

SHAYKH HASAN-I-ZUNUZI
The Promises Fulfilled

"O Shaykh Hasan, rejoice that your name is Hasan, Hasan your beginning, and Hasan your end...In the days to come yours shall be the inestimable joy of beholding 'what eye hath seen not, ear heard not, nor any heart conceived.'"

As the exciting, precious history of our Faith unfolds before your eyes, let this window reveal the unique life story of Shaykh Hasan-i-Zunuzi. It will attempt to give a chronological overview of many exciting events. As you listen, ponder on one issue - was it the purity of his heart or merely predestination to be a witness for our recorded history. What is so special about Shaykh Hasan is that he came face-to-face with the Twin Luminaries at the predawn era of the Baha'i Dispensation; namely, Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kazim. That was only a prelude to the greatest bounty of beholding the countenances of the Twin Manifestations, the Bab and Baha'u'llah. Only one of such bounties would be more than anyone deserves.

As we ponder on this, we should be fully cognizant that the divine knowledge of the Messengers of God is not limited within the confines of time and space. To some degree, such a bounty of vision has been bestowed upon the pure-hearted, such as the Twin Luminaries, Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kazim.

To follow the footsteps of such a unique person, our route will take us from the holy city of Karbila, which is near Baghdad to Shiraz, followed by Isfahan and a village near Tehran. Then during the captivity of the Bab, we direct our steps towards the two prison fortresses of Mah-ku and Chihriq. We will visit the city of Tabriz where the Bab clearly proclaimed His station as the promised Qa'im. The final and most fulfilling event occurred back in Karbila where it all had started.

The title of Shaykh means an elder, chief, or a venerable old man. What a befitting title for Hasan whose surname was Zunuzi. In the course of this talk, he will be referred to as Shaykh Hasan or the Shaykh.

Shaykh Ahmad, the first luminary, spread his different but well-grounded doctrines based on true interpretation of Islamic prophecies to the vast circle of his students. He cautioned them that the hour of the Day of Days was fast approaching. In 1827, eight years after the birth of the Bab, he retired from teaching and chose his trusted student, Siyyid Kazim to succeed him. (The Bab, by Balyuzi, p. 3)

Shaykh Hasan, who was a student at the feet of Shaykh Ahmad, now became a student of Siyyid Kazim, and in no time became close to him. Before telling you a few exciting stories during his stay in Karbila, you wish to know about a forecast by Siyyid Kazim which shows what a true visionary that great teacher was. In the course of the years they spent in Karbila, many times Siyyid Kazim addressed Shaykh Hasan with these awe-inspiring words, "O Shaykh Hasan, rejoice that your name is Hasan (meaning praiseworthy); Hasan, your beginning and Hasan, your end. You have been privileged to attain to the day of Shaykh Ahmad, you have been closely associated with me, and in the days to come yours shall be the inestimable joy of beholding 'what eye hath seen not, ear heard not, nor any heart conceived.'" Well! How breathtaking this visionary forecast was. (Dawnbreakers, p. 29)

Shaykh Hasan states that with his devotion to Siyyid Kazim, and like some other students, he entertained the notion that possibly that great teacher himself could be the promised Qa'im. One student with such a thought went public with his belief. The teacher would have expelled him had he not begged forgiveness and expressed his repentance.

The Shaykh states he prayed to God for confirmation if this assumption about his teacher were true; and if not, to be delivered from that agony. He continued his days in the service of Siyyid Kazim to whom he was greatly attached, but he states, "With such doubts flooding my mind for days, I could neither sleep or eat. One day at the hour of dawn, I was suddenly awakened by a knock. I found one of the intimate attendants of Siyyid Kazim at the door. With excitement he told me to get dressed and follow him. We went to the house of Siyyid Kazim where we found him fully dressed and ready to go. He asked me to accompany him and stated that a highly esteemed and distinguished Person had arrived, and it was our duty to visit Him."

