the instructor's room, and he had overheard the whole conversation of Mulla Husayn and the instructor. Being deeply touched by the sincerity, fluency and learning of Mulla Husayn, he ventured to meet Mulla Husayn at the hour of midnight when everyone else was asleep. He states, "Mulla Husayn did not expect me, but responded to my knocking at his door and received me with kindness and courtesy. I found him sitting by a lamp, reading. I was so disappointed and upset with the behavior of my friend, the instructor, but until that moment I had concealed it. I unburdened my heart to him, and as I spoke tears flowed from my eyes which I could not repress."

Mulla Husayn said, "Now I know why I have chosen this school for lodging." No, the recipient of the package is still a mystery to Mulla Husayn. He told the visitor, "Your teacher strongly rejected the message. My hope is that his student may recognize the truth." Now we are getting close! Mulla Husayn asked him, "What is your name?" He answered, "Mulla Muhammad, but I am known as Mu allim (meaning teacher.) My home town is Nur in the province of Mazindaran." Well, well, how perfect! Mulla Husayn, who had heard about Baha'u'llah's father who was a famous man of nobility, became curious. He asked Mu allim, "Tell me, among the family of the late Mirza Buzurg from Nur has anyone manifested the traits of that illustrious man?" The answer was, "Yes, among his sons, one son, Mirza Husayn-Ali, has distinguished himself with such qualities that characterized his father." He questioned Mu allim further about that son's position, activities and age. Every answer caused such a delight in Mulla Husayn which surprised Mu allim. His face beaming with joy, he asked Mu allim if he saw Mirza Husayn-Ali often. Mu'allim said he frequently visited their house. Then Mulla Husayn reached for the scroll, and asked him if he would deliver it to Mirza Husayn-Ali at the hour of dawn the next day.

As you know from the details in other talks, it was done, and Baha'u'llah accepted the Faith of the Bab, and sent gifts through Mu'allim for Mulla Husayn. Upon the return of Mu allim, Mulla Husayn jumped to his feet and listened to what transpired. With bowed head, he received the gift and fervently kissed it. Then he kissed Mu allim's eyes which had beheld the face of the Mystery which the Bab had alluded to. He asked Mu allim for complete secrecy about what transpired, lest any harm might come to Mirza Husayn-'Ali. Mu'allim became a believer, and later on, as one of the defenders of the Fort Shaykh Tabarsi, was martyred.

Meanwhile, the Bab had delayed his departure for pilgrimage until Mulla Husayn's report on this mission reached Him. Mulla Husayn immediately left for his home province, and from there sent the report the Bab had been waiting for. The Bab was with Quddus in Shiraz when He received the letter. With joy, He told Quddus, "The Cause of God is in capable hands; therefore, we can start our journey." Such spiritual connection and interaction not only stagger's one's mind, but also makes us realize the greatness of the station of Mulla Husayn who was the chosen instrument in the hands of the Almighty.

His coming that close to Baha'u'llah fortified Mulla Husayn. His converts in Khurasan were the most learned divines, none of whom could challenge his arguments. One such influential man dedicated his home for debates between Mulla Husayn and the divines of Mashhad, the capital of that province. After the tragic death of Mulla Husayn, Quddus appointed this man to become the leader of the defenders of the Fort which ended with his martyrdom.

While Mulla Husayn was actively teaching in Mashhad a communique had reached all the Babis from the Bab that He would return to Iran by way of Karbila. Such a message brought joy to those who were in Karbila, such as Tahirih, Mulla Husayn's mother and sister and others. Other believers, such as Mulla Husayn, took advantage of it for reunion with their Beloved, the Bab. After all, it had been a year or more since he saw the Bab. Then a letter from the Bab reached the believers, that due to circumstances, His plan was changed and they should all go to Isfahan and wait for further instructions.

Mulla Husayn, while travelling towards Karbila, did not know about the new instruction. At one stop, he heard about the change in plan from believers, and joined them in their travel to Isfahan. Mulla Husayn advised the large number of believers to enter the city in small numbers to avoid suspicion and alarm of the authorities. A few days after their arrival in Isfahan, a shocking news came that the city of Shiraz was in a state of violent agitation, and all manner of communication with the Bab was cut off. The message warned them about the danger awaiting the followers who tried to enter Shiraz.

Mulla Husayn, quite undaunted by such news, decided to go to Shiraz and confided his intentions to a few trusted companions. He discarded his turban and robe and put on layman's clothes and hat. As he, his brother and nephew were approaching the gate of Shiraz, he sent his brother in advance, so at the dead of night he would reach the Bab's uncle and inform him of Mulla Husayn's arrival. Several times at night Mulla Husayn attained the presence of the Bab at His uncle's house. As you recall, the Bab was under house arrest at His home which adjoined His uncle's house. As before, the meetings would last until the daybreak.

Mulla Husayn's layman's disguise worked when passing through the gate, but he was well-known in the circle of divines, who for three months had listened eagerly to his inspiring lectures until they discovered that he was a follower of the Bab. The clamor of the people against him intensified to such a degree that the Bab instructed him to return to his province of Khurasan, which he did.

In Mashhad, the provincial capital, his untiring teaching efforts brought row upon row of high and low under the banner of the Cause. Now the winter of 1847 was approaching, nearly three years after the Declaration of the Bab. The Bab was imprisoned in the fortress of Mah-Ku, and in Mashhad, Mulla Husayn's prestige and influence became well-known. During those days, because of corruption and ineptness of the central government, uprisings of strong men were common across the country. One such uprising occurred in that year in Khurasan under the leadership of a strong man called Salar.

Soon Mulla Husayn sensed that Salar was planning to approach him

for recruiting him and the rest of the followers in rebellion against the government. Mulla Husayn's sudden and unannounced departure from Mashhad took place in the middle of the night when he and his attendant, Qambar-Ali, left the city on foot. They directed their steps towards Tehran with eventual destination of the Fortress of Mah-Ku, where the Bab was incarcerated. The next morning when the believers found him gone, they took the main road on their horses, and overtook Mulla Husayn. Seeing him and his attendant walking, they offered horses and provisions, but he told them his pledge was to walk those hundreds of miles all the way.

In different towns, Mulla Husayn was enthusiastically received by the believers. In Tehran he was visited by Baha'u'llah's brother, Mirza Musa, who secretly ushered him into the presence of Baha'u'llah. Just imagine the joy and palpitation of Mulla Husayn's heart! His title was Babu'l-Bab, or the gate to the Gate. He was the first to recognize the Gate, or the Bab. Now he was going to actually see the Mystery beyond the Gate. He did not know who his host was when he accompanied the Bab to His house where the Declaration took place, but this time, he knew who Mirza Husayn-Ali really was. No doubt Mulla Husayn's knees felt weak under the immensity of that momentous visit. One can easily assume that the secrecy of the visit was to keep the identity of Baha'u'llah concealed. Mulla Husayn, at that time, had the highest rank among the Babis, and Baha'u'llah was only a distinguished nobleman. If some believers had been present in that meeting and had seen Mulla Husayn prostrate at the feet of Baha'u'llah, it could have prematurely revealed the identity of Baha'u'llah.

Soon after that visit, he and his attendant walked towards Mah-Ku. The total distance they walked from Mashhad to Mah-Ku was approximately 900 miles or about 1,500 kilometers. The steep mountains and mud and snow did not slow them down. The night before Naw-Ruz of 1848, that memorable year, Ali-Khan, the mellowed warden of the fortress of Mah-Ku, saw a delightful dream. He states, "In my dream I was startled by the sudden message that Muhammad, the Prophet, was soon to arrive at Mah-Ku, and directly go to the fortress to visit the Bab, and offer His congratulation on the advent of Naw-Ruz. With such a message, I ran out to meet Him, and, at a distance from town, saw two men walking towards me. I thought one was Muhammad and the other a companion. I bent to

kiss the hem of His garment, when I suddenly woke up. The vividness of that dream left no doubt that it was a true vision."

