***Remember***

***My***

***Days***

*The Life-Story of*

*Bahá’u’lláh*

Lowell Johnson



THE NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY

OF THE BAHÁ’ÍS OF SOUTH AND WEST AFRICA

*JOHANNESBURG*

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Foreword

The following pages attempt to bring together part of the widely scattered

information and stories about the life of Bahá’u’lláh as already printed in

English-language publications. A list of books from which the information was

taken includes: *God Passes By* by Shoghi Effendi, *Guidance for Today and To-*

*morrow* by Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá’u’lláh and the New Era* by J. E. Esslemont,

*The Chosen Highway* by Lady Blomfield, *All Things Made New* by John Ferraby,

as well as various articles in several volumes of The Bahá’í World.

With deep humility and love, this booklet is dedicated to all those who thirst

for a fuller knowledge of the life of Bahá’u’lláh and a deeper understanding of

the sufferings endured by Him and His family.

 Lowell Johnson

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# 1 His Early Years

Bahá’u’lláh, the world’s greatest Teacher, was born between dawn and sun-

rise on 12th November 1817. He was related to the royal family of Iran. His

father was a descendant of Zoroaster, a Persian Prophet of God. His mother

was a descendant of the Prophet Abraham through Abraham’s wife, Katurah.

He was also descended from Jesse, and through His father belonged to one of

the oldest and most famous families in Persia.

As a child, Bahá’u’lláh was known as Ḥusayn ‘Alí He later received the

surname Bahá’u’lláh from the Pen of the Báb.

Bahá’u’lláh was an unusual child. He did not go to school. He would not

let anyone teach Him. This is a well-known fact in Ṭihrán. From His earliest

childhood, He was different from His relatives and friends. They said: ‘This

child has a very great power.’ He was advanced beyond His age in wisdom, in-

telligence and knowledge.

Although He never had a teacher, He was still able to solve the difficult

problems of all who came to see Him. Like Jesus, He was considered an expert

on any subject being discussed—anything from science to philosophy and re-

ligion.

Bahá’u’lláh’s father realized that his child was very unusual. He paid very

little attention to the rest of his children, but for Bahá’u’lláh he showed great

interest and respect.

One day, when Bahá’u’lláh was still quite a little child, He happened to walk

near His father and mother where they were sitting together. He heard His

father remark: ‘This son of ours is without equal. There is no one else like him.

He cannot be compared with the rest of our children in any way.’

His mother said, ‘I think he is a little bit too short.’

His father replied, ‘What does that matter? If his height is not so great, that

only makes his brain near to his heart. He is perfect in every way.’

From earliest childhood, He had an extraordinary power of attracting people

to Him. It was felt by all. Everybody loved Him, and people liked Him so

much that they always crowded around Him. Bahá’u’lláh was a very generous

person, and a lover of the outdoor life. Most of His childhood was spent in the

garden or in the fields. He was very happy when He was talking to people.

Once, when Bahá’u’lláh was only seven or eight years old, the Sháh (the

king of Persia) demanded a large sum of money from Bahá’u’lláh’s father. It

was the custom in Persia at that time that the king could demand money

from the rich ones in his country any time he wanted it, and the rich man had

to pay.

Bahá’u’lláh’s father was a very rich man, and so he paid what the Sháh had

demanded. Later, the Sháh made a second demand, and again Bahá’u’lláh’s

father paid it. But, when the Sháh demanded money a third time, it was a much

larger sum, and Bahá’u’lláh’s father was not able to pay.

When Bahá’u’lláh’s father did not pay the money, the Sháh sent collectors

to Bahá’u’lláh’s house, and they forced their way in. They were about to take

all of the furniture and sell it, when Bahá’u’lláh said to Himself, ‘I will see to

this matter myself.’

Bahá’u’lláh knew that the Sháh was away from his palace in Ṭihrán and

living at a place about ten days’ journey. But, Bahá’u’lláh decided He was

going to go and visit the Sháh, anyway. His father did not want Him to go, as

He was still only a small boy, and the weather was very cold from a recent fall

of snow. But Bahá’u’lláh said, ‘I will go.’

When Bahá’u’lláh got to the city where the Sháh was visiting, He first went

to see the Prime Minister. He talked with the Prime Minister a while, who then

took Him to see the Sháh. He then talked to the Sháh, and while He was talking

to the Sháh, He sounded as though He were thirty or forty years old—so clear

were His arguments and so keen His wisdom. Finally, the Sháh wrote out an

order telling the collectors to leave Bahá’u’lláh’s father alone. Bahá’u’lláh had

made the Sháh understand that he was being unfair.

Although Bahá’u’lláh’s father was a Minister of State close to the Sháh,

Bahá’u’lláh never tried to obtain special favours or a political job. Many

people were surprised at this, because it would have been so easy for Him to get

an important position with the government and live a long and easy life.

When Bahá’u’lláh’s father passed away, Bahá’u’lláh was twenty-two years

old. The Government invited Him to step into His father’s position, as was the

custom. This He refused to do. When the Government asked why, the Prime

Minister said, ‘Leave him to himself. He will not lower himself to such a position.

I cannot understand him: he has some greater purpose in life. He has other

thoughts, leave him alone.’

Bahá’u’lláh’s life was a life of service to mankind. He was very generous,

especially to the poor. No one who came to Him for help was ever turned away.

The doors of His house were open to all. He always had many guests.

When His friends saw how free He was with His money and His goods, they

would tell Him that He must be careful, He would become as poor as the people

He was helping. They asked of each other, ‘Why is he not thinking of his own

affairs?’ But, there were a few people who were wise. They said, ‘This person

is connected with another world. He has something beautiful within him which

cannot be seen very clearly now. The day is coming when his beauty will be

manifested.’

In truth, Bahá’u’lláh was a protector of every weak one, a shelter for every

fearing one, He was kind to every needy one, merciful and loving to every

living thing.

As was the custom in those days, Bahá’u’lláh married when He was quite

young. His bride was Ásíyih Khánum, the only daughter of an important

Persian nobleman. Her father was also a very wealthy man. When the two

families were joined in marriage, people said to each other, ‘It is adding wealth

to wealth.’

Ásíyih Khánum’s wedding treasures were very great. It took forty mules to

carry all her possessions to her Husband’s home. For six months before the

marriage, a jeweller worked at her home preparing jewellery for the wedding.

Even the buttons on her dresses were made of gold and set with precious stones.

(These buttons were later exchanged for bread while they were making the

terrible journey from Ṭihrán to Baghdád.)

Ásíyih Khánum was tall, slender, and graceful. Her eyes were dark blue. She

was a pearl, a flower amongst women. Even when very young, her wisdom and

her intelligence were remarkable. She was like a queen in her dignity and loveli-

ness. She was always thinking of others, gentle, unselfish, pure-hearted and full

of loving-kindness. Just to be with her made a person happy and full of love.

She welcomed everyone with gentle courtesy.

As a young married couple, Bahá’u’lláh and His wife did not take much part

in the entertainments and dinner parties of the government officials, or of the

wealthy people who considered them as their friends. They found such pleasures

and luxuries to be empty of very much meaning. They preferred to spend their

time looking after the poor, and helping all those who were unhappy or in

trouble. No one was ever turned away from their doors; hospitality was open for

everyone who came.

The poor women of the neighbourhood always came to Ásíyih Khánum and

told her their stories of trouble and hardships. And they went away comforted

and happier through her loving helpfulness.

Bahá’u’lláh became known around His neighbourhood as ‘The Father of

the Poor’, and Ásíyih Khánum as ‘The Mother of Consolation’. Of course, no

one ever saw Ásíyih Khánum’s face except the women and the children, because

the time had not yet come to throw off the Muslim veil.

Bahá’u’lláh and His wife had two children before the birth of ‘Abdu’l-

Bahá. Both of the first two children died. When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was born on

23rd May 1844, Bahá’u’lláh was twenty-seven years old.

After ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, another son was born, but he also died, and them came

Bahíyyih Khánum in 1846. Bahíyyih was later to be known as ‘The Greatest

Holy Leaf’.

In spite of sorrows, there were many joys for the family, and life flowed on in

its peaceful way. Bahá’u’lláh had a house in town, and also a house in the

country. He managed an entire village called Níyávarán; He took care of the

villagers in every way.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Bahíyyih used to go to the country house very often,

especially when the weather was hot in town. In the country, they could play

in the beautiful gardens where there were wonderful fruits and flowers and

flowering trees. But these days of peace and happiness were not to last very long.

# 2 The Bábí Era, 1844–1853

Bahá’u’lláh became well-known for His great spiritual qualities long before

the Báb appeared. When the Báb declared His mission in 1844, Bahá’u’lláh was

twenty-seven years old. He immediately accepted the Báb’s teachings as true,

and started to teach the Báb’s Faith. He soon became recognized as one of the

Báb’s most powerful and fearless disciples. When the Bábís were forced to protect

themselves from their enemies, Bahá’u’lláh helped them by carrying food and

money to their homes and their forts to keep them alive.

The fact that Bahá’u’lláh, a Man from such an important family in Persia,

had accepted the Báb caused many other important people to become interested.

As a result, many pure-hearted officials and well-known people became believers,

such different kinds of people as members of His own family, clergymen,

peasants and merchants. Through His efforts, He was able to guide and increase

the Bábí community in a way that the Báb Himself could not, for the Báb spent

most of His days as a Prophet in prison. He was also able to protect the Báb’s

for some time, because of His high position. Two of the Báb’s earliest disciples—

Quddús, the Báb’s favourite, and Ṭáhirih, the first woman believer—were

helped in this way.

Naturally, the fact that Bahá’u’lláh had become such an active follower of

the Báb reached the ears of the Báb’s watchful enemies. Twice Bahá’u’lláh was

put into prison for being a Bábí. The first time was when He was helping

Ṭáhirih; this lasted only a few days. The second time was when He was on His

way to join those who were defending themselves at the Fort of Shaykh Ṭabarsí.

This time He was put in prison, no doubt, by the Will of God, to protect Him

from being killed when all the rest of them were killed in the cruel slaughter.

On this occasion, He was insulted, stoned, and struck on the bottoms of His

feet until His feet bled. In both cases He was released because He was a de-

scendant of a royal family.

When the Báb announced that a greater Manifestation of God would take

place after Him, He called that Promised One ‘Him Whom God will make

manifest’. The Báb promised that nine years after His own mission was an-

nounced, the real reason for His own appearance in the world would become

clear.

The Báb and Bahá’u’lláh never met each other, but they wrote letters to

each other privately. The final communication received by Bahá’u’lláh from

the Báb was a packet delivered by the Báb’s secretary which contained the Báb’s

pen, His ring, and some of His Writings. This was a symbol that the Báb had

turned His Faith over to Bahá’u’lláh to carry on.

In His Persian Bayán, the Báb also wrote: ‘Well is it with him who fixeth

his gaze upon the Order of Bahá’u’lláh, and rendereth thanks unto his Lord.

For He will assuredly be made manifest. God hath indeed irrevocably or-

dained it in the Bayán.’

During these difficult years before and after the Báb’s martyrdom, Bahá’u’lláh

had openly become a disciple of the Báb, and helped many Bábís to escape and

protect themselves when they were being attacked. Through all this, He earned

the hatred of the fanatical clergy. From then on, they hired spies to watch

every move He made.

The Báb was martyred on 9th July 1850. Two years later in August 1852, an

event took place which had a terrible effect upon the Bábís.

One of the followers of the Báb, a young man named Ṣádiq, had been so

affected by seeing the martyrdom of his beloved Master, that he had gone half.

crazy. When the Sháh was out riding on his horse, the crazy young man shot

at the Sháh and tried to kill him. The fact that the gun was not properly loaded

proved that the young man was not in his right mind, but the Sháh was slightly

hurt, and ordered that all Bábís be punished. Ṣádiq was put to death on the spot

and eighty others were killed in Ṭihrán. Many others were captured and put

into prison.

At the same time when Ṣádiq tried to kill the Sháh, Bahá’u’lláh was at His

country house in the village of Níyávarán. His wife, Ásíyih Khánum was at

the town house with the children.

Suddenly and in a great hurry, a servant came rushing in to see Ásíyih

Khánum.

‘The Master, the Master!’ he called. ‘He is arrested—I have seen Him!

He has walked many miles! Oh, they have beaten Him! They say He has

suffered the torture of the bastinado!\* His feet are bleeding! He has no shoes

on! His turban has gone! His clothes are torn! There are chains upon His

neck!’

Ever since Bahá’u’lláh had taken up the Cause of the Báb, Khánum had

expected that such a time would come. But, now that it had happened, her face

turned whiter and whiter. The children, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Bahíyyih and the

youngest, Mírzá Mihdí, only two years old, were terribly frightened and wept

bitterly.

Although Bahá’u’lláh’s family had many relatives and friends living with

them at the time, they all became frightened and ran away. Even the servants

left them, all except one man, Isfandíyár, and a wonderful negro woman.

Their big house in town and all their smaller houses were soon stripped of

everything. The people broke in and stole all their possessions, their furniture

and all their valuable things.