"The morning light had just broken when I found myself walking with him through the streets of Karbila. We soon reached a house, at the door of which stood a Youth, as if expectant to receive us. He wore a green turban and His countenance revealed an expression of humility and kindness which I can never describe. He quietly approached us, extended His arms toward Siyyid Kazim and lovingly embraced him. Speechless, with bowed head, Siyyid Kazim received the many expressions of affection and esteem with which that Youth greeted him. We were soon led by Him to the upper floor of that house, and entered a chamber bedecked with flowers and redolent of the loftiest perfume. He bade us to be seated. We knew not, however, what seats we actually occupied, so overpowering was the sense of delight which seized us. We observed a silver cup which had been placed in the center of the room, which our youthful Host, soon after we were seated, filled to overflowing and handed to Siyyid Kazim, saying this verse from the Qur'an, 'A drink of pure beverage shall their Lord give them.' Siyyid Kazim held the cup with both hands and drank it. A feeling of reverent joy filled his being which he could not suppress. I, too, was presented with a cupful of that beverage, though no words were addressed to me. The above verse from the Qur'an was the only thing spoken in that memorable gathering. Soon after, the Host arose and accompanied us to the threshold of the house, and bade us farewell.

The Shaykh goes on to relate, "I was mute with wonder about His charm, His bearing and His dignity. How great was my amazement when I saw my teacher without any hesitation drink from that silver cup..." We should realize that in Islam, use of silver and gold utensils is forbidden. The Shaykh continues, "I could not explain the motive which could have induced the Siyyid to manifest such profound reverence in the presence of that Youth which the holiest shrine had failed to excite."

To make the rest of Shaykh Hasan's story better appreciated, you wish to know that in the spring of 1841, about three years before His Declaration, the Bab visited Karbila. (The Bab, Balyuzi, p.41)

The Shaykh continues, "Three days later I saw that same Youth arrive and take a seat in the midst of the company of the assembled disciples of Siyyid Kazim. He sat close to the entrance and with modesty and dignity of bearing

listened to the discourse of Siyyid Kazim. As soon as Siyyid's eyes fell upon that Youth he discontinued his address and held his peace. When one of his disciples begged him to resume what he had left unfinished, the teacher replied, 'What more shall I say,' and as he turned his face towards the Bab, he said, 'The truth is more manifest than the ray of light that has fallen upon that lap!' I immediately observed that the ray which the Siyyid referred to had fallen on the lap of the same Youth whom we had recently visited. The disciple asked further, 'Why is it that you neither reveal His name nor identify His person?' To this, Siyyid replied by pointing with his finger to his own throat, implying that were he to divulge His name, they both would be put to death instantly. I saw the Siyyid actually point out with his finger the ray of light on the lap of the Bab, and yet none among us apprehended its meaning."

"I, for myself, became convinced that the Siyyid himself could never be the Promised One, but the mystery surrounding that Youth kept me perplexed and anxious. Several times I ventured to approach Siyyid Kazim and seek from him elucidation of this mystery, but every time I approached him, I was overcome by a sense of awe which his personality so powerfully inspired. I watched the Youth several times as He stood in attitude of prayer at the Shrine of Imam Husayn. Oblivious of those around Him, tears rained from His eyes and from His lips fell such words of glorification which attracted all who could hear Him, so they interrupted their own devotions and shed tears as they watched Him." (Dawnbreakers, p.30)

"I felt the impulse to approach Him, but every time I ventured an approach a force that I could neither explain nor resist detained me. All I learned was that He was a merchant from Shiraz, and did not belong to any of the ecclesiastical orders. The memory of that Youth haunted me until the day when the call of a Youth from Shiraz proclaiming Himself to be the Bab reached my ears."

According to this story it appears that the Bab's mission was apparent to Himself and to Siyyid Kazim three years before His Declaration. It is contrary to a concept that a Messenger of God is an ordinary person and suddenly God bestows upon Him a special mission.

It is very probable that Mulla Ali-i-Bastami, the fourth Letter of the Living, who was appointed by the Bab to go to Iraq, was the first one to break the news of the appearance of the Bab in Karbila, where Shaykh Hasan was living. You might recall his name from the story about Abdu'l-Vahhab, the glorious youth from Shiraz, in the talk entitled "The Mystery of Martyrdom."

The Shaykh states, "When I heard that a Youth from Shiraz has claimed to be the Bab, the thought instantly flashed through my mind that such a person could be none other than the same Youth whom I had seen in Karbila." He continues, "When later on I journeyed from Karbila to Shiraz, I found that He had left for a pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina. I met Him on His return and endeavoured to remain in contact with Him."

During that period of more than a year which the Bab spent under house arrest, Shaykh Hasan remained in Shiraz until the Bab instructed His followers to go to Isfahan. No doubt he witnessed how the blessed Imam Jum'ih, or chief clergy, nullified the death sentence on the Bab which was signed by the high-ranking clergy of Shiraz.