Immediately he got up, did his ablution and prayer, put on his finest attire and perfumed himself. It was before sunrise when he began to walk to the spot which he had seen in his dream. His stableman, as instructed, saddled three of his best horses, and followed him. The sun was just rising when he reached the bridge, and, with throbbing of his heart, he saw the same two people he had seen in his dream walking towards him. He relates, "I fell on the feet of the one whom I thought was the Prophet and kissed his feet. I begged him and his companion to mount the horses which I had prepared for them but the answer was 'No, I have vowed to accomplish the whole of my journey on foot. I will walk to the summit of this mountain, and there will visit your Prisoner.'"

With this experience, Ali-Khan's devotion to the Bab increased immensely, and he followed the two on foot. Maybe this was the first and last climbing for him as he was not used to climbing the mountain on foot. There, at the gate was a sight to behold. The Bab was at the gate to receive Mulla Husayn, as if He had received the message of his arrival. As you have witnessed in the histories of the Bab and Baha'u'llah, their knowledge was all-encompassing with no need for physical communication.

Mulla Husayn bowed before his Lord, and stood motionless as the Bab opened His arms and embraced him. Then the believers staying in the town were summoned to the chamber to celebrate, in the presence of the Bab, the fourth Naw-Ruz after His Declaration. Dishes of cookies and fruit were spread before them which the Bab Himself handed to the believers one by one. Food from heaven!

Up to that time, only the Bab's scribe and attendant, who were brothers, were staying day and night with Him. After the mellowing of the warden, Ali-Khan, through the will of the Bab, the followers had access to the Bab during the day. On that Naw-Ruz day, however, Ali-Khan told the Bab that he had no will of his own, and if the Bab desired, Mulla Husayn could spend the nights there as well.

One day from the roof of the castle, the Bab looked towards the west, and as He saw the Araxes River winding its course, He told

Mulla Husayn, "This is the river that the poet Hafiz referred to a few centuries ago. Didn't he say, 'O zephyr! Should you pass by the river Araxes, kiss the earth and make your breath fragrant.'" Then the Bab stated that by the influence of the Holy Spirit words such as these flow from the tongue of poets, the significance of which they themselves oftentime do not comprehend. Then the Bab referred to another poetry stating, "Shiraz will be thrown into a tumult, a youth of sugar tongue will appear. I fear that the flow of his words will agitate Baghdad." In retrospect we easily can tell that this was referring to the Declaration of the Bab in Shiraz and Baha'u'llah in Baghdad. However, at that time, the Bab told Mulla Husayn, "The mystery within this poem is now concealed. It will be revealed in 1852." It was in 1852 when Baha'u'llah received His intimation in the Siyah-Chal dungeon, and in a couple months was exiled to Baghdad.

Another interesting incidence was the wish of Ali-Khan, the warden, to have the Bab marry his daughter. Ali-Khan had a beautiful daughter whom the crown prince wished to marry as one of his wives. Ali-Khan did not favor the idea, and said the relatives of his wife, who were Sunni, would be so furious about that idea that they immediately would kill him and his daughter. You should know that in Mah-Ku area, everyone was of the Sunni sect of Islam, a minority only in Iran and Iraq. The hatred between the two major sects of Islam, Shi'ih and Sunni, began right after the passing of Muhammad. The Bab was of the Shi'ih sect, and that was the reason he was imprisoned there by the prime minister, so no one would have mercy on Him or His followers.

A number of times he begged the Bab, who was about twenty-eight years old, to honor him with acceptance, but the Bab did not consent. Now while the esteemed Mulla Husayn was there, Ali-Khan asked him to intercede on his behalf. Again the Bab denied his request. His beloved wife, Khadijih Bagum, in Shiraz, was in constant anxiety, not knowing what was happening to the Bab. As you recall, on His last day in Shiraz, arrested by the police, the Bab was not given the opportunity to say farewell to His wife or mother.

Well, the final day which was the ninth day after Naw-Ruz, and the last hour arrived. No doubt, Ali-Khan was planning to host

Mulla Husayn in his fine home, and offer his two best horses and all provisions needed for their comfortable ride home. However, the Bab told Mulla Husayn these parting words, "You have walked on foot all the way from your native land, and on foot you shall return. For the days of your horsemanship are yet to come. You are destined to exhibit such courage, such skill and heroism as shall eclipse the mightiest deeds of the heroes of the past. Visit many towns and cities on My behalf, and convey the expression of My love to all. From Tehran direct your steps towards Mazindaran where God's hidden Treasure will be made manifest to you and the nature of your task will be revealed to you."

Mulla Husayn started out at once, and refused the kind invitation of Ali-Khan as there was no time to be wasted. Ali-Khan, the formerly stone-hearted and ruthless warden, had never experienced such spiritual light, but he had to be tested. First was the Bab's refusal to marry his daughter, now Mulla Husayn declined to spend a few days as his guest, but worse was yet to come in eleven days. As the Bab had foretold to Mulla Husayn, twenty days after Naw-Ruz by the order of the desparate prime minister, He was transferred to a fortress on another mountain. The ice cold heart of that tyrant warden within nine months had melted, and while pulsating with the love of the Bab, it had to break. Through what other power except the Holy Spirit, could the Bab have influenced the people. Matter of fact, the officer in charge of his short transfer from one fortress to the other became a dedicated believer. One can say it was like a miracle, but to attribute a miracle as a proof of a Manifestation, according to Baha'u'llah, is degrading His station, so let us obey His injunction and ponder in our hearts.

Mulla Husayn inspired the hearts of the believers on his walk towards Tehran. There, for the second time, he had the bounty of attaining the presence of Baha'u'llah. That was the needed spiritual charge for his upcoming mission to face the fierce assaults in the closing months of his life. All along during his long walk, his soul was in constant communion, his thoughts occupied with one question, what would God's hidden Treasure be, the Treasure which would guide his steps. Hadn't the Bab said, "You will find it in Mazindaran." After Tehran he proceeded to Mazindaran. The only one he knew there was Quddus, then about twenty-six years old. Was it possible that during those months

of Quddus's companionship with the Bab, the Bab had given him His writings for what was yet to unfold? What could that treasure be? He had no doubt about its unfoldment before his eyes, but his legs could not carry him fast enough on the rough roads, climbing the mountain range north of Tehran. As the slopes towards the Caspian Sea began, lush vegetation and trees surrounded the road, and the air was perfumed with various blossoms. He approached the city of Babul where Quddus was residing.

Finally, he reached the house of Quddus. What a sight! The first and the last Letters of the Living embracing each other. Quddus affectionately welcomed Mulla Husayn, and washed his blistered feet with his own hands. That evening Quddus invited the believers to his house to meet the honorable Mulla Husayn, and hear the glad tidings of his recent visit to the Bab. As you recall, Quddus never saw the Bab again after their pilgrimage. The parting words of the Bab to Quddus three years earlier were, "The hour of separation has struck, a separation which no reunion will follow, except in the Kingdom of God in the presence of the King of Glory." The Bab also assured Quddus that he would attain the presence of Him Who is the object of our adoration and love, meaning Baha'u'llah.

As the believers arrived, they found Quddus at the threshold ushering them into the presence of Mulla Husayn, occupying the seat of honor. He truly was a fresh spirit to those longing to hear news of the Bab. After the believers left, Quddus asked Mulla Husayn if the Bab had sent any of His writings with him. Although this was the customary treasure that visitors would carry back, this time the answer was no. Upon hearing this, Quddus handed a manuscript to Mulla Husayn and asked him to read a few passages. As soon as Mulla Husayn had read a page, a sudden change of admiration and surprise appeared on his face. With utmost praise, he laid the manuscript down and said, "This is way beyond ordinary learning." Soon, from the silence of Quddus when questioned about the writer, Mulla Husayn realized that his host, Quddus, was the writer. Mulla Husayn arose, and with bowed head declared, "The Hidden Treasure lies before my eyes. Though my Master is confined in a fortress on the mountaintop, I find the reflection of His light in you."

Mulla Husayn, that matchless man of great learning, with the highest station, well-respected by all, knew how his learning was nothing when he saw the Bab on the day of His Declaration, and now again disregarding his own seniority and erudition, appreciated the significance of God-given virtues and knowledge manifested in Quddus. He pledged his undying loyalty to Quddus who so powerfully mirrored forth the radiance of the Bab. The remaining months of Mulla Husayn's life were spent in obedience to Quddus, constantly striving to ensure his safety and welfare.

