

CROWN

OF

GLORY

Memoirs of Jináb-i-Azíz'u'lláh Azízí

TAJ-I-VAHHAJ

"CROWN OF GLORY"

Memoirs of Jináb-i-Azíz'u'lláh Azízí

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"Faithful obedience to the divine counsels is the

CROWN OF GLORY

of every servant of His Threshold."

--`Abdu' l-Bahá



Jináb-1-Azíz'u'lláh Azízí

In one of His Tablets, His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá, responding to correspondence from one of the friends, opens with the salutation: " O Herald of the Covenant! Thy letter dated the 19th of Muharam was received. "

Further on the Master states:

"Impart heartfelt regards and special Bahá'í greetings to Jináb-i-Azízu'lláh Khán Khayyát ("the Tailor"), and to Jináb-i-Azízu'lláh Khán, teacher at Tarbíyat School, on behalf of 'Abdu'l-Bahá."

"Both are dear, respected, close companions at the sacred Threshold. . ."

Preface to the Second Revised Edition

The writing of *Táj-i-Vahháj: Memoirs of Jináb-i-Azíz'u'lláh Azízí* was originally intended for the benefit of his children and for posterity, so that his descendants might follow in the spiritual footsteps of their beloved forebear.

The sale of this volume experienced such a level of interest outside the family, quite unexpected by the writer, that all copies of the volume in its first edition sold out within a relatively short period of time.

Following the Revolution in Iran (1979) and the upheaval in Tehran, the resulting dispersal of the Persian Bahá'í friends abroad created an even greater need for more literature on the Faith. There was also more opportunity to reflect and deepen on the Faith under these new circumstances.

Within the Azízí family itself, the martyrdom of three of its most distinguished members -- Iskandar Azízí, Jalál Azízí and Habíb'u'lláh Azízí -- intensified interest in preserving the spiritual legacy of the family to such extent that I received an increasing number of requests to reprint my father's memoirs, *Táj-i-Vahháj*. Interest in these memoirs was by no means confined to the family itself. Letters from as far away as Malta and the Philippines, the United States and Canada -- and other places -- requested copies of the memoirs.

Unfortunately, due to the adverse circumstances of the Revolution, there was no copy of the publication at hand with which to oblige these requests. However, it happened that one or two copies of the work had inadvertently been brought to the United States prior to the Revolution. Evidently, the photocopies of the book were being passed along to interested individuals, and in this manner the book was being circulated beyond the finite limited edition itself. I had heard that a few copies were made by hand, in order both to save money and ensure accuracy.

This being the case, I decided to reprint the volume in a new edition. I was convinced that I should do so when Moslem Persian expatriates reported to me that a number of the Moslem friends who came from Iran to the States were circulating the book among themselves (unaware that I was its author!) and there was a definite demand among them for more copies!

Having made the decision to reprint this book, it was necessary that the text should undergo re-editing in order to restore it to its full original length, and, at the same time, correct errors in the previous edition.

The present writer makes full admission to his limited knowledge of the Torah and the sacred traditions of Judaism. Efforts have been made to keep editorial notes referencing allusions to Jewish traditions in the text to a minimum, lest the edition become a target for critics. I only refer to what my father has explicitly mentioned with respect to Jewish traditions, as my own study of the tradition permits.

Dr. Zabih'u'lláh Azízí. New York, 18 December, 1986.

Preface to the English Edition

Because the book, *The Memoirs of Jináb-i-Azízí*, got lost in the turmoil of the revolution in Iran, members of the family found it necessary to arrange for a new publication and a translation into English so that their children would know how their grandfather had become a believer. For this purpose, one of the grandchildren, Hamid Azizi, with the help of his wife Sandra -- who are both knowledgeable in English and Persian -- took the initiative and with the help of Christopher and Nahzy Buck translated the book, taking care to safeguard the original meaning.

Therefore it is my duty to thank Christopher and Nahzy Buck for the first translation and Hamid and Sandra Azizi for the editing of the text. Thanks go also to many others who in one way or another have contributed to the production of this volume.

It is my hope that this story will inspire future generations to follow in the footsteps of their grandfather, Jináb-i-Azizi.

Dr. Zabiolláh Azízí

The English edition is lovingly dedicated to the memory of my grandfather, Jináb-i-Azíz'u'lláh Azízí, who brought the blessings of our Beloved Faith to the family.

Hamid Azizi
Vancouver, B.C.
Naw-Ruz 149 B.E. (1992)

Statement, made by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Jináb-i-Azízí in Paris:

"Inscribe in the margin of your book: All the forces of the world are being defeated. Have patience for a few years. The light of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh will envelop the whole world."

Additional Note:

The National Spiritual Assembly of Iran at the recommendation of its Board of Review, gave its approval for the publication of this book, on the condition that certain sections of the narrative (around one-third of the text) be edited out due to the sensitive nature of the material, considering the prevailing state of affairs between the government of Iran and the Faith.

Publication of the text in its entirety was left for a more favourable time in the future. Meanwhile, the passages in question were kept in archives. One may wonder about the state of these archives considering the excesses of the Revolution in Iran. Since the personal effects of the present writer and his brothers were ransacked during the Revolution, we expect nothing less of the fate of the archives of any Bahá'í Assembly.

When this book was approved for publication, certain esteemed members of both the National Spiritual Assembly and its Board of Review personally sent letters of endorsement and encouragement to me, including Jináb-i-Dr. Barafrúkhtih.

Dr. Barafrúkhtih's letter concerned a particular statement 'Abdu'l-Bahá had made to Jináb-i-Azízí in Paris, in regard to the importance of recording the events to which he was an immediate eyewitness. We therefore quote the kind doctor's letter as follows:

"I came across the following statement by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Jináb-i-Azízí, as found in the memoirs of Mon. Dreyfus in Paris, in which he wrote:

"... Ecrivez dans le coin de votre canot tous les partis politique seront aneantis, attendez quelques années vous verrez que la lumière de la Foi de Bahá'u'lláh enveloppera le Monde entier."



Calligraphy of "Yá-'Abdu'l-Bahá", by Jináb-i-Núridín Zayn

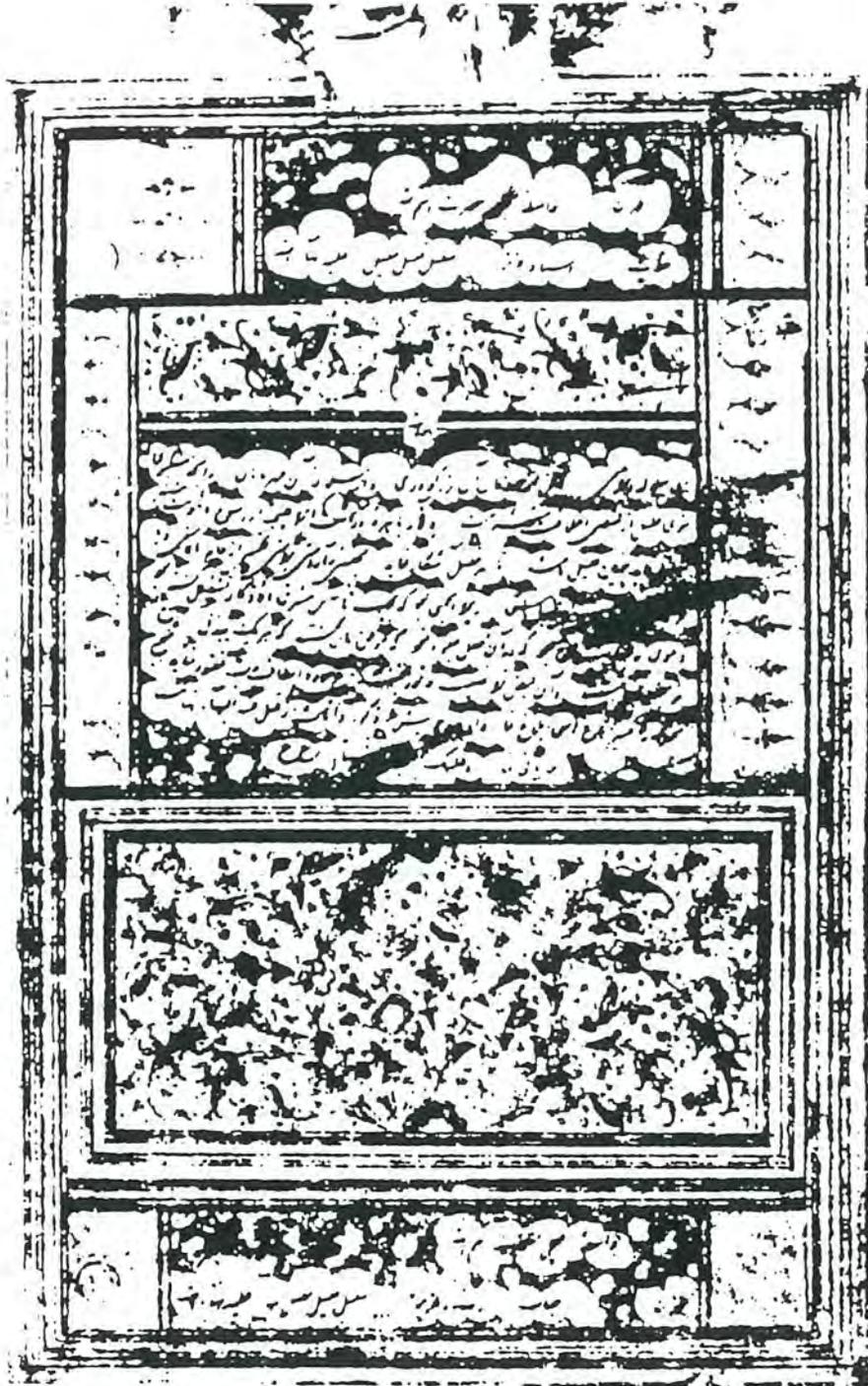


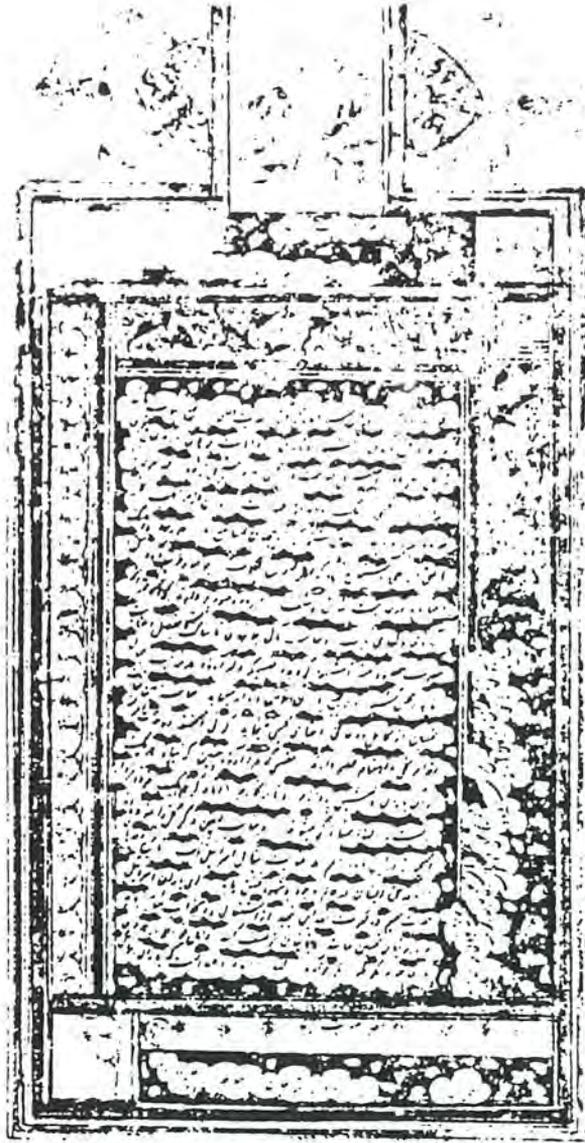
Photograph, given to Jináb-i-Azízí, bearing 'Abdu'l-Bahá's signature

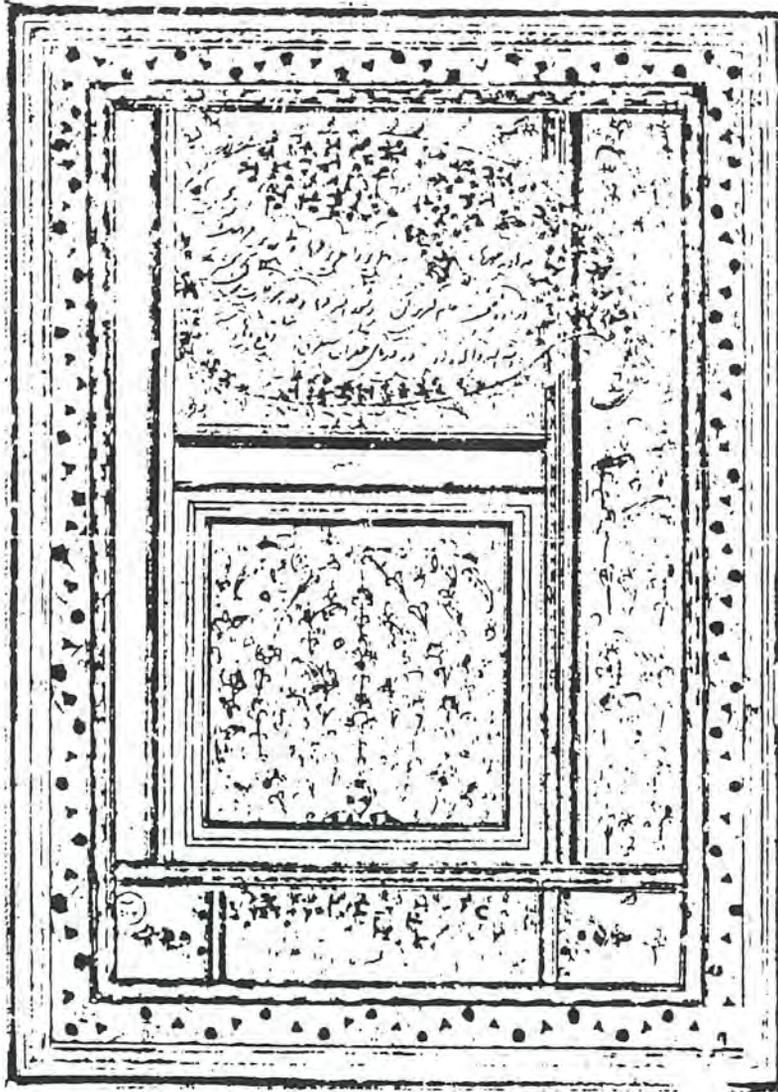
First official portrait of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in London
(on Page 10)

This portrait, reproduced here by permission of Abdu'l-Bahá through Jináb-i-Azízí, was taken by the official Royal Photographer in London.

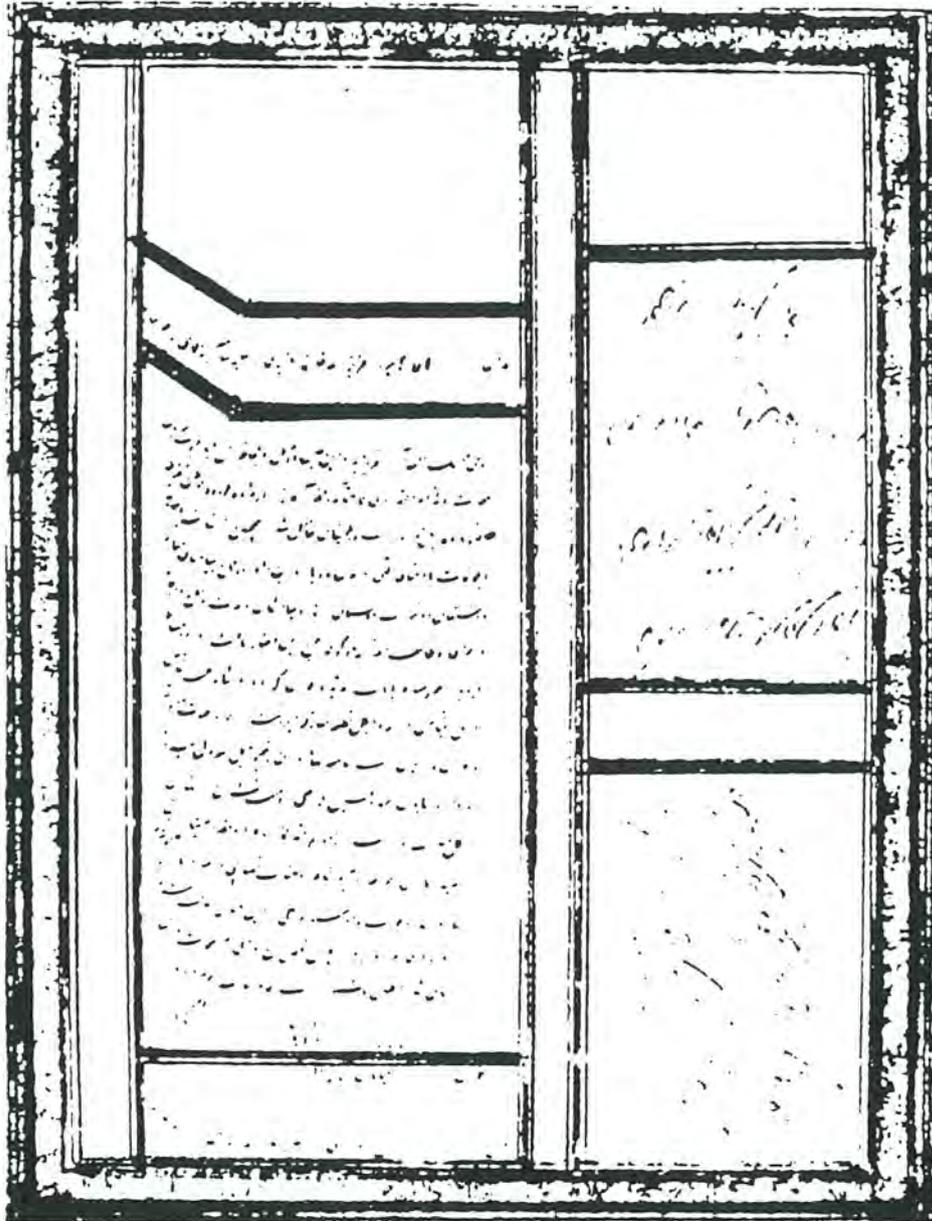
The circumstances surrounding this portrait are related on page 122 below. The very first print of the portrait, with a personal autograph written on the blessed *táj*, was presented to Jináb-i-Azízí.







رواقها از سوره
۱۳۳۱



Handwriting of the Beloved Guardian

Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Jináb-i-Azízí

To Jináb-i-Azízí, of the lineage of Abraham, on him be the Glory of God.

He is God!

O descendant of Abraham!

In truth, thou art of that illustrious lineage, a descendant of that resplendent Sun.

From the mantle of your deeds is diffused a musk-laden fragrance, like unto the sweet-smell of the ministry of Abraham.

Tokens of your Abrahamic heritage are evident from your firmness and steadfastness. Thus should the descendant live up to that nobility, so that the secret of Abraham may be revealed.

The gathering you had arranged was glorious, majestic and beauteous and in reality a reflection of the realm above, for it was a gathering consecrated to the establishment of a Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár. Divine favour and assistance was manifest in that gathering, inspiring each one present to succeed in giving generously, according to their capacity.

The blessings of that event shall return to you with a bountiful portion thereof, causing you to become the recipient of God's forgiveness.

Convey to your honoured wife greetings of the Most Glorious, and may you ever show kindness to your sons and daughters on behalf of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Salutations and praise be upon you.

- 'Abdu'l-Bahá

(unauthorized translation)

In care of Jináb-i-Amín, Tehran.
 To Aqá Mirzá Azíz'u'lláh Khan, the Tailor.
 Upon him be the Glory of God.

He is God!

O Spiritual Friend! Signs of divine assistance, in this blessed year, are radiating from all horizons, even as the rays of dawn. Verses of proof are chanted in village and city alike and whole streams of heavenly blessing flow throughout societies the world over.

From every side an anthem is raised, and from every land a melody and refrain. These are the overall bestowals of God. Give ear to the cry of "Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá", ascending to the Concourse on High, and to the call of "Yá Alí'u'l-Alá," imparting joy and rapture to the ears of (those in) the Kingdom.

The friends must be at the apex of joy and happiness because, thanks to God, the desires of the pure in heart and the utmost wish of luminous souls, are now visible and manifest through the bounty and grace of His Holiness (Bahá'u'lláh), the Supreme Goal.

The Beloved One of our desire is present in this gathering in His Most Great Beauty and has manifested Himself to all the friends. Jináb-i-Amín has the utmost praise for the spiritual meetings of the friends of Jewish heritage, who in truth have taken great steps and made every effort toward service in the Cause of God.

At this point, I wish very much to bring each and all to mind, and write a word for each of those dear friends who are in my heart. Alas, time does not permit mention of each, one by one, so they will be given recognition together. Know that Jináb-i-Amín has made mention of each individual.

Praise be to God, that in this great Dispensation, the glances of divine favour have embraced the people of Israel, that the promises of the Prophets of old might be fulfilled, in the realm of visible existence.

O Jewish friends! His Holiness Kalím (Moses), from the precincts of the sacred Kingdom, is, at this very moment, voicing praises for your attraction and enkindlement (devotion). The Concourse in the realm above are lauding you and recounting your deeds. At every moment, the denizens of the spiritual realm raise aloud the call: "Blessed are ye!"

It is therefore my earnest wish that the Jewish friends will continue to render evident service to the Lord of the Friend (Abraham), and thereby augment the joy and happiness of His

Holiness Abraham, in the lofty retreats of the Kingdom.

Upon you all rest the Glory of the All-Glorious!

- 'Abdu'l-Bahá
(unauthorized translation)

Jináb-i-Aqá Mirzá Azíz'u'lláh Khán Bahá'i, upon him be the Glory of God.

He is God!

O Thou Kind Lord! Render Thy dear servant Azíz precious, endow him with unlimited knowledge and discernment. Make him an overflowing chalice of the wine of love. Impart to him vigour. In business practices, make him prosperous. Immerse the mother of this servant of God in the ocean of forgiveness, and crown him with the Crown of Glory (Táj-i-Vahháj).

- 'Abdu'l-Bahá
(unauthorized translation)

To: *Jináb-i-Aqá Murtidá,
Jináb-i-Aqá Mirzá Shukr'u'lláh
Jináb-i-Aqá Sayyid Ismá'il who was a pioneer from
Isfahán
Jináb-i-Aqá Mirzá Abdu'l-Husayn Yazdí
Jináb-i-Aqá Mirzá `Alí
Jináb-i-Aqá Ridá
Jináb-i-Aqá Ridá Khán*

*upon them, and upon the other friends
in the shop rest the Glory of the All-Glorious!*

In the name of the Supreme Goal!