The Shaykh was there in Shiraz at the time of the conversion of Siyyid Yahya-i-Darabi, later called Vahid by the Bab. As you recall, the king chose Vahid because of his vast learning and sent him to Shiraz to investigate the claim of the Bab; and, if possible, to subdue Him. What happened during those three investigative meetings is as awesome today as was a century and half ago.

To bring you up-to-date with history, the hostility of the prime minister and the governor of Shiraz, deepened by the conversion of Vahid, increased by the hour. The Bab, knowing the future, changed the title of His house to the name of His mother and wife, and told His followers to proceed to Isfahan. Therefore, the Shaykh was no longer in Shiraz when the plot to kill the Bab was averted by a sudden outbreak of deadly cholera. Because the Bab healed the son of the chief police, He was not killed but expelled from Shiraz and made to go to Isfahan. As you recall, He was not allowed time for a final farewell to His mother and wife. The final embrace with His guardian, Uncle

Ali, was both heartbreaking and revealing. The 27-year-old Bab told His uncle who had raised Him from childhood, "I will see you again in the mountains of Adhirbayjan when I will send you to the field of martyrdom, and soon after, I will join you in the Realm above." What a forecast!

Shaykh Hasan, while residing in Isfahan, was awaiting to see what drama would follow. The Bab was well-received by the governor of Isfahan, and for forty days was the honored guest at the home of the Imam Jumih, the chief clergy. But when the other clergy felt the threat to their position, the death sentence was their response. The governor, Manuchihr Khan, who had discovered the truth in the Bab's Cause, transferred the Bab to his own compound of houses and assigned Him a house. In spite of the entourage of servants, the governor wanted the honor of personally serving the Bab's meals. The Bab spent four months as the guest of the governor until the governor died.

Of all the followers of the Bab who had converged in Isfahan, only three Babis of the Bab's choosing were allowed to see Him, one of whom was Shaykh Hasan. (Dawnbreakers, p. 212) This was for the Bab's protection as the governor had spread the rumor that the Bab had been transferred to Tehran, condemned and executed. The governor was aware of the effect of such rumors among the many followers of the Bab. To alleviate their anxiety, only three followers were allowed to see the Bab and give the news of His safety while keeping the Bab's whereabouts a secret.

(The Bab, Balyuzi, p. 115)

Here it should be mentioned that the Bab's stay in Isfahan was considered to be the most peaceful period in His life after declaring His Cause. One of the many interesting events which took place in that time was a banquet in His honor. According to many witnesses, it was the largest reception ever given in that city. The host was a wealthy follower of the Bab, and the event was attended by dignitaries and followers.

From all indications, it took place during the early few weeks of the Bab's stay as the guest of the chief clergy when high and low were highly impressed and attracted to the Bab. This story has to be shared with you as it reveals a delightful mystery. The host of that elegant reception was Mulla Ibrahim

Nahri, who had two sons, ages 9 and 11. Many years later, as believers in Baha'u'llah, the two sons were martyred and the titles of the King of Martyrs and the Beloved of Martyrs were bestowed upon them by Baha'u'llah. The host, Mulla Ibrahim, had a brother who was married, but childless.

While the Bab was eating dinner, the host, being close to Him, mentioned the longing of his brother and sister-in-law to have a child. The Bab responded to such a hope for intercession by putting a portion of food which was on His plate onto another plate. Handing it to the host, He said, "Ask your brother and his wife both to eat the food and their wish will be fulfilled." Soon a baby was conceived, and at birth she was called Fatimih. Twenty-six years later she became the wife of Abdu'l-Baha with the title of Munirih Khanum. (Dawnbreakers, p. 208)

After the death of the governor, his mean and evil nephew became governor. This nephew, against the written will of the governor, appropriated his property which had been willed to the Bab, and reported the whereabouts of the Bab to the king. The king ordered the transfer of the Bab, under disguise and escorted by armed guards, to Tehran, where the king was eagerly hoping to meet Him. Prior to the death of Manuchihr Khan, the Bab had given His writings to the three chosen followers to transcribe and later advised them to tell all followers to go north to the cities of Kashan, Qum, and Tehran. An interesting event occurred in the city of Kashan which is beyond the scope of this talk, but is mentioned in the history of the Bab.