How fascinating to see the absence of ego, pride and arrogance in those chosen ones of God. May we strive to attain some degree of it. As the essence of greatness is humility, Mulla Husayn was the embodiment of it. The next morning when the believers came to visit, to their surprise, they saw the honorable Mulla Husayn standing at the threshold in an attitude of humility, and Quddus was in the seat of honor. The first assignment given to Mulla Husayn, in the presence of the assembled believers, was to pay a visit to the notorious and tyrant divine, Sa'idu'l-Ulama, a bitter and vocal enemy of the Cause, and try to open his eyes to the truth of the Cause. Then Mulla Husayn should proceed to Khurasan, his home province, and in Mashhad, its capital, build a house for both a private residence and to serve as a teaching center.

The next day at dawn Mulla Husayn visited that arrogant priest, who in learning was no match to the great ones Mulla Husayn had challenged a few years earlier. Before the assemblage of the divine's disciples, Mulla Husayn defeated every argument which he presented to refute the truth of the Cause. Fearful that all of his disciples should unanimously rally around Mulla Husayn, he stooped to the meanest device of foul and abusive language. Mulla Husayn, having done his duty, left with these words, "My deeds will, in the days to come, prove to you the power of the Message you have chosen to despise." The divine became speechless and utterly confounded.

Mulla Husayn immediately left for Mashhad, and soon bought a piece of land on which he built a house, and gave it the name "Babiyyih." Shortly after it was completed, as promised, Quddus arrived in Mashhad, and together they lived in that house. A steady stream of visitors whom Mulla Husayn had prepared for the acceptance of

the Cause, poured in to attain the presence of Quddus, and acknowledging the truth of the Cause, willingly enlisted under its banner. The combination of the efforts of these two greatest stars of the Faith brought ever-increasing number of believers into the fold, and gave rise to a wave of enthusiasm which swept over the entire city of Mashhad, with its effect spreading rapidly beyond the province. The Babiyyih house became a rallying center for a multitude, fired with the love of the Bab. Well, friends, such an achievement is not beyond our reach. May we arise resolutely, and with trust in Baha'u'llah's unfailing assistance, raise such centers and make each city or town another Mashhad.

Now the summer of 1848 is approaching, with excitement filling the air. To name a few major events, there was the Bab's examination in Tabriz in front of the leading divines and the crown prince, where He boldly pronounced, "I am, I am, I am the promised Qa'im," eliminating any doubt as to His claim. Another one, the conference of Badasht, hosted by Baha'u'llah, where Tahirih appeared without a veil, and under Baha'u'llah's leadership, all ties with Islam were torn away. And, of course, the remarkable events in Fort Shaykh Tabarsi. The first two events are mentioned in other talks, but this one is all about the indomitable Mulla Husayn and the defenders of Shaykh Tabarsi.

Such fervor and enthusiasm in the city of Mashhad could not escape the attention of the clergy and the authorities who became alarmed. Its prolongation could have meant total conversion of the holy city of Mashhad, the province of Khurasan, and, who knows, probably the whole country and beyond. It had to be checked at once. Unfortunately, for ages, new concepts and ideas have always been faced with physical suppression which ultimately fails.

To intimidate Mulla Husayn, the police chief decided to deliver a severe blow to him and the followers as a warning to curb their activities. His men arrested Mulla Husayn's servant, called Hasan, pierced his nose, pulled a cord through the hole and with that halter, paraded him on the streets with jubilant mob following and cheering. Hearing about such insult, the indignation and rage of the followers knew no bounds. Mulla Husayn, quite concerned about the reaction of the new believers and the serious consequences, tried to reason with them and calm them, but to no

avail. The first group of followers, heading to rescue Hasan, raised the cry of "Ya Sahibu'z-Zaman," meaning O Lord of the Age, referring to the Qa'im. This was the first cry which would be repeated numerous times in the months ahead.... Their cry reverberated in the city, and soon cries from various corners shook the people. In a short time, Hasan was rescued and the enemies were struck down.

You remember from earlier part of this talk that the rebellious Salar wished to recruit Mulla Husayn and his men, which was a reason for his leaving on foot to see the Bab. Well! That uprising was put down by Prince Hamzih Mirza, the governor general of Khurasan, whose camp was still standing in the outskirts of Mashhad, ready to act. Hearing all about what happened that day could not be tolerated by the prince, who decided to nip it in the bud. He issued an order for immediate arrest of Mulla Husayn and to be brought to his presence. A little too strong! The prince had witnessed heavy bloodshed ending Salar's uprising. Now, no one could be spared in order to keep peace and quiet.

Could the prince's act be considered rash, or was it guided by the Hand of Providence? The captain of the prince's artillery, a badly needed man, became the instrument. His name, which history shall remember, was Abdu'l-'Ali Khan Maraghiyi. He told the prince, "I consider myself a devoted admirer of Mulla Husayn. You should take my life before contemplating any harm or even disrespect to him." The prince, greatly embarrassed, said, "I, too, have met Mulla Husayn and cherish the utmost devotion to him. All I wish to do is to quiet the unrest while protecting his person." Then the prince, in his own handwriting, wrote an invitation to Mulla Husayn, and ordered his own ornamented tent to be raised for the reception of his guest.

When the letter was delivered to Mulla Husayn, he read it and handed it to Quddus for his advice. Quddus said, "Accept the invitation, but for myself, tonight I will leave Mashhad for my home province of Mazindaran. By God's will you, too, later on at the head of a large company of the believers, under the Black Standard, will leave Mashhad to join me." The mysterious interconnection here is fascinating. In those days telegram and instant electronic communications were not available, but the world of spirit

superceded them all. When Quddus said those words about the Black Standard, a messenger had already left the fortress of Chihriq, where the Bab was imprisoned hundreds of miles away, with the same message from the Bab to Mulla Husayn.

As the course of history shows, Quddus was informed about Baha'u'llah's intention to go to the resort village of Badasht, and therefore he joined Baha'u'llah and Tahirih there.

Prince Hamzih Mirza, in whose camp Mulla Husayn was graciously hosted, later became the governor general of Adhirbayjan and refused the order to execute the Bab. He was an honorable man.

It was in July of 1848, when after a short stay, Mulla Husayn left the camp with a plan that in one week he was to proceed to Karbila. The prince offered money for his expenses which he declined, asking the prince to spend it on the poor. The devoted captain of the artillery, Abdu'l-'Ali Khan, also expressed eagerness to pay for the expenses of Mulla Husayn and whoever he decided to take with him. Also, he sent a sword and a horse as a gift. Mulla Husayn declined the money, but kept the sword and the horse. This sword became the most unique in history, and the horse, practically indestructible. With Mulla Husayn's fame and popularity, his house was besieged by eager people wishing the honor of accompanying him.

Suddenly, the explicit command from the Bab in the mountain prison arrived. A messenger from the Bab arrived bringing the Bab's own turban and the new name of Siyyid Ali for Mulla Husayn with this message, "Adorn your head with My green turban, the emblem of My lineage, and with the Black Standard unfurled before you, hasten to Mazindaran and lend your assistance to My beloved Quddus." You see, Quddus at that time was at Badasht, but the Bab, weeks before, knew that Quddus soon would be arrested and confined. What else except the all-encompassing knowledge of a Manifestation of God!

Mulla Husayn, at once, arose to execute the wishes of his Master. He left Mashhad, and, a few miles away from the city, hoisted the Black Standard, put his Master's turban on his head, and gave the signal to his two hundred and two companions to march towards

for the great trials ahead should return now." At another stopping point he gave stronger warning with these words, "I, with seventy-two of my companions, shall suffer death for the sake of the Well-Beloved." Twenty of those men chose to return.

Another time he told his companions, "Leave behind all your belongings except your swords and horses, so all may witness that you have no desire for your property, or that of others." The allegiance of the men was unconditional, and their obedience without hesitation. The father of Badi who had a small sack of choicest turquoise opened it, and flung the precious stones on the roadside. The rest followed his example.

As you shall see, the number of companions increased to over three hundred, because after the conference of Badasht, most of the participants joined Mulla Husayn.