The only relative who helped them at this time was Bahá’u’lláh’s brother,

Mírzá Músá (also known as Áqáy-i-Kalím). Mírzá Músá also went into hiding

to escape being killed but he first helped Khánum and the children find a place

to hide themselves, so that they would not be killed. Khánum managed to save

only a few of her marriage treasures. These things were gradually sold and the

money given to Bahá’u’lláh’s gaolers as a bribe, so they would take food to

Him while He was in prison.

\* Being struck on the soles of the feet.

Mírzá Yaḥyá, Bahá’u’lláh’s half-brother, ran away into the mountains of

Mázindarán, where he remained in hiding.

The prison into which Bahá’u’lláh was thrown was a terrible place. The

prison was called the Síyáh-Chál. It was located in Ṭihrán, the capital city.

It was once used as a sewer for the dirty water from people’s baths. To get to it,

Bahá’u’lláh had to go down three flights of stairs with chains around His neck

and on His hands and feet.

The prison was dark, and it held about one hundred and fifty murderers,

robbers and thieves. There was no way out except the way He came in, and

there were no windows. The smell of the place was too terrible to describe.

Most of the men had neither clothes to wear nor a mat to lie on.

No reason was given for throwing Bahá’u’lláh into this black hole, loaded

with heavy chains. Five other Bábís were chained to Him night and day. When

one of the Bábís moved, the chains cut deeper into the flesh of not only the one

next to him, but into Bahá’u’lláh and the others chained together, as well.

Sleep or rest of any kind were impossible. No food was provided by the prison

officials, and it was very difficult for Khánum to get either food or drink into

the prison to help them. Even when Khánum succeeded in getting food to her

beloved Husband, the guards put poison into it hoping to get special favours

from those in authority.

Although the poison did not kill Bahá’u’lláh, it left Him with poor health for

many years of His life.

The house in which Khánum and the children were hiding was very near to

the prison, but she was not able to visit even the guards of the prison except

late at night or very early in the morning while no one was out in the streets.

If Khánum had been caught by any of the people on these trips to the prison,

she would immediately have been put to death. Little ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, then seven

years old, used to go out of the house with His mother when she visited the

prison. Bahíyyih would stay home shivering in a corner of their dark house

holding onto two-year-old Mírzá Mihdí. Once in a while, Mírzá Músá, Bahá

’u’lláh’s faithful brother, would come to them and tell them the latest news.

For four months, this kind of life went on.

Meanwhile, the spirit of the Bábís in the prison remained high, and became

higher. To be tortured to death became their dearest wish, the goal of their

heart’s desire.

They chanted prayers night and day. Every morning one or more of these

brave friends would be taken out and tortured and killed. Before being turned

over to the executioner, they would be given to different classes of people in the

city. The butchers would use their knives on them, the bakers would put their

feet or their heads in their ovens, the shoemakers and the blacksmiths would

make them suffer with their tools. Finally, they would be put out of their misery

by the executioner, if they had not already died on the way.

Those who were torturing the Bábís could not understand their courage and

their strength. When they saw the Bábís chanting prayers, praising God, and

asking Him to forgive and bless their murderers, they became even more

bloodthirsty. Mobs of people would gather around, yell curses and insults at

them, and beat their drums to give themselves the courage to commit these

awful deeds.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Bahíyyih, Mírzá Mihdí and their suffering mother heard all

these sounds every day. Their hearts were crying out, and their fears became

greater day by day—for they never knew but perhaps it was their own blessed

Father who was being killed at that very moment. They would not know until

late at night when Khánum went again to the prison guards to deliver the food

and water, and hear the news.

While in the prison of Síyáh-Chál, Bahá’u’lláh thought about the condition of

the Bábí community, how spiritually low it had sunk since the martyrdom of

their beloved leader, the Báb.

During those days in the prison, He had very little sleep because of the terrible

weight of the chains and the awful smell of the air, but when He did drop off

into a light sleep, He began to have a strange experience. This is the way He,

Himself; describes it: ‘I felt as if something flowed from the crown of My head

over My breast.’ He said it was like a rushing stream of water which falls down

the side of a high mountain. Every part of His body would feel as if it were on

fire.

On one of those nights, Bahá’u’lláh had a dream. He seemed to hear voices

coming from every side. And these were the words He heard: ‘Verily, We shall

render Thee victorious by Thyself and by Thy pen. Grieve Thou not for that

which hath befallen Thee, neither be Thou afraid, for Thou art in safety. Ere

long will God raise up the treasures of the earth—men who will aid Thee

through Thyself and through Thy Name …’

At another time, He heard a wonderful, sweet voice calling above His head.

He turned His face and saw a young woman floating in the air before Him. So

happy was this young woman that her very soul appeared to Bahá’u’lláh as

the face of God. Between heaven and earth she was calling to the hearts and the

minds of all men. She was giving a Message which made everyone happy—

both outwardly and in the deepest parts of their souls.

The young woman pointed a finger at Bahá’u’lláh’s head, and announced

to all who are in heaven and all who are on earth: ‘By God! This is the Best-

Beloved of the worlds, and yet ye comprehend it not. This is the Beauty of

God amongst you, and the power of His sovereignty within you, could ye but

understand. This is the Mystery of God and His Treasure, the Cause of God

and His Glory …, if ye be of them that perceive.’

That is the way in which Bahá’u’lláh came to know that He was the One

chosen by God to carry on the work already started by the Báb. It was in this

manner that Bahá’u’lláh was appointed the Manifestation of God for this day.

The exact date is not known, but it happened sometime during the final months

of 1852.

Although Bahá’u’lláh did not rest or sleep in the prison of Síyáh-Chál, this

did not mean that He was unhappy. On the contrary, He and His companions

were in the greatest happiness. When the order came for one of them to die,

he would dance for joy and kiss the hands of Bahá’u’lláh, throw his arms around

the rest of his fellow-believers, and rush up the stairs to his martyrdom.

Bahá’u’lláh even gave His shirt to one of His companions, so that he would

not have to go to his death without clothes. To another He gave His shoes.

One day, an uncle of Bahá’u’lláh who was a friend of the Russian Consul in

Ṭihrán, learned that Bahá’u’lláh was about to be put to death by the State

executioner. Bahá’u’lláh’s uncle went to the Russian Consul and told him what

was about to happen. The Consul was already convinced of Bahá’u’lláh’s

innocence, so he went to the Court where the sentences of death were being

passed. Completely without fear, the Russian Consul rose up in that Court

and spoke these wonderful words:

‘Listen to me,’ he said, ‘I have words of importance to say to you.’

The president and the officials were so surprised to hear this voice that they

could not make a reply.

‘Haven’t you been cruel enough?’ he asked. ‘Have you not already murdered

enough of these harmless people? You know very well that these people are

innocent of any crime. Hasn’t there been enough blood shed to satisfy you?

How is it possible for you to pretend that this great prisoner planned that silly

attempt to shoot the Sháh? You know that the stupid gun used by the poor

youth could not have killed a bird. There must be an end to all this. I have de-

cided to offer the protection of Russia to this innocent nobleman; therefore

beware! If one hair of his head is hurt from this moment on, rivers of blood shall

flow in your town as a punishment. You will do well to listen to my warning.

my country is behind me in this matter.’

That night, Bahá’u’lláh’s uncle came to see Khánum and the children, and

told them what the Russian Consul had done. How they all wept for joy! Soon

their beloved Father and Husband would be out of the terrible prison and with

them once more!

Very soon after that, in December, the Governor of Ṭihrán changed the

expected order of death and ordered Him to leave the country for the rest of His

life. The Governor was afraid to go against the warning of the Russian Consul.

Bahá’u’lláh and His family must go to ‘Iráq. They must start a new life in the

land of Mesopotamia, in the city of Baghdád.

Bahá’u’lláh was very sick when He came out of the prison. In fact, no one

thought that He could possibly live. He came to that small house which had

only two rooms early in January, 1853. Only ten days were given to them to

prepare for the journey. But, oh! how happy the family was to have Him with

them!

Bahá’u’lláh (then known as Jamál-i-Mubárak, The Blessed Beauty’) spoke

very little about the terrible sufferings in prison. The family saw what had

happened to Him and did not need to be told—the wounds where the chains

had cut into His delicate skin, especially around His neck. Also the sores on

His poor feet, wounds which had not been cared for, which made it painful for

Him to walk.

Instead of talking about His sufferings, Bahá’u’lláh told of the faith of the

friends who had gone out to meet a martyr’s death with such courage and joy.

The glory which had been theirs was such a victory that the shame, and pain

and sorrow were of no importance whatever.

The family saw that something else had happened to Bahá’u’lláh while He

was in prison. They saw a new spirit which seemed to surround Him like a

shining garment. They did not know what it meant at the time, although it is

said that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá understood its meaning at once. Bahá’u’lláh never told

them of His dream, or about anything else which had happened.

Ásíyih Khánum did her best to nurse her beloved Husband, so that He might

set out on His journey in ten days’ time. It was a time of great difficulty. How

could she prepare?

The poor, dear lady sold almost all that was left from her marriage treasures,

jewels, clothes, and other belongings. From these she received about £125

(R250). With this money she tried to make preparations for the uncertain

journey. She had no experience in such things. There was no one to help her.

The children were small, her Husband was sick, none of the friends were brave

enough to come and help, or even say goodbye. The two servants did everything

they could.

Only one old lady came to see them. It was Ásíyih Khánum’s grandmother.

And since Mírzá Mihdí (later known as ‘The Purest Branch’) was only two

years old and too young to take along on the trip, Khánum gave the boy to the

grandmother to keep for her. The parting was very sad.

Finally, they were ready to go—Bahá’u’lláh, Khánum, Bahíyyih and

‘Abdu’l-Bahá. The weather had turned bitterly cold, for it was the middle of

winter. There was snow on the ground.

# 3 Baghdád

It was on 12th January 1853 that Bahá’u’lláh, part of His family, and several

friends started the three-month journey to Baghdád.

They travelled on foot across the snow-covered mountains with guards

watching them every hour, day and night. They suffered terribly—especially

the ladies, who were not used to such painful conditions.

On the way to Baghdád, they sometimes camped in wild places, sometimes

in a caravanserai, rather like a rough hotel. Poor Khánum! How she suffered

on that journey, riding a jerky mule. And she was only a short time away from

having her next child.

But, did she complain? Not a word! She was always thinking of some kind-

ness for somebody else, and giving her sympathy to all who were in difficulty

on the trip. When they came to a city, she would take the clothes and wash

them in the public bath. She would then carry the cold, wet clothes in her arms

—drying them as best she could. Her lovely hands, not being used to this kind

of work, became painful and red.

When they stayed at a caravanserai, there was only one room for each family

and then for only one night. No light was permitted at night, and there were no

beds. When they could get food it was sometimes a little tea, or perhaps a few

eggs, a little cheese, and some hard bread.

Bahá’u’lláh was so ill on the journey that He could not eat the rough food.

This made Khánum very unhappy and she tried to think of ways to get some

other food—but mostly He ate nothing and became weaker and weaker.

One day, Khánum was able to get hold of a little flour, and that night she

made a sweet cake for Bahá’u’lláh. But, she had made a mistake! In the dark,

she had used salt instead of sugar, and the cake was impossible to eat.

If a person thinks about the way in which Bahá’u’lláh was forced to leave His

native land and move to another country, he is reminded of what happened

to some other Prophets of God—how Muḥammad was forced to leave Mecca

and move to Medina, how Mary and Joseph had to flee from Bethlehem into

Egypt with Jesus, how Moses led His brother and His followers out of the land

of Egypt, and above all, how Abraham was forced out of Ur to the Promised

Land.

In some ways, the story of Abraham and the story of Bahá’u’lláh are very

much alike. But, just as Abraham’s life brought great benefit to many different

peoples, faiths and nations after Him, so the sufferings of Bahá’u’lláh will bring

great blessings to the entire human race in time to come.

On 8th April 1853, Bahá’u’lláh and His party of followers finally reached

Baghdád. When they first arrived, they were put into a very small house with

only two rooms—one for Bahá’u’lláh and one for Khánum and the children.

Bahá’u’lláh was ill for a long time, but gradually He became better. Khánum’s

health was also very poor. Her strength had become less because of the hard-

ships on the journey, but she continued to work beyond her strength so that the

work would get done. Sometimes, Bahá’u’lláh would help her with the cooking,

because it saddened His heart to see her doing the work that was too much for a

delicate, refined, gentle lady.

Mírzá Músá, Bahá’u’lláh’s faithful brother, came with the family on this

journey to Baghdád. He was a very kind helper in everything. At time he

did almost all the cooking, for which he had a talent; and he would also help

with the washing. While in Baghdád, Mírzá Músá met and married a woman

who had been taught the Faith by Ṭáhirih. They were always devoted to Bahá-

’u’lláh. (Their daughter, however, eventually married Muḥammad-’Alí, the

faithless half-brother of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.)

As soon as Bahá’u’lláh’s health became better, He began to teach and

encourage the believers to improve their character and follow the laws of the

Báb. Soon, there was peace and happiness amongst the Bábís of Baghdád. This

peace and happiness did not last very long, however, because soon Bahá’u’lláh’s

half-brother, Mírzá Yaḥyá, arrived in the city to cause trouble.

Mírzá Yaḥyá had at one time been appointed by the Báb to carry on the

leadership of the Faith until the next Manifestation of God should appear.