O Lovers of Truth! Though night and day Abdu'l-Bahá is immersed in the sea of proclamation, teaching and the providing of proofs, Jináb-i-Azíz requests a Tablet in the sweet-toned speech of parrots. And under any such exacting commander (as yourself!), I remain obedient and considerate (of your wishes), because Jináb-i-Azíz is very dear to Me! At this very moment, as it is now nightfall, I am standing beside a lamp, writing swiftly as I stand, in order to impart joy and delight to those friends in spirit.

Praise be to God, that in Paris souls were found who were cordial and dear; and that the Cause of God has bestowed spirit upon this old place and established there the Teachings of God. Our hope is that in this very centre of materialism, the friends might rally forth and find victory in the field, raise the divine pavilion, and the banner of "Yá Bahá'u'lláh!" be unfurled. Greetings to you all, and upon each of you be the blessing of God.

- 'Abdu'l-Bahá
(unauthorized translation)

In care of Aqá Mírzá Azíz'u'llah Khan, the Tailor, --on him be the Glory of the Most Glorious!

To all the spiritual friends in Tehran. Upon each and all rest the glory of the Most Glorious!

HE IS GOD!

O my Lord, O my Lord! Thou beholdest Thy loved ones, attracted to Thy Abhá Kingdom, enkindled in their inmost being, enflamed with the fire of Thy love, that is blazing in the Tree of Sinai, submissive to Thy lofty Word, humble in Thy Cause amongst all people, obedient to that which Thou hast commanded in Thy Epistles and Tablets, excelling in the promotion of Thy Word, and clinging to Thy Most Great Bounty.

O God! They are surging as the billowing waves, raging as the blowing breeze. They have scattered Thy fragrances amongst the peoples of the earth and, not concealing themselves in obscure corners, they came forth and called out in Thy name, openly beckoning all to Thy love at every morn and even-tide. Thou seest them, bowing, prostrated, humble and submissive at the door of Thy Oneness, self-effacing and lowly, and they have resisted those, who, in their pride and arrogance were negligent in their remembrance of Thee.

O God! Thou knowest that Thy servant is intoning at every morn and eve the verses of His contentment with them, His tongue, breaking forth at every dawn and dusk in thanksgiving to them. Praised be Thou, O Bestower of Bounty for having enabled them to serve Thee and confirmed them in worshipping Thee, attaining to Thy knowledge, being steadfast in Thy love, and grateful to Thy Bounty and Mercy.

O my Lord! These are the birds of the apex of knowledge, sustain their wings with the ensigns of might and power, that they may soar to the highest realm, to the ultimate aim, to the endless heaven and make of them towering trees,

waving banners, surging fountains, beautiful gardens, and mighty mountains, unmoved by the blowing winds even though it were raging storms, breaking down the hollow palm trees, and assist them in all their affairs under all conditions and give them to drink of the chalice of Hope, overflowing with Joy in the Kingdom of Beauty.

Verily, Thou art the Compassionate, Thou art the Bounteous, and Thou art the Most Beloved and Exalted One.

O companions of 'Abdu'l-Bahá! At this very moment, on the slopes of Mt. Carmel, near to the Shrine of the Báb, This Servant is engaged in your remembrance and occupied with your mention in a state of utmost happiness and joy. This is due to your recent initiative, enthusiasm and efforts, deserving of recognition, which were reported recently from Tehran. The flames of the fire of the love of God have leapt to great heights. I am in a state of rapture and happiness, for that land is the birthplace of His Holiness, the Supreme Goal (Bahá'u'lláh), and should therefore become the centre of divine inspirations. From that blessed city the rays of the love of God should radiate in all directions, and the fragrances (of the teachings) spread throughout. Teachings which shake the pillars of ancient imitations and overthrow the foundations of decayed beliefs.

At any rate I supplicate morning and evening, day and night, imploring His Divine Holiness (Bahá'u'lláh) to impart renewed strength at every moment and to manifest a fresh favour and exuberant vigour.

Jináb-i-Mirzá Subhi did not fall short in recounting your praise. Indeed he adorned his speech with your mention and praise, stating that each of these friends is worthy of blessing from the Realm of Glory, and ever deserving endless bounties from the Concourse on High.

Upon you be the Glory of the Most Glorious!

'Abdu'l-Bahá 'Abbas 1920 Haifa
(unauthorized translation)

HE IS GOD!

O Thou Herald of the Covenant!

Thy letter of the 19th of Muharram was received, and from its contents signs of contentment, resolve and great expectations were perceived. It is My desire that, from the secret bounties of God, you will with joy and happiness sing a new song and raise a wondrous melody.

Should letters such as yours convey happiness when they are read, the breezes of happiness will waft aloft; and should traces of sorrow be imparted, these too, leave a strong impact.

Praise be to God! By the grace of the Abhá Kingdom, certain persons will listen to your words, and this will continue into the future. I am hopeful that through the blessings of the Creator they might rend asunder the veils, and disperse the clouds. Each of those blessed individuals, who make their homes the nests for divine birds (spiritual friends) and a place for the radiation of proofs of the divine Revelation (referring to feasts and firesides) are dear to Abdu'l-Bahá, and are glorious in the Abhá Kingdom. By God! These have arisen with the utmost strength to serve, They show forth every endeavour and, with heart and soul, strive to cause the blind to see, to quicken those who are as dead and to turn the stranger into a friend.

I cherish the hope that these individuals are those souls whom the Blessed Beauty had promised to `Abdu'l-Bahá from His pure lips -- may My soul be a sacrifice to His friends-- to raise up. Of course, all the dear friends who follow their example and initiate similar endeavours, become each a source of results, illumination and a mine of mysteries.

Convey Abhá greetings to Jináb-i-Azíz'u'lláh Khán, the Tailor and to Jináb-i-Azíz'u'lláh Khán, the teacher at Tarbíyat school, on my behalf. Both are dear, renowned and close companions at the Treshold of the Almighty.

Jináb-i-Aqá Siyyid Jalál and Jináb-i-Mírzá Hájí Aqá are, in reality, each like unto the Hoopoe of Sheba, conveying the message of the Solomon of fidelity to lands and countries abroad, spreading the sweet savours (teaching) and erstwhile reciting the verses and explaining the hidden meaning of the words of God with heart and soul.

I beseech God to endow each of these honourable gentlemen with power to shake the pillars of the East and West, and that people will be moved by these two illumined souls.

Moreover, may Jináb-i-Mírzá Abdu'l-Husayn in the land of Alif -- be assisted by a thousand angels! Jináb-i-Akháván Safá will soon be sent on a mission to Mázindarán. Jináb-i-Yúsuf Khán's trip was quite proper. My hope is that by the bounty of God, Hadrat-i-Malik Ará will obtain the beauty of the realm above. It is my wish that both material and spiritual affairs will be set in order.

Upon you rest the Glory of the All-Glorious!

-- `Abdu'l-Bahá Abbás
(unauthorized translation)

He is God!

O God! In the Books of the Prophets, Thou hast given good news and glad-tidings to (the people of) Israel, and you have given the promise that there would come a day when the despair of Israel would be transformed into hope, and that those in captivity and the downtrodden might at last find eternal glory. That wondrous Tribe shall, under the shadow of the Lord of Hosts, find security and settlement in the Holy Land and, from the far lands abroad, return unto Zion. Those, who were once lowly shall be cherished, and those who were formerly poor are destined to become powerful.

Those, who were forgotten shall find fame and renown and those once detested shall become the beloved of the peoples of the world. Now, praise be to God, that day of tranquillity has arrived, and the means of happiness and joy are now within reach. Soon will all of Israel become glorious, and this diaspora be transformed into regathering.

The Sun of Truth has arisen, and a ray of divine guidance has alighted upon Israel, so that they will enter the Holy Land from far-away routes in the utmost joy.

O God! Fulfil Thy promise, and bring honour upon the progeny of His Holiness Abraham. Thou art the Powerful, the Able, and Thou art the Seer, the Hearer, the All-Wise.

-- `Abdu'l-Bahá Abbás

(unauthorized translation)

Letter from Shoghi Effendi, via his secretary

Tehran.

Mr. Mírzá Azíz'u'lláh Khán Azízí,

upon him rest the Glory of the All-Glorious!

May my soul be a sacrifice for your devotion! Your letter arrived this very moment, and was given special attention by the dearly beloved Guardian of the Faith -- may my soul be a sacrifice to his friends!

The glad-tidings of your arrival home -- safe and sound with your respected family -- brought joy and assurance. What likewise imparted joy and happiness was the spiritual glad-tidings of meetings with the friends of God in various cities and countries along the way. The spiritual attraction and enkindlement of these divine friends, inspiring them to each

arise and teach, in fulfilment of their sacred obligation -- all this added to that joy and happiness.

Especially welcome was news of spiritual activities in Tehrán, which is in effect like a heart throbbing and pulsing spirit in the sacred body of Iran, imparting life-giving power through the veins and arteries of the Bahá'í community in that glorious land. This news is worthy of the praise and recognition of the Concourse on High, and was the cause of joy and happiness for the Guardian.

I pray that God might increase your honour and power, that you might attain an apparent victory. Regarding the matter between Khájeb Ibráhím Shalim and Jináb-i-Qassabchí in Baghád -- a telegram was sent to Ibráhím Shalim. The response came from him that he has changed his mind altogether and will not mention the matter further. Moreover, a very knowledgeable teacher was sent to Iraq, rest assured.

Written in accordance with the blessed order,
Núridín Zayn
11 December 1928

The Following in Shoghi Effendi's own blessed handwriting

O spiritual friend!

This servant has, with utmost supplication, turned towards the sacred Threshold and sought continuous divine confirmation and invisible bestowals for that mighty pillar of the Cause of God in that land.

The wonderful endeavours and continuous efforts of that active, compassionate and self-sacrificing servant of His Holiness, the Unique One, is most praiseworthy, deserving of acclaim from the Concourse on High. Its traces are engraved as well on the heart of this servant.

I pray that God might increase your honour, power, victory and success. You are not, nor ever shall be forgotten in this place. Rest assured.

Servant at His Threshold,
Shoghi

(unauthorized translation)

Introduction

For many years, there was a fireside in my home every Tuesday. Most of the contacts were in fact fellow physicians and friends from my years in (medical) school. It was rare that someone else would come.

The speaker at these firesides was usually Mr. 'Abdu'l-Karím Ishráq. He was educated only very minimally and could only read and write Persian. For many years, he had worked as a tailor in my father's (the late Azíz'u'lláh Khán Azízí's) shop. Later he went on to open his own tailor shop. I heard on numerous occasions from his friends that his love for teaching was so great that even when he was making measurements for his clients, or fitting suits on them, he would at the same time engage in teaching them the Faith.

Sometimes this would cause a disturbance and certain of his clients would be offended; those who were prejudiced would simply not come back any more.

But what was most important to him was teaching, not business and amassing a fortune. Thus he made no change in his lifestyle, to the extent that at one point he closed down the shop and would teach the Bahá'í Faith day and night. At the same time he would economize within his small income, even though he had a sizeable family to support.

As a result of his love of teaching, he became so experienced that it could be said that he had a rare gift for it. He knew by heart most of the divine verses in past revelations regarding this great Revelation. To win over contacts who had some objection over one point or other, he would recite from memory proof-texts from the Torah, Gospel or Qur'an, where relevant. Once in a while some of my friends, along with certain other contacts, would conspire together to come up with difficult passages in scripture to confound him. But they never succeeded.

Mr. Ishráq had weak hearing, so sometimes he would take advantage of his disability to oblige his contacts to repeat their questions twice over, as to give him more time to consider his response. Though he would always effectively prove his point, nonetheless everyone would leave in good spirits and none felt upset in the slightest. Afterwards they would remark on his cleverness and readiness to answer.

There was a young doctor among my friends who would often come to the firesides and who was in fact quite well-spoken. The young doctor professed to have his own school of thought, but during their discussions, the late Mr. Ishráq discovered that his guest's father had been a Bahá'í, and that the doctor had altered the Bahá'í teachings somewhat to suit his own purposes. Under the pretence of his "new school of thought," he would proceed to criticize the Faith. The doctor was ready to take any religion to task in order to hold his own with Mr. Ishráq, but Mr. Ishráq was patient with him.

Fellow physicians who stood behind the young doctor would come regularly to witness the on-going battle. But it was always Mr.

Ishráq who would come out on top. At the height of their popularity, these firesides would usually have on average seven to eight contacts, and up to twelve others as an audience. Yet each fireside would focus on the debate which would inevitably take place between Mr. Ishráq and one contact who would engage him in debate.

My father took a great deal of interest in these firesides. Though he had a busy schedule, when guests had arrived I would let him know and he would join in. The firesides continued without fail until Mr. Ishráq passed away. The LSA of Tehran through its teaching committee would sponsor and lend support to these firesides. After Mr. Ishráq passed away, the firesides were subsequently run by Mr. Rastegar and Mr. Nahví. Then, after Mr. Nahví departed to India to pioneer, our fireside was left with no one in charge and thereafter declined in popularity. It was even cancelled for some time. Nevertheless, my father wanted the firesides to be re-established, as he considered them important for the family. As a result of his perseverance and the support of the teaching committee, a well-spoken and experienced man was appointed to the fireside: Mr. Enayat'u'llah Fá'iz, son of the late Aqá Muḥammad Alláqihband Yazdí. My father had been long-time friends with him, and together they had visited 'Abdu'l-Bahá on a number of occasions in the Holy Land. Or, at other times, my father would send letters to 'Abdu'l-Bahá through him.

Unfortunately, when he showed up to the firesides to teach, it had lost its former popularity. Once in a while a contact would come, and my father would attend happily, as usual. Whenever there was a seeker present, Mr. Fa'iz would speak and we would all listen. But if no guest came, in order to bring some warmth to the meeting my father would reminisce about his travels and his several attainments to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's presence, and thereafter, his visits with the Guardian.

Since my father had visited the Master on seven occasions, had seen the Guardian on three more, had travelled to Europe twelve times, and had accompanied 'Abdu'l-Bahá during the latter's sojourn in London and Paris, he naturally had a lot to say. He would relate his memories with 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and how 'Abdu'l-Bahá reacted to meeting diverse people of different cultural backgrounds. Whenever he would make mention of some of the crises which the Master had to deal with, my father would become filled with emotion, and we would see a tear begin to well up in his eyes.

These stories held Jináb-i-Fa'iz spellbound, and he would lavish praise on my father for them. He would insist that these episodes be committed to writing and be recorded. But Jináb-i-Azízi would not agree.

One night, however, Mr. Fa'iz insisted and flatly stated, "If you would only bequeath to your children your memories as an inheritance, it would be of much greater worth than a material inheritance! So I propose that you let me take notes and compile a book for them."

My father replied to the effect that, "I myself had in mind to write a narrative of my travels. In fact during my various trips I

would keep a running diary. But in 1921, when I was about to visit `Abdu'l-Bahá en route through India, I received the news of his passing. I became so distraught that I simply abandoned my notes. Now, after forty years, you want me to recount details of events from the depth of my memory? Isn't that a bit difficult? Don't you realize that some points might have become muddled in my mind by this time, and could well spark criticism from those who see only shortcomings?"

But Jináb-i-Fa'iz convinced him that recounting history was by no means selfish. "If you are concerned over your critics," stated Fa'iz, "no doubt they would find fault in even the Holy Writings! And, anyway, this book is not intended for them. The history is first and foremost for your family. Rest assured that some few souls might be drawn to the Faith, having been moved by the narrative, and will serve the Faith as a result."

After detailed discussions over these concerns, my father consented. So we determined that he would recount whatever he could recall, Fa'iz would record these events in the form of notes and, later on with my help, put them into sequential order. We would then present the narrative to my father and, upon his approval, publish the text.

Every week these notes would become increasingly voluminous. The order was somewhat chaotic: some notes related to the first trip, others to the second, and so forth, while certain details had faded away, only to be remembered later on. There were times when a particular point would be mentioned more than once.

But Fa'iz would record all these notes on separate sheets and these were subsequently in my possession. Though very busy, later on I put them in order as you now see. Should there exist any errors in the text, I beg pardon from the reader, and ask for a measure of understanding, for now both my father and Fa'iz have passed away! My father in his late years had developed diabetes and would become tired rather quickly at the end of the day. He would usually come to the fireside at 6 pm and leave around 9 pm to retire to his own residence.

I should say a few words about his place of residence. My father had a garden of about 6,000 squares meters on Pahlavi Avenue. At the time he bought the land, it was on the outskirts of town, before Sháh Pahlavi came to power, who created gardens and planted trees along the streetside and called it "The Garden" (Bústán). Following the erection of the Pahlavi Palace closeby, it was renamed Pahlavi Avenue. At any rate, my father had built six separate residences for his sons on his property, for whenever each one of the sons would marry. In the centre of the estate was his own residence and a large guest hall. On most evenings, he would invite all his children and grandchildren for dinner at his home, and at the dinner-table he would talk to them and give advice.

This was carried on as a family tradition till his dying days. Before he passed away, five of his sons had their own families and all his four daughters were married. On festive occasions, all his sons and daughters, together with their families would come to greet him and everyone would stay for lunch. Altogether there were

around seventy to eighty people on these occasions.

On one particular Tuesday evening during the course of our fireside as usual, my father was dictating his reminiscences. He happened to be describing his third visit to the Guardian. It was close to 9 pm when I was paged to see a patient. Upon returning (some time after 10:30 pm), to my surprise I found my father sitting in the same chair and still talking. I remonstrated to Jinab-i-Fa'iz that it was not good to keep my father up till that hour of the night, but it was my father who insisted that he wanted to finish everything that night. I told him that it was very late and my mother was waiting for him. But he was adamant about accomplishing everything that night. So I did not wish to oppose him, and at around midnight, at last he ended the narrative and then prayed for the success of completing the project.

He stressed to Fa'iz that he did not wish to be perceived as arrogant or proud in all this, and Fa'iz assured him this was not the case and that, in any event, the entire text would be submitted to him for his approval, prior to publication. Fa'iz also assured him that the text would be submitted to the review board for authorization to publish. This assurance filled my father with joy and an obvious sense of satisfaction, whereupon he left to return home.

Whenever I remember that last night of his recounting his memoirs, I feel some sadness, for the next Tuesday evening he was no longer among us. That is why it all had to be completed on that special night. By the following Tuesday he was destined to pass away, though there were no signs of illness that would end in death.

The night before his passing, he complained of some pain in his stomach. He called me to his bedside in the middle of the night, but with a little medication he recovered and the next day he felt no pain. Even so, at my insistence, he took rest at home. That evening, most of his sons and daughters were gathered in the room next to his bedroom, and I myself wanted to stay the night at his residence. At 11 pm on Sunday, the 14th of Isfand, 1328 AH (March 4, 1950), he passed away in peace. Whatever measures Prof. Manucher Hakim took to revive him were of no avail. My father was gone.

After his passing, the following telegram arrived from the Guardian:

"We offer our assurance to you and your loved ones of our ardent prayers for the exaltation of the station of this one who ascended to God."

--Shoghi (unofficial translation)

I have always told my brothers and friends that, upon reflection, my father must have experienced some forewarning that this would be his last opportunity to finish his memoirs that final Tuesday night, which alone could explain why he had determined to stay up as late as was necessary. Another rather mystical occurrence was a dream my father had, which made him quite upset. He dreamed that he was leaving town in an exquisite black car, but suddenly the car

vanished from view and he found himself alone. After searching he came across a horse and carriage which he hired for two tumáns to take him back to town. But as he rode the carriage, it too, suddenly disappeared. And the day was about to end as well. Then the same thing happened all over again until he woke up startled and fearful.

On hearing this, I chuckled and stated that this dream was the result of the day's events and could be explained by what these events suggested. "First of all," I said, "You have an elegant black car, which sometimes your sons or daughters use, obliging you to hire a horse and carriage. Because of your various construction projects, you deal day-to-day with porters and labourers," and I went on to complete the picture. But my father shook his head, smiled, and went on.

Two or three days later, I myself had a dream. I saw that a large crowd was coming out of his guest room. There were in fact so many present that the entire garden and the street outside were filled with people. I recall thinking to myself in the dream, "Why is it that all these people were gathered in the guest room?" My father and I, in this dream, were standing at the exit door, greeting guests as they left. Then two old friends of my father, the late Dr. Yúnis Khán Afrúkhtih and the late Mr. Dabir Mu'ayyad, stood on both sides of my father and asked him very kindly to go with them. He accepted, and accompanied them to the middle of the garden, but he just stood there, put his hands on each one's back and said, "You go, I will come on my own."

Since I am not inclined to follow superstition, I paid no heed to that dream, especially for my own peace of mind. I told myself "Thank God my father had not gone away with them." But when these events manifested themselves, I was amazed at the prophetic meaning of my dream.

The death of my father left the Azízí family without its guardian, and his passing was a cause of remorse for his many friends. `Abdu'l-Bahá had told my father: "Inscribe in the margin of your book: All the forces of the world are being defeated. Have patience for a few years. The light of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh will envelop the whole world." *

On the ninth day after his passing, his business office was opened in the presence of some of his friends. On his desktop was found his Will and Testament. It seems he had not taken his dream lightly, for at the beginning of the Will, he states:

"I, Azíz'u'llah Azízí, with utmost humility before the threshold of God, do hereby, with sound mind and body, write this Will and Testament with the following provisions:

*(General Dr. Bar-Afrúkhtih, while in Paris, had seen the notes of Mr. Dreyfus, taken while `Abdu'l-Bahá was in Paris. These notes were given to Dr. Bar-Afrúkhtih by Madam Dreyfus, and, in turn, Dr. Bar-Afrúkhtih gave me a copy, in which this was independently recorded. This is why I placed this quotation as a frontispiece for this book.)

... My children, sons and daughters, alike, I exhort you to unity and cooperation one with another, under the shadow of the Cause of God. Consort with each other with joy and contentment and show forth kindness to each other." (For certain reasons, the text of the Will is not cited here in full.)

It goes without saying that those who survive Jináb-i-Azizi are forever grateful to Jináb-i-Fa'iz, for having been the one without whom this narrative might never have evolved into the priceless treasure that it is. His sincerity and perseverance throughout all his firesides not only deserve recognition, but should serve as an example for us.

On the eve of his departure to Belgium as a pioneer, the late Fa'iz entrusted his notes to me so that I might edit them and arrange them in their present order. It was unfortunate that I could not complete the entire project with his assistance. But we were always in correspondence with each other until the book took final form, when I requested he write a Foreword and send it from Belgium. As always, he accepted with characteristic graciousness and, in fine handwriting, put forth the reasons for writing this book, as appears in the following pages.

Why This Work is Entitled "Táj-i-Vahháj" or "Crown of Glory"

I recall when my father ended his memoirs and the late Fa'iz had finished recording them, he asked my father, "What should we call the book?" The late Mr. Azízí gazed serenely at him and said, "You yourself know." Whereupon Mr. Fa'iz responded, "Since in one of the Tablets in your honour `Abdu'l-Bahá has stated, 'Attire thy head with the " Táj-i-Vahháj", we will call the book "Crown of Glory."

My father accepted this forthwith, and since Mr. Fa'iz in his letters from Belgium would himself refer to the narrative as Táj-i-Vahháj, out of respect for the wishes of each, this work is so named.

Dr. Zabíh'u'lláh Azízí
this 23rd day of the eleventh month, 1343 A.H.