You might wonder why they had a black flag waving over their heads. There is a prophecy from Muhammad which states, "Should you see the Black Standard proceed from Khurasan, hasten to it, even if you have to crawl on snow, because it proclaims the advent of the Promised One." It is awesome to realize that Muhammad appeared in Arabia more than twelve hundred years earlier when Iran was an independent, prosperous nation enjoying the prestige of the Sassanid Dynasty. At that time, no one could fathom its defeat by the nomads of Arabia under the banner of Islam, and yet Muhammad mentioned the Black Standard from Khurasan, a province in Iran.

You need to know that soon after the conference of Badasht, Tahirih was arrested and sent to Tehran, and Quddus was captured and confined at the house of the leading clergy in the city of Sari.

The mandate the Bab gave to Mulla Husayn stated, "Go to the assistance of My beloved Quddus." Obviously by this time, Mulla Husayn had learned about the confinement of Quddus in Sari, and that was where he and his companions were heading. They had to bypass Quddus's home town of Babul.

The news of their approach to Babul alarmed the notorious Sa'idu'l-Ulama who was in a rage. The popularity of Mulla Husayn in Mashhad, the discipline and large number of his companions under the Black

Mazindaran. That memorable date was July 21, 1848, when it all began.

Wherever they stayed or passed through, fearlessly the message of the New Day was proclaimed, which brought new recruits, and selected people joined them. The father of Badi, who was a notable merchant and the son of the prestigious owner of the choicest turquoise mine, also enlisted under the banner of Mulla Husayn. The story of Badi and his father are recounted separately in the talk titled "The Mystery of Martyrdom." It is easy to say he joined Mulla Husayn, but only the fire of love and understanding was capable of detaching him from all worldly honors, wealth, and material comfort to take that step towards a destination, the altar of sacrifice.

Arriving at a place where the road divided, Mulla Husayn decided to camp for a few days. They used the shade of a very large tree by a running stream. He told his companions, "We shall await the Bab's decree as to which road to take." It was on the fourth day of September when a fierce gale struck down a large branch of that tree, whereupon Mulla Husayn said, "The tree of the sovereignty of Muhammad Shah was uprooted." Three days later a messenger, on his way to Mashhad, reported the death of the king. The next day the company mounted their horses.

Well, friends, the name of this game is not fame or fortune. The road's name is submission; its color, scarlet; and the destination, the sacred altar of sacrifice. The mystery of the mission, not simply the rescue of Quddus, but to leave an imperishable lustre on the pages of history about the literal force released by the power of the Holy Spirit. And, finally the most critical, the demand on those who took the road, an absolute and unshakeable conviction.... Are you ready to take the road, or rather watch those heroes through this window?

Leading the men, Mulla Husayn pointed in the direction of Mazindaran, and said, "This is the way that leads to our Karbila." For your information, the desert of Karbila was the site where Imam Husayn and seventy-two companions were defeated by Sunnis and brutally martyred. It happened more than ten centuries before. Then Mulla Husayn repeated several times, "Whoever is unprepared

Standard, were more than he could bear. So he dispatched criers to call all the people of Babul to attend the mosque for a vital and crucial announcement. An immense crowd of men and women packed the mosque. The fiend climbed to the pulpit, flung his turban on the ground, and tore open the neck of his shirt. He shouted, "Wake up! The wreckers of Islam are coming to our very doors to wipe out all that we cherish as pure and holy in Islam. It is your sacred duty that tomorrow at dawn, fully armed, confront them on the road, and exterminate them all."

The next day a few miles from Babul, Mulla Husayn and company encountered their enemies blocking the road. The multitude was fully equipped with arms and ammunition. The fierce expression of their faces and their foul language indicated their hostile and savage mood.

You can set the stage in your mind. Three hundred horsemen against a hostile crowd stretching as far as they could see. The companions reached for their swords, but Mulla Husayn commanded, "Not yet." He barely had given that order when the enemy began to fire at them. The companions became restless as six of them were hurled to the ground. Mulla Husayn told them, "The time has not yet come, the number is as yet incomplete." When a bullet pierced the chest of one of his devoted supporters who had walked all the way by his horse, Mulla Husayn raised his eyes to heaven and prayed, ending with these words, "I now arise with my companions to defend our lives against the assaults of the enemy."

It was as if Mulla Husayn was awaiting the countdown before the Holy Spirit blessed him with that mysterious superhuman power. He drew his sword and charged his horse into the midst of the crowd and downpour of bullets to pursue the man who shot the last companion. This man took refuge behind a tree, holding his musket gun to shield himself. With a single stroke of his sword, he cut across the tree, the barrel of the gun, and the body of that man. This is the truth, without exaggeration. When later the commander of the large royal army suffered a disgraceful defeat at the hands of a small band of Babis, and was reprimanded by the prime minister, he sent the half of the barrel of the gun cut by Mulla Husayn's sword, stating, "These are the kind of people our forces had to face." The prime minister, dumbfounded by receiving that evidence,

realized that even their cannon power was unable to break what he called a "handful of young and contemptible students." Therefore, he stooped to treachery and fraud to destroy them. The story of that shameful betrayal will shock the world.

Anyway, the crowd witnessing that force, panic-stricken, fled and scattered out of sight into the forest. The forementioned force of Mulla Husayn has also been reported by non-Baha'i historians who tried to minimize it by claiming that Mulla Husayn had excessive training in the use of sword and horsemanship during his youth. For your information, Mulla Husayn, a student of theology, spent his years acquiring true knowledge. His mastery, which won the admiration of the leading divines, even while a student, was his deep knowledge and sincerity of his expression.

According to a childhood friend, Mirza Muhammad-i-Furughi, who also fought shoulder to shoulder with him, but miraculously survived the final massacre, the weight of a pen was too much for the frail Mulla Husayn. Furughi relates, "I have known Mulla Husayn from childhood. I have never known him to be possessed of such strength. I even considered myself superior in strength. His hand trembled as he wrote, and he often expressed his inability to write as fully and as frequently as he wished. He was greatly handicapped in this respect, and he continued to suffer from its effect until his journey to Mazindaran. The moment he drew his sword to repulse that hostile crowd, a mysterious power seemed to have suddenly transformed him. He always was the first one to spring forward on his charger to face the combined forces of the opponent, and achieve the victory. His name, alone, was sufficient to strike terror into the hearts of the enemy, who panicked and fled. We, the companions, all were convinced that he had ceased to be the same Mulla Husayn we knew."

Furughi continues, "Mulla Husayn, after that memorable blow, disappeared from our sight. His attendant, who had followed him, later related that Mulla Husayn charged forward amidst the multitude of enemies, with bullets raining from all directions, and with strokes of his sword, he mowed down whoever was in his way." He headed unharmed for the city of Babul, and straight to the home of that despicable fiend, Sa'idu'l-Ulama. Mulla Husayn circled his house three times and cried out, "Let the coward who incited

the holy war against us come out, and by example prove the sincerity of his appeal and the righteousness of his cause. Has he forgotten the requirement for the one who declares a holy war to be at the forefront of his followers?" What a sight!

Soon the inhabitants surrounded Mulla Husayn, and begged for peace. At this moment, the followers were galloping towards Mulla Husayn. The cry of "Ya Sahibu'z-Zaman, shouted at the top of their voices, struck fear into the hearts of everyone. Heaven knows in what hole in his house that frightened mouse was hiding. When the followers saw Mulla Husayn unhurt, with a feeling of joy, they dismounted and kissed his stirrups. Now it was in the afternoon when Mulla Husayn granted peace, telling the crowd, "Now you witness the ascendancy of the Faith of God. Except for a scratch on my face, I and my horse were protected by God from your brutal attack."

None of the companions had anything to eat or drink since dawn. Mulla Husayn led his men to a caravanserai. He sent a few men to get water and bread, but they came back empty-handed. They were denied both. Mulla Husayn assured them to put their trust in God, and ordered the gates of the caravanserai closed.

As the hour of sunset approached, he asked one of the companions to go on the roof and chant the customary call for prayer, called Adhzan. A youth gladly responded. No sooner had he uttered the first words, he fell by the fire of the enemy. Mulla Husayn said, "Let another one among you arise and finish the Adhan." Another youth chanted a few more words, and suffered the same. When the third youth finished the call, he also was struck down.