The Báb had done this to protect Bahá’u’lláh from becoming known to the

people too early. If it had been known that Bahá’u’lláh was the Promised One,

He would have been killed immediately.

Before the Báb’s passing, He gave His last Writings to His secretary to give

to Mírzá Ḥusayn ‘Alí. In these papers, the Báb referred again and again to

Mírzá Ḥusayn ‘Alí as ‘Him Whom God will make Manifest’, and gave Him

the name ‘Bahá’u’lláh’. The Báb also gave His papers, His pen case and His

seal to His secretary, and told him to deliver all of these things to Bahá’u’lláh

after His martyrdom.

The secretary obeyed all of the Báb’s instructions, and these important

papers were kept with Bahá’u’lláh in Baghdád.

After the passing of the Báb, Mírzá Yaḥyá claimed to be the leader of the

Bábís, which was true. But, when the Sháh ordered all the Bábís to either be

shot or put into prison, the cowardly Mírzá Yaḥyá ran away into the mountains.

Instead of helping the Bábís to remain in unity and protecting them, he found

a safe hiding place, put on the clothes of an Arab, and wandered from town

to town.

The Bábís, in general, did not concern themselves very much with the claims

of this weak character, Mírzá Yaḥyá. The true disciples looked upon him as an

ignorant, ambitious youth. But, his claims did have the desired effect on the rest

of the people. They protected Bahá’u’lláh from being recognized as the

Promised One until the proper time had arrived.

When Mírzá Yaḥyá arrived in Baghdád, he met a jealous, ambitious, black-

hearted fellow by the name of Siyyid Muḥammad. Both Mírzá Yaḥyá and Siyyid

Muḥammad saw what Bahá’u’lláh had done to make the Bábí community

such an outstanding one, and they noticed how much love and affection was

being showered upon Him, not only by the Bábís but also by the officials of the

city. As a result, their jealousy grew, and between the two of them, they started

a secret campaign of whisperings and lies directed against Bahá’u’lláh.

Soon, arguments arose amongst the members of the Bábí community, and

it began to split into many parts in the same way that arguments had arisen

amongst the disciples of Jesus and the descendants of Muḥammad. These

differences were very painful to Bahá’u’lláh, Whose whole purpose in life

was to bring unity to the people of the world.

During this time, Bahá’u’lláh was in such sadness that it made the hearts of

the faithful tremble. When Bahá’u’lláh looked at the terrible things which

Mírzá Yaḥyá and his partner were doing to the Bábís, He became so angry

He could not hold His tongue.

One night, He suddenly left His house with His night cap still on His head,

and as He walked through the streets, He cried out His anger.

‘These creatures,’ He was heard to say, ‘are the same creatures who for

three thousand years have worshipped idols, and bowed down before the Golden

Calf. Now, too, they are fit for nothing better. What relation can there be

between this people and Him Who is the Countenance of Glory? What ties

can bind them to the One Who is the supreme embodiment of all that is lovable?’

Finally, He cried out into the night this prayer of the Báb: ‘Bid them recite:

“Is there any Remover of difficulties save God? Say: Praised be God! He is God!

All are His servants, and all abide by His bidding!” Tell them to repeat it

five hundred times, nay, a thousand times, by day and by night, sleeping or

waking.’

Several times during these days, Bahá’u’lláh was heard to remark: ‘We have,

for a while, stayed amongst these people, but We fail to see the slightest response

on their part.’

Suddenly, without warning, Bahá’u’lláh announced to His family that He

was leaving Baghdád. He commanded the friends to treat Mírzá Yaḥyá with

kindness, and invited Mírzá Yaḥyá to live with His family in His own home

while He was gone. Mírzá Yaḥyá accepted the invitation and Bahá’u’lláh told

Khánum, Mírzá Músá and the children that they must take care of Mírzá

Yaḥyá’s family and do everything they could to make him comfortable. Then.

He was gone.

# 4 Two Years in the Wilderness

Bahá’u’lláh left Baghdád with only one companion and a change of clothing.

He changed His name to Darvísh Muḥammad and went to live in the mountains

of Kurdistán. His plan was never to return. Bahá’u’lláh, the man, was not able

to cope with the enemies of the Cause. He wanted nothing more than to main-

tain peace within the Bábí community. As He said in the *Book of Íqán*, His

only thought was to remove Himself so that He would not be a cause of fighting

amongst the faithful, or the cause of sorrow to any soul.

When Bahá’u’lláh left Baghdád, Mírzá Yaḥyá was overjoyed. Now, he felt,

he had his chance to prove that he was the true leader of the Bábís. As time went

on, however, the spiritual condition of the Bábís became worse instead of

better. So low did it sink that no less than twenty-five Bábís declared themselves

to be the Holy One promised by the Báb. Mírzá Yaḥyá was powerless to do

anything about it. The Bábís only laughed at him and went their ways.

Seeing that he could not improve the spiritual life of the community, he and

Siyyid Muḥammad set about trying to poison the minds of everyone against the

person of Bahá’u’lláh. Since they were unable to lead the Bábís, they were

going to make sure that no one else would, either. The community became

more and more divided until, at last, it reached a hopeless condition. The light

of faith had almost completely disappeared.

Meanwhile, Mírzá Yaḥyá was a guest in Bahá’u’lláh’s house. He gave the

family much trouble, even complaining of the food. He did not appreciate the

fact that all the best and most tasty dishes were always given to him.

At this time, he became very afraid that he would one day be arrested. He

hid himself in the house all the time, keeping the door of the house locked and

storming at anyone who unlocked it.

As for the children, they led a very lonely life. They would have loved to

make friends with other children—especially little Bahíyyih. But, Mírzá

Yaḥyá would not permit any little friends to come to the house, nor would he

let Bahíyyih go out.

Two little girls about Bahíyyih’s own age lived in the next house. She used

to peep at them through the door, but Mírzá Yaḥyá always shouted at her for

opening the door, and hurried forward to lock it.

Always, he was afraid of being arrested, and he cared for nothing but his

own safety. He would not even permit them to go to the public baths, and no one

could come to the house to help with the work. For hours every day Bahíyyih

had to stand by the well in the house and draw up the water. The ropes were

hard and rough, and the bucket very heavy for a little girl. Mírzá Yaḥyá never

helped.

During this time, Bahá’u’lláh’s darling baby son, born after they arrived in

Baghdád, became seriously ill. Mírzá Yaḥyá would not allow a doctor to be

called, nor would he permit a neighbour to come and help. Bahá’u’lláh’s wife

was broken-hearted when the little one died. Mírzá Yaḥyá wouldn’t even let

anyone prepare the baby for burial. The sweet body of her beautiful baby was

given to a man who took it away, and no one ever knew where it was buried.

For many years they remembered the sorrow of those days so clearly.

A little while after this, Khánum and the family moved into a larger house.

Fortunately, Mírzá Yaḥyá was too afraid to be seen if he came with them, so

he stayed in a little house behind theirs. They still continued to send his food

to him, and also provided for his family which had now increased. Mírzá

Yaḥyá had married another wife, a girl from a neighbouring village. From

then on, Khánum and the family were greatly relieved and lived a happier life.

All this time their greatest worry was, ‘Where was Bahá’u’lláh?’ Mírzá

Músá and Khánum made every effort to find out anything they could. ‘Abdu’l-

Bahá was terribly upset by His Father’s long absence. On several occasions,

He prayed the whole night asking that their Father be returned to them.

While Bahá’u’lláh was in the mountains, He lived mostly in caves. At one

time, He lived in a hut made of stone which was used by peasants to protect

them from the weather during the harvest time. The birds of the air were His

companions, and the animals His only friends. Many a night He had no food,

and on many a day He had no rest.

But, in spite of all these trials and difficulties, Bahá’u’lláh was the happiest

He had been in His life. In the quietness of the mountains, He was not aware

of any other living thing. He knew nothing of human joys or sorrows, health or

sickness. He gave no thought to the rest of the world. He was alone for the first

time in His life, and He lived entirely with His own spirit.

Almost two years went by in this way. And, Bahá’u’lláh would have been

contented to live this kind of simple life forever. But, God had decided otherwise,

and in the end Bahá’u’lláh surrendered His will to God’s and returned to

Baghdád.

This is how it happened: A certain Shaykh who owned property near where

Bahá’u’lláh was living had an unusual dream. In his dream, the Prophet Mu-

ḥammad appeared, and told him to go to the mountain and find a man who

was living there. The Shaykh obeyed Muḥammad’s command, and found

Bahá’u’lláh as Muḥammad had said.

After meeting Bahá’u’lláh, the Shaykh told the head of a mission about Him,

and soon Bahá’u’lláh was invited to come to the mission to live. Bahá’u’lláh

refused, but after many invitations, He finally agreed to live there. No one at

the mission had any idea that Bahá’u’lláh had special learning or wisdom.

However, one day one of the students happened to see some of Bahá’u’lláh’s

writing. From the shape and style of the letters, he could tell that Bahá’u’lláh

must be a person of great spiritual power. From then on, Bahá’u’lláh was called

upon by the priests and students to speak to them every day and to explain the

most difficult passages of the Muslim sacred Writings.

In a short time, Kurdistán was flooded with His love, and everywhere He

was loved in return. Soon, He became so famous that the news of this wonderful

Teacher reached the ears of the people of Baghdád.

One night, after ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had prayed the whole night, He and His

uncle Mírzá Músá, overheard two people speaking about a marvellous Person

living in the wild mountains of Sulaymáníyyih. They described Him as the

‘Nameless One’ who had filled the whole countryside with His love. ‘Abdu’l-

Bahá knew at once that this must be their Beloved.

Mírzá Músá and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá went to see a faithful friend, Shaykh Sulṭán,

and asked him to search for Bahá’u’lláh and urge Him to return. ‘Abdu’l-

Bahá wrote a letter. The family wrote letters. Even Mírzá Yaḥyá wrote a letter

begging Bahá’u’lláh to return.

Before Bahá’u’lláh received the letters, He realized that He must return to

Baghdád to save the Faith from being destroyed. He said to His companion

while making His way back that if it were not for the Báb, and the fact that

‘all the sacred blood poured out in the path of God would have been shed in

vain, I would in no wise have consented to return …’ But, He turned His feet

towards Baghdád.

Bahá’u’lláh took several weeks to make the trip back to Baghdád. He knew

that these days would be the last hours of peace He would ever know. Never

again would He be alone to commune with His spirit. The rest of His life was

destined to be one crisis after another, until He finally was to give up His life

for the sake of a people who were not yet ready to receive Him.

# 5 Return to Baghdád

Bahá’u’lláh arrived in Baghdád on 19th March 1856, exactly two years from

the day of His departure for Kurdistán.

As soon as Khánum knew that Bahá’u’lláh was returning, she made a coat

for Him out of some pieces of red cloth which she had carefully saved. It was

now ready for Him to put on. And it was well that she had prepared it, for when

He arrived He appeared in the clothes of a beggar.

Here are the words of the Greatest Holy Leaf, Bahíyyih, as she describes the

return of her Father:

‘Our joy cannot be described as we clung to him. I can see now my beloved

mother, calm and gentle, and my brother holding his father’s hand fast, as

though never again could he let him go out of his sight … I could never forget

this scene, so touching and so happy.

‘Many were the stories of those two years which he told us. We were never

tired of listening. The food was easy to describe—coarse bread, a little cheese,

was the usual diet; sometimes but very rarely a cup of milk; into this would be

put some rice, and a tiny bit of sugar. When boiled together, this provided the

great treat of a sort of rice pudding.’

Bahá’u’lláh’s first duty was to bring the Bábís back into one community,

so that they would be able to work together in peace once again. This He did in a

short time through His love and divine power of attraction. All the Bábís had

come to realize that Mírzá Yaḥyá and Siyyid Muḥammad were not able to

help them or improve their spiritual lives, so they turned to Bahá’u’lláh as

their guide. His next goal was to improve the characters of the Bábís who had

sunk so low that some of them had even become robbers and murderers.

The basic teachings of the Báb had been forgotten while Bahá’u’lláh was

away. So, Bahá’u’lláh restated them and gave them a fresh interest. He first

forbade the Bábís to take part in any political activity or secret organizations.

He then told them that they must not fight, they must strictly obey their govern-

ment, and they must be kind, honest, truthful. They must not argue or back-

bite. They must return good for evil. They must learn the arts and sciences.

They must sacrifice themselves, they must be patient and strong, and accept

the Will of God.

It was at this time that Bahá’u’lláh revealed His little book *The Hidden*

*Words*. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá tells that Bahá’u’lláh would often go for a walk along

the banks of the Tigris River and He would come back looking very happy.

He would then go into His room and write down the poetic words of wisdom

which have since brought help and healing to millions of aching and troubled

hearts.

Soon, Bahá’u’lláh’s fame became very great in Baghdád. Visitors came from

far and near to see Him and hear Him. The friends whom He had made in

Kurdistán came to Baghdád looking for ‘Darvísh Muḥammad’, and were sur-

prised to find Him living in a house with so many followers gathered around

Him.