A Letter from the Late Enayat'u'llah Fa'iz
 dated 3/15/1341 A.H.
 Belgium

Dear friend, Dr. Zabíh'u'lláh Azízí

I had the good pleasure of reading in your letter news of the imminent publication of Táj-i-Vahháj, the narrative of your honourable father Jináb-i-Azíz'u'llah Azízí, the announcement of which elates me considerably.

It is true to say that this dear spiritual soul had the distinct honour of serving the Cause throughout his adult life. He was a gifted tailor, and as such was commissioned to tailor apparel for His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Your father was always the recipient of His blessings.

Of this, the sacred Tablets in your father's honour bear eloquent testimony, and are sufficient witness such that no other proof is needed.

You had requested I write a Preface detailing the circumstances and reasons which gave rise to this book and, though I have but little time to spare, I will accept your request and forward the preface to you.

Yours, E. Fa'iz

Preface

As the reader probably knows, I was appointed by the Teaching Committee (under the auspices of the Spiritual Assembly of Tehran), to serve in the capacity of teacher at the firesides held in the Azízí's home. This I accepted whole-heartedly to do. Therefore, without fail, I was present every Tuesday evening at 6 pm.

One day, I encountered Jináb-i-Azízí in the waiting room, and at the time he was reminiscing about the past. Upon hearing this I exclaimed, "Jináb-i-Azízí! What a precious treasure you have left for your children!" He replied, "By the blessing of God, and after a great deal of hardship, I have earned sufficient funds to ensure that each will live comfortably after me and can serve the Cause." I said, "Pardon me, but I was not referring to material wealth at all, for that is none of my business anyway. What I meant was *spiritual* treasure and *eternal* fortune. I have known myself from my late father, Hájí Muḥammad Yazdí, that you have attained the presence of both the Master and the Guardian on several occasions, and that you have precious memories of them. Are any of these experiences written down? Is there any compilation of them?"

I went on to say that, in my estimation, this treasure is more precious than all the properties of Tehran, and it would be an irretrievable loss if his memoirs were not preserved after his passing. At which Jináb-i-Azízí said: "I know that your father himself rendered service to `Abdu'l-Bahá by carrying letters to him, and you yourself are a good man at heart, therefore I will agree to record my memoirs if you write them down. Yes, by all means, I will come to you and relate all my experiences."

I felt like a pauper who chanced upon a treasure-chest of gold! I became delighted and, since pen and paper were handy, I proposed we start immediately, since there was no seeker present. I asked him to start with his very first journey, to which he agreed, and the first page was completed that night.

His style was simple and sweet. Weeks and then months passed while all this continued. One night, it went on very late, when I recall you came back from visiting a patient. You saw your father still awake and me busy writing away. It was only proper that you as a conscientious physician brought up the fact that it was very late and that your father should take a rest, and that Fa'iz is tired, too, and it would be best to leave the rest for next Tuesday. Your father smiled in a bitter-sweet way and said, "This is the last of my journeys, and then my memoirs will be complete. I should finish and then go to bed." Half an hour later everything was recorded and Jináb-i-Azízí was right that it should be so, for by the following Tuesday he was in everlasting rest. That next Tuesday there was a memorial for him, as he had passed away on Sunday, the 24th of Isfand, 1328 A.H (March 4, 1950).

Even so,

*The fire of Love will scarcely be slain after death,
For this is a lamp taken from one home to the next.*

E. Fa`iz



Father of Jináb-i-Azízi and Murtida Azízi

Tablet of BAHA`U`LLAH to Hájí Eliahu Cohan, known as `Abd-Ḥusayn

In the name of God, the All-Knowing, the All-Mighty.

Today is the day on which God, from His Throne, is calling all the denominations and the inhabitants of the earth, commanding them to exalt and sanctify the Name of God.

Today is the day, on which heavenly angels are at every moment descending with the chalices of utterance and the decanters of the Knowledge of God, spreading the sanctified, pure and divine fragrances.

Say, the Promised God says: "O people of Judaism, you were from Me, I made you to appear and I called you back to Me, what happened that you do not know Me now, even though I have appeared with all possible signs.

You have considered enemies as your friends and abandoned the True Friend.

Today the New Heaven hath appeared and the earth hath been renewed. If you look with pure eyes, you will see the New Jerusalem and if you listen with attentive ears, you will hear the call of God.

Today all things are calling you and inviting you to God, while you are so intoxicated with the wine of pride, that not even for a moment did you heed the call.

The ear is to hear My Call and the eye is to see My Beauty; listen and shun any other but Me. The dome of God hath been raised by the hand of the Bounty of God, and the Cause of God hath appeared. The times of bygones are passed.

A new time of fulfilment hath been reached and by the Will of God, everything hath been renewed. However, only the new eye can see and the new mind can comprehend this condition.

The Beginning and the End alluded to One Sacred Word, which hath appeared and come, which is the Spirit of the Divine Books and Scriptures. This Word hath existed from the beginning that hath no beginning until the end that hath no end. This is the key to the greatest Divine Treasure and Hidden Mystery, which had forever been hidden behind the veils of innocence. This is the mystery "A" and "YA" that John prophesied. Verily, it is the Beginning, the End, the Manifest and the Hidden.

O 'Abd-Ḥusayn, may God assist you in giving the joyful tidings revealed in the sacred scriptures of the past to the peoples of all denominations. For these glad tidings are as living water to the dead of the world. Well is it with him, who

drinks of it and woe unto the deprived.

*Say, today the City of God hath appeared and can be witnessed in perfect adornment. This is the City, in which the God of all peoples hath appeared. Ponder these words of John, who announced the great and sacred city and said: "I did not see a temple in the city, because its temple is the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb. The city hath no need of the sun or the moon to shine on it, because the Glory of God shines on it, and the Lamb is its lamp."**

In the name of Truth, take hold of the cane of reliance on God and with the utmost detachment, guide the people who have gone astray to the great divine city, so that perchance the people who are lost may attain to the true homeland and the blind may see with perceiving eyes. He hath power over all things. All things are in His power and captive in His hand. He is Powerful and Mighty.

**The English translation of this quotation is taken directly from Rev. 21:22,23*

Birth

In the year 1252 of the Islamic calendar (approximately 1873 A.D.), during the course of the festivities of Rosh Ha-Shanah (New Year), one of the holiest days of the Jewish calendar, the Almighty God bestowed a son to a poor but faithful and orthodox Jewish family who had no male descendants. The son was given the name Isaac.

The father in this family had always prayed to God to give him a son, whom he might raise up in the sacred Jewish tradition, and make him his successor in life, so that his descendants might ever worship God the Almighty, and show compassion to all His creatures and to all mankind.

When news reached him of the birth of his son, members of the family exclaimed, "Your prayers are answered! God has given you a male child!" The father did not believe it at first, and was assured at last only when he, so to speak, examined closely...

This pious man was renowned for his godly character, and was known as Rabbi Daniel (Ibrahim), who earned his livelihood by peddling. His family consisted of his wife and two daughters (of the five daughters his wife had given birth to). Though not wealthy, his eldest daughter Miriam decided to have a celebration. She took over the domestic affairs of the home, and apart from the task of preparing the feast and taking care of her younger sister at the same time, she made sure to look after her parents as well.

The father was endlessly happy over this event and, though limited by poverty, he threw a party and even arranged for musicians to play in order to spend time for a few days in a manner different from the usual. Though he had named his son Ezra this child was so dear to him that he became known as Azíz and later as Azíz'u'lláh ("Endeared of God").

Since in those days over half of the infants would die in their first years of life due to poor hygiene and poverty, our relatives and family friends took extra care to protect this child from all risks. For instance, they would not even put this child down to sleep on the floor at night, fearing the very earth would beckon him early, believing that in this way they would secure for him longer life. This perhaps is the best example of what might characterize the mentality and superstitions of that time.

The child was barely five years old when his father began to send him to a local *maktab* (a traditional school for reading and writing in the home of a Jewish rabbi) where he started to learn Hebrew. In the evenings, he would learn the verses of the Torah from his father and would memorize them before going to sleep in his father's room each night.

Frequently the present writer heard from his father (Azíz'u'lláh) how he would wake at dawn hearing his own father crying out earnestly to God in prayer. If he paid close attention, his father could be heard asking God that he might find a sack full of money to be free of all his hardship and poverty.

This child had an uncle who was rich, wise, caring and quite

generous. After the age of seven or eight, the child would spend most of his time with this uncle. The uncle was called Rabbi Amran. He was chief and judge over the Jewish ghetto, and most of his time was spent settling family disputes and problems. People would turn to him and show him great respect. As he would enter the synagogue, everyone would become silent out of respect. There he would preach to the Jewish people, and sometimes would reproach them for reading only the Torah. "It's not enough to read only the Torah," he would say, "We should read from other books as well."

One example of his behaviour and way of thinking, was that he would, early most mornings sweep and rinse off the front porch and would likewise encourage others to maintain a good standard of cleanliness. He actually wanted people to take him as an example, and whenever he would pass an untidy house, the very next day he would, bright and early, march up to that porch and proceed to personally sweep and polish that porch, hoping that the owner would catch on. Of course the uncle was not always successful in his mission, since people were not careful to keep their homes as clean as they should.

In fact the neighbourhood was quite over-crowded and run down, with no regard nor means for public maintenance. Alleys were narrow and the houses poor and made of mud. In winters, these alleys remained muddy and in summer were always dusty. Few houses had trees. This district was totally lacking in water supply and in public sanitation.

Garbage would usually be thrown to the sides of the streets and alleys, and as a result of this rotting and putrid garbage, flies and other vermin would breed freely. Not only was this offensive to passers-by, but worse still, it was the source of epidemics of various diseases. These people (the Jewish sector) lacked the financial means to deal with their problems, and were not given the freedom to act on their own as a community. Furthermore, the authorities of that time were not at all concerned with the affairs of the Jewish community since those outside the Islamic community were considered impure, and thus subject to second class treatment. Under these circumstances, the condition of the Jews was only aggravated, adding to their discouragement, and making them resentful.

In such a backward society, this bright and talented young boy continued to grow and develop past the seventh and eighth years of age. Day-time found him attending the *maktab*, and at nights under his father's guidance he would study religious texts such as stories from the Torah. The present writer frequently heard from his father the following about his father (the grandfather of the author):

(The remainder of this narrative is presented in the first person as related by Jináb-i-Azízí himself. English Ed)

"The poverty of my father, the lack of opportunities for work, the distress of my mother, and the anguish of members of my

family caused me to suffer, and at last I resolved that I should make every effort to save this family. Any discomfort brought on by lack of means would only deepen my resolve and make me more determined. Though I was still a child, I had made a firm decision to arise and rescue my father from these circumstances. I was unsure however, as to what profession to pursue to this end.

Because I was able to look at things with an open mind with a view toward the future, I began to think about a trade with potential for expansion and some wealth. But launching on any business venture required capital, not to mention training and education--all of which I lacked. With the assistance of my uncle, at last I chose tailoring, which was the most respectable and creative profession available. Tailoring, at that time, was a profession exclusive to Armenians, and there were very few from other religious communities who would pursue it. With little choice--and entirely secret from my father--I started to work in a small tailoring shop, owned by an Armenian. I was not paid for my work, and took the job hoping only to learn the craft. After some time passed, my master became aware of my hard work and dependability, and hired me at minimum wage. This brought me great satisfaction and happiness, for even then at that tender age, I realized that the future of this profession was bright and had excellent prospects. For this reason, I took on my job with optimism and dedication, looking forward to a bright future and hoping for divine blessings. To make mention of the hardships of this period, makes me somewhat sad, and it is not my wish to affect the reader at all in the same way. On the other hand, though our religious values include the principles of self-respect, respect for others, and the preservation of human dignity, it serves a purpose to write about the past, pointing out the mentality and the patterns of behaviour of the time. Since my purpose is to make this narrative a lesson of life for my family, I will just mention two further episodes in this regard:

(1) I was six years old, when, due to a sore throat, it was decided that my tonsils should be removed. Since I was so dear to my uncle, and as he was the most influential member of the family, he took charge of this situation. He took me on foot to a distant location, to the residence of a doctor who had just returned from Europe. The doctor right away cut and removed my tonsils and put them on a piece of paper and placed it on the palm of my hand and dismissed us. My considerate and thoughtful uncle took me back home on foot, but because of various business engagements, he dropped in at a number of different places. Since he had longer strides than I, I was running to keep up with him, and to make a long story short, as we finally arrived home at dusk, I fainted due to bleeding and exhaustion. My tonsils, in the meantime, had dried on the piece of tissue. I mention this story to give you an example of the kind of treatment given by a wise and understanding man, with a beloved child, according to the standards of the time. You can well imagine, therefore, the treatment by ordinary people of their own children or of other children!

(2) When I started to work, one night the wife of my employer

ordered me to bring a bucket of water, drawn from a water pump, which was located in a very deep underground water storage tank.* The bucket was so big for me, and the reservoir so deep and dark, that I lost my balance and was thrown into a chuckhole down there. Above my eyebrow, I was cut and bleeding, and one of my ribs was broken, yet I still filled my bucket and brought it for the master's wife. Rather than comfort me and tend to my injuries, she scolded me for being so late and clumsy.

Later on in life, I experienced discomfort with my back, and after a medical examination in Europe, it was diagnosed as having been caused by the fracture of the rib, back in childhood. In fact, the way that my rib had fused itself together, quite amazed the examining physicians. At that time, no one paid any attention to my pain and no one made any attempt to seek treatment for it. I was kept busy with my work, and the rib fused itself together.

One day I was preparing the iron for my master. In those days, irons were warmed up with wood charcoal. Out of negligence, a tiny piece of charcoal fell under my foot and was crushed and wasted, and though that piece was worth less than a penny in those days, my master slapped me so hard for this wastefulness, that I was bedridden for one week.

Such was my life until the age of seventeen, when, after having gained through experience enough knowledge and skill in tailoring, my desire for moving on and becoming independent prompted me to open up my own *dakke* (a little stand or make-shift shop in a space in the marketplace). I started to work immediately--not for my own customers but rather for other tailors.

For instance, I would sew a few pairs of pants for an Armenian tailor shop (in that time the most well-known tailors were Armenian) and was content with every little profit. Yet in order to earn more, I would continue to cut and sew until long after midnight. I was at a stage in my life when I had to work very hard because I was responsible for the support of my parents as well as my brothers and sisters. In fact, I was in charge of the entire family, and except for earning a wage, there was no other way to meet family expenses.

It would not be out of place to relate how owning my own tailor shop came about. At that time I had no capital, but with the help of my uncle I managed to borrow a small sum of money, and with that money, I bought one ironing table, an iron, and a sewing machine, along with a pair of scissors. All of these items were accounted as collateral with the lender. I had to work in such ways as to earn enough to pay the rent for the shop, satisfy the interest on the money I borrowed, and on top of that, meet the expenses of my family, and above all else, try to save if possible, some earnings to pay my debt and free my belongings from

 *(In that time, due to the lack of public water pipes, residences would make use of a large storage tank where water would be kept for a few months at a time. Usually people would try to make this storage tank-- which was call *abanbar* -- as large as possible, in order not to be in need of others.

collateral.

For these reasons, most nights I would work till dawn. By the grace of God, in a couple of years, at last I had established myself, paid off my debts, was successful in my work, and managed to put away some savings, while all the time my mind was occupied with making advancements in life and increasing the success of my trade.

During this period in my life, I began to feel a growing humiliation because of the religious discrimination against me. It was difficult to get out of the ghetto. I had no opportunity to attend a public gathering, as I was not permitted to enter into crowded places, such as the bazaar. If my hands would touch anything, it would get the Moslems mad, and all the time I was called, "*najes*," which means "impure." In those days when it rained, Jews were not permitted out of their homes, because if their clothes were to get wet and they came into contact with a Moslem, it would make that Moslem impure. This would create public unrest and would result in punishment of the offending Jew, even if the defiled Moslem was a porter or a man of no honour and the Jew a man of respect. These superstitions were so extreme and so varied that a separate book could be written on that subject alone. Since this is not our object, though, we leave it at that.

These incidents left no small impact on my mind, and would haunt me continually. I could clearly see that there was no real difference between us and other human beings. Indeed my talents were equal to any man's, and more! Certainly my understanding and common sense were no less than others. Furthermore, my drive to succeed and to aspire after everlasting blessings, caused me to seek whatever means possible to achieve my goals.

At first I thought perhaps it was the way I dressed or behaved that incurred the hatred of others, so I tried my best to be clean and neatly dressed, and in public I would be polite and respectful of others, and I presented myself respectably and with dignity. Unfortunately, the more I tried the less success I had, and I became more and more the target of jealousy and malice.

As a result of the education and upbringing given to me by my father as a youth, I was very religious and even prejudiced, following as I did the teachings and customs of the religion of the Jews. I had no shortcomings with respect to the reading of the Torah or other religious texts. I was quite deepened and would meditate on each verse, looking for its true meaning. It is true that my knowledge of the Torah was well-grounded, and there was no aspect that was beyond my grasp. Indeed, I had memorised most of the verses of the Torah together with their meaning and that made my father deeply proud of me. He was expecting great things of me -- a bright future -- for the cause of the Jews. He was hoping I would become a rabbi. But I had no desire to become a kind of rabbi and to sit on a spiritual throne.

When during the course of my reading the Torah, I encountered verses concerning the "Day of God." I would read that in that Day, the "Wolf and the Lamb" would drink from the same stream, and injustice and discord would vanish and equality and



First photograph of Jináb-i-Azízí in his youth with a friend, Jináb-i-Mard Khayeshu'a, father of Jináb-i-Habibo'llah Nahale.

brotherhood would be established and so forth. It was my utmost wish--indeed the very thought brought me fulfilment -- that mankind would soon experience this blessed vision and all these enmities, religious prejudices and inequalities between the sexes might disappear. In short, all these circumstances helped prepare me and make me receptive to the truth and acceptance of divine bestowals, until at last I met and begin to socialize with the Bahá'ís, as I will explain in detail later.....

Teaching the Faith in the Jewish Community

Close to 60 years ago, around the year of 1272 A.H. (1890 A.D.), a man known as Hájí Eliahu returned from the Holy Land and was secretly socializing with the Jews, in order to teach the Cause of God. Orthodox Jews, aware of his activities, would call him names in public and would insult this man of God in the streets and marketplace. Children, encouraged by their parents, would throw stones at him. This opposition was especially strong from my father, Rabbi Daniel, who was one of the most prejudiced and influential of the Jewish spiritual leaders. The matter came to a head one day when a group of men felt agitated by his wisdom and reason. As is the way of ill-intentioned men, they caught him by surprise in one of the alleys of the ghetto and beat him relentlessly probably with the intention to kill him. A goodhearted man was passing by and immediately reported the incident to Mirzá Aqá Ján Gilavani (later known as Majzub) who was related to my father. He was told that one of his relatives was being beaten to death. Mirzá' Aqá Ján Gilavani Majzub, went straightaway to save him and delivered him from their hands. He took him to the house he rented (which was owned by Mirzá Aqá Ján Bolbol), where he provided a bed for him in one room and began to attend to him to help him recover.

Mirzá Aqá Ján Bolbol, before accepting the Faith, was a wine seller. This job was customary at that time and involved making wine at home. As he came home in order to pick-up and deliver some wine for his customers, he learned that Hájí Eliahu had been brought to his home. He became extremely upset. (Mirzá Aqá Ján Bolbol told me repeatedly). Mirzá Aqá Ján Bolbol, flew into a rage and exclaimed, "I have just heard that Hájí Eliahu -- who has turned against his own religion and become an atheist--has been brought to my house?" The homeowner later said, "My knees suddenly weakened and somewhat paralysed. I grew pale and felt so ill, that I could not keep my balance. So I sat down on the porch stairs in the yard outside, and as I began to regain my senses, I shouted out, "How dare you bring this infidel and apostate into my house?" In the end, I was reduced to tears of frustration and under my breath I was muttering that my entire wine supply was turned impure. Then I turned to Mirzá Aqá Ján Gilavani (Majzub) and threw insults and screams at him."

Anyway, this disturbance continued well into the day until Mirzá Aqá Ján Bolbol calmed down. Mirzá Aqá Ján Gilavani went to him and

apologized, and in the end, convinced the homeowner to visit Hájí Eliahu to hear what kind of nonsense he was saying. Hájí's words were so unimportant to them both, that they considered whatever he would have to say as having no value. So at the insistence of Mirzá Aqá Ján Gilavani, Mirzá Aqá Ján Bolbol reluctantly went with him to visit Hájí Eliahu.

To their surprise, they found the Hájí talking in a calm and kind manner, in spite of the abuse, insults and physical beating he had just suffered. The Hájí had also been quite aware of the yelling and cursing of the landlord. The Hájí's remarks were full of truth and sincerity; he would mention nothing apart from faith and God. Whatever the Hájí would say, he would back up with verses of the Torah, directing all his remarks to the landlord and his tenant. Both calmed down, and were drawn to the Hájí's kindness and sweetness of speech.

The next and following days, they went to see him again and again, till they became intoxicated and entranced by his discourses and solid proofs. This continued until one day they referred these matters to a person more knowledgeable than they: Mirzá Ibráhím Khayát (father of Mr. Khojasteh, who had a pharmacy on Nasir Khusraw Avenue). They told him the whole story and sought his advice. Mirzá Ibráhím Khayát, responded with sarcasm, but as he found them nevertheless persistent, he started to verbally attack and insult these two. But their insistence paid off, Bolbol and Majzub managed to drag him along to see Hájí Eliahu. In the presence of the Hájí, Mirzá Ibráhím became also drawn to him. Hájí Eliahu succeeded in making known to them the love of Jesus, by means of his tenderness and love. Through his teaching, they came to know that Jesus was from God. When later, they became believers in the (Bahá'í) Faith through Jináb-i-Hájí-Mullá 'Alí Akbar Shahmírzádí, who was a Hand of the Cause of God in the time of Bahá'u'lláh, they went on to accept Muḥammad as the messenger of God and thereafter the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. At last these four men began to teach the Faith in the Jewish ghetto: Hájí Eliahu was, as it were, the standard bearer, with Mirzá Ibráhím Khayát (also a tailor) the torch bearer, Mirzá Aqá Ján Bolbol the minstrel of the four, and Mirzá Aqá Ján Majzub was the one who would render service to the group as a whole. On many occasions, I would hear Mirzá Aqá Ján Bolbol say, with a wistful and emotion-laden voice: "From that moment on, I abandoned wine selling and besought God to forgive my sins."

This group of four knew well that they would meet with no success among the very prejudiced elders there, so they approached the youth, and started to speak to them. They invited them to come and see Mirzá Aqá Ján Majzub, acquainting them with the Faith and cultivating a seed of love for it in their hearts.

As a consequence, these activities provoked complaints and eventually continued residence in the ghetto became impossible for them. So Mirzá Aqá Ján Majzub left the ghetto and moved to the vicinity of the Qazvín Gate district of Tehran. Thus, the very house that for some time was the hiding place for Jináb-i-Mirzá Maḥmúd Furúghí, in fact became a proof of the verse of the Torah:

"Those who were as wolves held lambs in loving embrace, and would protect them with heart and soul from the onslaught of enemies."

(A verse from the Torah.)