Mulla Husayn ordered the gates opened. Leaping on horseback, he and his companions mowed down the assailants outside the gate, and made them disappear. No doubt left in their minds, the notables of the city, with the Qur'an in their hands, walked towards Mulla Husayn, who still was on his horse. They begged for mercy, and asked Mulla Husayn to permit them to say a few words. Mulla Husayn, observing their sincerity, dismounted his horse and invited them to sit with him, and ordered tea for them which none of the companions yet had. Mulla Husayn said, "We, unlike the people of this town, know how to receive the stranger." The notables blamed everything on the notorious divine, and requested that by

morning they leave for the next town. Then two of them arose, and swearing by the Qur'an which they brought, declared their intention to regard them as their guests that night, and the next day under heavy guard they would be escorted to the next town.

The attendants of the notables had already gone to fetch food for the companions and feed for their horses. The clock registered four hours after sunset when the companions, by permission of Mulla Husayn, broke their fast. That had been a long day, only an introduction to what was yet to come.

At midnight, that cowardly divine summoned the commander of one hundred guardsmen. His name was Khusraw. He confided in him that at any time or place which he found right he must massacre the Babis, leaving no one alive to tell the story. Khusraw objected to the plot, and said that these are godly people who sacrificed three people trying to say the call to prayer. The shameless man said, "I command you to slay them. The matters of religion are for me to decide. I will stand answerable at the day of judgment."

The sun anxiously arose to witness another eventful and exciting day. The notables summoned Khusraw and told him that he must exercise utmost consideration and courtesy towards Mulla Husayn and his men, and refuse any reward. He pretended total submission, and assured them that he would bring a written note from Mulla Husayn as to his satisfaction about his services. The notables took Khusraw and his men to the caravanserai to introduce them to Mulla Husayn.

Mulla Husayn told Khusraw, "If you do well, great shall be your reward, but if you act treacherously, severe will be your punishment. We commit our Cause only to God, and are wholly resigned to His will." Mulla Husayn mounted the charger, and gave the signal for departure. His attendant, the one who had walked with him all the way to Mah-Ku, raised the call of his master, "Mount your steeds, O heroes of God!" a summons which would be raised over and over in the months to follow.

To implement his plan, Khusraw took them through forest. On that narrow road a few guards were in front, followed by Mulla Husayn

and Khusraw riding side by side. As soon as the forest was penetrated, Khusraw gave the code signal which was relayed to the guards at the tail end of the long line of the horsemen. Soon a few of the Babis were killed, and some captured. As soon as the cry of agony reached Mulla Husayn's ears, he halted, dismounted and protested Khusraw's treacherous behavior. Mulla Husayn said, "It is way past noon, and yet there is no sign of our destination which you promised us to reach at noon. I refuse to go any farther with you, and can dispense with your guidance and men." Then Mulla Husayn told his attendant to spread his prayer-mat. Khusraw had also dismounted his horse. As Mulla Husayn was doing his ablution, Khusraw told one of his men to tell Mulla Husayn that if he wished to reach his destination he should deliver to him his sword and horse. Mulla Husayn received the message, but refused to answer and proceeded to offer his prayer.

Meanwhile, one of the companions, a man of erudition and courage, sensed the intrigue. He went to one of the attendants of Khusraw, who was preparing the water-pipe for Khusraw, and asked if he could have the honor of taking it to Khusraw. He took the water-pipe to Khusraw who was resting by a tree. Pretending to bend and fix the charcoal, he swiftly pulled out Khusraw's dagger, and killed him on the spot. Mulla Husayn was still in prayer when the cry of "Ya Sahibu'z-Zaman" was raised again, and in a short time all of the guards who were fully equipped with guns were struck down. The attendant of Khusraw, who had given the water-pipe to a follower of Mulla Husayn, threw himself at the feet of Mulla Husayn, begging to be spared. Mulla Husayn accepted his plea and said, "One should live to tell the story." He kindly gave him the jewel-studded water-pipe of Khusraw, and told him to tell the notables that Khusraw had foolishly demanded his sword and horse, not realizing that their work had just begun.

As the night was approaching, they camped in an open spot nearby. Next sunrise Mulla Husayn told his men, "We are approaching our Karbila," which they understood its meaning. It meant the altar of sacrifice. When he saw some men carrying belongings of Khusraw and his fallen men, he instructed them to discard them. He took a road no one was familiar with, but they all followed him on foot, leading their horses. In half an hour they reached the shrine of an Islamic saint called Shaykh Tabarsi. His resting place for

centuries has been reverently visited by Moslems of the area. You will find its photo on the insert with the photo of the famous sword of Mulla Husayn. The shrine is about fourteen miles or twenty-two kilometers from Babul where the road block was made.

The night before their arrival the custodian or caretaker of the shrine saw a very revealing dream. In it, he saw Imam Husayn, the third Imam, martyred centuries ago with seventy-two warriors, arrive at Shaykh Tabarsi with a number of companions. He saw Imam Husayn engaged in most heroic battles there, triumphant every time; and, to the custodian's amazement, Muhammad, the Prophet, Himself, the maternal grandfather of Imam Husayn, joined them at the shrine.

Mulla Husayn, all along, had been praying for his steps to be guided, and here was the answer. The custodian at once recognized him as the hero in his dream, so he threw himself on his feet and kissed them. Somewhat startled about such a welcome, Mulla Husayn asked him to sit by his side, and listened to him relate his dream. Mulla Husayn told him, "All that you saw in your dream will come to pass, and the glorious scenes will be enacted." The custodian begged Mulla Husayn to be accepted as one of his companions, and eventually he was martyred there.

On the day of their arrival, Mulla Husayn gave instructions to the notable believer, who had built the Babiyih in Mashhad, to start plans for building a fort for their defense. They already were attacked twice, and nearly ambushed by the guards. The future was clear and ominous to Mulla Husayn who had come so close to rescue Quddus, but it wasn't to be a simple operation.

As the evening approached, they found themselves surrounded by a multitude of horsemen preparing to open fire upon them. They claimed to be inhabitants of the home village of Khusraw, the treacherous guard commander, and they had come to avenge his blood. The companions drew their swords again in self-defense, raising the cry of "Ya Sahibu'z-Zaman" and leaped onto their horses. So tremendous was the shout that the horsemen vanished as suddenly as they had appeared from the forest. This defense was led by a companion who requested the honor from Mulla Husayn. Fearing the return of the enemy, they pursued them until they reached a village which they thought was Khusraw's village. In the darkness

of the night and with the confusion that ensued, the mother of the owner of the village was accidentally killed. Soon the companions learned that it was not the village of Khusraw. The leader ordered a halt, and when he ascertained that he and his men were led to the wrong village, he became agitated. His distress mounted when he heard about the death of the mother of Nazar Khan, the owner of that village. This was quite heavy on his mind. The companions kept apologizing for the unfortunate mistake, but the leader decided to go to the home of Nazar Khan to explain everything, and by assuming the responsibility, offered himself to take any punishment. After all, the honor of Mulla Husayn and the rest of the followers of the Bab was at stake.

Before I tell you how everything was destined to happen for the unfolding of this drama, a clarifying comment is necessary. By hearing some of the details of this episode, some, particularly in the West, might consider the companions as a bunch of wild and sword-happy hoodlums who had fun engaging in war under the name of religion. No, not at all. Mulla Husayn and his companions were clerics, craftsmen, merchants and the like. They were more familiar with pen and paper than sword and horse. Carrying a sword in those days in Islamic tradition was not unusual, particularly when going on a mission and riding a horse. The Bab's Faith in its fourth year had not forbidden the use of sword in self-defense, but in 1863 Baha'u'llah, on the day of His Declaration, forbade it. Lastly, at no time did these defenders attack offensively to gain property or territory.

Only when they felt dangerously hemmed in, they unleashed their forces and repulsed the enemy. Matter of fact, during the siege of the fort at a later time, Quddus told the defenders that with the ascendancy they had demonstrated over the massive royal army, people of that area were seeing the power of their Cause, and becoming willing to join them. He said that if he wished to declare a holy war, without doubt, they could conquer the whole country and beyond, but theirs was only to defend themselves against the onslaught of the enemy, and promote the Cause of God.