(The Bab, Balyuzi, p. 116)

A week after Naw-Ruz of 1848, the Bab reached the fortress of Kinar-Gird only 28 miles from Tehran. But the crafty and hostile prime minister, afraid of losing his position, prevented such a meeting with the king. Upon order of the prime minister, the Bab was taken to the prime minister's village of Kulayn. He stayed there for 20 days before the order came for His transfer to the fortress of Mah-ku.

Shaykh Hasan and three other followers who were on their way going to Tehran joined the Bab in Kulayn to care for Him. Also from Tehran came two other Babis, one of whom brought a letter and presents from Baha'u'llah which gave

the Bab extreme joy. During these three weeks, a remarkable incident occurred to which Shaykh Hasan was a witness. The story was related to Nabil, the historian, by Abdu'l-Karim, one of the four followers who had come to attend the Bab.

Abdu'l-Karim states, "My companions and I were fast asleep in the vicinity of the tent of the Bab when the trampling of horsemen suddenly awakened us. We were soon informed that the tent of the Bab was vacant and that those who had gone out to search for Him had failed to find Him. We heard the chief of the guards scolding the guards, saying, 'Why are you disturbed? Isn't His nobleness of soul sufficiently established in your eyes to convince you that He will never for the sake of His own safety consent to involve others in embarrassment.' To assure his men, the chief led his men on the road towards Tehran. The followers also went along when, all of a sudden, by the dim light of the early dawn, we saw in the distance the lonely figure of the Bab. He was coming towards us from the direction of Tehran. These were His words addressed to the chief guard, 'Did you believe Me to have escaped?' The chief answered, 'Far be it from me!' as he flung himself at the feet of the Bab. To everyone, a look of confidence and serene majesty sat upon the Bab's face, but no one dared to ask what had occurred."

Some of us may wonder if the Bab, being so close to Tehran where Baha'u'llah resided, was visited by Him; however, Abdu'l-Baha has clearly stated that the two never physically met. This does not rule out a spiritual meeting.

Let us go back three years about another spiritual meeting. When in Shiraz, Quddus, the last Letter of the Living, by seeing the back of the Bab, recognized Him as the Promised One, to the perplexity of Mulla Husayn who was not allowed to reveal the Bab's identity. When the Bab was informed about this, He said, "In the world of spirit, We have met."

Now a letter arrived from the king that the time was not right for a meeting, and that the Bab should be taken to the prison fortress of Mah-ku in the mountains of Adhirbayjan. The prime minister had succeeded in his evil machinations, but in a couple of years he lost his fortune, fame, was expelled from Tehran, and died miserably in Karbila. In the prison, the Bab was allowed only two companions. He chose two brothers who were of His lineage,

meaning Siyyids. One of the brothers, Siyyid Husayn from Yazd, was a Letter of the Living.

Shaykh Hasan was heartbroken when he saw his beloved Bab surrounded by guards and disappear from his sight, but his faith never wavered. His assurance were these words of Siyyid Kazim, his teacher of years ago, "Hasan, your beginning, and Hasan, your end." Here I wish to interject that when the guards brought the Bab to Tabriz, the capital of the province of Adhirbayjan, their chief, Muhammad Big, grief-stricken, begged the Bab for forgiveness as he felt he had failed to serve the Bab adequately and asked to be blessed. The Bab promised that generations of followers would exalt and bless him, and He counted Muhammad Big as one of His followers. His son became a believer in Baha'u'llah, and related to Mirza Abu'l-Fadl how his father had accepted the Bab. Nearly all the guards in charge of the Bab's transfer and prison wardens were bent to the will of the Bab, captivated by His soul.

The events of that long trip, some miraculous in nature, are recounted under the title, History of the Bab. Now we find the Bab imprisoned in the harsh fortress of Mah-ku. The hearts of the citizens of the nearby village and the warden were as hard as the stones in the walls. Their hostility towards the new prisoner had no bounds.

Shaykh Hasan, trodding along, arrived shortly after the Bab's arrival, but there was a problem. To make matters worse for the followers of the Bab, and enforce His strict isolation, the inhabitants of the village were warned by the prison warden, Ali-Khan, that they should not show the least mercy towards the Bab and His followers. They did not have to go out of their way to implement that order. There was inherent hatred towards the Bab because the inhabitants were of the Sunni sect of Islam with severe animosity towards the Shi'ites, particularly the Siyyids. Now you know why the evil prime minister chose that prison. To top what you just learned about that village, add the following information. That forsaken village was the birthplace of the prime minister, and its inhabitants, being proud of their famous son, were subservient to his wishes.