Account of the Conversion to the Faith of Jináb-i-Azíz'u'lláh Azízí

Among these youth, who were my close friends, with whom we found our way to this sacred threshold, were Jináb-i-Arastu Khán Hakim, Dr. Ayyub Khán, Azíz Eliahu (paternal uncle of Jináb-i-Mirzá 'Abd'u'lláh Ābrishami), myself and a number of other Jewish youth, who did not have the bounty and honour of accepting the Faith. Most of the time, I would take my younger brother Aqá Murtida with me to these firesides. Each of the youth would ask a question and Jináb-i-Furúghí would respond with utmost love and kindness.

At certain meetings, a most radiant elderly man named Mullá Muḥammad Ridá-Yazdí, was present. He had much regard for the youth and his sincerity attracted them so that they would not waste a moment's effort to strive and seek after the truth. Other youth were hesitant and suspicious of his attention and love towards them, and feared this was but a trick to lure them into the Faith.

We continued to gather together often, until at one point, we found our way to the home of Hájí Mullá Alí Akbar Shāhmírzádi, Hand of the Cause, who was residing near the Jewish ghetto. This honourable and knowledgeable gentleman was very kind to us. Through his powerful and thought-provoking discourses, he would answer our objections and misunderstandings. Due to the persuasive power of his proofs, the truth of the Faith became evident to me and one could say that I was half-converted. Yet the type of faith and conviction which consumes heart and soul, the kind of faith which leaves no room for doubt or questioning, the type of faith which renders one intoxicated and in a state of wonderment, to the extent that one would sacrifice life and wealth, had not yet arisen in me.

Even so, Jináb-i-Aqá Ján Bolbol, Mirzá Aqá Ján Gilavani, known as Majzub, Mirzá Khalil (father of Mr. Arjomand), and Mirzá Ibráhím Khayyát all declared, were very steadfast in their faith, and would observe all the principles of the Bahá'í Faith.

Mirzá Khalil was one of the respected and confident members of Jewish society, and therefore, his conversion to the Cause of the Blessed Beauty created much commotion. One day, Hájí Eliahu, as I have mentioned, was taking refuge in the home of Núr-Mahmúd out of fear of his enemies, and in the meantime was secretly teaching the Faith to Mirzá Mahmud's son-in-law, Mirzá Ayyub. After embracing the Faith, Mirzá Khalil, who had a very modest home in the Ghetto, put his house in the service of Bahá'í teachers and many would frequent his house. For instance, one day Jináb-i-Hájí Mirzá Haydar 'Alí and Jináb-i-Varqá-i-Shahid entered that home where I met them as I also visited this place often for deepening.

Jináb-i-Varqá had recently returned from the Holy Land and Mirzá Khalil had invited a group of Jews and Rabbis to benefit from his teaching and to ask whatever questions they had and present any

concerns. We ourselves sat quietly in a corner and were witnessing the discussion taking place. Unfortunately, instead of deriving benefit and learning some truths, they were busy arguing and would often change the subject. Out of prejudice and the habit of clinging to their old beliefs, they were not really ready to listen to any truthful fact whatever. Such was the case until Jináb-i-Varqá stated, "There is a verse from His Holiness Joshua, to this effect: *'Eye to eye, see that they will bring the Lord back to Zion'*". (a verse of Joshua). And then he said, "I saw this with my own eyes."

The Rabbis, who could not bear to hear things like this, began to insult him. Disregarding manners and courtesy, they said, "If you saw God, may both your eyes be blinded if you lie." This contemptuous attitude from them, in contrast to the gracious and courteous manner of Jináb-i-Varqá, who so eloquently marshalled proofs and cited verses from the Torah, moved me to the extent that I recognised the truth, and realized that in every age, the chief source of denial has ever been this kind of unjust, stubborn, and proud people. At any rate, this baseless response from Jewish religious leaders to the powerful and persuasive discourses of Jináb-i-Varqá stirred me to such depths that I surrendered my will right then and there. My faith was confirmed, and I took on the path of service to Bahá'u'lláh.

Following this event, other instances like this took place in the home of Mirzá Khalil, and the situation there became so difficult and troublesome for him, that he was forced to leave the Jewish ghetto. So he sold his house and moved to Qasvín Gate, but he would not put an end to his teaching efforts. Every night he invited gifted and receptive youth to his home, and on occasion, Jináb-i-Shaykh Muḥammad 'Alí Qaini, went to his house and read aloud tablets of Bahá'u'lláh.

As a result of frequenting this house, and socializing with the friends there, especially with individuals like Jináb-i-Ḥáji Mullá 'Alí Akbar Shahmirzádi (Hand of the Cause), Shaykh Muḥammad 'Alí, Ḥáji Muḥammad Allaqiband Yazdi, Nayyer and Sina, Aqá Muḥammad Ridá and his son along with Ḥáji Abul-Hasan Ardekani (Ḥáji Amin) and Fayzeh Khán - I forged strong friendships. Beyond what benefits I derived from socializing and interacting with these individuals, I compared what I heard from them with what I knew from the Torah.

Especially on Fridays and holidays I would go with them to various gardens throughout the suburbs of Tehran, and I was always on the alert to learn and add to my knowledge. It was then that Yunis Khán Afrouhteh - who later became known as Dr. Yúnis Khán - along with Dr. Arastu Khán Hakim (Father of Mr. Gholam Ḥusayn Khán and Prof. Manucher Hakim) were summoned to the Holy Land. Since Mirzá Aristu Khán was a very sincere and kind friend of mine, I called upon him to act as my go-between and to ask that I too might be given permission for pilgrimage.

From Jewish Traditions To Bahá'í Practices

Not long after my acceptance of the Faith, I became unwilling to attend synagogue, and to observe Sabbath rituals according to Hebrew custom. Still, I did not dare to tell my father this fact for he was so prejudiced, ill-tempered, rough and foul-mouthed. I was waiting for an opportune time to break this news to him, and in the meantime I engaged myself in learning Bahá'í practices, observing them secretly. Then an event took place which enabled me to free myself from the hold of the synagogue.

My progress, both materially and spiritually, went hand-in-hand. By the bounty and grace of God, I cared for spiritual matters. As a result of my discipline, hard work and thrift, I was not materially lacking either. My life was good -- much better than before. In accordance with the command of Bahá'u'lláh, I took great care to be tidy and clean. I let my hair grow longer and took care grooming it. This was not looked upon favourably at the time and was considered somewhat anti-religious. Not only was this not practiced among Jews, but pious Muslims would shave their heads and cut short their beards. They would consider shaving their beards a sin. Only the friends of God (i.e. the Bahá'ís) following the wish of the Blessed Beauty, would grow their hair for the sake of beauty and would shave their faces according to the practice prevalent among advanced countries.

One Sabbath, after having closed my shop, it happened that, out of respect for my father I reluctantly attended the synagogue, when a very rude youth jumped at me, yanked off my hat and shouted: "Look everyone, look at this! What kind of religious observance is this? Just look at the hair of this son of the rabbi, take a look at his hair! With him like this, what are others going to do? This kind of behaviour from a youth causes others to go astray also."

There was no foul word which did not fall from his lips and no insult he failed to invent. I was just standing there, quiet and composed. I just looked at him and said nothing. Since I had earned the respect of my peers, and my father had always taken pride in such a son, who had brought respect, honour and solace to his father and family, this attack on my honour hurt very deeply.

I used this episode as an excuse not to go to the synagogues anymore. At first, my father would be silent about it, and later on he could not force me to go, as he no longer had the same authority and influence over me as previously. But, the gentle behaviour of the Bahá'ís and their kindness, together with my own attraction to the Bahá'í Faith, impelled me to be present at many of their gatherings and feasts. I also willingly offered my services.

Of course, these activities could not be kept secret for long, and news of some of this eventually reached my father's ears. At first, he refused to believe what he was told. But my continued involvement, itself considered a sin, together with my neglect of Jewish custom and ritual and my conspicuous absence from the synagogue, would cause my father to wonder and doubt. Still, he could not imagine how a child of a rabbi, with such deep knowledge of the Torah and sacred tradition, could suffer himself to be

misled and join ranks with the Bahá'í religion, which to him was manmade and baseless. But over time, repeated events increased his suspicion and eventually he grew certain that the child he had so implored God to grant him, so that it might become a faithful observer of Jewish tradition, had easily slipped from his grasp.

How Father Attempts to Prevent the Bahá'í Faith from being Taught Among the Jewish People

My father was among the most severe opponents of the Bahá'í Faith, and was ever trying to find means to prevent Jewish youth from associating with the Bahá'ís. To accomplish this, he would seize any opportunity possible, even to the extent of forbidding school and study.

In those days, there was a school established by the French in Tehran. It was supervised by Monsieur Kazes. My father was very dissatisfied and would often bring complaints to the principal of the school. He would insult Kazes and demand that only the Torah be taught in school and nothing else. He would even complain about the plight of his own son and had begged the principal to show him a solution.

The interested reader should believe that I am not exaggerating. My father went to great pains to achieve his objective, and cursed insistently the one who had caused his son to abandon his faith. As always, poor Monsieur Kazes was the recipient of his complaints. This continued until Kazes succeeded in convincing him and some of the Jewish rabbis to agree to a debate during which they could put forth persuasive arguments to win back his son. However, it seemed impossible to calm down my father who was torn with anger.

Once in a while, my father would allude to the Bahá'í Faith, while talking to my mother in front of me. He would curse and insult the Faith profusely, hoping to provoke some reaction in me or at least make certain it was true, that his son really had become a Bahá'í. But most of the time I would keep silent without reacting and would keep him wondering.

My First Bahá'í Feast in my Father's Home

In those days, Bahá'ís were secretive and none would dare declare his faith openly, which was only reasonable and out of necessity. If a father was a believer, he would conceal it from his sons, and if a son was a believer, he would not dare admit it to any of his family, or for that matter, to other people. Bahá'ís would pray behind closed doors. The only family in which every member had become Bahá'í, was the family of Jináb-i-Mirzá Ibráhím Khayyát (the tailor).

As mentioned already, he was known as Mirzá Ibráhím Simsar. (At first he was an enemy of the Faith, but soon embraced the Faith and taught his entire family). Most local Bahá'í gatherings would be held in his house. However, he could not afford to undertake all of

the expenses connected with those events. One day, I suggested that we could try instead to have each Bahá'í take turns in hosting the meetings. At the same time, the veil should be slowly lifted and our beliefs become known so that greater steps could be taken to serve the interests of the Faith. In the meantime, we could lighten the burden and hardships of Mirzá Ibráhím Simsar. All present acknowledged this. But how to begin? Everyone was wondering and looking at each other rather perplexed, over where and who should be first.

Who had the heart and courage to hold a Bahá'í meeting in his own home? Perhaps everyone there was eager with all heart and soul, to arise and do this, but at the same time inwardly disturbed over their lack of power. When I offered my family's house, everyone turned towards me in utter astonishment. Their surprise stemmed from knowing my father all too well, and from being aware of his temper and his behaviour. So they responded all at once, saying: "Is it wise, to gather together in the home of the most prejudiced of the Jewish rabbis and hold there a Bahá'í feast? How would this be possible? No other would present such difficulties and obstacles." I responded to all of these objections by pointing out that, on the night of the Sabbath, my father and family go to the synagogue and stay there quite late. I said, "You wait nearby, so that I can call to you as they leave. And also, you would leave shortly before my family returns." Everyone was happy with this arrangement and approved of it, but no one could have predicted what would happen, but God alone.

The first night I convened the feast in my home I called to the friends waiting nearby, right after my parents and family had left. So, everyone gathered together and a lively feast began. Each would say prayers in turn. We had tea ready and would have some tea during breaks, in between chanting and reciting the Holy Writings, even though starting a fire and preparing tea on the Sabbath was a great sin for the Jews.

My mother had a sister, who would come for a visit on Saturdays and they would go to the synagogue together. By accident that night, she came later than usual and my mother had already left for the synagogue. Because of my anxiety over the immediate situation, I had entirely forgotten about her. To make the story short, she arrived, opened the curtain and discovered what we had been trying to keep secret. Especially noticeable was the samovar, simmering and steaming, placed in the centre of our circle, on a Sabbath night! She shook her head and dropped the curtain, and left without saying a word.

There was no doubt that there was a crisis building up within her. How could she have imagined that her nephew would ever touch fire on the Sabbath? Would it have been possible for her to just push what she had seen out of her mind? Not so. For whatever she saw became magnified a thousand times in her eyes, and so she went straightaway to my parents and reported the episode, probably not without a great deal of exaggeration. She went as far as putting my father down. She said to him, "Congratulations! Not only has your beloved son gone astray from religion, but he has also gathered

together other unbelievers under your very roof, and moreover, he has touched fire, and thus made your place impure." From the way my aunt had let down the curtain, and from the nature of her silence, I realized right away that there was bound to be a crisis. I asked the friends to cut the meeting short and to leave, and we removed the tea.

The first to arrive home was my mother who was hostile and abusive. Since there was no one else present (to catch me red-handed), she said: "Your aunt was just saying that you have become a Bahá'í, and are socializing with infidels, have turned against the religion of Israel and have handled fire. Of course, I just cannot believe you would become the cause of our misfortune and ill-repute, making us shameful and notorious before our own people!" My mother was telling me her feelings with the utmost sadness. What could I say to a mother who was more dear to me, than my own life? I replied: "Dearest mother, you yourself, have read the Torah. In it, it is said that only illegitimate children would forsake their belief. There is no one else here, but you and I. Either you have concealed such a thing or the Torah is wrong?" Poor mother swore repeatedly and then became silent. I realized how hurt she was, so I said: "Dear mother, I know you have never done me wrong, nor is the Torah false, I have not forsaken my faith either. Rest assured, for it has been said that the Messiah has appeared and the time for the emancipation and progress of Israel has at last come." My mother's face began to open up with a smile.

We were in the middle of this conversation, when my father burst in, roaring like a volcano. Normally, my father had a very strong and loud voice, and so you can imagine how it was when he began screaming out of anger. When he started to insult me, I lost my patience and told him straight, that indeed, I had embraced the Cause of God. I then brought up verses of the Torah, as witness to the truth of the Cause and I challenged him to respond. Since he had no real answer, his anger intensified a hundred times over.

I said, "Father, you refuse to listen to me, so how can I take seriously what you have to say? There should be a third party to judge between us." My father had the Torah in his hand and was waving it constantly. I then said, "I firmly believe in the very Torah you believe in." Then we placed it between us, and both of us took an oath. If my father was right, I would agree to follow him and attend synagogue, each and every Sabbath, and faithfully observe all of the rituals and traditions of the Jewish faith, and to do the utmost in my power to please him. But, if I was judged to be in the right, then he should follow me.

Since we were both exhausted, and there was no other recourse, he consented to this. The storm calmed somewhat, and my mother, who had all the while been watching us, seemed relieved and satisfied enough so that we could have supper and then turn in for the night. But could any of us really sleep!

I, myself was in a world of imagination. After all, I was attempting to convince my father that I had done nothing wrong, and was trying my best to do this, through love and kindness, and by the use of proofs and appeal to reason. But what my father's real

feelings were, I do not know.

The next morning, I related the events of the previous night's episode to Mirzá Ibráhím Simsar. Others among the friends, became informed of what had taken place. Everyone was most supportive and said this plan of action should be pursued until some result be achieved. The least outcome would be that all of this would come out of the closet. Perhaps that would bring some relief to the whole predicament and we would be able to teach openly.

The Debate

After that night, my father could not calm down and started working on his own plans. Monsieur Kazes, the school principal, had advised him and other Jewish scholars, that they should try to win over the Bahá'ís by convincing proofs and reason, not by hostility or use of force. These scholars had a great deal of pride in themselves and considered us lowly and weak. Thus they decided on a debate and chose accordingly the following individuals to rise to the occasion:

1) Rabbi Ha'im Murih: He was blind, yet he knew the entire Torah by heart, and had an astonishing knowledge of other books, sacred to the Jews. He was a brilliant and powerful speaker, and had recently composed a refutation against Jesus and the Gospel, which was without peer or rival at that time. (He is the father of Mr. Ibráhím Murih)

2) Rabbi Ibráhím Ribino,

3) Rabbi Ya'qub Baba'i and his brother,

4) Eli Safan,

5) Rabbi Elezar Ha'im, who later emigrated to Palestine where he would subsequently cause trouble for me, which I will relate later on,

6) Rabbi Daniel, my father,

Drawn from the Bahá'í community, these individuals were present:

1) Adib Elahi,

2) Mirzá Khalil Aqiba,

3) Mihdi Arjomand,

4) Aqá Muḥammad Allághiband Yazdí,

5) Aqá Sayeed Hasan Hashemizadeh (Motevajeh),

6) Hájí Mullá 'Alí Akbar Shahmirzádi, (Hand of the Cause)

7) Ibn-i-Asdaq, (Hand of the Cause)

8) Rahim Mullá Bakhaj,

9) Jináb-i-Ibn-i-Abhar (Hand of the Cause)

Of course, there were other people present, both Jews and Bahá'ís, who were audience to the debate. These people were: Hájí Yezghil Kashi, Mirzá Aqá Ján Gilavani, Hájí Baba and his son, Dr. Amír Khán Amirian, Hájí Haq Nazar, Mirzá Ibráhím Khayyát, Mirzá Aqá Ján Kashi-Bahá'u'l-Hukama, Azíz Eliahu, known as Abrishami, Haqq Nazar Na'ima, Eliahu Hájí Shaul, and a host of others, whose names

I cannot recall. The debate took place in two adjoining rooms which were packed with Bahá'ís and non-Bahá'ís.

After opening remarks and the usual courtesies, Ibn-i-Asdaq opened the debate. The Jewish leaders answered all at once and there were no rules of order in force. Mirzá Mihdí Arjomand, known as Rifua, sought permission from Ibn-i-Asdaq to act as speaker and Ibn-i-Asdaq would come to his assistance, if needed. He was saying, "I know their language better."

After some further discussion, his idea was accepted and Mirzá Mihdí, took over the debate. He began by saying to the Jews present: "You should choose among yourselves the one you find most knowledgeable. Because, the way things are now, everyone is trying to talk at the same time and this creates chaos, and not a single point can possibly be made." Of course, none of the Jewish personalities there was pleased to be considered less than any other. But as a result of Arjomand's persistence, after a bit of arguing, they at last settled on one to speak on their behalf.

The second recommendation Mirzá Mihdí Arjomand made, was that everything mentioned should be written down and that the record be signed by both sides to prevent any denial of the facts and course of the debate at a later date. He elaborated on this idea by saying, "We each and all are gathered here together for the sake of God. God forbid if we are overtaken by pride and we should deny the truth as a result. So it makes better sense to record each point and have this attested to by both sides. Perhaps, as a result, we might know at the meeting's end who is right." Though at first there was disagreement over this proposal, after some reluctance this condition was also accepted. It remained to be decided who would be the one to write everything down -- one who would be acceptable to both sides. Fortunately, that problem was soon resolved with the choice of a certain Hájí Rahim Mullá Bakhaj (grandfather of the engineer Farhadi, son-in-law of Dr. Lotfullah Hakim). Hájí Rahim was an honest man and trusted by the Jews of the area, and was secretly a believer of the Bahá'í Faith. Thus, he was chosen unanimously as the secretary.

Despite the fact that the Jewish party had agreed to a speaker to debate on their behalf, they would continue to respond chaotically all at once to statements made. Each would venture his own way of interpretation and explanation. So it was then suggested to them that before responding to any particular point, the Jews first discuss among themselves and then present a unified response. After agreement was reached, their designated spokesman should convey the response. Having won approval of this, Mirzá Mihdi Arjomand resumed the debate and posed this question: "Are messengers of God sent for specific nations only, or for all the peoples of the world?" He then gave the example of Moses, and the very same question again: "Was Moses sent for the people of Israel only, or for all the people of that time?"

To deal with this question, a harsh dispute broke out among the Jewish scholars because certain of them held that Moses was for one chosen nation only, while others believed His mission extended to all the peoples of the world. Mirzá Mihdí could not accept these

mutually-opposing viewpoints on this matter and asked for a clear, straightforward answer. After further discussion among the Jews, it was resolved that the Jewish religion was for the nation of Israel, chosen as it was of God.

Then Mirzá Mihdí replied, "If so, please tell us why Moses took some of the Egyptians with him who had declared their faith in him? If granted you are right, that this religion is for Israel only, Moses should have rejected these Egyptian believers, all the more so, as they were at one time the very enemies of the people of Israel."

The Jewish Rabbis were facing a very problematic point so they chose the other answer, namely that the Jewish religion was for the whole world as well. As all of them at last agreed on this, it was noted down and signed.

Thereafter any question agreed-upon, posed or response given, was written down and signed by both sides. At length, the debate focused on this verse of the Torah; where Moses states, "*I will choose a Prophet from among thy brethern, like unto myself,*" (Deuteronomy 18:15), which follows with, "*Hearken to him,*" meaning: follow him. The Jewish learned present were asked whether or not they were in agreement as to the authenticity of this verse, and all gave their recognition of it.

Then Arjomand said, "Set forth, if you will, those attributes of Moses which you deem as proofs of His prophethood. Then I propose to show you how Jesus, Muḥammad, the Báb, and Bahá'u'lláh themselves, exemplified these attributes as well."

The Jews were making guesses which were quite senseless, and Arjomand would proceed to invalidate their responses with reason and proof. When at last Arjomand found the Jewish debaters unable to offer a proper response to this question, he himself proceeded to explain the attributes of the Messengers of God so objectively, that everyone present gave consent and signed to that effect. So the truth of His Holiness Jesus, son of Mary, Muḥammad, the Messenger of God, the Báb, the Primal Point, and Bahá'u'lláh, the Blessed Beauty, was demonstrated conclusively.

Following so sharp and profound an explanation on this matter, the Jewish scholars were reduced to silence, and with one accord conceded to the validity of his argument. They then said, "Now leave us alone. Let the Jews be Jewish and the Christians Christian, the Muslims to follow their own religion, and we allow as well that you Bahá'ís should be free to follow your own religion. We do not interfere in the affairs of others, and you also should not meddle in our affairs." So the Jews present adopted this strategy, as a last resort. They insisted: "We really cannot forsake our ancestral faith, even in these times. After all, we were born in the Jewish faith and we shall die in the Jewish faith, we do not wish to bother you, nor you to bother us."

At this point, Arjomand asked them to sign the record to this effect. But, they stalled and ended up refusing to, even though throughout the lengthy debate Arjomand at several points had taken

their signatures voluntarily.*

This debate had lasted several hours, and both sides had become so involved in the issues at hand, that the time had passed unnoticed. The end of the debate coincided with sunrise the next day, the debate having started early in the evening the night before. I invited everyone to dinner. At the table, now and then, I would look up at my father's face. Though outwardly he appeared calm and quiet, it was obvious to me that the fire of anger in him was still smouldering. But since he had consented to all of this beforehand, he was obliged to conceal his inner feelings and hide his anger.

At the dinner table, he was sitting across from Hájí Mullá Akbar Shahmirzádi, the Hand of the Cause. My father had his head down and was idly toying with a knife, cleaning a red radish. To comfort my father, the Hand of the Cause told him: "Do you see now, that your son has not gone on the wrong path? You should be proud and happy over such a mature, active, religious and God-abiding son." And after saying a few more things, at last he said, "From now on, God-willing, you will not bother him any longer?"