During the next seven years in Baghdád, Bahá’u’lláh was the centre of

great attention. To visit Him came priests and religious leaders, poets, mystics,

and notables, government officials, famous Persians living in ‘Iráq and Persia,

princes of royal blood, Bábís who came all the way from Persia to see Him,

the British Consul who offered Bahá’u’lláh British citizenship and a home in

India, and finally the Governor of Baghdád himself. All were attracted by His

fame, His Writings, and His wisdom.

Amongst those Bábís who were privileged to visit Him were four of the

Báb’s cousins and His maternal uncle; a grand-daughter of the Sháh who was

an admirer of Ṭáhirih; Mullá Ṣádiq, who had been with Quddús in Shíráz;

Mullá Báqir, one of the Letters of the Living; Mírzá Muḥammad, the father

of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s wife; and Nabíl-i-A‘ẓam, the author of *The Dawn-Breakers*.

When Nabíl visited the newly-awakened Bábí community, he wrote that

the Bábís had become so affected by Bahá’u’lláh’s presence that in their eyes

the palaces of kings had become less important than a spider’s web. He (Nabíl),

with two others, lived in a room which had no furniture. Many a night no

less than ten persons had no other food than a pennyworth of dates. No one

knew to whom actually belonged the shoes, the clothes, or the blankets that

were to be found in their houses. Their own names they had forgotten, their

hearts were empty of everything except love of their Beloved. Each Bábí had

entered into an agreement with one of his fellow-disciples that if he were noticed

doing anything against the high standards of character upheld by Bahá’u’lláh,

that person would strike him on the soles of the feet. The worse the offence the

more blows on the feet would he receive.

It was not only the Bábís who felt Bahá’u’lláh’s power. One royal prince came

to see Bahá’u’lláh and said, ‘I know not how to explain it. Were all the sorrows

of the world to be crowded into my heart, they would, I feel, all vanish when

in the presence of Bahá’u’lláh. It is as if I had entered Paradise itself.’

Another prince who visited Bahá’u’lláh thought that the feeling he received

in Bahá’u’lláh’s room came from the simple room itself. So, when he returned

to his own home, he ordered that another room be added to his house exactly

the same size and shape as Bahá’u’lláh’s.

When Bahá’u’lláh heard of the prince’s plan, He said that he may be able

to build a low-ceilinged room like this one made of mud and straw, but what

about his ability to open onto it the spiritual doors leading to the hidden worlds

of God?

Such was the attraction of Bahá’u’lláh. And as a bounty to all Bahá’ís in

future, Bahá’u’lláh has ordained this house in Baghdád to be a place of pil-

grimage, the most important place outside the Holy Land itself.

Soon, most of the twenty-five Bábís who had declared themselves to be the

Promised One came to Bahá’u’lláh and asked His forgiveness. Others who came

to live in His shadow were several Persians who were being badly treated for

being Bábís. They came to Baghdád to be protected by Him.

A few government officials were so impressed by His power and influence

that they asked Him to recommend their plans or ideas to the people, thinking

that in this way they would gain favour with the public. This He always refused

to do and condemned for its motive.

All during this time, it must be remembered, Bahá’u’lláh was only a disciple

of the Báb. The people who were attracted to Him were attracted by His

personality, His knowledge, wisdom, love, kindness, helpfulness and His power

to give them new life and understanding. Thousands of people could be con-

sidered His friends and admirers; they could not praise Him enough nor could

they find anyone else who was nearly as powerful as He.

And yet, when Bahá’u’lláh later declared Himself to the world as a Prophet of

God, many of these same people turned against Him and refused to accept His

greatest Message of all.

Bahá’u’lláh kept His secret of Prophethood until 1863. How sad it must have

made Him to remain quiet for such a long time! How full of sorrow He was

to see that the people were not yet ready to receive Him in His full glory!

How patient He was in gradually opening their eyes and preparing their hearts!

It was at this time that Bahá’u’lláh revealed His first full-length book—

*The Book of Íqán*. In it He explained what a Manifestation of God is, how the

Manifestations have come to earth one after another, how all their Messages

have been spiritually the same but restated to suit the age in which they were

given, and how the next Manifestation would fulfil the prophecies and promises

of all the Prophets gone before Him.

Bahá’u’lláh spent the nineteen years between the Báb’s martyrdom and His

own Announcement teaching and preparing the world to accept a much greater

Message than any which had yet been given to men by a Prophet of God.

As Bahá’u’lláh’s power over the hearts and minds of His followers became

greater and greater, there were a few people who became jealous and afraid of

His popularity. One of these was a Muslim priest who hated Bahá’u’lláh. This

jealous priest tried to stir up the uneducated people and cause them to harm

Bahá’u’lláh as He walked alone in the streets.

When Bahá’u’lláh met these people, He would fearlessly walk up to them,

ask them what they wanted, and then joke with them until they forgot what

they had planned to do to harm Him.

When the priest discovered that he was not able to get rid of Bahá’u’lláh in

this way, he hired a man named Riḍá to shoot Him. Twice Riḍá tried to kill

Bahá’u’lláh. The first time he followed Bahá’u’lláh into a public bath carrying

a gun under his coat. But, when he tried to shoot, he found that he did not

have the courage. Another time, he lay alongside the road where Bahá’u’lláh

walked, and when he lifted his gun to shoot, he was so overcome with fear that

the pistol dropped from his hand. On that occasion, Bahá’u’lláh’s brother was

with Him, and when Bahá’u’lláh saw the gun drop, He told His brother to

give Riḍá back his gun and help him to find his way back home.

Another thing which the jealous priest did to cause trouble for Bahá’u’lláh

was to call a meeting of all the high clergy of Baghdád and insist that Bahá’u-

’lláh prove His greatness by performing a miracle.

When Bahá’u’lláh received the request, He said, ‘Although you have no

right to ask this, for God should test His creatures and they should not test

God, still I allow and accept this request.’

He then went on to tell them that He would perform any miracle they asked,

if they would agree on one miracle only, and submit their request to Him in

writing. Also, they must agree that if He performed that miracle, they would

then accept the truth of His Cause and not obstruct His way in future.

Naturally, the priests were not able to agree on which miracle they wanted

Bahá’u’lláh to perform, and so they chose to drop the matter entirely.

By this time, almost the entire Bábí community in both Persia and ‘Iráq had

recognized Bahá’u’lláh as their spiritual leader. He had proved Himself through

His abilities.

But, His enemies increased their activities and tried to get Him moved out

of Baghdád. They wrote letters to the Sháh in Persia telling lies and claiming

that Bahá’u’lláh was getting ready to call upon thousands of fighters to attack

the city and destroy the Holy Shrines of Islám.

After nine months of this kind of activity, the Sháh finally sent an order to

have Bahá’u’lláh moved from Baghdád, and he requested the Sulṭán of Turkey

to accept Him into Constantinople (today called Istanbul). This the Sulṭán

agreed to do, and Bahá’u’lláh was given a large sum of money to take care of

the expense of moving Himself and family so great a distance. At first He refused

to accept the money, but when He was told that the government would be

insulted if He refused, He did accept it, and on that same day gave it away to

the poor.

That day, the day when His followers learned that He was being forced to

leave Baghdád, was the most terrible which the Bábís had ever experienced.

They were going to be separated from their Beloved, their Inspiration, their

very Life. When the news reached them, they refused to accept either food or

sleep the whole night. Not one person was calm or able to control himself.

Many had already decided that if they were separated from Bahá’u’lláh, they

would immediately kill themselves.

Little by little, however, Bahá’u’lláh calmed their hearts with His loving-

kindness, His words, and with a different Tablet (Message) which He revealed

for each person—each adult and each child in His company.

For those who were going to leave Baghdád with Bahá’u’lláh, there was the

problem of what to take with them. They had not been told where they would

be going, nor how long they would be travelling. Even Bahá’u’lláh’s family

did not know these things themselves. So many of the friends came to weep and

ask what they should do that the family found it impossible to make any prepar-

ations.

At this time, a certain Najíb Páshá, who had become a friend of Bahá’u’lláh,

invited Him to bring some of the Bábís to stay in his garden a short distance

outside Baghdád. While Bahá’u’lláh and the friends went on to stay in the

garden, the ladies stayed behind to pack their belongings. In this way more

was accomplished, and everyone worked hard getting ready for their next

journey.

It was on 21st April 1863 that Bahá’u’lláh and His companions left Baghdád.

All the city came to see Him before He left—the friends, as well as others.

There was a great crowd.

Weeping women came forward and laid their babes and young children

at His feet. He carefully lifted each of these children one by one, blessed them,

and gently and lovingly replaced them in their mothers’ arms. To each mother

He said she must bring up these dear flowers of humanity to serve God with a

strong faith and truth.

What a soul-stirring day! Men threw themselves in His path; if only His

blessed feet might touch them as He passed!

Bahá’u’lláh got into the boat to cross the Tigris River, the people pressing

around Him, not wanting to lose one moment of their last chance to be in His

Presence. Finally, the boat put off, and those behind watched it with bleeding

hearts.

Those who were to be with Bahá’u’lláh went off to set up His tent, and five

or six other tents for the friends. Some became cooks, others served in other

ways. While Bahá’u’lláh was in the garden (later called the Garden of Riḍván\*),

it was very windy for several days. His tent swayed in the wind. Because the

friends thought His tent might be blown down, they took turns sitting on the

ropes so that it might be held steady. Night and day they held the ropes, so

glad in this way to be near their Glorious Lord.

They stayed in the Garden of Riḍván for twelve days. Those twelve days

arc now called the Feast of Riḍván, or the ‘Feast of Paradise’. They are the

most holy days in the Bahá’í year. It was during those twelve days that Bahá’u-

’lláh announced to His companions that He was the long-awaited Promised

One, the Messiah promised by Moses, the Spirit of Truth promised by Jesus,

the Great Announcement promised by Muḥammad, the One whom God

would make manifest promised by all the Prophets and Holy Books of the past.

At last, God had fulfilled His promises to mankind and given the world its

Greatest Teacher. The ages of prophecy had come to an end, and the Age of

Fulfilment had begun. At last, the great World Brotherhood, the Kingdom of

God on Earth, the Golden Age of Peace and Understanding was about to

begin.

From that time on, the Bábís became known as Bahá’ís.

By the ninth day of Riḍván, His family had completed their preparations for

\* Pronounced *Rezvan*, the *a* as in father,

the journey and they joined Him in the Garden. On the twelfth day, in the

afternoon, an escort of Turkish soldiers came to get them, and they set off on

their journey. But, where they were going they did not know.

# 6 Constantinople and Adrianople

At noon, on 3rd May 1863, Bahá’u’lláh and His companions left the Garden

of Riḍván.\* His followers had purchased for Him the finest horse they could

find—a red, roan stallion.

As Bahá’u’lláh rode away from Baghdád, thousands of people watched Him

go. People on every side bowed to the dust at the feet of His horse and kissed

its hooves. Others pressed around Him to give Him one last embrace. Others

threw themselves in front of His horse to be killed rather than be separated from

their Beloved.

The whole journey from Baghdád to Constantinople continued in this way.

Besides Bahá’u’lláh, there were twelve members of His family, seventy-two

disciples, and the Turkish soldiers who led the way.

Bahá’u’lláh’s half-brother Mírzá Yaḥyá was not with them when they left

Baghdád. He had run away from Baghdád about two weeks before, because he

was afraid he was about to be arrested. He later heard about Bahá’u’lláh’s

departure and hurried to catchup with Him. He knew nothing about Bahá’u-

’lláh’s declaration.

Through whatever city or village Bahá’u’lláh passed, the people greeted

Him with the same love and reverent devotion. This was greatly helped by an

announcement sent out by the friendly Governor of Baghdád.

Miles outside of every city, Bahá’u’lláh would be met and escorted all the

way into and through the city. Men, women and children would crowd onto

the -roofs of the houses and line the streets waiting for Him to arrive. Drums

would go in front of Him through the entire city while the people showed their

love and respect—and they would go with Him for miles on the other side of

the city.

So great was the honour shown to Him on this journey that no king or govern-

ment official had ever received anything like it. Bahá’u’lláh arrived in Constanti-

nople on 16th August 1863. The journey had taken three and a half months.

Throughout this entire journey, Mírzá Yaḥyá followed behind Bahá’u’lláh’s

carriage on foot, at his own request. With Mírzá Yaḥyá was also Siyyid Muḥam-

mad. When they arrived in Constantinople, Mírzá Yaḥyá said to Siyyid

Muḥammad: ‘If I had not chosen to hide myself, if I had announced who I

really am, all these honours which were given to Bahá’u’lláh would also have

been given to me.’ It was clear that Mírzá Yaḥyá’s jealousy was beginning to

rise once again.

The arrival of Bahá’u’lláh in Constantinople may be said to be the beginning

\* Pronounced *Rezvan*, the *a* as in father.

of the most important part of Bahá’u’lláh’s mission. Exactly twenty years

earlier, the Báb had announced Himself in darkest Persia, in the city of Shíráz.

In spite of His many years in prison, His Teachings had been spread throughout

the countries of Persia and ‘Iráq. His followers had left the laws of Muḥammad

behind and had begun to fashion their lives after the laws of the new age. The

Báb had left this world and had placed the leadership of His Faith in the hands

of Mírzá Yaḥyá until the new Manifestation revealed Himself.