As soon as Ali-Khan, the warden, heard about a follower of the Bab, namely Shaykh Hasan, arriving at the village, he gave strict orders of no visitation. He went to the extreme of every night sending Shaykh outside the village gate to find lodging elsewhere. The only shelter available to him was a mosque outside the village on the side of the stony road.

Of the two brothers who had accompanied the Bab to Mah-ku, Siyyid Husayn, one of the Letters of the Living, was His scribe and the other His attendant. Every day the attendant would go to the village for provisions. Shaykh Hasan exchanged letters and messages through the attendant who was a link between the Bab and His followers.

One day the Bab told His attendant that these secret contacts with Shaykh Hasan were to end, and how He, Himself, would tell the warden, Ali-Khan, to permit visitors to come and go in peace. It is fascinating to see how a Messenger of God, imprisoned, will impose the Divine Will upon the unbending and arrogant warden. The average prisoner would be risking his life by such an assertion. You wish to know that the Bab and the two brothers in His service were the only prisoners in that immense fortress. Otherwise, it was occupied by two guards and a few dogs. Truly, a forsaken place near the border of Russia. The two brothers and Shaykh Hasan who learned about the Bab's intention had no doubt, but were grateful to become witnesses to another historical event.

For those of you who have not heard the miraculous story it will be recounted. The next day after the Bab had spoken those words, at the early hours of the morning the inmates were startled by loud and incessant knocking at the gate to the castle. Well, it was Ali-Khan who was shouting to be let in. Quickly, a guard rushed to say that the warden wished to see the Bab immediately. The Bab's scribe took the message to Him and the Bab gave permission. The warden was visibly shaking. He threw himself at the feet of the Bab, and begged to be relieved of his misery. These were the words of the arrogant Ali-Khan, "Deliver me from my perplexity. I adjure You, by the Prophet of God, Your illustrious ancestor, to dissipate my doubts, for its weight has crushed my heart. I was riding through the wilderness, when at the hour of dawn, my eyes suddenly beheld You standing by the side

of the river, engaged in offering Your prayer. I stood still and watched... I was waiting for You to terminate Your devotions that I might approach and rebuke You for having ventured to leave the castle without my permission. I quietly approached You but in Your state of rapture, You remained wholly unaware of my presence. I was suddenly seized with great fear and recoiled at the thought of awakening You from Your ecstasy. I decided to leave You and admonish the guards for their negligence. I soon found out that both the outer and inner gates were closed. Then I was ushered into Your presence and now find You, to my wonder, seated before me." (The Bab, Balyuzi, p.129)

The Bab answered and said, "What you have witnessed is true and undeniable. You belittle this Revelation and have contemptuously disdained its Author. God, the All-Merciful, desiring not to afflict you with His punishment, has willed to reveal to your eyes the Truth." All the arrogance of the warden vanished. He was totally conquered. In utmost humility, his next words were, "A poor man, a Shaykh, is yearning to attain Your presence. I pray that You allow me to bring him to Your presence, and by this act, I hope my evil deeds be forgiven."

Now you imagine Shaykh Hasan's situation. He still was in the mosque, possibly having his usual breakfast of tea, bread and cheese, when the sound of galloping horses stopped at the entrance. Are they agents to expel him from that territory, or kill him as a lesson to all future visitors? Suddenly, he heard the pounding of the long boots of the warden with the jingle of their spurs. What is Ali-Khan doing here at this time of day? His worries increased until Ali-Khan approached him and said he, himself, would take the Shaykh to see the Bab. Soon he found himself riding alongside of the changed warden. That was the way the Bab implemented His wish. The Shaykh was ecstatic while in the presence of the Bab, or transcribing His writings, but at times his thoughts took him back to Karbila where for the first time he beheld the radiant face of that Youth, and now, what cruelty and atrocities are showered upon Him. Were will it all end?

Those close to the Bab had the privilege of being informed in advance. You remember, for instance, when He was forced out of Shiraz, He told His uncle about the mountains of Adhirbayjan and the fate of both of them. When in

Tabriz, before the Bab's exile to Mah-ku took place, one day His scribe asked Him whether they will stay in that city or will be transferred to another place. His answer was, "Have you forgotten the question you asked me in Isfahan?" You see, this answer was given during the most peaceful days of the Bab when no one could have guessed the ominous future. The Bab stated then, "No less than nine months We shall remain confined in the Jabal-i-Basit (referring to Mah-ku). From there We shall be transferred to the Jabal-i-Shadid (referring to Chihriq)." The Bab went on to clearly specify the whereabouts of these two mountain-prisons. The meaning of Jabal-i-Basit is the "open mountain," and Jabal-i-Shadid is the "grievous mountain."