Suddenly my father's patience reached its limit, he began to roar, and with intense anger and bitterness, while turning his knife in his hand, said, "If you leave him in my hands, I'll cut his head off like..." But Adib intruded into the argument and jokingly said, "Jináb-i-Mullá, neither would you ever do such a thing, nor would we deliver him to your hands to be martyred."

I believe that Hájí Muhammad must have related the events of that night to `Abdu'l-Bahá, because during my pilgrimage I heard about some of the events of that night from the most pure mouth of His Holiness `Abdu'l-Bahá. At any rate, as a result of that night, our debate was discussed in every neighbourhood and marketplace. The situation changed and we had no more fear. Social gatherings became more frequent, and I gained the freedom to hold Feasts in my home. But the dissatisfaction of my father persisted still.

Debate with Jamál Burújirdi

Prior to accepting the Faith, in search of truth and information on the nature of various beliefs, I would go to different places. I even went to Sufi gatherings and to the well-known house of Súfi 'Alí Sháh. But since I found their words and deeds as virtually of no real worth compared to those of the Bahá'ís, I rid my hands of them all and accepted the Bahá'í Faith. After becoming a Bahá'í, I was very active, and even confronted enemies of the Faith.

Ever since I heard of Aqá' Jamál Burújirdi (Jamál Burújirdi was a well-known Baha'i at the time of Baha'u'llah, but because he was

* (The present author of this narrative, some time later searched in earnest for the original document and learned of its existence in the hands of the Golsham brothers. But since they are still Jewish and quite religious at that, they ended up denying the whole episode and refused to produce the notes.)

against 'Abdu'l-Bahá, he became a covenant breaker.) I had become interested in meeting him, but did not have the means to do so. I finally had the chance to visit Jamál when a friend of mine, Dr. Fakhim, took me to his house during a holiday celebration.

Jamál deemed his own station too exalted to socialize with a poor person like me, so he ordered his son to receive me in the adjoining room. His son, Hob'u'llah, started to bring up certain points. For instance, he had been reading some of the poems of Vargá, in one of which it is written: "I'll know you, whether in beggar's clothes or in king's clothes." He concluded that 'Abdu'l-Bahá had believed himself to be a Manifestation of God, even though the real Manifestation of the Faith had been just one person.

Right away I knew that he harboured enmity towards 'Abdu'l-Bahá. I replied that, if a poet such as Vargá has out of love for his Master, composed such a poem and has lavished on Him such praise, this is not a standard by which one can judge 'Abdu'l-Bahá. We should instead see what 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself has said. He advances no such claim, nor had He commissioned Vargá to write such things in verse. Even in numerous tablets, He very distinctly says, "My name is `Abdu'l-Bahá (Servant of Bahá), My qualification is `Abdu'l-Bahá, My reality is `Abdu'l-Bahá." Furthermore, He had stated that the source of His honour is servitude to the threshold of Bahá.

So clearly does `Abdu'l-Bahá explain His station, that I wonder how so simple a matter could be so misconstrued by some. There has even been a case where one poet mentioned `abdu'l-Bahá's name, as "Abbas" in a poem, with which `Abdu'l-Bahá was not pleased but rather disturbed.

At any rate, our argument went on far too long, and no matter what approach he used, the door was slammed in his face. At last, he neither succeeded, nor could I determine what his real and ultimate purpose was in choosing such a way to attack the Faith, or what his objective was and to what authority he looked up to. So I asked Fakhim to invite Jamál over to his place for lunch and to arrange at the same time for Mullá 'Alí Akbar, Hand of the Cause, to show up unexpectedly. At the same time I asked him to let me hide in the next room, so that by observing the encounter from both sides, I could come to my own conclusions.

He did exactly as I had suggested. Both sides engaged in lengthy discussions, and I had the opportunity to be exposed to Jamál's unfounded criticisms as well as his enormous pride. No matter how Hand of the Cause Mullá 'Alí Akbar tried to deal with Jamál's abuses against 'Abdu'l-Bahá, his efforts to convince him of anything proved fruitless. It got to the point where Jamál proclaimed himself to be no less than 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and equal to Him in station.

At this point I had run out of patience and came out from behind the curtain and exclaimed, "Your criticisms are similar to those of Gharun with regards to Moses. According to the Torah itself, Moses was forbearing and patient for a long time, and finally besought God to resolve Gharun's problem. As you are well aware, he disappeared from the face of the earth after enduring many

misfortunes. You should likewise be careful not to act as Gharun did."

As Jamál heard me say this, he lost control and got extremely upset with Dr. Fakhim, and told him, "You promised me that you would not accept anyone else into your house. What nonsense is this? A Jewish youth who was my subordinate yesterday, is given permission to address me like this?" He then stormed out of the meeting.

Yet, what I warned him about that day actually happened. Not only did his fate end up like Gharun's, but a hundred times worse. And everyone who knew him is witness to that. I heard from his son that Jamál was reduced to begging for his very survival during his last days.*

These kinds of encounters not only failed to make me go astray, but would kindle the lamp of faith in my heart ever brighter, just as the light of an electric lamp is more luminous than that of a mere candle.

Marriage and a Gift from the Reigning Monarch

My father was forever trying to get me married. It was customary among the Jews to arrange for their son to be married, when they reached their eighteenth year of age. As a youth I passed this year still unmarried, and as a result, my parents felt themselves responsible and guilty. Then I passed age twenty, still single. No one would consent to give his own daughter in marriage to me, since I had become a Bahá'í. Then as a result of my parent's efforts, I became engaged to a girl I had never met before. For an entire year, I would visit my fiancé on Saturday nights as the guest of her family and sometimes would even sleep there overnight. But not once was I given the chance to even see my fiancé's face.

At last I thought of something. I came up with a plan to make a coat for her, and while fitting it on her, try to see her face. So I did exactly this and came to the conclusion that this poor creature had every reason to cover her face. Not only was she far from pretty and looked quite undesirable, but she also looked older than me. So I backed out of this arranged marriage, and no matter how much my parents would insist, I would not accept.

Time passed, and after a while I myself found a girl who was young and rather beautiful, and so I went to my parents and through them asked for her hand. But her parents would not accept because of their prejudice against the Bahá'ís. This was aggravated by the fact that I had become well-known as a "Bábí". (The early Bahá'ís were often known as "Bábís".)

The girl's grandmother, who was quite influential, was dead set against the marriage and no one would dare challenge her.

* (His son is Mr. Muhibat, who was faithful in the Covenant and ever engaged in service to the Cause. During the ministry of the Guardian, he was involved in copying the Holy Tablets.)

This continued until the assassination of Násiri'd-Dín Sháh. In those times, it was the usual practice for ruffians to take advantage of any situation to loot the homes of innocent people, and to perform acts of cruelty, with minorities as a prime target.

The Jewish ghetto was particularly vulnerable, and these gang members would ransack homes in the Jewish quarter repeatedly, and at the same time commit unspeakable crimes. After the death of the Sháh, chances of fresh attacks were more than ever. The family of the girl I wished to marry, was very prejudiced against me - the grandmother was especially stubborn - and yet, they vowed that if they be spared the calamities which might befall them as a result of the assassination, and be saved from the attacks of ruffians, they would consent to give over the hand of her granddaughter to me, a Bahá'í.

Fortunately, the Jews were kept safe, because the Blessed Beauty had rescued them from abasement. Although the grandmother had come to regret her vow later, our marriage did take place. Though I tried my best to find a way to her heart, the grandmother continued to be upset that her granddaughter had married a Bahá'í.

As I have previously mentioned, prior to the wedding I had invested forty tumans (thanks to the loan from my uncle) in an ironing table, an iron, a pair of fabric shears and a few other tailoring tools of the trade, and had opened my own shop. By the grace of God and His bounty, after several years, I paid not only my household expenses, but managed to pay off my debts as well. So I was running a debt free shop.

Since I was always trying my best to attract more customers and to be accomodating, I was quite outgoing and showed respect for my patrons as well as I could. In this way I had struck up friendships and made acquaintances with people from all walks of life. It happened that in the court of Muzaffari'd-Dín Sháh, it was decided that a special formal piece of wardrobe be tailored for one of the courtiers. The Sháh himself was rather particular when it came to proper apparel, so he entrusted a group of civil servants to see to it that the outfit would be professionally tailored. It was through the influence of a friend of mine, that I got the commission to tailor this.

When the outfit was finished, I delivered it to the summer palace in Shimrán and presented it before His Majesty. All court members present praised the garment in every way. The Sháh was also impressed and added his admiration. As he did so, one official spoke up and said, "Your Majesty, this commission - so brilliantly executed - justly deserves a royal gift. The royal court gave its assent, and the Sháh gave order that a *Khal'at* (a royal gift of honour) be presented. It was a *Tirmih*, a luxuriantly hand-woven fabric with silver and gold thread woven into it. The *Tirmih* was placed around my neck, in the presence of the Sháh. I kissed the ground out of respect and was then dismissed.

In those days, whoever became the recipient of a *Khal'at*, would

be escorted back to his work place in a royal carriage, and would be accompanied by a special guard. In this manner I was sent back to my town. All along the way, my only thought was of the great assurances of the Blessed Beauty and 'Abdu'l-Bahá as recorded throughout their Tablets, and these were before my eyes and echoed in my ears. Of these assurances, one was this:

*"Ere long, hopeless Israel shall be possessed
of honour, and its hope shall be restored."*

(unauthorized translation)

I offered up thanks to God and prayed for divine assistance and steadfastness. It should be mentioned that the carriage driver, the guard and the remainder of the retinue were each asking for a tip. As a result, the worth of the *Khal'at* was expended several times over to pay to these greedy people.

You should know, my dear children, that these events were certainly not of great consequence to me. I had not been overtaken by pride as a result of such honour. In fact, it was usually the case that a *Khal'at* would be kept as a family keepsake and shown off on occasion to attract honour and respect. In my case however as it was close to the New Year and my family was without proper clothing, I felt that they deserved better and so at once I sold that *Khal'at* at the market place and used the money to provide them with clothing and the necessities and comforts of home. I also provided for the children of my sister, who were without guardian.

Revelation of the First Tablet

I had received the blessings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, so my feelings of attraction and love were limitless. I had been present at a number of meetings of the Board of Consultation. (This was the term for a Spiritual Assembly at that time.) At one point it was decided that a fund should be established for the erection of the Bahá'í House of Worship at 'Ishqábád, known as the Mother Temple. With utmost keenness and resolve for the project, I offered to host a fundraising event in my own home. When this offer won approval, I started to borrow rugs from friends and neighbours with which I covered the courtyard. I'll never forget how I even rinsed off the trees and placed lights on them.

At that time, it was not customary for the Bahá'í friends to sit on chairs at meetings. Normally, they would sit on the floor. So in order to make the friends more comfortable, I prepared cushions and pillows to sit on. After the meeting opened with prayers, the purpose of the gathering was announced. My part in responding to the call to contribute was to give my entire fortune in three parts: one in my wife's

name, one in my daughter's name, and the remainder in my own name. Altogether, a considerable sum of money was raised for the House of Worship. (My daughter's name was Qudsíyyih Khánúm.)

Following this event, I started a new business, and praise be to God, I was successful. I know not who it was who reported this episode before the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, but after some time, I received from the pen of 'Abdu'l-Bahá a Tablet which reads as follows:

Tablet of Abdu'l-Bahá

To Jináb-i-Azízí, of the lineage of Khalíl (Abraham), on him be the Glory of God.

He is God!

O descendant of Abraham!

In truth, thou art of that illustrious lineage, a descendant of that resplendent Sun.

From the mantle of your deeds is diffused a musk-laden fragrance, like unto the sweet-smell of the ministry of Khalíl (Abraham).

Tokens of your Abrahamic heritage are evident from your firmness and steadfastness. Thus should the descendant live up to that nobility, so that the secret of Abraham may be revealed.

The gathering you had arranged was glorious, majestic and beauteous and in reality a reflection of the realm above, for it was a gathering consecrated to the establishment of a Máshriqu'l-Adhkár. Divine favour and assistance was manifest in that gathering, inspiring each one present to succeed in giving generously, according to their capacity.

The blessings of that event shall return to you with a bountiful portion thereof, causing you to become the recipient of God's forgiveness.

Convey to your honoured wife greetings of the Most Glorious, and may you ever show kindness to your sons and daughters on behalf of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

On behalf of Abdu'l-Bahá, salutations and praise be upon you.

- 'Abdu'l-Bahá
(unauthorized translation)

In those days, I had only one baby girl, but my wife was expecting. In accordance with the Tablet, I announced the good news that she was going to have a boy. I also gained confidence from the assurance that I would experience increased success, and this also came true.

I was a servant of the Cause, and my desire to serve had no bounds, yet the desire to attain the presence of the Beloved of the World would not let me alone. It was through Dr. Yúnis Khán and Dr. Aristoo Khán, who themselves were called to the Holy Land, that I applied for pilgrimage. Some time passed and as I had not heard from them, I wrote to Dr. Aristoo Khán again and begged him in greater earnest to intercede on my behalf and seek permission for my visit.

Love to Serve the Cause

As I had become a Bahá'í, I savoured the sweetness of the Cause, but it was also necessary to endure the shafts of its enemies. In those days, one needed great strength to deal with the hardships and pains inflicted.

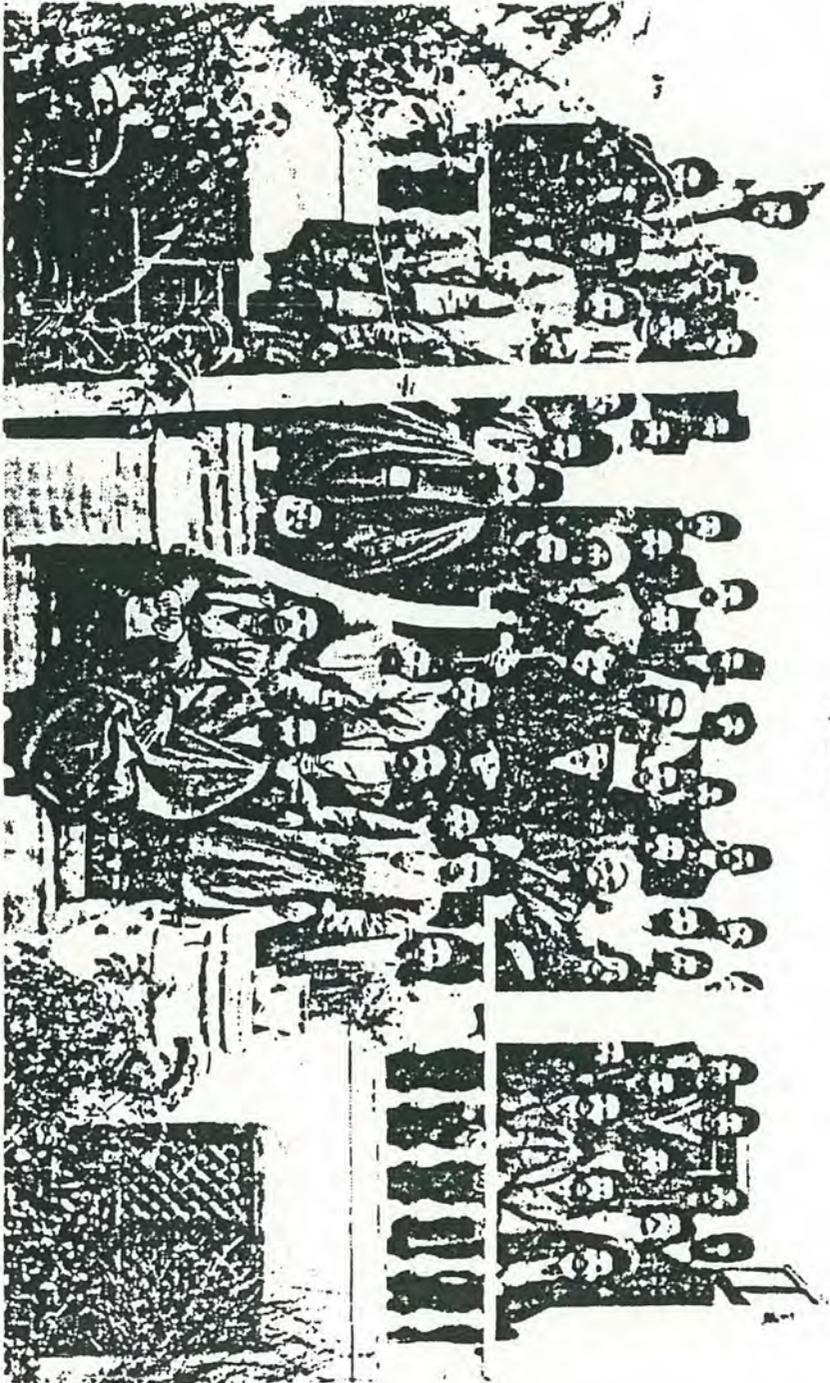
I had prepared myself from every angle. For me, hardships would come in different forms from a number of directions, for instance: those who were against the Bahá'ís generally would persecute me, but on top of this, those who felt unfavourable towards the Jews had it out for me too. According to the persecutors, I was a Bábí, impure, and without true religion. In short, the heavy rains of calamities would pour down. But, so also would confirmations from God come from every direction. Praise be to God, I had the endurance and patience for it all. I was working hard, and in spite of the opposition of enemies, I was successful and advanced. My evenings were devoted to various kinds of Bahá'í service, but I was particularly active in teaching.

There was a certain physician, a very strong and steadfast believer, who was sent on a mission by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to teach the Faith within the Jewish community. On evenings, especially Saturdays, he would invite the Jews to his home for the purpose of teaching them. I would also attend and bring my own contacts with me. Usually, I would take with me my brother, Aqá Murtidá, who eventually accepted the Faith. Since there was no longer any pretence, and my secret was laid bare (the fact that I was a Bahá'í) I would likewise hold Bahá'í gatherings and firesides for teaching.

Though all along my father was displeased with all of this, he would complain only secretly, and would not dare voice his opposition openly. This was largely due to the outcome of the debate that had taken place, at which he had sworn never to create any disturbance. Rabbi Ibráhím Ribino, who would show utmost good-will towards me, was himself present at that historic debate, and would in earnest dissuade the Jews from argument and opposition.



A Gathering of Friends at the Azizi House.



Celebration in honour of a visit by Mrs. Schopflocher

At any rate, we were relatively free, and the field also was quite vast. We were given opportunities and means for service and, praise be to God, we were successful. Every day we had new believers and during all this time, I had the honour of participating in most of the activities and gatherings.

Bahá'í Dervishes

Six Bahá'í dervishes had come to Tehran. Their names were: Hájí Muqbilan, Hájí Qalandar, Hájí Tavangar, Hájí Yunis, Hájí Muqidih, and Hájí Muidih. They were in trouble financially and at times would pass through the market place in Tehran, chanting the poetry and verses of the Blessed Beauty in loud melodious voices. Some people who discovered that they were Bahá'ís, would harass them. The fact they were dervishes at the same time, did not make any difference. These dervishes were new believers and had not yet been able to find jobs. Worse still, these dervishes possessed no craft, art or vocation, nor any other source of income. I was aware of their situation and the persecution they suffered at the hands of the Shí'ahs, which would pain me.

I recall one winter night when it was snowing very hard. I came home and saw that my mother was about to throw away a big pot of meat stew. It was rich with fat and very tasty. It was Sabbath eve, on which usually Jews would prepare food to last two days, in order to avoid handling fire on the Sabbath. So it's not hard to imagine just how much food she had made. Poor mother was complaining, not having enough strength to pick up the pot and get rid of the food. I asked her why she was doing this. She said, "Haven't you heard? The village crier informed everyone that among the lambs recently sold at market, one had a broken bone. All the meat sold was suspect, and according to both the Rabbi and Synagogue, eating of any of that tainted meat is forbidden." (It was a custom among the Jews, that if a butchered animal had had a broken bone - even if healed, consumption of the meat of that animal was banned.)

In whatever way I tried to make her change her mind, so as not to waste that food, nothing worked; so I thought of a solution. I said, "Mother, a Jew cannot eat this food, but what about a non-Jew?" She answered that nothing forbade that. I said, "In that case, give me the pot." I then wrapped the pot in a cloth and on that cold and snowy night, I went to our poor friends - that is, those six dervishes who were staying the night in a caravansarai, just outside town. I found them in a very poor shelter, without protective clothing, huddled together and chanting prayers. They were thrilled to see me, especially when they noticed I was carrying something. So I told them the story about the stew and they were all delighted over this. Each of them were famished, having found nothing to eat all day. Smiling, their leader Dervish Mughbilan said, "It

is not possible that the Blessed Beauty should deny His faithful ones their share of His bounty." So he asked one of the dervishes to chant some more in order to get some money for bread as well.

On the way back, I thought a lot about the disability of human beings, despite all the potential power with which each man is endowed. I was also thinking about the abject poverty of some people, and also about persecution. The piercing cold of that night, and the want of proper clothing for these men, particularly distressed me. So I decided to make each of them a very thick vest. Thus, without any advance sizing, and only my own visual estimates of the body size of each, I made each of them vests and took them to these men.

Unfortunately, the dervishes were evicted from the caravansarai by force, and so they had left town. I became very disheartened, and sat down on a rock. Then I asked about them from the owner of the caravansarai. I found out they were kicked out because they had no money and had not paid for their overnight stay. I asked, "Do you know what direction they took?" He said, "I think they headed in the direction of Ḥadrat 'Abdu'l-'Azím (a religious town known as Rayy.)"

I followed them straightaway and I was overjoyed when I caught up with them. The dervishes greeted me and offered up a prayer of thanks for me, and were very gracious to me. I presented them the vests and my happiness reached its peak when I saw that the vests fitted perfectly, even though I had made them by visually estimating their size. The vests were neither loose nor tight, nor short nor long, but were a proper fit. Anyway, the dervishes became so delighted, thankful of the bounties of the Blessed Beauty, and thanked me over and over. We hugged each other like brothers and kissed each other (as men do in the Middle East). After prayer and wishing each other well, we went our separate ways, to pursue our own destinies. They departed once more for Ḥadrat 'Abdu'l-'Azím, and I for Tehran.