The condition of the Bábí community had steadily become less and less pure

until it was in a very low condition. Bahá’u’lláh had been put in prison and

suffered greatly. The Maid of Heaven had appeared and appointed Bahá’u’lláh

as the Great One promised by the Báb. Bahá’u’lláh had been forced to leave

His home in Persia and settle in Baghdád. Mírzá Yaḥyá and Siyyid Muḥammad

had succeeded in causing so much trouble that the Bábí community was split

in two. Bahá’u’lláh had left Baghdád and spent two years in the wilderness and

had returned only because God called Him to return. The Bábí community

was again made spiritual and brought into unity through Bahá’u’lláh’s loving

wisdom and patient guidance. The enemies of the Faith had succeeded in forcing

Bahá’u’lláh to leave the city of Baghdád. Bahá’u’lláh had finally announced

to His companions that He was the One promised by the Báb, and Bahá’u’lláh

had travelled from Baghdád to Constantinople in such glory that no king before

had been able to equal.

The main thing which still remained to be done by Bahá’u’lláh was to an-

nounce His Mission to the rest of the world. However, He was not able to do

this in Constantinople.

When they arrived in Constantinople, they were crowded into a small

hotel. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, then known as ‘the Master’, asked the governor of the

city to let Bahá’u’lláh and His family have a separate house. This house was

given to them, but Bahá’u’lláh invited Mírzá Yaḥyá and his family to share the

house with Him.

Amongst the Bábís were members of all classes—simple tradesmen, merchants,

teachers and noblemen. The noblemen had given up everything, every position

of wealth and honour, to come with Him. They pretended to be tailors, cooks,

sweets makers, bakers or anything so that they might be permitted to be near

Him and remain unknown.

The Persian Consul-General became a friend of Bahá’u’lláh in Constanti-

nople. He suggested that Bahá’u’lláh should pay a few visits to the court officials.

It might make His conditions of living easier.

Bahá’u’lláh answered: ‘I have no wish to ask favour from them. I have come

here at the Sultan’s command. Whatsoever additional commands he may

issue, I am ready to obey. My work is not of their world; it is of another realm,

far removed from their province. Why, therefore, should I seek [favours from]

these people?’

The Consul was so well-pleased with Bahá’u’lláh’s answer that he repeated

His words in Ṭihrán, and added, ‘I was very proud of him. Very often, I am

ashamed of my fellow countrymen for they almost always go to the officials

and ask for special favours. The dignity of Bahá’u’lláh was a very refreshing

experience.’

When the same Persian Consul met Bahá’u’lláh’s brother, Mírzá Riḍá-

Qulí, in Ṭihrán he said to him: ‘Mírzá Ḥusayn ‘Alí is a wonderful and great

man; you are his brother, I believe.’

To which Mírzá Riḍá-Qulí made reply: ‘I? No indeed! Oh no, I am not

his brother!’

Such was the attitude of Bahá’u’lláh’s kindred, even some of His brothers.

Of course, some were worse, like Mírzá Yaḥyá.

While in Constantinople, the fame and wisdom of Bahá’u’lláh had gone

abroad, and many great and pure-hearted people were eager to come into His

Presence. The visitors were so greatly impressed that they spoke to everyone of

His majestic person and the holiness of His teachings. This made His enemies

uneasy again, and they made a plan to get Him moved out of Constantinople.

Four months after Bahá’u’lláh arrived in Constantinople, He suddenly

received an order, without warning, that He must leave and move on to Adrian-

ople.

Adrianople was a town at the farthest north-west corner of the country of

Turkey. The only people who ever went there were those who had been

punished for doing something against the Sulṭán.

The journey to Adrianople, although it lasted only twelve days, was the most

terrible they had yet experienced. Snow fell heavily most of the time, and they

were not prepared with the proper amount of clothes. Some of His companions

rode in open wagons, others rode on horses and donkeys. Turkish officers went

along with them to see that they did not escape. The weather was so cold that

animals died, and they had to burn fires beside the springs for two hours before

the ice melted enough so they could get water to drink.

During their first winter in Adrianople, Bahá’u’lláh and His family, twelve

persons in all, were required to live in a small house with only three rooms. The

house was infested with rats. It was a very miserable time.

In order to understand what happened to the Bahá’í Faith in Adrianople,

it is necessary to understand more about Mírzá Yaḥyá and Siyyid Muḥammad.

Siyyid Muḥammad has been described by Shoghi Effendi as the Antichrist

(the ‘Judas’) of the Bahá’í Revelation. It was Siyyid Muḥammad who thought

of the many ways to bring suffering on Bahá’u’lláh and His companions. It

was Siyyid Muḥammad who promised Mírzá Yaḥyá the leadership of the Faith,

if he would follow his evil instructions. And it was Siyyid Muḥammad who later

encouraged Mírzá Yaḥyá to kill Bahá’u’lláh in any way he chose.

Siyyid Muḥammad was the author of all these cruelties, but it was Mírzá

Yaḥyá who carried them out. Between the two of them they committed a

greater spiritual crime than Judas’s betrayal of Christ, greater than the treat-

ment of the sons of Jacob toward Joseph, even greater than the crime committed

by Cain against his own brother, Abel.

It was Mírzá Yaḥyá who was so afraid of the responsibility of leadership

temporarily given to him by the Báb that he ran away, pretended to be a

Baghdád Jew and became a shoe merchant. It was Mírzá Yaḥyá who refused

to spread the Writings of the Báb around Persia as Bahá’u’lláh had suggested

he should do. It was Mírzá Yaḥyá who changed the Báb’s Writings in such a

way that it looked as if the Báb had appointed Mírzá Yaḥyá and his descendants

the permanent leaders of the Bábí Faith, and even made it appear that the

Báb recognized Mírzá Yaḥyá as God Himself. It was Mírzá Yaḥyá who con-

demned to death all the leading disciples (The Mirrors) of the Báb and caused

the murder of a man named Dayyán, as well as one of the Báb’s cousins.

All of these things and more were the crimes committed by Mírzá Yaḥyá

in partnership with Siyyid Muḥammad. But, these crimes only show what

kinds of characters these men had. Far worse crimes were soon to be com-

mitted in Adrianople.

About a year after Bahá’u’lláh arrived in Adrianople, these two criminals

decided that Bahá’u’lláh was becoming much too powerful and that the time

had come to take over the leadership before it was too late. The only way this

could be done was to kill Bahá’u’lláh.

Therefore, Mírzá Yaḥyá made friends with Bahá’u’lláh’s faithful brother,

Mírzá Músá, who knew many things about medicine. Through Mírzá Músá,

he learned as much as he could about the effects of certain herbs and poisons.

After deciding to use poison to kill Bahá’u’lláh, Mírzá Yaḥyá invited Ba-

há’u’lláh to visit him at his home. Bahá’u’lláh accepted his invitation, because

He always hoped that Mírzá Yaḥyá would change his ways and work with Him

peacefully for the advancement of the Cause.

However, Mírzá Yaḥyá smeared Bahá’u’lláh’s teacup with some of the poison

he had made, and Bahá’u’lláh became seriously ill, for no less than a month.

Bahá’u’lláh was so ill, in fact, that the poison left Him with a shaking hand till

the end of His life.

So serious was His condition that when a doctor was called to treat Him,

the doctor took one look at Him, declared the condition hopeless and fell at

Bahá’u’lláh’s feet. The doctor then went home and prayed that God would

take his own life and save Bahá’u’lláh’s. A few days later the doctor took ill

and died. Bahá’u’lláh later wrote that this doctor, Dr. Shíshmán, had sacrificed

his life for Him.

When Mírzá Yaḥyá’s first attempt at poisoning did not work completely,

he tried another method. He put poison into the well which provided water

for Bahá’u’lláh and His family. As a result, the entire family showed strange

kinds of illnesses for a long time afterwards.

But, poison did not seem to be strong enough to kill Bahá’u’lláh, so Mírzá

Yaḥyá next made friends with Bahá’u’lláh’s hairdresser. One day while in the

bath, Mírzá Yaḥyá offered a large reward to the hairdresser if he would cut

Bahá’u’lláh’s throat some day when he was cutting His hair. The hairdresser

was so shocked at the suggestion that he would have killed Mírzá Yaḥyá on

the spot, if it had not been that he feared Bahá’u’lláh’s punishment for com-

mitting murder.

When Bahá’u’lláh heard of Mírzá Yaḥyá’s suggestion and the hairdresser’s

anger, He ordered the hairdresser never to say anything about it to anyone

in the community. But, the hairdresser was not able to keep his secret. He told

somebody, and the whole community was thrown into confusion. Mírzá

Yaḥyá claimed that it was the hairdresser’s own idea, and he had had nothing

to do with it.

The time now came for Bahá’u’lláh to make it clear to Mírzá Yaḥyá how

serious it was for him to continue disobeying the Manifestation of God. In

order to give Mírzá Yaḥyá one last chance to become part of the faithful

Bahá’ís, He revealed a Tablet especially for Mírzá Yaḥyá, explaining the

supreme greatness of Bahá’u’lláh’s station and God’s Message for this age.

He made it clear that Mírzá Yaḥyá must in future obey all His laws and com-

mands, and that if he did not obey Bahá’u’lláh, he would be disobeying the

Representative of God on earth.

When Mírzá Yaḥyá heard this Tablet read to him by Bahá’u’lláh’s messenger

he asked for one day to think it over. Permission was granted.

On the next day, Mírzá Yaḥyá sent his reply. In his letter, he did not accept

Bahá’u’lláh as a Manifestation of God. Instead, he declared that he was also a

Manifestation of God, that he had received an independent revelation, and

that all the peoples of the earth in both the East and the West must bow down

before him.

When Bahá’u’lláh heard this declaration by the false prophet, Mírzá Yaḥyá,

He took immediate action. He gave Mírzá Yaḥyá over half of the family

property, rented a different house in a different part of the city, moved there

with only His own family, and refused to see any of His friends or companions.

For two months, He remained completely separated from them, and He

gave everyone the chance to choose between Himself and His false-hearted

brother.

The Bahá’í communitiy was again thrown into confusion. It was like the

Day of Judgement and the Day of Resurrection. Every man, woman and child

was forced to make a decision. Almost all of the Bahá’ís chose to remain faithful

to Bahá’u’lláh and only a few accepted Mírzá Yaḥyá’s claim.

Mírzá Yaḥyá became so angry at his failure to become the leader that he

and Siyyid Muḥammad wrote letters full of hate and lies to Persia and ‘Iráq

and to the Governor of Adrianople. Siyyid Muḥammad went to Constantinople

personally and told the officials that Bahá’u’lláh had sent a man to Persia to

kill the Sháh. Finally, Bahá’u’lláh was forced by circumstances to come out

of His retirement in order to protect the reputation of the Bahá’í community.

After about a year of this kind of trouble, a certain Bábí of Shíráz named

Mír Muḥammad succeeded in forcing Siyyid Muḥammad to agree to a plan.

Mír Muḥammad’s plan was this: that Mírzá Yaḥyá and Bahá’u’lláh should

meet in a public debate at a certain mosque. In this way, the entire community

would be able to choose between the true and the false.

Siyyid Muḥammad presented the idea to Mírzá Yaḥyá, and Mírzá Yaḥyá

accepted the invitation, thinking that Bahá’u’lláh would certainly never agree

to such a public demonstration. However, when Bahá’u’lláh received the in-

vitation, He set out immediately on foot in the noon-day sun for the appointed

mosque. As He walked through the streets, He spoke such powerful words that

all who heard Him were overcome with fear and surprise.

‘Were … all the wise men, all the kings and rulers on earth to gather to-

gether,’ He called out, ‘I … would confront them and would proclaim the

verses of God, … the Almighty, the All-Wise. I am He Who feareth no one,

though all who are in heaven and all who are on earth rise up against Me.’

Before Bahá’u’lláh reached the mosque, a messenger arrived from Mírzá

Yaḥyá explaining that he would not be able to meet Bahá’u’lláh as expected.

He would meet him another day. That other day never arrived, however,

because Mírzá Yaḥyá never fulfilled his promise.

In the eyes of the Bahá’í community, the position was now clear. Bahá’u’lláh’s

followers never doubted again, and although a few faithless ones continued to

work with Mírzá Yaḥyá and Siyyid Muḥammad against the Cause, these few

never had any further power over the faith of the Bahá’ís.

Even before this crisis was finished, Bahá’u’lláh began to reveal His most

important Messages to the kings and rulers of the earth. Day and night, He

dictated His holy Tablets. The words came so fast that His secretary, Mírzá

Áqá Jan, could not write them all. Mírzá Áqá tried to write everything down in

a type of shorthand. At the same time, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá spent all His time copying

these holy Words in longhand. There was not a moment to spare. Several

other secretaries were called in to help, but they were unable to keep up with

the speed of Bahá’u’lláh’s revelation. One of the secretaries copied no less

than two thousand verses every day, and every month sent several volumes of

Writings to Persia. This continued for six or seven months.

Bahá’u’lláh Himself said that God had poured out so many words through

Him in so short a time in Adrianople that all the revelations of all the Prophets

of the past had been revealed again. Most of it was revealed so fast, however,

He said, that the secretaries were not able to copy it down.