As the words of Shaykh Hasan bring to light many historical events, you will see greater forecasts even two years in advance about the manner of His martyrdom. (Dawnbreakers, p. 243) This foreknowledge is from the Divine Realm with no access by us mortals. Shaykh Hasan recalls, "The voice of the Bab as He dictated the teachings and principles of His Faith, could be clearly heard by those who were dwelling at the foot of the mountain. Mountain and valley re-echoed the majesty of His voice which caused our hearts to vibrate at their very depths." (Dawnbreakers, p. 249)

Although the restrictions were removed from the followers attaining the Bab's presence, no one except the two brothers were allowed to spend the night in the fortress until towards the end when Mulla Husayn arrived. His spectacular visit is beyond the scope of this talk, and is mentioned under the title of "Mulla Husayn."

As the history unfolds, we learn that, as predicted by Himself, the Bab, after nine months of captivity in Mah-ku fortress was transferred to another mountain fortress called Chihriq. Since the Bab spent nearly 27 months there, events were many. The restrictions of this fortress were more severe than Mah-ku. The sister of its harsh and unpredictable warden was married to the king. The strictness soon gave way to the effect of the Bab on the warden and removal of the restrictions.

The state of excitement of His followers was shattered by tragic events which engulfed the band of His devoted followers. In that period only a few events

to which Shaykh Hasan was a witness will be recounted until the time when the Bab asked the Shaykh to go to Karbila. After the passage of almost three months in the new prison, the order came for the transfer of the Bab to Tabriz for a mockery of a trial and execution. One of the factors that aggravated the situation was the conversion of the prominent Dayyan whose father was a friend of the prime minister. After all, the health of the king was rapidly deteriorating, and so was the status of the prime minister, who needed to impress his friends and enemies.

Shaykh Hasan was a witness to two momentous events, one after the other. As the order arrived for the transfer of the Bab to Tabriz for so-called examination of His claims, Shaykh Hasan also headed for Tabriz where he had relatives with the same surname of Zunuzi. We will meet the pride of that family in a short time. Upon receiving the order for transfer, the Bab sent away those followers who had gathered around Chihriq. Also, He commissioned Shaykh Hasan to collect the Writings He had revealed in the two fortresses and hand them to a certain believer in Tabriz.

The Bab arrived in Tabriz sometime in July 1848, and was brought before the crown prince, who was only 17 years old, and had recently been given the governorship of that province. A panel of prominent divines of Tabriz gathered to examine the Bab in the presence of the crown prince. Shaykh Hasan, standing with other people outside the hall, was able to follow the conversation in that examination. An officer of the army brought the Bab and introduced Him to that gathering. The only empty seat was the one reserved for the crown prince. Without slightest hesitation, the Bab, to the surprise of everyone, occupied that seat. When He was asked by the presiding divine, who was the tutor of the crown prince, "What is the message which you have brought?" the Bab three times repeated, "I am, I am, the Promised Qa'im whose name you have invoked for a thousand years and at whose mention you have risen."

The voice of one of the hostile divines suddenly took Shaykh Hasan back to Karbila more than a decade earlier. This man had been a student of their illustrious teacher, Siyyid Kazim. At that time, Shaykh could not figure out why Siyyid Kazim deplored that student's insincerity and perversity.

Now he understood that great teacher's foresight. Shaykh Hasan's agony had no bounds when he heard that renegade call the Bab, "You wretched and immature lad of Shiraz! You have already convulsed and subverted Iraq. Do you now wish to arouse a like turmoil in this province?" The Bab answered, "I have not come here on my own accord." That evil man furiously retorted, "Hold your peace, you perverse and contemptible follower of Satan." The Bab, addressing the presiding divine, said, "Your honor, I maintain what I already have declared."