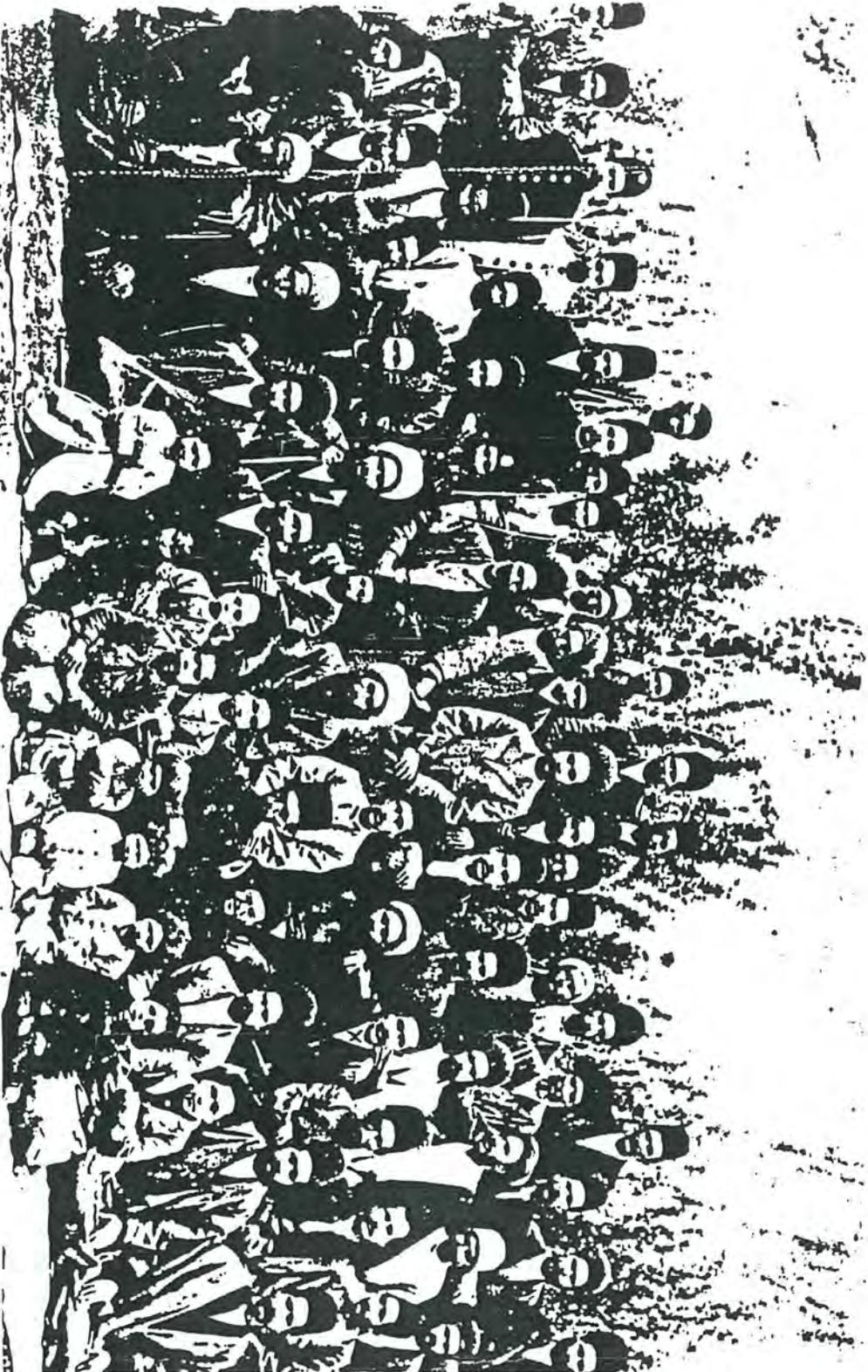
First Journey to 'Akká to Visit 'Abdu'l-Bahá

The wish to see 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave me no rest. I was in touch by letter with Dr. Arastoo Khán, and after calling earnestly on him to seek permission on my behalf to come, at last in one of his letters the good news reached me, that permission was granted.

My permission came at a time when the outbreak of cholera would kill people like leaves in fall. As this plague was epidemic, travelling was very difficult, and for this reason 'Abdu'l-Bahá would not as a rule, grant permission to Persians to visit him. But my permission, nevertheless, had come. I was anxious and worried. So I took the matter before the Spiritual Assembly (which at that time was called the Board of Consultation), of which I myself was a member. Fortunately,

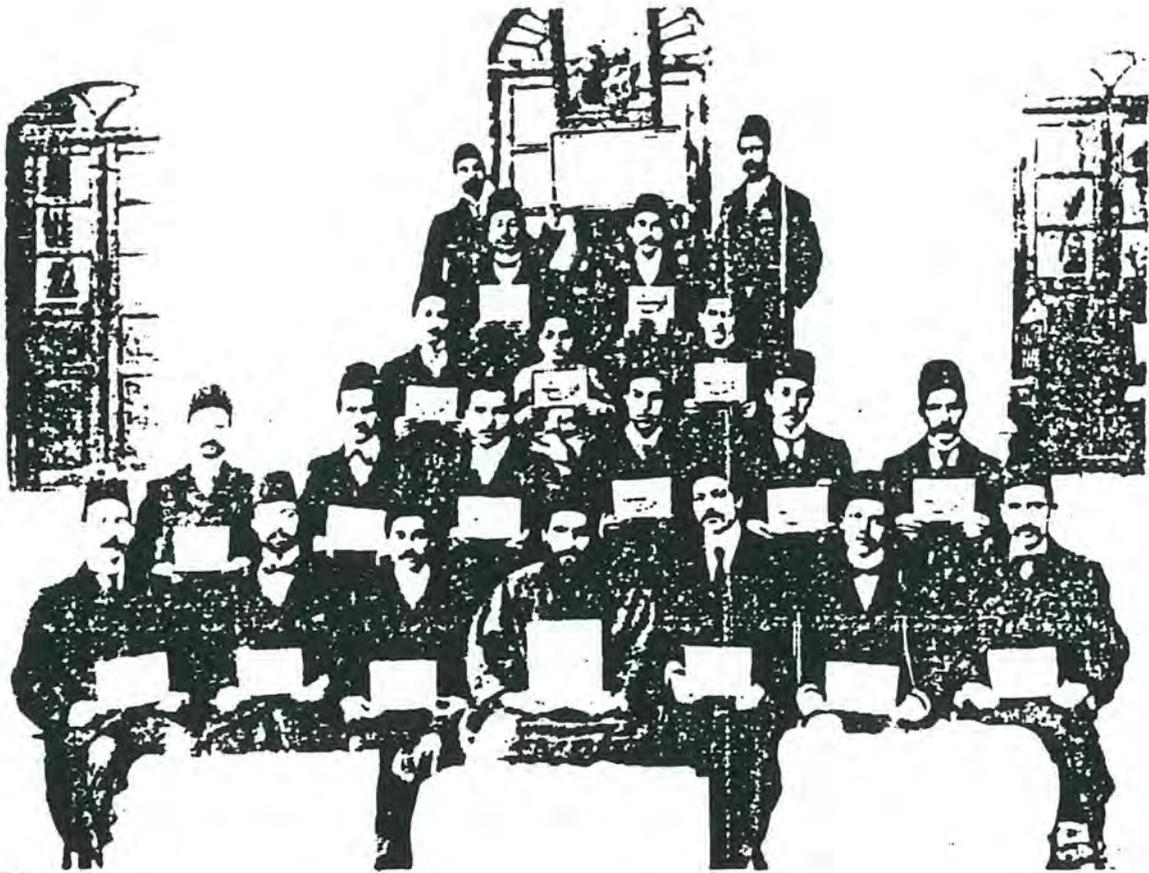


Six Darvishes.



Shāh-i-Azīzī is seated next to Hājī Abu-el-Hasan Ardekanī,
known as Hājī- Amin





all present advised me to go, Bahá'í friends would, moreover, insist and say to me, "If you don't go and then die of cholera, you will have lost a great blessing."

Furthermore, I had faith that permission from the all-knowing Master was in itself, a sign that I would survive the cholera epidemic. At any rate, I resolved to undertake the journey. Enduring countless hardships, I travelled by way of Qaf Qaz, Istanbul in Turkey, and from there to Haifa and 'Akká. On this journey, I was accompanied by Ibn-i-Asdaq, along with his servant, and also a Bahá'í friend from Yazd. At the outset of the journey there was some conflict among us which I tolerated until we met up with Siyyid Ḥasan Hášimi-zadeh and Ustád Maḥmúd Khabíri, who were also destined for 'Akká. At this juncture, we were six men looking forward to meeting our Beloved.

As we entered Anzalí (now called Pahlavi), we were put in quarantine. This building was made of wood, so one day it caught on fire. But Ustád Maḥmúd, with peerless bravery and skill, saved us from the inferno. This accident forged closer bonds between us and as a result we became more united, sharing in one another's joy and sadness. As we reached Badkubih, again we were thrown in quarantine. Upon release from this temporary jail, we anxiously sought out the Bahá'í friends there, and soon became their guests.

How wonderful it was. They showered upon us much kindness and brought us comfort. In every town where Bahá'ís resided, they would treat us with the utmost hospitality. In reality, we were as members of one family, and as children of one Father. In Tibilis, Aḥmad took us in and through his kindness he took all the hardship of the journey away from us, while we were there. In fact, in every town and village, the moment they were informed of our coming, the Bahá'í friends would greet us with open arms and make us forget all the hardships of our journey. This would intensify in us the flame of love and goodwill.

In this manner, we journeyed from town to town. When we were about to board our ship, the captain refused to accept us. He ignored our passionate pleas and knew not that God had kept us safe till then. Each of us was overwhelmed with excitement at the thought of attaining the presence of the Beloved of the World. The captain kept his distance from us to protect himself, and left us to suffer in our separation (from 'Abdu'l-Bahá).

Then, an Italian ship had pity on us and greed for money prompted the captain to accept to take us to Beirut. But he failed to keep his promise and left us stranded in Istanbul. Again we faced quarantine, but not as easily and calmly as in other towns. In this place, they endeavoured to disinfect us with steam from boiling water. I can never forget how all our leather-crafted belongings were spoiled, and my shoes afterward no longer fitted my feet. Was there yet any further need for shoes? To the precincts of the Beloved we

should go barefoot and without shoes. As we reached Beirut, Aqá Shaykh Muhammad-'Alí Qa'ini and a group of Zoroastrian Bahá'ís from India joined us. All of us entered Haifa aboard the same ship.

In Haifa, there was a coffee shop called "Sahlan wa Siyyid." In that coffee shop, someone appointed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to serve the pilgrims, was waiting for us. He hired a carriage at once to take us to 'Akká. God only knew how thrilled and delighted we were. We were just a few miles away from our Beloved, and all along the way we were praying, aloud at times and other times silently, to the one and only God. In this excited state, we reached the gates of 'Akká. At that point, there was a company of Turkish guards. They would require newcomers to register and obtain visas.

Our group was a most interesting one, with different looks, different outfits, each from a different town or country or race, with different customs and cultures. But we were all of one accord and showed the utmost kindness towards each other. We all were headed towards the same goal and were beside ourselves in our longing to see the Beloved, all to the point of weeping. One would have to have seeing eyes, a perceptive vision, to perceive what could possibly have brought all these opposites together and for all these colours to become one colour. Is there any greater happiness for humanity than looking away from estrangement and fixing their gaze on the oneness of mankind?

The gate of 'Akká had two large doors. There was a large courtyard (barracks square) behind the two doors. Around it were barracks to serve as quarters for the soldiers and guards. The city of 'Akká was very small and its alleys extremely narrow, dark and dirty. A group of Qaz-Qafi Bahá'í residents of 'Akká came in white outfits to receive us. They directed us to the guest house. The guest house in 'Akka was a caravansarai with a few small rooms. A few such guests would stay in just one room.

The very night we entered 'Akká, all travellers were called into the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. I was very anxious and uncomfortable, and a bit wary. According to the Torah, the station of the Centre of the Covenant of the Lord of Hosts was so exalted that I found myself too unworthy to attain His presence. I cannot describe what went through my mind in those moments. Even though I wanted so much to behold that peerless Beauty, I did not dare raise my head and thus did not know quite what to do.

It was at night when it was our honour to enter the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. We kissed the ground out of respect. His holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá was holding a lamp in His blessed hand and was paying special heed to each one's face. Right away I realized that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was showing his own face, fulfilling what I had always longed for before. Who were we, that 'Abdu'l-Bahá should take such trouble to meet? Then He said, " *You are very spiritual.*" He said many

things, but due to my inner anxiety at the time, they did not remain in my mind. But what I do remember is that He said, *"The chief of the guards informed us that a group of our friends have entered 'Akká, whereupon we replied, 'Yes, indeed-some from Iran, some from India and some from other places have come to visit us."* He then gave leave for all of us to retire. Memories of that night are indescribable. What could be spoken of is beyond my ability to adequately recount. It needs a tongue more eloquent and a mind more able than mine. (At this point, Jináb-i-Azízí became quite emotional and could barely speak. The corners of his eyes were moist with tears which he would calmly wipe away with his finger.)

After two or three days, 'Abdu'l-Bahá would summon the pilgrims, sometimes altogether and at other times individually, and would address them each according to his capacity and understanding. Whenever someone was called in privately, others would circle around him as he was dismissed, and would ask him to recount every detail of what took place in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. That person would describe what transpired and this would exhilarate everyone present.

One day it was my turn, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá summoned me. The moment I entered His presence, I was so nervous, I had difficulty even keeping my balance. Immediately 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, *"Bismellah (In the name of God), enter."* I obeyed and took my place on a chair, but experienced such trembling as could not be described. The trembling became such that even the chair was vibrating and making noise. 'Abdu'l-Bahá was very kind, even though I had lost my composure. He ordered tea to be brought and served me with His own hands and bade me drink. As I drank, I felt better and began to calm down as my anxiety ebbed away. He asked me about the events of my journey and my travelling companions. I had a few things to say, as there were more than a few mishaps, and I had some complaints about one of the friends, but as I was about to make mention of that, He said, *"Yes, I know, but so long as there are youth so strong and steadfast in the Cause, as you - who are as an immovable mountain - actions of people like that are not worthy of mention."*

By this single statement, many points became obvious to me. I was now confident that both apparent and hidden aspects of people were crystal clear to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. No need was there for self-disclosure from one like me. Suddenly I became conscious once again that I was in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the "Mystery of God." Then 'Abdu'l-Bahá in a loud voice addressed one of the friends known as Aqá Muḥammad-Ridá Qannád. He said, *"I have written a prayer for the martyrs of Yazd. I will chant it to you, listen as well."* He began to chant by heart. The timbre of His voice had such impact upon me emotionally, that I am incapable of explaining its effect, especially the power and

magnificence He manifested in that hour.

Aqá Mirzá Hasan Adib Taliqani, the Hand of the Cause, had a very close relationship with me. With extreme kindness, he had related to 'Abdu'l-Bahá the events and the sequence of the debate which had taken place in my house that historic night, especially of my father's temper, anger and dissatisfaction over my joining the Bahá'í religion. At times 'Abdu'l-Bahá would make mention of that episode and would remark as to its significance.

The City of 'Akká

'Akká was a city with a very foul environment. It was exceedingly filthy. Its alleys were dark and narrow. There were scarcely any trees or greenery of any kind. It's inhabitants were accustomed to these conditions, and at any rate, had no power to do anything to alleviate the situation the city was in. Since everyone who knows of 'Akká is aware to some degree of the poor condition of this city, I will leave this subject alone.

This run-down and ruinous city was under martial law. It had only one gate, which was constantly patrolled by guards. Leaving the city itself was difficult. It was hardly possible for anyone to make it out to the surrounding fields and escape the pitiful environs of the city with its looming and threatening towers. At dusk, the bugles would sound and all the hustle and bustle would grind to a halt. Everyone had to return to their houses, which were no better than holes, and remain there. Close to the house of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, a military garrison was stationed which kept close watch at the least movement of the friends. It was certainly not very easy for the devoted friends of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to cope under such restrictions.

Most of the Bahá'í pilgrims would become ill. After traversing the long distance between Tehran and 'Akká, with primitive means of travel and lodging overnight in low-grade inns and weathering adverse climates, they had to face the unhealthy conditions of 'Akká and became even more distressed when witnessing the hardships of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

There was only one Turkish doctor who carried on his practice in the back room of a pharmacy under very poor conditions. It seems that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was not very happy with him. Among those who took ill was myself. According to what my friends tell me, I was so ill that I was in a coma for twenty days. At last, one day I opened my eyes and saw 'Abdu'l-Bahá who was visiting me.

Suddenly, I wanted to get up and show my servitude and pay my respect. But I was not able to do so. He was also very gracious and prevented me from doing so. He showered me with unlimited blessings. He then spoke with each one of the patients there, and at last He returned to me and said, "You

will recover. Of this you can be sure." After recovering, I learned that 'Abdu'l-Bahá had taken the trouble to visit me on several occasions while I was ill. Upon my recovery, 'Abdu'l-Bahá advised me that in order to improve my condition, I should travel to various holy places in Palestine. He said, "*I desire myself to go there and visit but have no leave to do so.*" He then sent a letter of introduction (for me) to 'Abdu'l-Rasul, who was residing in Jerusalem, in the vicinity of the Dome of the Rock.

Journey To Jerusalem

In obedience to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's command I departed from 'Akká and headed towards Haifa. I lodged for a brief while on Mount Carmel, where only two rooms had been built. There I awaited the ship, in the company of the caretaker of the building, who was from Najaf Abad. The ship arrived and took me to Yaffa. The friends had been advised in advance of my arrival and had been expecting me since the night before. The sea was stormy, causing a two-hour delay before entering the harbour, and the friends thought I was not coming and had left. Nevertheless, I reached Yaffa at night. The town was dark. I spent the night at an inn, and went the next day to meet the friends. Their hospitality knew no bounds. They were even apologetic over the night before and the fact that I had to stay alone at the inn. They served me lunch with the food they had prepared for my supper the night before, and did not leave me alone till I left to resume my trip. I recall that a representative from the consulate came on a handsome white stallion to see me out of the tremendous respect he had for 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He showed me the utmost kindness. After spending time with the friends, and with their consent, I departed again for Jerusalem by train. The train would pass through very beautiful citrus orchards and through verdant pastures. In the train my mind was on 'Abdu'l-Bahá. I was struck with sadness over his imprisonment and all his discomforts. He was deprived of even viewing a single green pasture. In my heart I grieved and kept asking myself when that Emblem of love, sincerity and faithfulness might be freed from the clutches of bloodthirsty wolves.

It was night when I arrived at Jerusalem. With great expectations I went to visit the Persian Jewish Community, among whom were a number of my relatives who had emigrated to Palestine some time before. But, alas some pretended not to know me, others were indifferent and turned me away, even insulting me and saying, "Why did you bother to come here at all? You have turned Bahá'í, as we have been informed from Tehran. You have come to see 'Abbás Effendi! What therefore are you doing in Jerusalem?" To make a long story short, instead of kindness and hospitality, they attacked and insulted me. Especially Rabbi Elezar Ha'im, who had been

present the night of the encounter between the Jews and Bahá'ís. He was somewhat informed about the Faith and as I had mentioned before, had, at one time insulted Jináb-i-Vargá. He had in fact abused and insulted me more than anyone else. As my principal opponent there, he acted as if he owned Jerusalem and all of Palestine and that I had entered their precincts without permission of the Feudal landlord. Whenever he would catch sight of me, he would object seriously saying, "You're a Bahá'í why have you come to Jerusalem?" But I would pay him no heed. I was aware of all the machinations and ill behaviour of this type of people, which had been foretold in the Torah. I realized there, that these were no longer my kindred but that my real family and friends were the friends of God, (the Bahá'ís, My spiritual companions.

Wedding Reception In Jerusalem

One of my acquaintances held a wedding reception in Jerusalem, and had invited a host of guests. I don't know for what reason, but I was invited too. Some who were not to pleased to see me there and who did not like my company complained to the host as to why I had been invited. Protesting most vigorously was Rabbi Elezar Ha'im, whom I've referred to several times before. He was one of the most prejudiced among the Jews and was especially perseverent in his enmity toward me. He was most uncomfortable and began to whisper in protest and make an occasional sarcastic remark against me. At first I did not want to say anything to him, as I knew nothing would move his heart of stone. But he would not keep quiet. Since I was fairly well-grounded in knowledge of the Torah, I recited a few verses to make a point, and challenged him to respond. As he was unprepared to answer he changed the subject.

At length I said, "There is a verse in the Torah which says, '*The Kingdom will not depart from the Jews until the messiah comes.*' Now suppose you show me either the Messiah or the Kingdom?" When the argument had reached this pitch, he tore open his collar and became infuriated, calling me various names and insulting me. Others confronted him, saying, "What sort of behaviour is this? If you don't know the answer why do you argue, and if you do know, why don't you respond properly and let us learn something? This kind of debate and demand for proofs does not require so much ranting and raving!" The Rabbi got more upset than before, so he created an even greater disruption. This disturbed everyone present. It prompted me to leave and stopped me from socializing with them any further as long as I remained in Jerusalem.

Holy Places In Jerusalem

In Jerusalem there was a certain Bahá'í named 'Abdu'l-Rasul Nahhas, who was a confectioner. I went to see him. I had in fact left my relatives for good and turned towards new brothers. After introducing myself and going through the conventional formalities, I explained my purpose: "By the express wish of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, I should visit the various Holy Places here. The problem is I know no Arabic. Would you accompany me as a guide and translator?" He accepted openly and willingly, but soon said, "Since the (Muslim) fast is about to end soon, I'm busy making sweets for the *fitr* (festivity to end the fast of Ramadan), so why don't I finish my work and after the *fitr* we'll go wherever you like." Of course I agreed to do so. So during the next few days I would assist him in preparing all his pastries. In fact it was quite a pleasant experience. The sweets were prepared the way he wanted, and when the *fitr* was over, we went to visit various religious leaders in Jerusalem.

After that, we departed for Holy Places such as Bethlehem, and as we entered the large church there, we found some people praying. We also visited the birthplace of Jesus, especially the stable where the baby Jesus was born. In that place there was a statue figure of a donkey which, according to legend, with it's own breath would keep the new born infant warm. Following our visit and chance to observe the birthplace of His Holiness Jesus, we came back to town, and 'Abdu'l-Rasul mentioned that one of the most important and illustrious judges in the city had become a Bahá'í. "Would you care to pay him a visit?" he asked. His name is Yúsuf Effendi and he serves in the Ministry of Justice. So with great enthusiasm, we went to see him.

The judge's house-servant announced our coming. He was overjoyed to see us, and rushed to the door to receive us. After greeting him with "Alláh-u-Abhá" and my being introduced by 'Abdu'l-Rasul as one of the Bahá'í friends from Tehran, who had just come from the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the judge became even more delighted.

He was presiding over a trial involving a dispute between a husband and wife. At once he dismissed the trial, dropped the charges on both sides and said, "Out of respect for a dear friend who has come to see me, I hereby release you both to go with joyous hearts." Together we went to his home. He had an air of modesty and sense of humanity about him. He was remarkably kind and loving towards us. After tea, I asked how it came to be that he accepted the Faith. At once he stood up, placed his hand over his heart, and with consummate respect he said, "At al-Azhar University, the foremost centre of learning for the entire Muslim World, I was a pupil of our master, Jináb-i-Abu'l-Fadl, and through him, I turned towards the Holy Cause." So remarkable were the titles of respect the

judge would utter, out of veneration for Abu'l-Faḍl, as would astonish the listener. He then brought out the tablet known as the **Sura of the Temple** and we read through it together. Afterwards we all left to see several different places in town. We came to a place of particular significance to shell-carving artisans. There, they were making very delicate and beautiful objects from shells. Yúsuf Effendi bought a very handsome set of pearl-like beads and gave it to me with instructions, that, on my return to the presence of `Abdu'l-Bahá, I should beg him to accept these beads (as a gift).