However, many volumes of His revelation were recorded. The most im-

portant Writings during this time in Adrianople were His messages to the

kings of the world—special ones to the Christian kings, to the Sulṭán of Turkey,

to Napoleon III, to the Sháh of Persia, to the governments of Turkey, France

and Persia, to the leaders of Sunni Islám, to the wise men and the people of Con-

stantinople, to the philosophers of the world and finally to all the people of Persia.

In these Messages, Bahá’u’lláh called first upon the leaders of these countries

to accept Him and tell their people about His Message, and when they did

not respond, He later called to the people themselves to believe in Him and

accept His laws for their own good and for the love of God.

During the same time, the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh began to spread. Many of

His followers wrote articles for newspapers, books and letters explaining and

defending the Faith against the false claims of Mírzá Yaḥyá. Bahá’í communities

were established in Russia, Egypt and Syria. Bahá’u’lláh honoured Nabíl, the

Bahá’í historian, by sending him to Persia to teach and make the first pilgrimage

to the Báb’s house in Shíráz and the Most Great House of Bahá’u’lláh in Bagh-

dád.

With the fame of the Cause being spread throughout the Near and Middle

East, it naturally came to the attention of the Faith’s enemies. The clergy of

all the countries where there were Bahá’ís acted with the government officials

and succeeded in putting into prison or putting to death thousands of the faith-

ful believers. Thousands of others came to Adrianople to visit Bahá’u’lláh

and pay their respects and show their love. So great did this stream of visitors

become that Mírzá Yaḥyá took advantage of it and informed the government

in Constantinople that Bahá’u’lláh was about to attack the city with His

followers and force them all to become Bahá’ís.

Finally, the Turkish government lost patience with the entire situation. Not

knowing who was guilty and who was innocent, and fearful of having the situa-

tion continue any longer, they decided to get rid of everybody. The order was

issued that Bahá’u’lláh and His followers would be sent to prison in ‘Akká,

Palestine. Mírzá Yaḥyá would be sent to Famagusta, in the island of Cyprus.

As an added touch of heartbreak, Siyyid Muḥammad was ordered to be impri-

soned with Bahá’u’lláh, and four of Bahá’u’lláh’s faithful ones were forced to

go with Mírzá Yaḥyá to Cyprus.

When Bahá’u’lláh learned what order had been given, He said to the captain

of the guard, ‘Tell the king that this territory will pass out of his hands, and his

affairs will be thrown into confusion. Not I speak these words, but God speaketh

them.’ History has proved His words to be true, for there is no longer a king of

Turkey; the country experienced a revolution and became a republic.

Before permitting His family and seventy companions to leave Adrianople

with Him, He told them that ‘this journey will be unlike any of the previous

journeys,’ and that whoever did not feel himself ‘man enough to face the future’

had better pull himself away from Bahá’u’lláh’s company and save himself

from tests, because soon he would find himself unable to leave.

Not one person left Bahá’u’lláh’s side. One man, who discovered that he was

not on the list to go into prison with Bahá’u’lláh, cut his own throat with a razor,

and would have died had it not been for Bahá’u’lláh’s help. Of this, Bahá’-

u’lláh wrote that such an act is ‘unheard of in bygone centuries’, but ‘God

hath set [it] apart for this Revelation, as an evidence of the power of His might.’

Another man who was forced to go with Mírzá Yaḥyá to Cyprus jumped

into the ocean and would have drowned himself, but for the government officials

who rescued him. When the man was pulled out of the ocean Bahá’u’lláh said,

‘Why did you jump into the sea? Did you wish to give a banquet to the fishes?’

Bahá’u’lláh’s ocean trip took eleven days. Seventy-two people were crowded

together into a very small boat in unspeakable conditions. Ten soldiers and two

officers guarded them all the way. The boat had a terrible smell, and most

of the passengers became very sick. The only food provided was a few loaves

of bread and a little cheese given to them by one of the friends. One man died

on the way, and was buried by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá when the boat stopped at Smyrna.

At Haifa they had to change boats. Lack of food had caused everyone to

become so weak and in such a poor state of health that many had to be carried

ashore in chairs.

The next boat was to take them from Haifa across the bay to ‘Akká. The boat

given to them was only a small sailing boat. It was so small that although they

were sick no one could even lie down to rest. The July sun was hot, and the

wind had stopped blowing. The sails hardly moved. It took eight miserable

hours to cross the bay. When they finally reached ‘Akita, the ladies were un-

able to walk and had to be carried to the shore.

# 7 The Prison of ‘Akká

It was 31st August 1868 when Bahá’u’lláh set foot on the shores of ‘Akká

and entered the Most Great Prison. As Bahá’u’lláh arrived at ‘Akita, He said

to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, ‘Now, I concentrate on My work of writing commands and

counsels for the world of the future. To thee I leave the province of talking with

and ministering to the people. Servitude is the essence of worship. I have finished

with the outer world, from now on I meet only the disciples.’

When they arrived at the prison, they discovered that news about them had

already arrived. The Sulṭán had ordered that a long list of false statements

about them be read in the mosques, so that the people would think of them as

hardened criminals and enemies of the pure religion of God and of man. All

the faithful Muslims were commanded to stay away from these ‘terrible’

Bahá’ís. The people were told that anyone who did anything against the Bahá’ís

could congratulate himself that he had done a good service to God.

It was into these surroundings filled with hatred that the ‘Followers of the

Light’ entered the prison fortress of ‘Akká ‘by way of the gate whose prospect

is towards the East’—the valley of Achor (‘Akká), which God promised ‘as a

door of hope’. In this way, although the world did not know it, the prophecies

of God were being fulfilled. (See Ezekiel 43:4, Hosea 2:15.)

At that time, ‘Akká was a prison-city—the whole city being a prison—where

the worst criminals were sent from all over the Empire of Turkey. On arriving

there, the entire company including men, women and children, were put in

prison in the army barracks. The place was filthy and dirty. There were no

beds or comforts of any kind. The food was impossible to eat. After a time,

the prisoners begged permission to buy their food for themselves. This was

finally granted.

During the first few days, the children cried continually, and sleep was almost

impossible. Diseases such as malaria, dysentery and others soon broke out and

everyone in the group fell sick, except two who became sick later. Three people

died from the sickness and the others suffered terribly.

In order to bury two of those who had died, Bahá’u’lláh gave His own carpet

to be sold for the expenses of the funeral. However, instead of using this money

for that purpose, the soldiers kept it for themselves, and threw the bodies into a

hole in the ground.

This kind of treatment lasted for two years. During this time the only Bahá’ís

who were allowed outside the prison door were the four who went out every

clay to buy food. Even these were carefully guarded.

None of the prisoners were allowed to see visitors, although many Bahá’ís

walked hundreds of miles from Persia to see their beloved Leader. They were

not permitted to come closer than the city walls. All they could do was go to a

high place outside the wall from which they could see Bahá’u’lláh’s window.

Bahá’u’lláh would then show Himself at His small prison window and wave

to them. Although the visitor would not be able to see Bahá’u’lláh clearly, he

would have to be satisfied with the wave of Bahá’u’lláh’s hand as his blessing.

The visitor would then turn around and start walking the long journey back

to his home where he would sacrifice his life in the service of the Most Great

Prisoner.

Two brothers from Persia were finally permitted to send cables to Bahá’u’lláh

in ‘Akká. They were the ‘King of Martyrs’ and the ‘Beloved of Martyrs’, from

Iṣfahán. They were successful in sending from time to time, both money and

food. By this time, Bahá’u’lláh and His companions had run completely out

of money. Most of their food and clothes were purchased from gifts sent to

them by the faithful Bahá’ís.

A Bahá’í named Shaykh Salmán appointed himself as a messenger between

Bahá’u’lláh and Persia. Many were the dangerous and difficult journeys he

made, mostly on foot. One time, he was arrested at Aleppo while carrying a

most important message from a friend in Persia to Bahá’u’lláh. Wondering

how he could keep the enemy from finding it, and knowing what would happen

if they did find it, he did the only thing he could do—he swallowed the message.

It was this same devoted friend who was able to bring Munírih Khánum from

Iṣfahán to ‘Akká so that she could become the bride of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

During the lifetime of Bahá’u’lláh so far, His sufferings had been mainly

of two types. His time in the prison of Síyáh-Chál of Ṭihrán had been caused

by enemies outside the Faith. The even greater troubles in Adrianople had

been a purely internal affair caused by enemies within the Faith itself. But, the

sufferings brought upon Bahá’u’lláh at ‘Akká were to be the greatest of all—

and they would be caused not only by enemies outside and inside the Faith,

but by Bahá’ís themselves who did such terrible things through ignorance and

stupidity that His heart and His pen shed tears of sorrow.

The two years of strict confinement in the ‘Akká prison were caused by the

enemies outside the Faith. The terrible conditions under which they tried to

live would have been bad enough. So crowded were they in the prison rooms

that at one time thirteen people of both sexes were required to live in one room.

This type of suffering the companions of Bahá’u’lláh were prepared to live

through. But, after two years, the officials took pity on these poor, patient

people, and gave them a house to live in inside the prison walls.

It was at this time, when the rules were slowly being relaxed that two of

Bahá’u’lláh’s followers behaved in such a manner that Bahá’u’lláh was forced

to put them out of His company. Such an action was what Siyyid Muḥammad

had been waiting for—some excuse to work against Bahá’u’lláh. This was his

chance to cause trouble. Completely twisting the truth, Siyyid Muḥammad

started a secret campaign of lies to awaken the anger of the people of ‘Akká

against Bahá’u’lláh. He was so successful in his effort, that suddenly Bahá’u-

’lláh’s life was in great danger. Forces outside the Faith and inside the Faith

were closing in on Him and making it seem as though He would be killed at

any moment.

As if this were not enough, there suddenly happened what could never be

forgiven either by Bahá’u’lláh or the prison authorities. Although Bahá’u-

’lláh had always taught His followers, in both His spoken and written Words,

that they must never take any action against those who did them wrong, seven

of His companions secretly gathered together and killed three of the trouble-

makers, including the greatest troublemaker of all, Siyyid Muḥammad.

The ‘Akká community was filled with fear, and Bahá’u’lláh was broken-

hearted that any of His followers could do such a terrible thing. From His

writings at that time, it becomes clear how angry and full of sorrow He was.

On one occasion He wrote that being a prisoner could never harm Him,

but that which could harm Him is the actions of those who love Him, who

claim to be His disciples, and yet they do what causes His heart and His pen

to groan.

In another Tablet, He wrote: ‘My captivity can bring Me no shame. Nay,

by My life, it conferreth on Me glory. That which can make Me ashamed is the

conduct of such of My followers as profess to love Me, yet in fact follow the

Evil One.’

Bahá’u’lláh was speaking about these things to His secretary when the Gover-

nor of ‘Akká appeared outside His house with soldiers carrying swords in their

hands. They completely surrounded the house. Crowds of people in ‘Akká.

also gathered around the house, and filled the air with shouts and noise.

Bahá’u’lláh was taken from His house with one of His sons and brought

to the Governor’s office. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was put deep into prison and placed in

chains for the night. The next day, He was allowed to join Bahá’u’lláh. Twenty-

five of His companions were put into another prison with chains on them for

six days. The seven guilty ones received a just punishment—they were put

into prison for several years in chains.

When Bahá’u’lláh was brought before the Governor, the Governor asked

Bahá’u’lláh: ‘Is it proper that some of your followers should act in this manner?’

Bahá’u’lláh answered: If one of your soldiers were to commit a repre-

hensible act, would you be held responsible, and be punished in his place?’

Bahá’u’lláh considered it unfair to be judged by the actions of His followers.

When the Governor asked Bahá’u’lláh what His name was, Bahá’u’lláh

answered in a manner very similar to Jesus’ answer to Pontius Pilate. With

great power and majesty, He said, ‘My name is Bahá’u’lláh [Light of God],

and My country is Núr [Light]. Be ye apprised of it.’

Bahá’u’lláh then turned to the entire gathering and spoke to them such words

of strength and power that no one dared to answer Him. After this speech,

He stood up and walked out of the office, and no one stopped Him. The

Governor sent a message to Him later, telling Him that He was free to return

to His prison home and apologized for everything that had happened.

Although Bahá’u’lláh Himself was declared innocent and given an apology,

it did not help the attitude of the people toward Him and His followers. They

were accused of being murderers, criminals, and disbelievers in God. Wherever

they went inside the prison city, they were in danger of their lives. Even the

Bahá’í children would be chased, hit and struck with stones.

The cup of Bahá’u’lláh’s sorrow was now filled to overflowing. And Bahá-

’u’lláh had to drink this cup for a long time.

Gradually, however, the fortunes of the Faith began to change. Over the

years, the people began to realize that Bahá’u’lláh was innocent of any crime.

Slowly, the true spirit of His teachings made itself felt to those who had the

capacity to see it.

Then, God seemed to smile on the Prisoner of ‘Akká and sent a kind and wise

governor to replace the former one. Most of the other officials who had been so

strict were also replaced. Life became a bit easier.

One of the things which had made it so difficult for the Bahá’ís was this:

the Turkish government, entirely misunderstanding the Faith had forced

Bahá’u’lláh to promise that none of the Bahá’ís would teach the Faith to anyone

in ‘Akká or the surrounding country while they were prisoners or exiles.