When abusive interrogations about Arabic grammar began, the Bab, the writer of the mighty book, Qayyumu'l-Asma and other tablets all in Arabic, closed the meeting by reciting a verse from the Qur'an, rose up from His seat without properly being dismissed and walked out. You realize two important rules of etiquette were broken by the Bab, only 29 years old. One of these rules was taking the seat of the crown prince; and the other, leaving without being excused. These acts of the Bab were a strong challenge to the well-established government and religious hierarchies. Corporal punishment by bastinado was ordered, but the officer in charge of such punishment and his men refused to carry out that order. An Islamic divine carried out the punishment himself, and once the rod aimed for the Bab's feet accidentally or purposefully hit His blessed face and caused injury. Later, that clergyman died after long suffering with paralysis.

A panel of three doctors, two Persian and one English, examined the Bab to verify His sanity so He could be executed. Dr. McCormick, the only Westerner ever to see the Bab, writes, "Our report was of a nature to spare His life." Further mention of Dr. McCormick is beyond the scope of this talk; however, you could hear it in the talk under the title, "The History of the Bab."

How could the generations to come, as well as the historians, ever adequately thank great disciples such as Shaykh Hasan for their contributions making our history alive with minute details.

The next event is an awe-inspiring and moving story. Remember back when the Bab, before leaving for that mock examination in Tabriz, instructed Shaykh Hasan to gather all His writings and take them to Tabriz for safekeeping.

The Shaykh states, "During my stay in Tabriz, I often visited Siyyid Aliy-i-Zunuzi who was related to me, and frequently heard him deploring the sad fate of his son. He bitterly complained that the son's behavior had brought shame to him. I tried to calm the son's agitation, but in my daily visits, I witnessed the tears which continuously flowed from his eyes." Shaykh Hasan goes on to state, "After the Bab left Tabriz for continuation of his incarceration in Chihriq, I visited the son again. His name was Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Zunuzi. To my surprise I found a joy and calm in him like never before. His handsome face was illumined with a heavenly smile when he approached to greet me." Right there and then Muhammad-'Ali told Shaykh Hasan, "The eyes of my Beloved have beheld this face, and these eyes have gazed upon His face." (Dawnbreakers, p. 307) As we sat down, he said, "Let me tell you the secret of my happiness." Shaykh became spellbound, realizing that an extraordinary and miraculous event had taken place, capable of changing agony to ecstasy. Before you hear his account, you need to know that Muhammad-'Ali was a devoted follower of the Bab, but his stepfather, attempting to prevent him from seeing the Bab in Tabriz, went to the extreme of locking him in the house.

The young Muhammad-'Ali recounted his experience to Shaykh Hasan, his elder relative, with the following words, "Let me tell you the secret of my happiness. After the Bab had been taken back to Chihriq, one day as I lay confined in my cell, I turned my heart to Him and besought Him in these words, 'Thou beholdest, O my Best-Beloved, my captivity and helplessness, and knowest how eagerly I yearn to look upon Thy face. Dispel the gloom that oppresses my heart with the light of Thy countenance.' What tears of agonizing pain I shed that hour! I was so overcome with emotion that I seemed to have lost consciousness. Suddenly, I heard the voice of the Bab calling me. He bade me to arise. I beheld the majesty of His countenance as He appeared before me. He smiled as He looked into my eyes. I rushed forward and flung myself at His feet. He said, 'Rejoice! The hour is approaching when, in this very city, I shall be suspended before the eyes of the multitude, and shall fall a victim to the fire of the enemy. I shall choose no one except you to share with Me the cup of martyrdom. Rest assured that this promise which I give you shall be fulfilled.'" (The Bab, Balyzi, p. 153-154)

As we see in the course of history, two years later that promise was exactly fulfilled. No doubt, when Shaykh Hasan, then residing in Karbila, heard of the Bab's martyrdom together with a young follower, no one had to tell him the youth's name. With tearful eyes he recalled what Muhammad-'Ali had related to him two years earlier.

Now, let us go back to the last year of the Bab's incarceration in the fortress of Chihriq. It is sad to realize that joyous events, such as the visit of his uncle, Ali, were soon followed by heartbreaking tragedies. The worst was the slaughter of the defenders at Fort Shaykh Tabarsi. When the news of the massacre reached the Bab, it stilled His pen for nine months, and for nine days He refused to eat and drink. Of course, when the massacre occurred, Shaykh Hasan, under the instruction of the Bab, had already left for Karbila to witness the last momentous event promised to Him by the Bab.