The humility and modesty of this man who commanded such respect - a man of learning and high station - impressed me deeply. A just description of this man, who never failed to impress any one who met him, is beyond my capacity. Especially moving was the deference and self-effacement he had for `Abdu'l-Bahá, and likewise his immense admiration and respect for Abu'l-Faḍl. The manner by which the judge would even mention Abu'l-Faḍl's name, let alone reminiscing about him, was quite striking indeed. After a thorough visit of Bethlehem City, we bade him farewell, and made our return to Jerusalem. From Jerusalem, we journeyed to the city of Hebron to pay our respects at the Tomb of Adam, Eve, Abraham, Jacob and Joseph. We then entered a mosque where everyone was engaged in obligatory prayers. Following this we went to other places of interest, so that there was no sight unseen nor Holy Place unvisited, and each was observed with great care. Wherever we would encounter reciters of the Qur'án, we would give alms to those who made mention of God Almighty. When our pilgrimage and visitations came to an end, we returned once more to Jerusalem. The inhabitants of the city of "The friend of God" (Abraham, referring to the city of Hebron) were far from civilized. They were rough, savage, prejudiced, and dirty. Especially noticeable was a blood feud taking place between two antagonistic clans. We could hear the shooting of rifles and the cries of women and children everywhere. All this was coinciding with an outbreak of cholera, spreading epidemically in a certain direction and resulting in many deaths. As we returned to Jerusalem, we decided to next visit the old city and the Temple Site. In the sight of the Jews, the Temple Site with the Wailing Wall had an exalted station. Jewish mothers and fathers would instill in the hearts of their children from the beginning of childhood, love and admiration for this place. Thus this site is held in highest esteem by rich and poor, young and old alike. All Jews long to pay a visit to the site. In Jerusalem, across from the Temple Site of the prophet Solomon, there are two Mosques. One is known as al-Aqsa and the other, which is very great and beautiful, The Dome of the Rock. The latter is believed to have been erected by Omar, the second Caliph.

As we were looking at this Mosque, suddenly `Abdu'l-Rasul grabbed my sleeves and whispered in my ear: "We must escape." Instantly we made our escape. When we reached our hiding and

were safely out of sight, I asked the reason for our escape. He replied, "You didn't notice the group of bandits that was about to ambush us? They could tell we were foreigners and were ready to shed our blood had we stayed any longer." `Abdu'l-Rasul was right, because I had also noticed that a group of Arabs were pointing their fingers at us and were murmuring to one another. But since I did not know Arabic, I didn't realize their intentions. It was fortunate that `Abdu'l-Rasul was so observant in overhearing and figuring out what they were about to do. Lucky for us this happened after we had seen all the other Holy Places, so this incident caused us no further regret.

We had in fact visited all the other Jewish Holy Places even though the Jews themselves generally do not dare to enter these. Their justification for this was that since we are sinners and are under God's punishment (In Hebrew: *In Kalut*, dispersed and in captivity), we should not enter the Sanctuary and defile that sacred spot by our sins. This must be so until our deliverer, the Messiah, appears and our sins are forgiven. Now as to what precisely their "sin" is they don't know, but confess to it anyway. But you honoured reader, know with certainty that the sin of the Jews was their denial of Jesus, the promised one of the Torah. There are many proofs in support of this point, but where are their hearing ears and where is their sense of justice to accept this fact.

They say: "We are sinners", but fail to know what sin they have committed, and in any event sheer prejudice is a barrier even if you wish to explain it to them. They rub their faces on the back of the great stone wall known to have been raised by David and embellished later on by Solomon. They wail and implore forgiveness from God. They ask God to hasten the advent of the Messiah, to release them from sufferings and free them from this *Kalut*. Yet they are steeped in ignorance and do not know that the Messiah has manifested Himself, that their Saviour has appeared. Another reason for their not entering that sacred place was, in my opinion, deterrence by the Arabs. No doubt, were Jews to set foot in that place, they would be slain by Arab hands.

From there we went to the sight where Jesus was crucified. There is a church in that place. We asked the high priest to permit us to see the inside of the church. We said that we were willing to sit through the entire ceremony, and so he accepted. We entered the chapel, it was very dark, the altar was a large statue of Jesus upon the cross, which was most glorious and impressive. During the visit there, it seemed to me that the people in the sanctuary were very short, but when I observed more closely, I realized they were walking on their knees and bowing before the figure of Jesus. It instantly occurred to me what influence and power was in Jesus, so that after 1900 years, people with the utmost devotion, self-effacement, and humility lay their heads upon His threshold, ready to obey His every command. But where are the

eyes to see and ears to hear, and where are the persecutors and disbelievers who might at last see the error of their ways?

Having undertaken a pilgrimage to all these Holy Places, and after observing every ritual, such as lighting a candle, giving alms and kneeling down in a Holy Shrine - this done in accordance with the wish of `Abdu'l-Bahá, I left, ready to return to the presence of my beloved Master.

`Abdu'l-Bahá's Message and Instructions

Wherever possible during my sojourn in Palestine and pilgrimage to the Holy Places of the Jews and Christians, especially in Jerusalem, I would speak to the Jews about the cause of Bahá'u'lláh and whatever I had gleaned from the word of God. As I have mentioned in several places I openly taught the Faith to people high and low.

As stated previously, together with 'Abdu'l-Rasul Nahhas, we were invited to a wedding reception held by a Jewish family, who had known me before in Tehran. As we entered, I became aware that all the opponents and Rabbis I had encountered, both in Tehran as well as in Jerusalem and with whom I had discussed the Faith, were there, each and everyone. Moments after my arrival, religious subjects cropped up in conversation from every corner. At first I resolved to keep my silence. But I soon realized they were abusing my silence and acting rude. Then I let loose my tongue to convey whatever I knew from the Torah to produce proofs in support of this great Cause. Of course, none would accept. In reality, none had hearing ears, so it was necessary to bring them to silence. I said, "Do you have Faith in the Torah? Is not this Torah the very truth?" Everyone present affirmed their avowal of faith. I resumed, "Then pray, tell what is the meaning of the Holy verse which says, *'The Kingdom will never depart from the Jews nor the sceptre from between their feet, until the Messiah appears* as well as verses similar to this. O Rabbi, if your honour, you do indeed have the Kingdom, then reveal it to me. If, on the other hand, you do not, know of a truth that the Messiah has appeared." These subtle points were murmured from mouth to mouth and created a stir, which in turn created a disturbance and ill-feelings. Everyone present betrayed his own true nature. Some reacted rudely, others resorted to slander, and still others started arguments. Episodes like this had happened before and all the previous experiences were basically the same, provoking indignation and wrath among the Jews. Apparently 'Abdu'l-Rasul reported to 'Abdu'l-Bahá the gist of all experiences with Jewish Rabbis in order to proclaim to them the faith, and that the result had been verbal abuse.

One day, Azíz'u'lláh Jazzáb came from 'Akká to Jerusalem. He came straight away to meet with 'Abdu'l-Rasul and myself.

After greeting me, he gave me the blessed message that I had been summoned to return to 'Akká with him, and that I did not have permission to teach these people (the Jews) for the time being, since it was not yet the time for pursuing, that course of action. I obeyed, and made my way back to 'Akka with him.

In the Presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá at Bahjí

It was Friday when we reached 'Akká along with Azíz'u'lláh Jazzáb. 'Abdu'l-Bahá had gone to Bahjí with friends and pilgrims. In a garden adjacent to the Holy Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh, we attained His presence, as our desire to see 'Abdu'l-Bahá had drawn us to Bahjí. The friends were present, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá was giving a talk. As we attained His presence, we fell at His feet. Then 'Abdu'l-Bahá, with His invigorating intonation, stated, "*Your pilgrimage will surely be accepted, as you have visited many Holy Places - places we ourselves would like to see, yet are forbidden from doing so.*" These statements might not be the exact utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, but this is what continues to echo in my ears after 40 years. Following this, in the presence of all those gathered, He bestowed infinite blessings upon the Jewish people. He predicted that in the near future, the children of Israel would return to this land, attain independence and exercise sovereignty. The children of Israel would become renowned throughout the world. Such statements of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and His blessing upon these mean and ill-tempered people, after all the poverty and powerlessness, along with all the pride I had witnessed, was simply beyond belief. Jerusalem was in the hands of the Arabs, who were strong and prejudiced and they were just a handful of impotent, meek, timid and homeless lot of old Jewish men. O God! What a blessing this was, what a profound statement. Just how were the Jews to achieve their sovereignty and independence? As it stood now, the Arabs did not even let the Jews visit their own Holy Places. How then would the Arabs ever permit them to have their own government and self-rule?

As the mere contemplation of all these things had bewildered me and I could contain myself no longer, I kissed the ground out of respect and with utmost humility asked: "Your Honour, the people of Israel, will they be re-gathered and achieve their independence on their own, or do so after accepting the 'Bahá'í Faith?" 'Abdu'l-Bahá replied: "*These very children of Israel, these very children of Israel will do so on their own.*" Then he turned His blessed face towards me and said, "*You will see for yourselves as well.*" I wrote all this down in my note book, and in Tehran I mentioned this to some of my Jewish friends especially Aqá Zechariah and now I am witness to it. Aqá Zechariah was a rich and influential man among the Jews. He was an old friend of mine and secretly believed in the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. But he kept his faith

hidden. Even his children (known now by the surname Qatan) never found out. (One of the authors friends - David Qatan - who accepted the Faith at a later time, eventually discovered that his father was a Bahá'í. David has been the recipient of several tablets as well. But the other children remained Jewish.)

Editor's Note

The author recounted these events at the time when the state of Israel had already been formed. Iran, moreover, had extended its recognition of Israel, and every day in Tehran, articles would appear regarding the Israelis, their new government and their conflicts with the Arabs. These reminiscences brought the author much satisfaction, but would also trigger anxiety in him over the fact that the Jews were so outnumbered by the Arabs, to the extent that the Jews could be wiped out in a single moment.

It would be timely and fitting at this point to enrich this narrative by introducing a Tablet and prayer of 'Abdu'l-Bahá revealed in these days. This Tablet concerns the eventual emancipation of the Jews and their glorious destiny, under the protection of the Lord of Hosts, Bahá'u'lláh.

He is God!

O God! In the Books of the Prophets, Thou hast given good news and glad-tidings to (the people of) Israel, and you have given the promise that there would come a day when the despair of Israel would be transformed into hope, and that those in captivity and the downtrodden might at last find eternal glory. That wondrous Tribe shall, under the shadow of the Lord of Hosts, find security and settlement in the Holy Land and, from the far lands abroad, return unto Zion. Those, who were once lowly shall be cherished, and those who were formerly poor are destined to become powerful.

Those, who were forgotten shall find fame and renown and those once detested shall become the beloved of the peoples of the world. Now, praise be to God, that day of tranquillity has arrived, and the means of happiness and joy are now within reach. Soon will all of Israel become glorious, and this diaspora be transformed into regathering.

The Sun of Truth has arisen, and a ray of divine guidance has alighted upon Israel, so that they will enter the Holy Land from far-away routes in the utmost joy.

O God! Fulfil Thy promise, and bring honour upon the progeny of His Holiness Abraham. Thou art the Powerful,

the Able, and Thou art the Seer, the Hearer, the All-Wise.

-- `Abdu'l-Bahá Abbás

(unauthorized translation)

Permission Granted To Fashion A Rida (Overcoat)

The boundless blessings and kindness of the Master gave me courage enough to seek permission to fashion a garment for Him. Out of consideration for me, He also honoured my request to choose the fabric Himself. Thus one day we paid a visit to the local fabric shop. The salesman there asked for more than the going price. This took 'Abdu'l-Bahá by surprise and He replied, *"It's quite expensive. This is not a fair price. In business and trade, that which is most equitable should be practiced."* None the less, 'Abdu'l-Bahá paid what the man had originally asked. At any rate, the material was obtained. I then took His measurements after respectfully circling around Him (*taváf*). I commenced tailoring the coat. Every now and then I would go to His presence to fit the coat. Each time I would approach Him with the utmost respect, I would experience countless blessings.

In the Presence of `Abdu'l-Bahá after His release

The first day I attained the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá was during the days of His imprisonment, but some time later He was no longer subject to confinement. 'Abdu'l-Bahá at first would not set foot out of the prison-city, despite the fact that many begged Him to do so. To this He would often respond: *"We are preoccupied with a number of commitments. We remain here."* The covenant-breakers would spread rumours that freedom had been given to us but withheld from Him. 'Abdu'l-Bahá was supposedly a prisoner still and was kept confined. This was of course intolerable for those faithful to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and thus many would urge Him to exit 'Akka. Some of the friends approached me and said, "You beg Him -- insist! His consideration for you is so great that He might accept your request."

So it happened one day that I found myself fitting His rida on Him and dared to say to Him: "Your honour, if only You would allow for a party to be held in Your honour in the garden of Ridvan, the friends might attain Thy presence." He responded, *"Very well."* I immediately said, "Choose, Your honour, a date, if You will." *"Wednesday,"* was the reply.

He stressed that the friends of Beirut, Tiberias, Adasa and elsewhere be informed and invited. I said that all this would be carried out, then He called upon Aqá Ridá Qannád (the confectioner) and ordered that sweets be prepared, especially

a certain kind of baklava. He also ordered fruits, tea and *sharbat*. The very next day, 'Abdu'l-Bahá sent a message through the Innkeeper to me saying, "Do you have the resources to do this? Do not, by any means, spend all of your money." But as I had some gold currency with me and funds invested with friends, with some assurance I replied, "Please tell Him that I do have sufficient funds." He then gave permission for a similar gathering for the ladies to be held the same day. The friends were thrilled at His acceptance of this invitation as it would be the occasion where He would at last set foot outside of 'Akká. They were extremely appreciative of me and kindly helped me in arranging the event. In the garden of Ridván there are a few very ancient mulberry trees alongside a stream. These trees together create a rather large shaded area, not unlike the great tents recounted in the tales of the Prophets. (A passage in sacred tradition says of the latter days that the Lord of Hosts with His angels shall, beneath green tents, reign with justice.) On that joyous day, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the blessed Centre of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, walked to and fro beneath these great green tents of mulberry trees and gave speeches. A number of the Hands of the Cause and Afnáns and friends were present. That day was unforgettable for me especially because I was of service to Him. My point is not to boast, and for this reason I will refrain from relating more of the event, especially in regards to the special blessings vouchsafed to me by Him. Instead I will proceed to other subjects.

Pilgrimage to Bahjí, the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh in the Company of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Many times I would accompany 'Abdu'l-Bahá to visit the resting place of Bahá'u'lláh at Bahjí. In those days Bahjí was in the hands of the Covenant-breakers. At times I would ride beside 'Abdu'l-Bahá in a horse drawn carriage, but on most occasions we would simply go on foot. Along the way we would make our approach with profound humility and self-effacement, immersing ourselves in prayer and reciting sacred verses. As we would approach Bahjí, we would perform our ablutions in an adjacent garden. Prayerfully, and with feet bared, we would enter the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh while 'Abdu'l-Bahá would sprinkle rosewater on each pilgrim's hand. Following this, 'Abdu'l-Bahá would chant the Tablet of Visitation in heavenly intonations. Afterwards we would return in the same manner. The recitation of the Tablet of Visitation would create a wondrous atmosphere amidst those assembled. This atmosphere would be all the more rarefied by the selflessness of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and how this was reflected in the style of His intonation. Memorable as well was the kindness 'Abdu'l-Bahá would shower on those friends who remained steadfast in the Covenant. To truly recount those moments is beyond words, the

words simply do not exist.

Some Answered Questions

One of my most sweet and cherished memories hark back to the days when 'Abdu'l-Bahá would send the caretaker to summon me for lunch. During most of these gatherings, 'Abdu'l-Bahá would hold a vessel in His hand and would pour out water for everyone to wash their hands for lunch. At the table, He would take care to personally show hospitality to the guests, or see to it that each was served. He would also entertain those present with anecdotes so humorous that everyone would burst with laughter and were hardly able to contain themselves. The Master would often say, "*Food should be taken with happiness.*" For some time an American lady, who was also very captivated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, would sit at the table as well. Her name was Laura Clifford-Barney*. She was very dear to 'Abdu'l-Bahá and much respected by Him. She would ask various questions from 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He would answer with profound simplicity and would sometimes repeat Himself a few times (to respond more effectively). Certain men were present to record His statements. One day before she had a chance to ask her question, 'Abdu'l-Bahá remarked, "*Now you might as well ask, 'Why did God create the scorpion?'*" By chance the lady moments later put forth the very same question, and the audience smiled. 'Abdu'l-Bahá replied, "*All species are creatures of God. Were the scorpion in its own world to ask, 'Why did God create man to kill it', what would you answer?'*" The style of 'Abdu'l-Bahá was such that He would not depart from the subject so long as she was not convinced. These talks were compiled in the form of a book, known as Some Answered Questions. Now this book is in the hands of some of the friends and is treated as though its pages were sheets of gold.

A number of Jewish and Muslim religious leaders have acquired this book as well and drawn from it. I had the inestimable honour of being present at the time of the revelation of these discourses. When at times Miss Clifford-Barney* was not present at the table, 'Abdu'l-Bahá would address some other person and would shower His bounty on each one in a special way. One day, as we gathered in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, He ordered Jináb-i-Shaykh Muhammad-i-Qa'iní to chant a prayer. He thus intoned a prayer in Arabic, which delighted 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He then asked Jináb-i-Shaykh, "*Tell us of the beatings you had to endure.*" He then recounted briefly his sufferings and the persecutions he experienced in the path of God. He had just escaped one outbreak of persecution and

* This illustrious lady would later marry Monsieur Dreyfus and became known as Madame Dreyfus. She is still alive and well. At a later date I met her and her husband in Paris, and carried on correspondence with her husband.

had fled to Isfáhán. As enemies of the Faith had begun to inflict abuse on him there as well, he fled in disguise to India, and from there to the Holy land. Jináb-i-Shaykh, was always the subject of exceptional bounty and blessings from 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and most of the time he would be addressed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the course of these talks.

The Gift of Two Lire

In those days while in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, I had not yet reached thirty years of age. One day in His presence, I asked if I should travel to Europe. He encouraged this, and heartily endorsed the idea. He said: "*You, descendant of Abraham, are assisted by divine confirmations. You go. You will no doubt be successful.*" So I was confident upon my dismissal from 'Abdu'l-Bahá's presence that I should go to Europe. Therefore I wrote a letter to Tehran and asked for the balance of my capital which I had left in the hands of Hájí Mirzá 'Abdu'lláh Sahih Furúsh.

I requested that it be sent immediately. While awaiting the transfer of these funds, I was all the while deriving enrichment from the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. During this time, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was erecting a structure in the heart of Mount Carmel. Very few would know that this was to become the Shrine of the Báb. But certain enemies along with Covenant-breakers had taken advantage of the situation and had written false rumours to the Imperial Court of the Ottoman Empire that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was erecting a fortress replete with battle stations. As a consequence of these representations, the Ottoman Court sent a task force to 'Akká to investigate the matter. Prior to their arrival, 'Abdu'l-Bahá excused the pilgrims and gradually dismissed the visitors. One day, Aqá Muḥammad-Hasan whispered in my ear that I had been asked to leave as well. Suddenly I felt as though I had been struck by a thunderbolt. I stood motionless and was utterly discouraged and hopeless. Aqá Muḥammad became aware of my distress from the look at my face. So he started to comfort me and advised me that no one was really willing to leave the Holy Threshold of the Beloved. Aqá had words of comfort for those in the same situation, all of whom were in great distress. I replied, "Yes of course I'll obey and this I must but..." --- "But what?" --- "But, ... I have written to Tehran to send me my money. It hasn't arrived yet and I've already written several more letters but still no reply has come as yet." Right then and there, the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "*Do not run out of money. If you have capital, do not exhaust those funds,*" kept echoing in my ears.

Oh my God, I thought, what am I to do in this shameful predicament? I was immersed in such worries, when I realized I had not noticed Aqá Muḥammad leave. I desired so much to be able to fulfil my Master's wish, especially now that there was

the possibility of an incident. But to whom should I stretch out a hand to beg? And I had nothing to serve as collateral. From whom should I borrow? In any event, I stood paralysed, simply unable to budge.

I was searching for a kind of salvation, unaware that a saviour was near. I was still standing in the same place, plagued by these concerns, when I heard Aqá Muḥammad Hasan once more. I raised my head to see his face. This time his face was different, as he now had a winsome smile on his lips. He took my hand in his, his eyes glittering with joy, and said, "Don't be discouraged," and put two French gold lires in my hand. Two French gold lires were equal to 40 French francs at that time. I was astonished. I wanted to know the reason, from whom and how this was obtained. He himself confessed: "The blessed Master has given this. Since I saw that you were so shaken, I went straight away to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's presence and reported what you had said. Then His Excellency, out of generosity, presented these two gold Lires and said, *"Give this to that person."* God alone knows how great was the shame I felt. This whole thing came about due to my own short-sightedness and I was filled with regret and self-accusation but... His blessings to each one are so special that every man exclaims "He is my Lord."

Journey to Beirut

Close to the time of departure, the blessed Master arranged a most memorable meeting for us all, after which the friends set off for their different destinations with an utmost sense of fulfilment. I went to pay a visit to my old friend and companion Jináb-i-Yúnis Khán Afrúkhtih, who was studying medicine at the American college in Beirut. I was counting heavily on him to render me some assistance and hospitality, until what I had sent for would arrive. The two gold lires were spent to get me to Beirut. At last, penniless and dispirited, I reached the presence of my friend Dr. Yúnis Khán Afrúkhtih, and explained the whole matter to him. He became visibly disturbed and his expression changed.

Right away it became obvious to me that he had no power to help me whatsoever. I said, "My friend, I have enough money in Tehran to get me to Europe and back. I'm sure the money will be sent to me. But perhaps we could come up with a solution just in case the money is delayed." I realized he was not inclined even to advise me on this. Then I said, "What of my illness --- are you able to cure me or not?" After a considerable pause, dear Dr. Khán replied: "Right now you should be taking castor oil." But I had no money even for this medicinal oil. I did, however, own an overcoat, which served me both as a coat and as a blanket. So I decided to sell the coat. We went to the market place together and managed to sell it for 18 gurush. First we purchased some castor oil and also

some cube sugar, and went back to Dr. Khán's room. After I recovered from my illness, I wrote a harsh letter to Tehran, but still no answer came. Telegraphs were very expensive then, but as there seemed no other way, I sent a telegram. But, alas, still no answer. What should be done? I should stay alive and see the fulfilment of the divine promises as well. Besides, I had many aspirations. After much contemplation, I told Dr. Khán to please refer me to a boarding school. There I would remain until the expected funds arrived. He said, "This is really not possible, since you don't know the language, nor have you any money. They simply won't accept you." I responded, "Fine, just take me there and translate what I have to say and leave the rest to me."