Since the orders against Bahá’u’lláh, His family and followers were never

changed, the people of ‘Akká and Haifa never had the benefit of hearing the

true Message of Bahá’u’lláh. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá also continued to respect this promise

during His entire lifetime, because the order against Him was also never

changed. It was only after Shoghi Effendi built the Gardens and Shrines on

Mount Carmel that people began to learn the true principles of the Faith.

Therefore, for the most part, during the lifetimes of Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-

Bahá, the only teaching which ‘Akká, Haifa and Israel received about Bahá-

’u’lláh’s Revelation was the living example of its Founders and of its followers.

At the time of Bahá’u’lláh’s imprisonment, it was ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, then a young

Man of great wisdom and personality, who slowly changed the hearts of the

people of ‘Akká through His living the Bahá’í life. He taught the people, not by

words, but by His actions. And He protected the reputation of Bahá’u’lláh’s

Faith by pointing to the effect which His teachings had in the lives of His

followers.

Slowly, the warmth and light of Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation changed the hearts,

even without direct teaching.

It was during this time that there occurred an event which gave great sorrow

to Bahá’u’lláh and His family, but untold spiritual benefit to mankind as a

whole. It concerns the death of Mírzá Mihdí.

Mírzá Mihdí was the youngest brother of Bahíyyih and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá,

who was left with his grandmother in Ṭihrán in 1853. He was then only two

years old and too young to make the difficult journey to Baghdád.

A few years later, he was permitted to join the family, after Bahá’u’lláh

returned to Baghdád from His two years of wandering in the wilderness of

Sulaymáníyyih. From then on, although he was a very delicate child, rather

short and very slender, he shared the misfortunes and trials of the rest of the

family. When he was old enough, he became one of Bahá’u’lláh’s secretaries.

Of all of Bahá’u’lláh’s children, Mírzá Mihdí was the purest. Bahá’u’lláh had

given him the title, ‘The Purest Branch’.

One evening in ‘Akká, when he was twenty-two years old, Mírzá Mihdí

was walking back and forth on the flat roof of the prison, chanting his prayers

as he usually did at that hour. He was so enrapt in his prayer that he did not

notice a skylight window in the roof. By accident, he fell through the glass of

this skylight and onto a wooden box standing on the floor underneath it.

As he fell, some sharp pieces of the box cut through his ribs. It would have

taken a miracle for his life to be saved.

But, his death was more of a miracle than if he had lived. Mírzá Mihdí,

the ‘Purest Branch’, had long been sad because so many pilgrims had travelled

so many miles to see Bahá’u’lláh, and had had to turn back at the prison walls.

Bahá’u’lláh asked His dying son if he wanted to live, but he said that his only

wish was that the gates of the prison could be open so that the believers would

have the privilege of visiting their Lord. He asked Bahá’u’lláh to use him as a

sacrifice so that the pilgrims would be able to come into the presence of Bahá-

’u’lláh. After twenty-two hours, he died.

No doubt it would have been within the power of Bahá’u’lláh to save His

son’s life, if He had willed it. Bahá’u’lláh chose to grant His son’s wish, however,

and He sacrificed His youngest, His purest son. As God had sacrificed His

Son Jesus on the Cross, and as Abraham had offered to sacrifice Isaac, so

Bahá’u’lláh gave His son, the Purest Branch, as a Sacrifice so that the people

of the world would not be punished for their wrong-doings, but forgiven and

awakened to Bahá’u’lláh’s teachings.

As Bahá’u’lláh watched His son being washed and prepared for burial, He

prayed: ‘Thou seest … My son blood-stained before Thy face … I have, O

My Lord, offered up that which Thou hast given Me, that Thy servants may be

quickened and all that dwell on earth be united.’

In order to protect the remains of the Purest Branch from His enemies,

Bahá’u’lláh buried Mírzá Mihdí’s body simply, quickly and in a secret place.

His mother, Ásíyih Khánum, now known as ‘Navváb’, who had suffered so

much already that her heart could hardly take any more gave up her soul to

tears. She wept and wept, and the tears refused to stop.

When Bahá’u’lláh learned that Navváb was so overcome with sorrow for her

pure-hearted son, He came to her and told her of Mírzá Mihdí’s dying request.

When she learned that her son had offered himself as a sacrifice, and that Ba-

há’u’lláh had accepted this greatest of all offers, she was greatly comforted,

and no longer grieved over her heavy loss. Within a few months the doors of

the prison opened so that Bahá’u’lláh was permitted to receive visitors.

Most of the enemies of the Faith in ‘Akká had now disappeared, and the most

fruitful part of Bahá’u’lláh’s ministry began. Through ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s friendship

with the new governor, He was gradually able to set his heart alight. So warm

did the governor’s feeling become for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá that he would not enter

His presence without first removing his shoes as a sign of respect for Him. He

even sent his own son to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for study and guidance.

On many occasions the governor asked ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for permission to visit

His Father. Eventually, Bahá’u’lláh gave permission for him to pay Him a

visit. During this meeting, the governor asked Bahá’u’lláh if there were any

service—any service, whatever—which he could perform for Him. Bahá’u’lláh

answered that there was no personal service which He would accept, but He

had one request for others. He suggested that the governor repair the water

system which used to bring fresh water from the mountains to the city of

‘Akká. So devoted was the governor to Bahá’u’lláh that he immediately arose

and carried out His suggestion. The wonderful fresh water which became the

pride of ‘Akká was due to this simple suggestion made by Bahá’u’lláh.

It was while this new governor was in ‘Akká that a few pilgrims were per-

mitted to visit the Prison. Although Bahá’u’lláh almost never granted personal

interviews any more—this being taken care of by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá—the people of

‘Akká began to refer to Bahá’u’lláh as ‘His Highness’. They even believed that

the changes in the weather and the water were due to Bahá’u’lláh’s being in

their city.

On one occasion, a general from Europe was granted an audience by Him,

but the general was so overcome that he just remained kneeling on the ground

near the door. Amongst the many leaders in Syria and the Near East who came

to see Him was even the ‘Azíz Páshá who had become fond of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

while He was in Adrianople. :Azíz Páshá, now a governor, came to ‘Akká

twice to pay his respects to Bahá’u’lláh and renew his friendship with ‘Abdu’l-

Bahá.



1Map showing Bahá’u’lláh’s journeys.

# 8 His Later Years

The story of how the prison doors were finally opened to Bahá’u’lláh has

been told best by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in words such as these:

Bahá’u’lláh loved the beauty and green of the country. One day He passed

the remark that He had not seen green trees and grass for nine years. ‘The

country is the world of the soul, the city is the world of bodies.’ When I heard

indirectly of this remark, I realized that He vas longing for the country. I was

sure that whatever I could do towards carrying out His wish would be successful.

There was a man in ‘Akká at that time who was very unfriendly to us.

He had a large house called Mazra‘ih about four miles north of the city, a

lovely place, surrounded by gardens and with a stream of water running through

it. I went and called on this man at his home in ‘Akká. I said: ‘Páshá, you

have left your big house empty, and are living in ‘Akká.’ He replied: ‘I am a

sick man and cannot leave the city. If I go there it is lonely and I am cut off

from my friends.’ I said: ‘While you are not living there and the place is

empty, rent it to us.’

He was surprised at the suggestion, but soon agreed. I got the house at a

very low rent, about five pounds per year, paid him for five years and made a

contract. I sent workers to repair the place and put the garden in order and

had a bath built.

One day I went to Bahá’u’lláh and said: ‘The house at Mazra‘ih is ready

for you, and a carriage to drive you there.’ He refused to go, saying, ‘I am a

prisoner.’

Later, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said, I requested Him again, but got the same answer.

1 went so far as to ask Him a third time, but He still said, ‘No!’ and I did not

dare to ask Him again.

There was, however, a certain man in ‘Akká who loved Bahá’u’lláh and was

greatly favoured by Him. I called this man and explained to him. I said,

‘You are brave. Go tonight to His Holy Presence, fall on your knees before

Him, take hold of His hands and do not let go until He promises to leave the

city!’

He was an Arab …. He went directly to Bahá’u’lláh and sat down close to

His knees. He took hold of the hands of Bahá’u’lláh and kissed them, and said:

‘Why do you not leave the city?’ He answered, ‘I am a prisoner.’ The Arab

replied: ‘God forbid! Who has the power to make you a prisoner? You have

kept yourself in prison. It is your own will to be in prison, and now I beg you

to come out and go to Mazra‘ih. It is beautiful and green. The trees are lovely

and the oranges like balls of fire!’

As often as Bahá’u’lláh said, ‘I am a prisoner, it cannot be’, the Arab

took His hands and kissed them. For a whole hour he kept on pleading. At

last, Bahá’u’lláh said, ‘Very good,’ and the Arab’s patience and persistence

were rewarded. The Arab came to me with great joy to give me the glad news.

Until this time there had been an order that I was not to have any contact

with Bahá’u’lláh. But, in spite of that order I now took the carriage to Ba-

há’u’lláh’s house and drove with Him to Mazra‘ih. As we passed through the

gates of the prison the guards did not even seem to see us. I left Bahá’u’lláh

there at Mazra‘ih and returned myself to the city.

For two years, Bahá’u’lláh lived at that charming and lovely spot. Then,

it was decided to move to another place, at Bahjí. It so happened that a disease

had broken out at Bahjí, and the owner of the house ran away from it with his

family. We took the house at a very low rent, and there the doors of majesty

and true sovereignty were flung wide open.

It should be explained that Bahá’u’lláh remained a prisoner in ‘Akká until

the day He died, because the orders of the Sulṭán were never changed. But,

instead of living like a prisoner, He was permitted to live like a prince from the

time He moved into the palace at Bahjí. From that time on, governors and

priests, generals and local officials, every type of important person would humbly

request the honour of seeing Bahá’u’lláh. However, He almost always refused.

One of the few visitors Bahá’u’lláh permitted to see Him was the famous

British historian, Professor E. G. Browne of Cambridge University. He visited

Bahá’u’lláh in 1890, and was the only man from Europe ever to speak with

Him. Professor Browne wrote the following description of Bahá’u’lláh as He

was at the age of seventy-three:

‘The face of him on whom I gazed I can never forget, though 1 cannot des-

cribe it. Those piercing eyes seemed to read one’s very soul; power and authority

sat on that ample brow … the deep lines on the forehead and face … the jet-

black hair and beard flowing down … almost to the waist … No need to ask

in whose presence I stood, as I bowed myself before One who is the object of

a devotion and love which kings might envy and emperors sigh for in vain!

‘A mild dignified voice bade me be seated, and then continued: “Praise be

to God that thou hast attained! … Thou hast come to see a prisoner and an

exile … We desire but the good of the world and the happiness of the nations …

That all nations should become one in faith and all men as brothers; that the

bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened …

What harm is there in this? … Yet so it shall be; these fruitless strifes, these

ruinous wars shall pass away, and the ‘Most Great Peace’ shall come … Let

not a man glory in this, that he loves his country; let him rather glory in this,

that he loves his kind …”’

Such was the interview which Professor E. G. Browne had with Bahá’u’lláh.

It was clear to everyone now that Bahá’u’lláh was not a prisoner, but was

really the King of Kings. Two powerful kings had put Him in the prison of

‘Akká and yet when He addressed them in His letters, He spoke to them as if

He were the king speaking to His subjects. As Bahá’u’lláh Himself said many

times, ‘Verily, verily the most wretched prison has been converted into a Para-

dise of Eden.’ And, as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá once said, ‘Surely, such a thing has not

been witnessed since the creation of the world.’

Bahá’u’lláh spent twenty-four years as a Prisoner of ‘Akká. The Sulṭán of

Turkey had issued the order that no one should meet Him, or talk to Him,

or see Him. The Sulṭán’s purpose was to make Bahá’u’lláh and His companions

hated by every one around them. God, however, had other plans for His

Messenger and His faithful ones. As has been seen in this story of Bahá’u’lláh’s

life, God was able to give Bahá’u’lláh the power to spread His Faith all over the

world in spite of being in the Most Great Prison. Bahá’u’lláh’s enemies had

thought that His Cause would disappear when He was put inside a prison.

But, the Spirit of God cannot be held inside four walls, no matter how thick

those walls are. Being a prisoner only made the news of His greatness spread

further and faster.

‘From this Prison,’ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said, ‘His light was shed abroad; His

lame conquered the world, and the proclamation of His glory reached the East

and the West.’ ‘His light at first had been a star; now it became a mighty sun.’

The fact that Bahá’u’lláh’s Faith and His Teachings could spread outside His

Prison and travel around the entire world proves the unlimited power of God.

In order to let men know what God’s Plan is for this world, God appointed

Bahá’u’lláh to speak and to write. And He protected Bahá’u’lláh from His

enemies, even by putting Him in Prison. In spite of all His sufferings, He still

obeyed the call of God and wrote. Had not the Maid of Heaven appeared to

Him in the Síyáh-Chál and said, ‘Verily, we will render Thee victorious through

Thyself and through Thy pen’? And so, Bahá’u’lláh wrote over one hundred

hooks of Holy Scripture, enough Scripture to explain all things to men for a

thousand years.