The following is Shaykh Hasan's words, describing the last days he spent with the Bab, "I continued to be closely associated with Him until that great encounter of Shaykh Tabarsi. When informed of that event, the Bab directed all His companions to hasten to that spot and extend every assistance to Quddus, His heroic and distinguished disciple. One day He told me, 'But for my incarceration in the fortress of Chihriq, it would have been incumbent upon Me to lend My personal assistance to My beloved Quddus. Participation in that struggle is not enjoined upon you.'" Listen to this touching but awesome promise, "You should proceed to Karbila and should abide in that holy city inasmuch as you are destined to behold, with your own eyes, the beauteous countenance of the Promised Husayn." (This is an Islamic reference to the One to appear after the Qa'im; namely, Baha'u'llah.)

The Bab further stated, "As you gaze upon that radiant face, do also remember Me. Convey to Him the expression of My loving devotion." Then the Bab emphatically added, "Verily, I say, I have entrusted you with a great mission. Beware lest your heart grow faint, lest you forget the glory with which I have invested you."

Shaykh Hasan states, "Soon after, I journeyed to Karbila and lived, as bidden, in that holy city. Fearing that my prolonged stay in that center of pilgrimage

might excite suspicion, I decided to marry...(and) to earn my livelihood as a scribe. What afflictions befell me at the hands of the Shaykhis, those who professed to be the followers of Shaykh Ahmad and yet failed to recognize the Bab! Mindful of the counsels of that beloved Youth, I patiently submitted to the indignities inflicted upon me. For two years I lived in that city. Meanwhile, that holy Youth was released from His earthly prison, and through His martyrdom was delivered from the atrocious cruelties that had beset the closing years of His life. It was on October 5, 1851, while I was passing by the...courtyard of the shrine of Imam Husayn, my eyes, for the first time, fell upon Baha'u'llah. What shall I recount regarding the countenance which I beheld! The beauty of that face, those exquisite features which no pen or brush dare describe, His penetrating glance, His kindly face, the majesty of His bearing, the sweetness of His smile, the luxuriance of His jet-black, flowing locks, left an indelible impression upon my soul. I was then an old man, bowed with age. How lovingly He advanced towards me! He took me by the hand, and, in a tone which at once betrayed power and beauty, addressed me in these words, 'This very day I have purposed to make you known as a Babi throughout Karbila.'

"Still holding my hand in His, He continued to converse with me. He walked with me all along the market street, and in the end He said, 'Praise be to God that you have remained in Karbila, and have beheld with your own eyes the countenance of the promised Husayn.' I recalled instantly the promise which had been given me by the Bab. His words, which I had regarded as referring to a remote future, I had not shared with any one. These words of Baha'u'llah moved me to the depths of my being. I felt impelled to proclaim to a heedless people, at that very moment and with all my soul and power, the advent of the promised Husayn. He bade me, however, to repress my feelings and conceal my emotions. 'Not yet,' He whispered in my ear, 'the appointed Hour is approaching. It has not yet struck. Rest assured and be patient.'" (Dawnbreakers, p. 32-33)

At this point, a historical background is helpful. About one year after the martyrdom of the Bab in 1850, upon instruction of the prime minister, Baha'u'llah left Tehran for Karbila, a trip which lasted nearly nine months. It was right after His return to Tehran that on suspicion of plotting the

attempt on the life of the young king in 1852, He was thrown into the Black Pit in Tehran. He received His mission in that infested dungeon, but did not publicly declare it until April of 1863, in Baghdad.

With this in mind, His following final words to Shaykh Hasan, will be more meaningful to us as we realize that He had not yet been imprisoned and exiled. These were His words about the future to the awestruck Shaykh Hasan, "...the appointed Hour is approaching. It has not yet struck. Rest assured and be patient." Further, He confided to Shaykh Hasan that He was destined to reveal it at a later time in Baghdad. (Dawnbreakers, p. 593) Our Baha'i history is so well-endowed with such breathtaking events!

The Shaykh states, "From that moment all my sorrows vanished. My soul was flooded with joy. In those days I was so poor...I hungered for food. I felt so rich, however, that all the treasures of the earth melted...into nothingness." Indeed, from that day on, Shaykh Hasan became revived by the charm of His newly found Master, and his fulfilled life ended shortly after. Do you remember the promise given to him many years earlier by the illustrious teacher, Siyyid Kazim, "Rejoice that your beginning was Hasan, and your end shall also be Hasan." He died a very happy and grateful man, and we are indebted to him for his inspiring contributions to the history. May his life story enkindle the spark of confirmation in our hearts.