As the story unfolds, one cannot believe how intertwined the events were. You see, Mulla Husayn, on the day of their arrival at the shrine, instructed a believer to start building a fort. They

had discarded all their valuables at the beginning of the journey. To build a fort for protection as the first step, even before thinking of rescuing Quddus, was a big undertaking, particularly when they had no money, food or other provisions. What they had was the most important asset, and that was their trust in God.

The last event in the story was that night when the leader of the companions went to the home of Nazar Khan, the owner of that village. He explained to Nazar Khan what had transpired, including the treachery of Khusraw, and how the people from his village were trying to avenge his blood. Although grief-stricken about his mother's death, Nazar Khan was so moved by what he heard that he invited the leader to spend the night at his home, and the next day take him to meet Mulla Husayn. He also showed great interest to learn about a Cause which could enkindle such fervor in the hearts of its followers.

At the hour of dawn, the leader, accompanied by Nazar Khan, arrived at the shrine, and found Mulla Husayn leading the congregational prayer. Nazar Khan, without hesitation, joined the worshippers, and repeated every prayer that Mulla Husayn uttered. Now the leader had to tell Mulla Husayn about the tragic death of Nazar Khan's mother. Mulla Husayn expressed deepest sympathy on behalf of himself and all the followers to Nazar Khan. Just a few words from Mulla Husayn transformed Nazar Khan to the point that he told Mulla Husayn, "Had I one hundred sons, all of whom I would have joyously placed at your feet as a sacrifice to the promised Qa'im." He pledged his undying loyalty to Mulla Husayn, and rushed home to return with whatever provisions were needed.

Amazing, how submission to the will of God works. One should do his best, but resign to the will of God, and be content with the outcome. The best wealth is that of happiness and contentment.

One wonders how those three hundred men, having no architect, engineer or power tools, built a fort within a span of two months which could sustain the poundings of the army. To add to the obstacles was the shorter days of fall which retarded drying of the mud used between the trunks of the trees. But everything worked like clockwork. The worst obstacle, which could have been the interference of the armed forces, was resolved by a major crisis

in the capital, Tehran. In those countries, the transfer of power did not and does not take place smoothly. After the death of the king, the power struggle of ambitious princes and politicians had to take place before the crown prince could claim the throne. The dust finally settled on October 20 1848, when the coronation of the young king, less than twenty, took place.

While constructing the fortress, the annoyance of hostile acts of nearby villagers riled up by the enraged divine had to be dealt with by a flyswatter. No doubt, the strenuous and long hours of labor strengthened those determined arms for the critical days ahead. The construction progressed well. As it was near completion, one day a believer arrived with the marvelous news that Baha'u'llah and Nazar Khan would be arriving in the afternoon, and Baha'u'llah had invited everyone for dinner that evening. Furughi, who survived the final massacre, related that he saw a beaming joy on Mulla Husayn's face upon hearing of the arrival of Baha'u'llah, but Furughi had not recognized the station of that nobleman.

Under Mulla Husayn's instruction, everyone frantically began to tidy up the place and themselves for the reception of Baha'u'llah, and even Mulla Husayn himself joined them in sweeping and sprinkling water on the approaches to the shrine. As soon as Mulla Husayn saw Baha'u'llah approaching, he rushed forward, embraced Him and conducted Him with reverence to the seat of honor. Furughi states, "The rest of us were too blind in those days to recognize the One Whom our commander treated with such love and humility. Mulla Husayn was so lost in admiration that he became totally oblivious of the three hundred of us standing waiting for permission to sit down. It was Baha'u'llah Himself who finally permitted us to sit down."

Baha'u'llah, in the course of that visit, inspected the fort and expressed his satisfaction with the work, and then said, "The only thing missing is the presence of Quddus which would make the fort complete and the company perfect." Baha'u'llah instructed Mulla Husayn to send a certain believer with six men to Sari to demand Quddus's release from confinement. After supper, Baha'u'llah left the fort, counseling them to be resigned to the will of God. Then He stated that, God willing, He would visit them again, and come to their assistance.

Mulla Husayn, at once, sent the seven men to Sari for the release of Quddus who had been confined for ninety-five days in the house of a top divine who also was a relative of Quddus's. You realize that we are talking about the town of Sari and a different divine than the vicious priest of Babul. As soon as the divine heard Mulla Husayn's message, he unconditionally honored their request. The name of Mulla Husayn had totally disarmed him. He said, "I have all along considered Quddus to be my honored guest, and he is at liberty to do whatever he desires." Well! A convenient change of attitude. No one dared to displease Mulla Husayn.

Here comes one touching part of the story. Mulla Husayn, the super-human commander, gathered his men to prepare them for Quddus whose station was not known to them. He told them, "You should observe towards him the same reverence that you would towards the Bab. As to myself, you must consider me only as his lowly servant. You should display such loyalty to him that should he command you to take my life, you should not hesitate for a moment. You should refrain from kissing his hands or feet for he does not approve of it." As you know, the majority of the companions were new converts from Islam and were used to such expressions of reverence.

The news of the impending arrival of Quddus brought a joyful tidings, releasing added strength and courage. You can feel the suspense in each man's heart about what was next. Mulla Husayn's burst of enthusiasm could not be repressed. Total darkness had enveloped the fort and the forest. Mulla Husayn gave two candles to each follower and lit them himself, and told them to proceed and greet Quddus. They surrounded Quddus on his horse, and on foot followed him to the fort while chanting the hymn of glorification, "Holy, holy, the Lord our God, the Lord of the angels and the spirit."..... Mulla Husayn would chant the refrain to which the company responded, and it echoed throughout the forest.

Some of Quddus's writings were read to the companions. His reverence to the Bab and Tahirih were easy to understand by the believers, but his praise of Baha'u'llah was not appreciated since Baha'u'llah appeared in the rich garb of the nobility. Being rich was not an admirable quality in their tradition.

The next morning Quddus asked Mulla Husayn for a head count. Mulla

Husayn ordered every one out of the fort, and when they returned, he counted them. The total, including himself and Quddus, came to three hundred and twelve. Before the gate was closed, Mulla Husayn heard a youth running in the distance and calling. He had come all the way from Babul, and flung himself at the feet of Mulla Husayn, pleading to be accepted as one of the companions. His wish was granted, and the number rose to three hundred thirteen. When Quddus was informed about the result of the head count, he made a reference to a prophecy from Muhammad regarding the assemblage of three hundred thirteen chosen ones as a sign of the advent of the promised Qa'im.

The knowledge and resourcefulness of Quddus gradually removed the doubts of the companions who still considered Mulla Husayn of higher station. Many times in the middle of the night, Mulla Husayn was seen to circle around where Quddus was sleeping, and utter words of praise. Quddus's new writings were regularly read to the companions which filled them with wonder, and justified his leadership in their limited minds.

With the fort completed, some curious and friendly visitors were permitted in. They marvelled at what was done in such a short time. Through word of mouth, the depraved divine of Babul heard of its praise and smouldered with jealousy. He constantly preached to the neighboring villagers to refuse to sell provisions to them, which some did. He also sent a petition to the young king for the elimination of what, in strong language, he called a menace and a threat to the throne. He could not tolerate the Black Standard raised above the fort, the banner which had been hoisted in Mashhad in July 1848, and waved continually above the heads of those heroes for eleven months until May 1849.

The young king referred the matters to the officers in the province of Mazindaran where the fort was. They reported back to the king that the handful of frail-bodied students would require only a fraction of the army that his majesty had contemplated. They maintained that the men in the fort were utterly unworthy of the king's concern and consideration, and that a small detachment of the army could easily wipe them out within two days. The king agreed, and assigned an officer to recruit whatever was necessary for the simple job. Trying to impress his king, in a short time

that officer put together an army of twelve thousand men equipped with guns and necessary ammunition. They camped at the village of Nazar Khan overlooking the fort. They stopped any traffic in and out of the fort.

With such control, soon a shortage of bread and water prevailed. At sunset Quddus and Mulla Husayn were viewing the army barricades outside the fort. Quddus told Mulla Husayn, "God willing, this very night a downpour of rain followed by heavy snowfall will assist us to repulse their contemplated assault." It exactly happened. It ruined the enemy's gunpowder supply, and the combination of rain and snow supplied the companions with adequate water for a long time. The snowfall was unusual for that season, and was so heavy, the like of which that region had never experienced even in the depth of winter. Friends, if so far you have not seen the Hand of Providence at work, in the course of the coming events, you shall.