Beginning with Bahá’u’lláh’s entry into the Prison of ‘Akká it was ‘Abdu’l-

Bahá who was called upon to protect Bahá’u’lláh from both His friends and

His enemies. It was ‘Abdu’l-Bahá who talked with Bahá’u’lláh’s friends, ex-

plained His teachings, protected Him against His enemies, took care of the daily

needs of the family, encouraged Bahá’u’lláh’s companions to improve their

characters and to go abroad and teach. He sent Bahá’í teachers throughout

the East to spread the Message; He answered Bahá’u’lláh’s letters; He did all

the things which Bahá’u’lláh did not have the time to do while He was obeying

God’s command—to write!

While in Adrianople, Bahá’u’lláh had begun to write His letters to the kings

and the rulers of the world. When He arrived in ‘Akká, He wrote, ‘Upon

Our arrival at this Prison, We purposed to transmit to the kings the messages

of their Lord, the Mighty, the All-Praised. Though We have transmitted to

them, in several Tablets, that which We were commanded, yet We do it

once again, as a token of God’s grace.’

And so, Bahá’u’lláh took His pen and wrote again to the world’s leaders—

among them Queen Victoria; Napoleon III of France; Nicholas II, Czar of

Russia; William I, King of Prussia; Francis-Joseph, the Austrian Emperor and

heir to the Holy Roman Empire; ‘Alí Páshá, the Grand Vazír of the Sultan

of Turkey; Pope Pius IX; to the Rulers of America and the Presidents of the

American Republics; to leaders of the Christian Churches; to the Muslim

priests and clergy; to the Jewish people, the Christian people, and to the high

priests of the Zoroastrian Faith. He addressed special messages to the followers

of the Báb, to the wise men of the world, to its priests, its men of education, to

its mystics and even to its tradesmen. Bahá’u’lláh left no one out of His Message.

It was in 1873 that Bahá’u’lláh revealed His Most Holy Book—*The Book of*

*Aqdas*—while living in the House of ‘Abbúd. This is the Book of His Laws which

must not be changed for at least a thousand years. In that same year, on the

anniversary of the Birth of the Báb, Bahá’u’lláh revealed a Tablet called ‘The

Tablet of the Vision’ in which He announced that the Maid of Heaven,

dressed in shining white, had appeared to Him and told Him that He should

hurry back to His Father in Heaven. However, Bahá’u’lláh continued to live

on and work for nineteen more years.

Nine months before His ascension, Bahá’u’lláh told ‘Abdu’l-Bahá that He

now wanted to leave this world. From that time on, it became clear that the

end of His life on earth was fast approaching. On 8th May 1892, Bahá’u’lláh

became ill with a slight fever. He continued to grant interviews to a few friends

and pilgrims, but it soon became clear that He was not feeling well. His fever

became greater and greater, His general condition became worse, and finally

His spirit returned to His Father at 3.00 a.m. on 29th May 1892.

Bahá’u’lláh had lived seventy-five years, forty of those years being spent either

in prison or exiled from His homeland. For twenty-nine years He carried on the

responsibilities of Prophethood, and had suffered every form of pain and trouble

to deliver men from their unhappy way of life. During all these years He laid

the foundation of a new way of life which was to be so beautiful that all the Holy

Books had called it ‘The Kingdom of God on Earth’.

# 9 His Passing

During Bahá’u’lláh’s lifetime, it had become clear to everyone around Him

that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was the perfect One to carry on the leadership of the Faith

after Bahá’u’lláh’s passing. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had proved His qualities during the

entire forty years which He had shared in and out of prison with Bahá’u’lláh.

He had especially shown His abilities to teach and protect the Faith after

arriving in the Prison of ‘Akká.

Bahá’u’lláh had in later years always referred to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as ‘the

Master’, and would not let any of the other members of His family be addressed

in this manner. As far back as Adrianople, Bahá’u’lláh had written special Tab-

lets praising the qualities of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. And finally in both His last Will and

Testament and in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, the Book of Laws, He made it completely

clear that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the ‘Most Great Branch’, was His choice of His sons

to carry on the Faith.

Bahá’u’lláh named ‘Abdu’l-Bahá the Centre of His Covenant and the only

authorized Interpreter of His Teachings. He insisted that all His family and

the entire community of the Bahá’ís should turn to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for their guid-

ance. His other son, Muḥammad ‘Alí, ‘the Greater Branch’, was named second

in importance to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

Six days before He passed away, Bahá’u’lláh called the pilgrims and all His

family into His bedroom. As He leaned against one of His sons, He said to them:

‘I am well pleased with you all.’ ‘May God assist you to remain united. May

He aid you to exalt the Cause of the Lord of Being.’ To the weeping women

at His bedside, He said that He had written a document in which He had

turned them over to the care of the Most Great Branch, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

The news of His passing was immediately sent to Sulṭán ‘Abdu’l-Hamíd in

a telegram which began with the words, ‘The Sun of Bahá has set’. The cable

also told the Sulṭán that the family wanted to bury Bahá’u’lláh’s body near

the house in which He had been living. The Sulṭán immediately cabled his

permission for them to do so.

On the grounds where Bahá’u’lláh had lived there was one large house,

‘the Mansion’, and three other small houses built west of the big house, but

very close to it. Bahá’u’lláh was buried in the third small house shortly after

sunset on the same day that He died. This house is now a sacred place, a shrine,

of the Bahá’í World.

During the day of Bahá’u’lláh’s passing, thousands of people from ‘Akká

and neighbouring villages came to the Mansion to tell of their sorrow. Even

in the field around the Mansion the people could be seen weeping, beating upon

their heads, and crying aloud their grief.

For a whole week people from everywhere, rich and poor, came to see Bahá-

’u’lláh’s family. Very important representatives of every religion, poets, and

government officials came, and left beautiful letters and poems telling of the

great life which Bahá’u’lláh had lived. Many of these letters and poems also

praised ‘Abdu’l-Bahá almost as much as they praised His Father. All of these

letters and poems were given to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

While all these visitors came to tell the family of their sorrow, His family

comforted each of them and served them with food. Thousands came and went

during that heart-breaking week.

Another sad thing happened during that same week. The man named Nabíl,

who wrote the early history of the Bahá’í Faith called *The Dawn-Breakers*,

was overcome with sorrow. He had a private conversation with Bahá’u’lláh

just before Bahá’u’lláh had died. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá then asked Nabíl to choose the

prayer to be used by anyone in future who should visit Bahá’u’lláh’s shrine.

After Nabíl had selected the proper Writings, he felt that he could not live any

longer. He went down to the sea and threw himself into it. In a few minutes

he was drowned. Like many others, nothing was able to comfort his grief,

now that Bahá’u’lláh had left them.

But, Bahá’u’lláh, in some of His Writings told the world not to be sorrowful

when He left. He said that there was a reason why He had come into the world,

and there was also a reason why He must leave it. He had finished His work,

and now it was time for His followers to do theirs.

# 10 New Teachings for the New Age

And what is the work of the followers of Bahá’u’lláh? It is to spread the

teachings of Bahá’u’lláh and to build a world-wide community which lives

in accordance with His Teachings.

The Teachings of Bahá’u’lláh repeat all the divine principles announced

by the Prophets of the past. Anyone can read these teachings in a very small

book entitled *The Hidden Words*. But, added to these everlasting truths, Bahá-

‘u’lláh gave new Teachings never announced by a Prophet before. Here are a

few:

The first teaching of the Bahá’í faith is that all men belong to one human

family. Speaking to all men, Bahá’u’lláh says, ‘Ye are the fruits of one tree.

and the leaves of one branch.’ By this He means that the world of men is

like a tree, the nations and people are the different branches of that tree,

and the men and women are the fruits and blossoms of that tree. In all past

religions, the world of men was divided into two parts—one known as the

people of the Book of God or the pure tree, and the other the lost people or

the evil tree. Bahá’u’lláh changed this teaching by announcing that the world

was one world and all people in it members of one family. This is a special

teaching of Bahá’u’lláh not to be found in any other religion. Some people

are asleep, He says, they need to be awakened. Some are sick, they need to

be healed. Some are like children, they need to be taught. But, all receive

the bounty and gifts of God.

Another new principle in the Bahá’í Faith is the need to investigate truth.

That is to say, no man should blindly follow his ancestors and forefathers.

Each man must see with his own eyes, hear with his own ears, and investigate

truth for himself.

Another teaching is this: that the foundation of all the religions of God is

one. There is only God. Therefore, there can be only one religion—the

Religion of God. All the past Prophets have taught the same basic truths,

and all have come from the same mouth of God. This teaching is a new

teaching and special in the Bahá’í Faith.

A new principle is that religion must be the cause of unity, harmony and

agreement amongst men. If religion becomes the cause of disagreement

and hatred, if it leads to separation and fighting, then it would be better if

there were no religion in the world.

The Bahá’í Faith also teaches that religion must agree with science and

reason. If it does not agree with science and reason it is superstition. Down

to the present day it is the custom for a man to accept a religious teaching even

if it does not agree with his reason and judgement. The agreement of religious

beliefs with reason and science opens new windows on the soul of man.

Bahá’u’lláh taught the equality of men and women. This is special to the

teachings of the Bahá’í Faith, for all other religions have placed man above

woman.

A new religious principle is that prejudices, whether religious, racial,

patriotic or political, destroy the solid foundations for a peaceful life. There-

fore, men must overcome their prejudices so that they can see the underlying

truth—that the family of man is one family and not divided into separate

parts.

Universal Peace is promised in Bahá’í teachings. This Universal Peace

will be accomplished by putting into practice the principles of Bahá’u’lláh.

Peace shall come to all nations, governments, peoples, religions, races,

and all parts of mankind. No other Prophet has ever promised peace to the

world before, but this is one of the special teachings of Bahá’u’lláh.

The Báb and Bahá’u’lláh taught that every man must learn knowledge

and receive an education. It is a religious law in the Bahá’í Faith that both

girls and boys must be educated equally.

Bahá’u’lláh has set forth the solution and provided the remedy for the

economic question. The solution of the economic problem, He says, lies

in the realm of the spirit. No religious Books of the past Prophets speak of this

important human problem.

He has ordained and established the House of Justice, at present on the

local and national level known as the Spiritual Assembly. The Spiritual

Assembly serves as a group of consultation for planning the growth of the

Faith and the spiritual development of its members. This institution is under

the protecting power of Bahá’u’lláh Himself. The Universal House of Justice

guides international Bahá’í affairs with its seat in Haifa, Israel.

Bahá’u’lláh has forbidden interference in political affairs and has com-

manded obedience to government. ‘Serve ye the sovereigns of the world

with utmost truthfulness and loyalty. Show obedience unto them and be

their well-wishers.’

The greatest new principle of this new religion is the establishment and

appointment of the Centre of the Covenant. This is another teaching not

given by any of the Prophets of the past. Bahá’u’lláh appointed a Centre of

the Covenant to carry on His work and hold the Bahá’ís together after His

passing. When a person becomes a Bahá’í, he must agree to follow the laws

contained in the Covenant. In this way, Bahá’u’lláh has protected the re-

ligion of God against splits and differences. He has made it impossible for

anyone to create a new sect or faction of belief. To be sure of the unity of the

believers, He has entered into a Covenant with all the people of the world,

including the Interpreter and Explainer of His Teachings, so that no one

may interpret or explain the religion of God according to his own ideas or

opinion, and thus create a sect founded upon his own understanding of the

divine words.

These are some of the principles of religion brought by the Báb and Ba-

há’u’lláh which are different from the religions of the past. Thousands of men

and women died during the nineteenth century rather than give up their faith

in these teachings. Today, in the twentieth century, millions of Bahá’ís live their

lives so that they can bring these teachings to all men, everywhere.

# 11 Epilogue

To tell the stories of what happened to all those who worked with and

against Bahá’u’lláh during His lifetime would take too long. But, some mention

must be made of Mírzá Yaḥyá, the worst breaker of the Covenant of the Báb.

Mírzá Yaḥyá lived long enough on the island of Cyprus to see all his hopes

brought to nothing.

At first, he was financially supported by the Turkish government, and later

by the government of Britain. But, when he applied for British citizenship,

he was embarrassed by having the British authorities refuse him.

Mírzá Yaḥyá appointed eighteen of his followers as ‘Witnesses’, himself

being the nineteenth (following the example of the Báb’s ‘Nineteen Letters

of the Living’), but eleven of these eighteen turned against him in the end, and

turned for forgiveness to Bahá’u’lláh.

Mírzá Yaḥyá and his eldest son became involved in a terrible scandal in

Cyprus which ruined their reputation, and many years later this same son,

as well as his nephew and niece, visited ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Haifa and asked His

forgiveness. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá graciously accepted them into the Faith, and the son

remained a loyal follower of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá until the hour of his death.

Such is the way of God, and may it not be said that Mírzá Yaḥyá’s son is a

symbol of what can be expected from the rest of the world? A world which has

ignored and fought against the light of God’s new Manifestation in this age will

eventually see its mistakes, beg for forgiveness, and return to the Master’s

fold. For the call of God has gone forth to all nations and peoples, and no one

can stop what the will of God has decreed through His latest Manifestation—

the glorious light of Bahá’u’lláh.