The date was December 1st, 1848, when Quddus decided to scatter the enemy which was preparing for attack. Two hours after sunrise, Quddus, flanked by Mulla Husayn, on their horses, led the companions on foot through the gates of the fort with the cry of "Ya Sahibu'z-Zaman." The roar of their voices and the glitter of their drawn swords stunned the armed soldiers who, panic-stricken, scattered in every direction. Those who stayed were put to blade. Within forty-five minutes the shout of victory was raised. Within that short span of time, the army commander, two of his officers, and four hundred thirty soldiers had perished. Not a single casualty among the companions. Only one man was wounded. As commanded, they only took the swords and horses of the fallen, ignoring the valuables.

Quddus ordered his men to dig a moat around the fort as a safeguard against any future attack, which took them nineteen days to complete. It was during this first siege of the fort by the army that Baha'u'llah's attempt to join them ended in His arrest and being bastinadoed, which means the beating the soles of the feet. It definitely was not God's will for Him to reach the fort. Do you remember His parting words were "if it be God's will, I will visit the fort again, and come to your assistance." You will know why it was not God's will when you hear the ending.

Soon after the moat was dug, the news arrived that a prince was advancing towards the fort at the head of a large army. Apparently the overzealous new prime minister, who later ordered the martyrdom of the Bab, became violently angry at the news of that defeat. Therefore, that prince was given a free reign to finish the job. After setting up his headquarters in a nearby village, he sent one of his men to meet Mulla Husayn, and find out what he was up to. Mulla Husayn assured them that his intention was not to subvert or usurp the authority of the king. He wished to assert the rightful claim of the Bab as the promised Qa'im. He asked the prince to arrange for a debate with the leading clergy of Sari and Babul at the fort in the presence of the prince. He said, "Let the holy book of Qur'an decide between truth and falsehood. The prince should be the judge, and I would welcome any punishment should I fail to prove my case." The messenger, moved to tears, promised that in three days such a meeting would be arranged, but the prince wanted to use the opportunity to impress the king with his tactics, and not negotiation.

Now he had three regiments of infantry and several regiments of cavalry under his command. This definitely was a much larger army than the defeated twelve thousand force. Tension was high, and the large army restless for the signal, but... A different signal...

The day had not yet broken when at the signal of "Mount your steeds, O heroes of God," Quddus ordered the gates opened. Mulla Husayn and other men followed Quddus. Undaunted by the forces that surrounded them, or the mud and snow on the road, they charged towards the heart of the camp, the prince's headquarters. With that surprise attack, like a bolt of lightning, the companions reached the residence of the prince. The proud prince, not wishing to be cut in half, jumped out of the back window, and escaped barefoot. The army went into total chaos, having lost their commander.

Two other princes and the soldiers who showed resistance were struck down. The companions found cases filled with gold and silver in the prince's room, but all they took was a case of gunpowder and the prince's favorite sword as evidence of their triumph for Mulla Husayn. Mulla Husayn had stayed behind with a number of men to check any unexpected move by the enemy. When the companions reached

him, they found he was using Quddus's sword because a bullet had struck his own sword.

After the men reached Mulla Husayn with the prince's sword, he led the company towards the camp headquarters where Quddus was. Mulla Husayn returned Quddus's sword, and ordered the companions to surround Quddus for safety. He remained at full vigilance, surveying the enemy's move. Still there were a few regiments remaining in the field. All of a sudden, he observed from left and right a mass of soldiers charging from two sides towards them. With the cry of "Ya Sahibu'z-Zaman," the companions pressed forward towards the coming host. Some followed Quddus, and the others followed Mulla Husayn in another direction. The oncoming enemy, seeing Mulla Husayn wielding his sword, deflected their direction and charged towards Quddus.

The thunderous sound of thousands of bullets fired filled Mulla Husayn with apprehension. Disregarding the shower of bullets, he sped towards Quddus, and found the companions repulsing the attack, but to his horror, he found Quddus bleeding profusely from his mouth. Dismounting his horse, he ran towards Quddus, and seeing what happened to his beloved chief, he raised his hands to beat upon his own head when Quddus signaled him to desist. A bullet had broken several of Quddus's teeth and lacerated his tongue and throat. Mulla Husayn obeyed his chief who had remained on his horse; however, he asked Quddus for his sword. Mulla Husayn mounted his charger, and with Quddus's sword in one hand and the prince's in the other, swept through the lines of the enemy. The charger, being given a free reign, like a chariot of fire, tore through the lines of the enemy, allowing his master to mow them down right and left. What a sight to behold! With such unmatched heroism, within thirty minutes, the entire army fled with no trace except the dead.

Back at the fort, Quddus wrote an appeal to all who were disheartened by his injury. He told them to be resigned to the will of God, and if they loved him, to not spoil the joy of that memorable day by their lamentation. He wrote, "Muhammad also lost his teeth by the stone of the infidels."

That unforgettable engagement took place on December 21, 1848,

when a handful of inspired heroes disgraced and defeated a large and well-equipped royal army. Truly, beyond any explanation, miraculously, a few swords silenced thousands of guns.

It took more than a month before the demoralized and scattered forces of the prince recovered and began to prepare for the final decisive blow. By this time, several additional regiments of infantry and cavalry under two brave and seasoned commanders had arrived. Another Goliath against little David. Their combined forces set up a series of barricades. To intimidate the occupants of the fort, they engaged in exercising maneuvers, firing their guns constantly for a few days.

While you are watching these childish practices, let me go inside the fort and tell you what is transpiring there. The scarcity of water compelled the men to dig a well. As it was near completion, Mulla Husayn told his hard-working comrades, "Today we shall have all the water we require for our bath. Cleansed of all earthly defilement, we shall seek the court of the Almighty, and shall hasten to our eternal abode. Whoever is ready to partake of the cup of martyrdom, let him prepare himself, and be ready to scatter the dark forces surrounding us." I wish I had a cheerful report to give you, but that is the way it was on that February 1st, 1849, within the fort of Shaykh Tabarsi.

Mulla Husayn washed and did his ablution, put on a new garment, and adorning his head with the turban of the Bab, prepared for the approaching encounter. Let us not get sad. Alluding to the hour of his departure, his face was beaming with joy. Alone he sat up all night at the feet of Quddus, who so powerfully reminded him of his beloved Master, pouring forth all that was in his heart.

After midnight, way before the daybreak, he mounted his charger, and commanded the gates to be opened. At the head of his companions, with the powerful cry of "Ya Sahibu'z-Zaman" which vibrated the fort and the forest, they charged towards the enemy lines. The first barricade Mulla Husayn dealt with was commanded by the enemy's bravest officers. Soon he disposed of its commander and scattered the soldiers. With the same speed and swiftness he cleared the second and third barricades. Undaunted by the shower of bullets, they pressed forward until the remaining barricades

had been all overthrown. In the confusion that ensued and fearful of his life, one of the commanders climbed a tree.

The horse of Mulla Husayn suddenly became entangled in the rope of a tent, and before it could free itself, Mulla Husayn's chest was pierced by the bullet of the officer in the tree. However, the officer had no idea whom he had shot. Mulla Husayn, who was bleeding profusely, dismounted his horse, staggered a few steps and collapsed. Two of his companions carried him back to the fort.

Friends, this is too much for me to recount. Two believers, one of whom was Furughi, have related the following account: "We were among those who had remained in the fort with Quddus. As soon as Mulla Husayn, who seemed to have lost consciousness, was laid down in the presence of Quddus, Quddus dismissed us and said, 'Leave me alone with him. There are certain confidential matters which I wish him alone to know.'" Then he bade his attendant, a strong believer, to close the door. Furughi continues, "As we sat outside the door, we were amazed to hear the voice of Mulla Husayn answering Quddus. For two hours they continued to converse. I had never seen that brave and strong attendant of Quddus so agitated. He later told us that he was watching them through a crack in the door. As soon as Quddus said, 'Mulla Husayn,' he arose, and seated himself on his knees facing Quddus. With bowed head, he listened to every word of Quddus, and answered his questions. Then Quddus's final words were, 'You have hastened the hour of your departure, and abandoned me to the mercy of my enemies. Please God, may I join you soon, and taste the sweetness of heaven's delight.' ...These were the final words of Mulla Husayn, 'May my life be a ransom for you. Are you well-pleased with me?'" Quddus, unable to speak, nodded his head. Mulla Husayn, that indomitable hero, with a gentle smile on his lips, closed his eyes to this world.

Furughi states, "A long time passed before Quddus permitted us to enter. Quddus participated in the preparation of his body for burial, and put his own shirt on him. As Quddus gave the parting kiss on his eyes and forehead, his lamenting final words were so intense, which made all of those in attendance to weep. Quddus laid the body with his own hands at a site within the shrine near the site where Shaykh Tabarsi had been laid to rest. He cautioned those of us who were within the shrine to keep the site of burial

a secret and conceal it, even from the rest of the companions. Mulla Husayn was thirty-six years old when he passed on to the kingdom of eternal glory..."

The Bab, in the Tablet of Visitation revealed for Mulla Husayn, has asserted that the dust of the burial site of Mulla Husayn has the potency to bring joy to the grief-stricken and healing to the sick. Matter of fact, after the events were over, He sent a believer to do a pilgrimage on His behalf to the site of the fort, and bring Him a handful of dust from the graves of Quddus and Mulla Husayn. (God Passes By, page 50) Let us pray that the days of emancipation will be hastened so the pilgrimage of the Baha'is, from all corners of the world, to that fort and Quddus's resting place will become possible.

Since most of you are anxious to learn how it all ended, a brief account will be presented. For details, please refer to The Dawn-Breakers.

On that second day of February, the day of the martyrdom of Mulla Husayn, the casualty among the companions was heavy. Ninety of them were seriously wounded and died later. From the date of their arrival to that tragic day in February, the number of companions martyred reached seventy-two, as foretold by Mulla Husayn. The days of Mulla Husayn's heroic deeds numbered one hundred sixteen days, which dwarfed and eclipsed all of the heroic deeds of the past. It was the mandate and the will of the Bab, so expressed in His parting words when Mulla Husayn left Mah-Ku a year earlier.

The disgraceful defeat of that massive army, and the loss of forty-five experienced officers was a severe blow to those in charge. It took one and a half months to recover, particularly with the intensity of cold in that winter. However, that hiatus did not relax their prevention of any supplies reaching the fort. With exhaustion of all supplies, Quddus opened the last supply of rice which Mulla Husayn had stored. As Quddus distributed the rice, he warned them about the unbearable trials ahead, and excused whoever wished to leave while the enemy's siege was broken.

That very night one traitor defected, and informed the enemy that Mulla Husayn was dead. Another Judas. He told the commander that

on February 2nd, had they persisted, the fort would have been conquered. Up to that time, the enemy did not have that information. It gave them a new resolve.

Here are the highlights of the remaining three months. With the loss of Mulla Husayn, the confident enemy was preparing and counting on their final deadly assault. But again, the magic cry of "Ya Sahibu'z-Zaman" by only nineteen charging companions scattered the enemy. We can easily see that it was not the strength of numbers of men or arms, but the power of the animating spirit. After Mulla Husayn's death, all defensive sorties were led by Mirza Muhammad Baqir, the stout builder of the fort, whom Quddus appointed to replace Mulla Husayn. The defeat of the commanding officer was both embarrassing and humiliating. While escaping, he fell from his horse with one of his boots stuck in the stirrup. The victory under the new leader brought fresh spirit to those hungry, but not broken, heroes. They ate the flesh of horses taken from the enemy. In the rank and file of the enemy, each defeated commander was a consolation to the other disgraced ones.

Finally, a desperate request was made to the capital for a shipment of cannons and artillery power. Meanwhile, at the fort, the last Naw-Ruz in the life of Quddus and the companions was celebrated. Disregarding hunger, they sang the hymns of praise with which Quddus had been welcomed to the fort. Their daily spiritual sustenance was the new writings flowing from the pen of Quddus.

On the ninth day of Naw-Ruz, artillery shells began to pound the fort. Quddus, calmly walking in the open, rolled a cannon ball with his foot and assured the followers. The photo of one such cannon ball is on the insert. With continuation of shelling by the enemy and expectation of unconditional surrender, they were badly surprised by the loud hymns of joy and regular calls to prayer reaching their ears from the fort. One wonders how many soldiers saw the power and greatness of the Cause, and later embraced it. Meanwhile, the food of the companions was reduced to grass, boiled water and chewing on the leather of their saddles and belts.

Frustrated with the fervor of the companions, a tower was erected by the army, from the top of which they directed their shelling at the heart of the fort. Quddus summoned Mirza Muhammad Baqir

and said, "Go and inflict a humiliation on this new commander, no less than the previous one. Let him know that although hungry, the lionhearted heroes can still roar." Again, he and eighteen companions, with the cry of "Ya Sahibu'z-Zaman," toppled the tower, and demolished the barricades with none of the believers scratched.

companions, with the final cry of "Ya Sahibu'z-Zaman," toppled the tower, and demolished the barricades with none of the believers scratched.

For one month attacks were halted due to an explosion in the ammunition depot where a number of officers and soldiers died. Once again the cannons began their fire, but were silenced with another counter-offensive. Now has passed about five months of siege with no sign of progress, even with their big guns. The only weapon left was treachery. At first they stopped all offensive. Then a Qur'an, signed and sealed by the prince commander, was sent to Quddus, swearing a safe passage for everyone with their expenses paid to return to their home towns. Quddus honored the holy book, and the gates for the last time were opened.

As the companions came out of the fort, they were taken to the army's headquarters and separated into groups, but soon the foul play of barbaric and brutal massacre ensued, blaspheming the Qur'an upon which they had falsely promised peace. Quddus was handed over to Sa'idu'l-Ulama, the blood-thirsty priest of Babul, who was impatiently awaiting his precious trophy to assure his own eternal damnation. That fiend had sadistically planned the prolonged parade of Quddus in chains and despicable torture on the way to the main square. As Quddus reached the square, he raised his voice, "Only if my mother could be here to watch the splendor of my wedding night." At his final moments, before he was struck down by the axe of that priest, he prayed for his tormenters. Then those ravenous beasts fell upon him, cutting him into pieces, feeding the parts into a blazing fire prepared and planned by that fiend.

Quddus was only twenty-seven years old, and the date was May 16, 1849. Past midnight when everyone was gone, under the direction of a compassionate and pious divine, Haji Muhammad- Aliyi-Hamzih, the charred remnants were buried at a site not too far from that square.

You should also hear the special circumstances surrounding the martyrdom of Mirza Muhammad-Baqir, whom Quddus appointed as the leader of their counter-offensive sorties after the death of Mulla Husayn. Mirza, a distinguished and learned man, was the one who

You should also hear the special circumstances surrounding the martyrdom of Mirza Muhammad-Baqir, whom Quddus appointed as the leader of their counter-offensive sorties after the death of Mulla Husayn. Mirza, a distinguished and learned man, was the one who built the Babiiyyih in Mashhad, and later the fort at Shaykh Tabarsi. He and another companion were sent to the town of Amul, where six months before, Baha'u'llah, after being intercepted on His way to the fort, had been confined and bastinadoed. Upon their arrival, the horrible tortures inflicted upon his friend threw Mirza into a fit of rage. When the executioner approached them, Mirza freed his tied hands, and snatched the sword from the executioner. He struck the executioner with such force that his head rolled about fifteen feet away. The crowd rushed towards him, but he mowed down all who came within his reach. Finally, they had to shoot him which was a more merciful death. In his pocket they found a dry piece of roasted horse flesh, a proof of what he and all those heroes had to endure for their faith.

Those thick walls and gate of that fort, still vibrating with the cry of those heroes, were meticulously razed to efface the least evidence of the army's repeated humiliations and their final treacherous blasphemy. How naive! How ignorant! The spilled blood of the martyrs could never and shall never be silenced.

That month of May, 1849, that part of northern Iran on the shores of the Caspian sea, witnessed the bloody end of so heroic and so tragic events of Fort Shaykh Tabarsi. Let the resonating, earth-shaking cry of "Ya Sahibu'z-Zaman," and the hymns of those valiant heroes fill the air and reverbrate until the end of time.