Since he had no other choice, he consented, and we proceeded to the boarding school. I assured the principal that I indeed had money in Tehran, but it had failed to arrive. "If you accept me, you can be assured I'll pay you when the funds come. I beg you not to let me die here out of starvation. After all, you are humanitarians here, and I expect this kind of generosity from you. I know for myself that this is contrary to procedure, but extending a helping hand to a fellow human being more than justifies your bending the rules." I don't quite recall exactly in what manner I came across and how it was I was able to influence him, but after a long silence and prolonged contemplation, the principal raised his head and stated, "As you yourself have noted, this runs counter to our policy, but I'll accept you with full personal responsibility." The problem was solved. I moved from Dr. Yúnis Khán's residence to the school. He was freed from any further burden on my account, I was relieved and had succeeded in buying some time for myself.

At the same time, I wrote a very harsh letter to Tehran, and stated, "If you refuse to send me my money, I'll drown myself in the sea, for I have no other choice and no other way out." My entrance to school was a capital stroke of good fortune. Since I intended to go to France and knew not a single word in French, I studied French with such diligence that the school authorities were quite amazed. They could hardly believe that one with no educational background could in so short a time progress so rapidly in conversation and in other areas as well.

*Jináb Hájí Mirzá had accepted the Faith in the time of Bahá'u'lláh and had served the Faith valiantly, and was the go-between for forwarding letters to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and transmitting His tablets to the friends. At first he was known as Saqat-Furush, but in accordance with certain tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, he became known as Sahih-Furush. In business, as a result of not receiving what was due to him, he went bankrupt. But as he was very honest and trustworthy, in the sight of Bahá'ís and non-Bahá'ís alike, God's blessings were upon him.

At any rate, as a result of my threatening letters, especially the last one, my family and relatives were alarmed, and had gone to Hájí Mirzá 'Abdulláh. They put considerable pressure on him. But his business had taken a turn for the worse and he had lost his capital entirely, yet did not dare to disclose this to anyone. Since he had no other choice in the matter, he told my wife in Tehran, "Don't expect anything from me. I simply have nothing left. My hands are empty".

So they went to one of my kind old friends, known as Aqá Zachariah, (Father of Mr Qátán), who was secretly a Bahá'í. He was very rich and was able to render any kind of financial assistance. But even that friend had asked for collateral, so my wife disposed all of her personal jewellery and household valuables to him. She received 300 gold lire, and sent this sum. It took four entire months until this money came. Once I received the money, I began to pay off all my debts. The most important debt, paramount over all my other debts, was that which I owed to His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá, which I repaid in a very nice manner. I likewise satisfied my obligations with the school. As I had become conversant in French in the meantime, I said my farewells and especially thanked Dr. Yúnis Khán Afrúkhtih and all of my friends and authorities in school. I then headed for Paris, with the permission, and moreover, encouragement of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Arrival in Paris

I arrived in the great city of Paris from the dark narrow city of Tehran. In this populous and crowded metropolis, where was I to go without any guide at my disposal? What direction should I take? What bustle! What traffic! As I left the train station, for some time I stood outside, motionless and overwhelmed, as I watched the wide and crowded streets, full of speeding vehicles. The reader should have seen Paris then in order to appreciate this description. In any event 'Abdu'l-Bahá's assurance of success and promise of divine assistance was ever with me. After finding lodging and with time, I adapted to these new circumstances. I realized how fortuitous it was that I had the opportunity to learn French in Beirut, what would I have done otherwise? So dear kindred, know that there is a hidden wisdom in anything that happens. Perhaps at times the future appears uncertain to you, but have no fear nor allow yourself to be agitated. We should take hold of the rope of reliance upon God, and supplicate for divine assistance and success. I knew of course that if I failed to find work soon, I would come face to face again with poverty and uncertainty. There was no Dr. Yúnis Khán here. Schools here would likely not accept me. Tehran had added very little to my sense of confidence. So I introduced myself to a tailoring institute. I asked to be accepted as a pupil and be

enabled to work at the same time. The owner accepted me for a one-week probation without wages. As he observed my diligence and professionalism, he established wages for me. That income was enough to meet my expenses, and gave me an opportunity at the same time to master pattern-making - the most intricate and technical aspect of tailoring. As my skills in tailoring reached a high level of proficiency, I was introduced to an advanced training program in tailoring, where I earned my advanced degree in tailoring.

In the Company of Muzaffari'd-Dín Sháh

At this time Muzaffari'd-Dín Sháh, with an entourage of distinguished and prominent members of high society, arrived in Paris. When I was in Tehran, I had connections with 'Ayn al-Dawlih and certain other members of the court, and I had tailored suits for them. So in Paris I went to see them. The entourage accepted me as part of the Royal Tour. This was a boon to me from every angle. I was given some relief from the costly living expenses of Paris, and no longer had to labour so hard just to survive. I was able to concentrate more of my time on perfecting technique and advanced yet further in the craft of tailoring. At the same time, I made acquaintance with various members of the court. Coming to know these influential people on personal terms contributed greatly to my advancements in the future.

I recall one day I was taking a *Qalyan* (water pipe) to one of the ministers of the Sháh. His Majesty asked, "Who is this youth?" He was told, "He is a progressive Persian young man, very talented and quite knowledgeable. He has been a tailor in Tehran, and is now residing in Europe for the time being to study advanced tailoring. He has earned his advanced degree in tailoring quite recently."

The King was very much surprised and exclaimed, "A degree in tailoring! Does tailoring require such certification?" One of the more cosmopolitan ministers present gave a detailed overview of just how various crafts in Paris had specialized to such a degree that training in them had become quite technical, even scientific. He exaggerated on some points and succeeded in building me up to such an extent that the Sháh himself became quite cordial and helpful towards me. He decreed that I be one of those in his entourage to return to Tehran.

Consequently, expenses for travel back to Tehran were taken care of. I made use of the remaining cash thus saved to purchase equipment necessary for my trade. After preparations, I set out for Tehran as part of His Majesty's entourage. When I set foot again in Tehran, it had been two years and some months since my departure. In the spectacle of the Sháh's return, some people had spotted me among the Sháh's entourage and spread rumours about it. I soon found enormous fame. I was



A gathering in honour of a Western Baha' i Lady
(Mrs. Schoflaucher?) at Jináb-i-Azizí's home.
Jináb-i-Azizí and son Zabiollah are marked by 'X'.

not properly prepared in Tehran for the flood of customers which streamed in. Virtually all the landed gentry and high society people came and asked for my services.

The First European-Style Shop At Lalehzar Avenue

On either side of Lalehzar avenue were luxuriant gardens and mansions of ministers and the rich. There were absolutely no shops in that location. Shortly thereafter, at the entrance of Lalehzar -- near to Sepah Square I set up an attractive and spacious shop, after the fashion of European shops. It was across from 'Alá'el'dulleh's mansion. I established the business in a very efficient and orderly manner. As a result of the steady flow of clientele frequenting so conspicuous and successful a shop by the standards of Tehran at that time, 'Alá'el'dulleh became concerned. One day he summoned me, and asked me a few questions. He said, "I should get to know who is conducting business opposite my residence. I should determine his belief. Otherwise, I would not be inclined to tolerate the noise and commotion so close to home." To whatever he asked, I responded very politely, but soon I came to realize that he was not satisfied. I realized as well that certain jealous individuals had made secret accusations, to cause confusion, in order to take advantage of the situation. He asked, "What is your religion?" So I said, "Your Honour, I have the utmost belief in His Holiness Muḥammad, and in the pure Imáms. But I am not of the type of Muslims your Honour is familiar with." I don't know what struck him, but he paused to think, and started to slowly pace. There were a number of people standing in his presence like statues. After a while he raised his head and said, "You are dismissed now." He said some other things which I cannot now recall. At a later date, he summoned me once again, asked further questions and at length showed me some very precious fabric. He wished to make a *rida* out of this fabric. He had previously shown this cloth to some of the well-known tailors of the city. They each said the material was not enough for the task at hand, and each requested twice the length of that piece. He then asked me if I could tailor a suit out of that amount of material. I said: "Yes, your Honour." He was taken aback and quite astonished.

In any event, I tailored the *rida* to his exact specifications. The clothing was cut smartly, was comfortable and much to his liking. There was even a piece of material left over, which I presented to him as well. He became delighted, praised my work and expressed gratitude to me. He then turned to those in his presence, all standing with such deference, with their arms crossed over their chests, and with extraordinary rage shouted, "Others are just thieves. They have nothing in mind apart from cheating and overcharging. They all wanted more material, and demanded exorbitant commissions. But this youth, despite everything said against

him behind his back, with less fabric and more equitable commission, fashioned such a prized suit." At any rate, his confidence and regard for me increased such that not withstanding his power, respect, pride and dignity he would come in person to my shop every now and then to visit me. This remarkable treatment created quite a reputation for me. For a while all this was the talk of everyone around us, that 'Alá'el'dulleh visited Azíz'u'lláh's shop. This increasing regard shown by 'Alá'el'dulleh would of itself stir up some disgruntlement and jealousy among such of his company as his secretary, butler, personal deputy, and so on. Among them, Jináb-i-Mirzá Muḥammad Khán Muyafiq later accepted the Faith. He would in fact bother me the most because of his harsh Islamic prejudice. Every day he would contrive a fresh insinuation, even accusing 'Abdu'l-Bahá of something. This slander hurt me the most. He bothered me so much that I decided to teach him the Faith by whatever means possible, just to rid myself of such problems. Night and day I would cry to the threshold of God on his behalf. Praised be God! With the assistance of a group of friends, we succeeded in teaching Mirzá Muḥammad 'Ali Khán. He at once declared his Faith and became trustworthy, such that at last I became free. This is the ideal way to treat one's enemies and opposition in general.

Monsieur Dreyfus Meets Muzaffari'd-Dín Sháh

In Paris, I had met Monsieur Dreyfus, who was a very pure and devoted Bahá'í. We would encounter each other often and would talk at length of the Faith, especially of the persecution of Persian Bahá'ís. As he grew more aware of the plight of the Bahá'ís in Iran, he became increasingly concerned. When I told him I'd become one of the company of the Sháh en route back to Iran, he insisted rather strenuously that I devise a plan whereby he might be granted an audience with the Sháh, to intercede with him on behalf of the Persian Bahá'ís. So persistent was he that at length I succeeded in making the necessary arrangements for him to attend the presence of the Sháh.

After touching on various subjects at the outset, Mon. Dreyfus stated: "It is a pity that my brothers, under the kingship of so just and beneficent a monarch as you, should endure such persecution and torture even to the point of death." The Sháh reacted with some nervousness and asked, "Who are your brothers in Iran?" Mon. Dreyfus made mention of the Bahá'ís. Of course the Sháh already knew he was speaking of the Iranian Bahá'ís, and asked if Mon. Dreyfus was himself a Bahá'í. He affirmed that he was, and the entire encounter ranged over many other important subjects which greatly impressed the Sháh. The King had given his word to Mon. Dreyfus that, upon his return back to Iran, he would look into

the matter, and moreover, Mon. Dreyfus could be assured that the matter would be given personal consideration. As to the other subjects broached in the course of that session, it is not appropriate to recount them here. But what could be expected from so weak a personality as Muzaffari'd-Din Sháh? He was, after all, completely in the hands of those around him, who would manipulate him to suit their own ends, so that he became the instrument for their personal machinations, ill-intentioned as they were. He certainly had no power to keep his word.

Mother's Death

Following my arrival in Tehran and setting up business, I did not hesitate for a moment to serve the Cause of God, even though my efforts in the material realm had intensified. Apart from my family, parents, brother and other relatives, there were a number of other people who looked to me for assistance. I would not deny them that in order not to fall short of my duty. Parallel to the advances I made materially, I was conscious of spiritual concerns. I would serve the Faith with heart and soul. In the best way possible, I would execute decisions of the Local Spiritual Assembly. I recall once how I arrived at a gathering a bit late. Jináb-i-Adíb Iláhi was curious to know why. I replied that I had been quite busy, and then apologized. He stated, "Affairs should be conducted in such a way that one is in control of one's affairs, not vice versa." This was quite good advice. Though my duties were numerous, I was in control, though not without difficulty. In my home, which was quite large back then, sizeable gatherings would take place and many people would attend. Since my house was suitable for such occasions, my mother would serve the friends with whole-hearted hospitality. Most of the responsibilities of feasts were on her shoulders. She would serve willingly and would make sure my father would remain undisturbed. She did this, though outwardly she did not profess belief in Bahá'u'lláh.

In those days, due to lack of security and the ever-present threat of harassment from the non-Bahá'ís and street people, the friends would stay overnight at those places where meetings were held, especially those who had come from some distance. It's quite obvious that making preparations for dinner, not to mention bed and breakfast, in those situations was no easy task. The more overnighters there were the truer this was, but my elderly and feeble mother would, with utmost willingness and from the bottom of her heart, accept those chores in order to take care of the guests.

It also happened that whenever disturbances would occur in populous areas, Bahá'í friends would stand ready to render assistance to others facing danger, take them to their homes and give them sanctuary. For instance, there was an attack

against the Bahá'ís in the district where Nayyer and Síná lived, with the intent to kill these two holy souls. The friends were alerted instantly and a group of youthful, robust, and brave Bahá'í friends were sent over to protect them and their property. I was among such guards to assist in predicaments like this. In one instance, a group of soldiers who were Bahá'ís drew their swords and charged their attackers, forcing the ruffians to flee. The fear these few soldiers commanded was enough to ensure peace and order. After some time, a Tablet was revealed in their honour.

To resume my mother's case who was in charge of hospitality for the Bahá'í gatherings in my house, she suddenly took ill and was confined to bed. I tried my best and spared no efforts to restore her to health. Many sleepless nights I stayed by her bedside. A few times I arranged for medical consultations by physicians. At length one night I fell asleep as mother seemed better and relatives had insisted that I get some rest. While I was asleep, my mother had suddenly raised herself up and called out for me. I was not told (by those around her) that she had closed her eyes forever to the world and all its trappings, to partake of the blessings of her Lord. When I awoke, I learned that my mother had ascended to the Abhá Kingdom. I was overcome with grief and tears came to my eyes. For a long time the thought of her would not leave my mind and I had no peace until I was in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's presence. His Holiness was enquiring about various matters to which I would reply, until the subject of my mother came up. Hidden emotions, the burning embers of which the passage of time had covered with ashes were inflamed once again and tears of sadness welled up from my eyes. With utmost humility, I sought forgiveness on my mothers behalf. The Master accepted this request, took up a pen and revealed a Tablet as follows:

Jináb-i-Aqá Mirzá Azíz'u'lláh Khán Bahá'i, upon him be the Glory of God.

He is God!

O Thou Kind Lord! Render Thy dear servant Aziz precious, endow him with unlimited knowledge and discernment. Make him an overflowing chalice of the wine of love. Impart to him vigour. In business practices, make him prosperous. Immerse the mother of this servant of God in the ocean of forgiveness, and crown him with the Crown of Glory (Táj-i-Vahháj).

-`Abdu'l-Bahá

(Unauthorized translation)

Monsieur Dreyfus Comes to Tehran

During the time of the Constitutional Revolution when Tehran was under martial law, Mon. Dreyfus came to Tehran accompanied by Miss Barney and Madame Lashné. Soldiers were protecting the city, yet it was still far from calm and tranquil. Aggravating the entire situation and onslaught of the revolution were the unsanitary conditions of the city. I was sure that they would suffer a great deal in a town full of dust which afforded not even the most primitive means of comfort and hospitality compared to what I had been exposed to in Europe. At that time there were no hotels or restaurants in Tehran. Only on 'Alá'el'dulleh Street (now called Firdowsi Avenue) there was a tailor shop above which there were a few dirty and unkempt rooms which a Romanian entrepreneur dared call a "Hotel".

Mon. Dreyfus and his companions had taken up residence there. I went to visit them and see to their well-being. To my surprise I discovered that not only were they content, but they were quite excited to meet the Persian Bahá'í friends. They were not concerned with their accommodations at all. I accepted to serve as their guide and most of the time I would look after them and arrange for their entertainment. I did this, since they had come from the bridal city of the world to the dusty dangerous city of Tehran. Jalál'u'dulleh, son of Zillu'Sultán, was one of the rich and influential men of Tehran. He was on friendly terms with me and was very kind to me. He had a very lovely and pleasant garden in suburban Tehran. This district was known as Jaláliyih*. (* Jaláliyih was located where Tehran university now stands.) One day I told him that I had European guests and asked whether a party might be arranged for them in Jaláliyih. Right away he said yes. So I threw a very fancy reception in the Jaláliyih Garden. Several Hands of the Cause and a large number of friends came to meet Mon. Dreyfus, Miss Barney and Madame Lashné. A speech was made about the services these individuals had rendered the Faith. It was a great and memorable feast which gave our Western friends untold joy and happiness especially since beforehand I had the garden trimmed and the water in the pond changed. The atmosphere and charm of the garden was enhanced and the ripples in the pond beckoned Mon. Dreyfus to wade in that crystal clear water. Later on, Mon. Dreyfus himself told me that he enjoyed that occasion tremendously and wrote about it in his memoirs. He likewise wrote of the love and friendship of the Persian friends. After numerous meetings with the friends and having gained sufficient information, Mon. Dreyfus was ready to return. I undertook to make the agreements and we agreed to meet once again in Europe. Jináb-i-Ḥájí 'Abu'l-Hasan-i Ardakání, known as Ḥájí Amín - very active in the Faith in the Holy land-made mention of the services rendered by the Jewish Bahá'í friends. In response, a Tablet in my honour was revealed and received

through Hají Amín. I now cite it to grace this narrative and to ornament these pages:

*In care of Jináb-i-Amín, Tehran.
To Aqá Mirzá Azíz'u'lláh Khan, the Tailor.
Upon him be the Glory of God.*

He is God!

O Spiritual Friend! Signs of divine triumph, in this blessed year, are radiating from all horizons, even as the rays of dawn beam from the recesses of darkness. The perspicuous verses are chanted in village and city alike, whole streams of heavenly blessing course throughout cultures the world over.

From every land an anthem is raised, with melody and refrain. And these are the bestowals of God. Give ear to the roar of "Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá", ascending to the Concourse on High, and to the call of "Yá Alí'u'l-Alá," imparting joy and rapture to the ears of (those in) the Kingdom.

With ardent fervour, render thanks unto God that the desire of the pure in heart, and the utmost wish of luminous souls, is now visible and manifest through the bounty and grace of His Holiness (Bahá'u'lláh), the focus of devotion.

The Beauty of spiritual desire in utmost enchantment has charmed the gathering and captivated the (Bahá'í) friends. Jináb-i-Amín has the utmost praise for the spiritual meetings of the friends of Jewish heritage, who in truth have taken great steps and made every effort toward the advancement of the Cause of God.

At this point, I wish very much to bring each and all to mind, and write a word for each of those friends who are in my heart. Alas, time does not permit mention of each, one by one, so they will be given recognition together. And know that Jináb-i-Amín has made mention of each individual.

Praise be to God, that in this great Dispensation, the glances of divine favour have graced Israel, that the promises of the Prophets of old might be fulfilled, in the realm of visible existence.

O Israeli friends! His Holiness Kalím (Moses), from the precincts of the sacred Kingdom, is, at this very moment, voicing praises for your attraction and enkindlement (devotion). The Concourse in the realm above

are lauding you and recounting your deeds. At every moment, the denizens of the spiritual realm raise aloud the call: "Blessed are ye!"

It is therefore my earnest wish that the Israeli Bahá'í friends will continue to render worthy service to the Lord of the Friend (Abraham), and thereby augment the joy and happiness of His Holiness Abraham, the Friend of God, in the lofty retreats of the Kingdom.

Upon you all rest the Glory of the All-Glorious!

- 'Abdu'l-Bahá

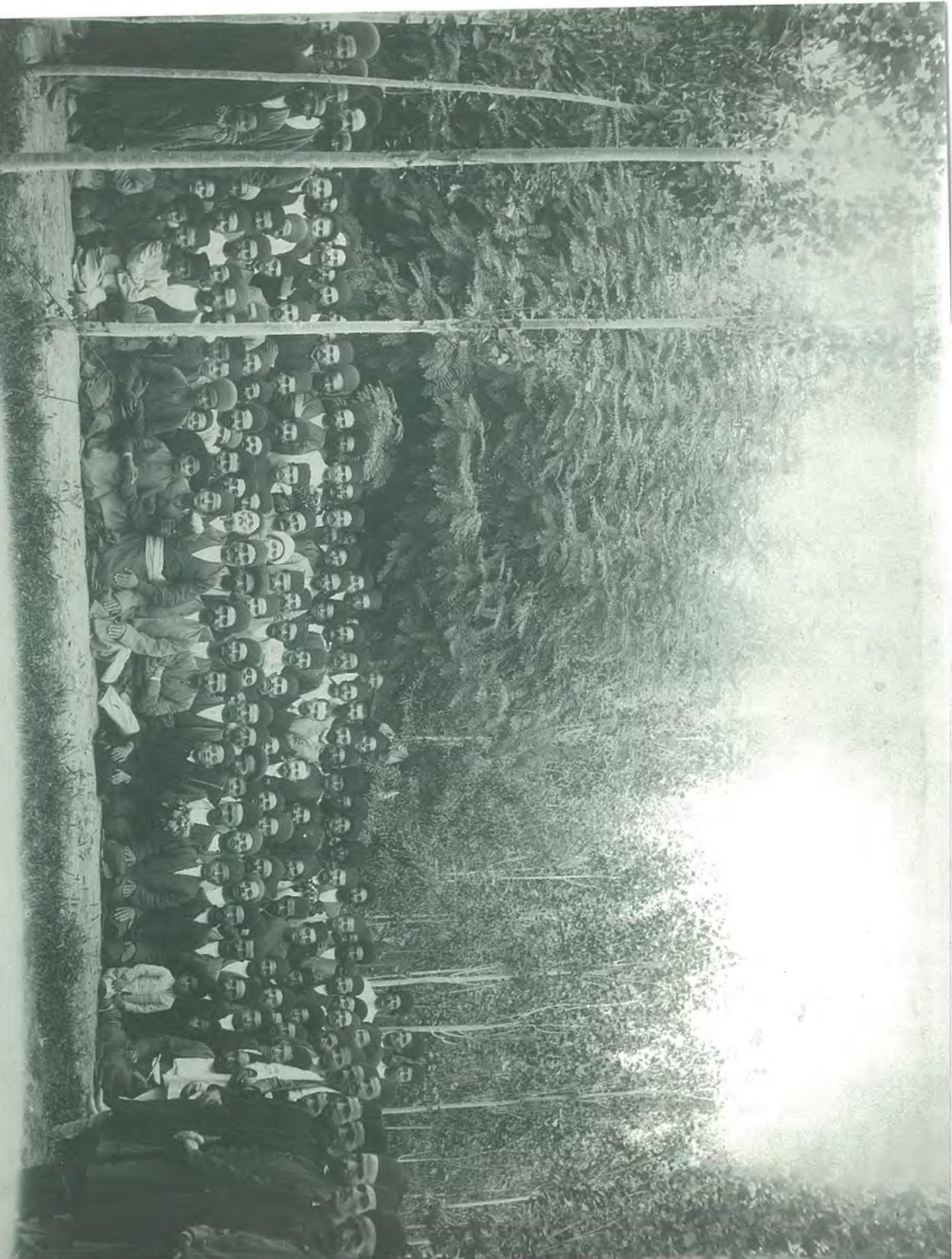
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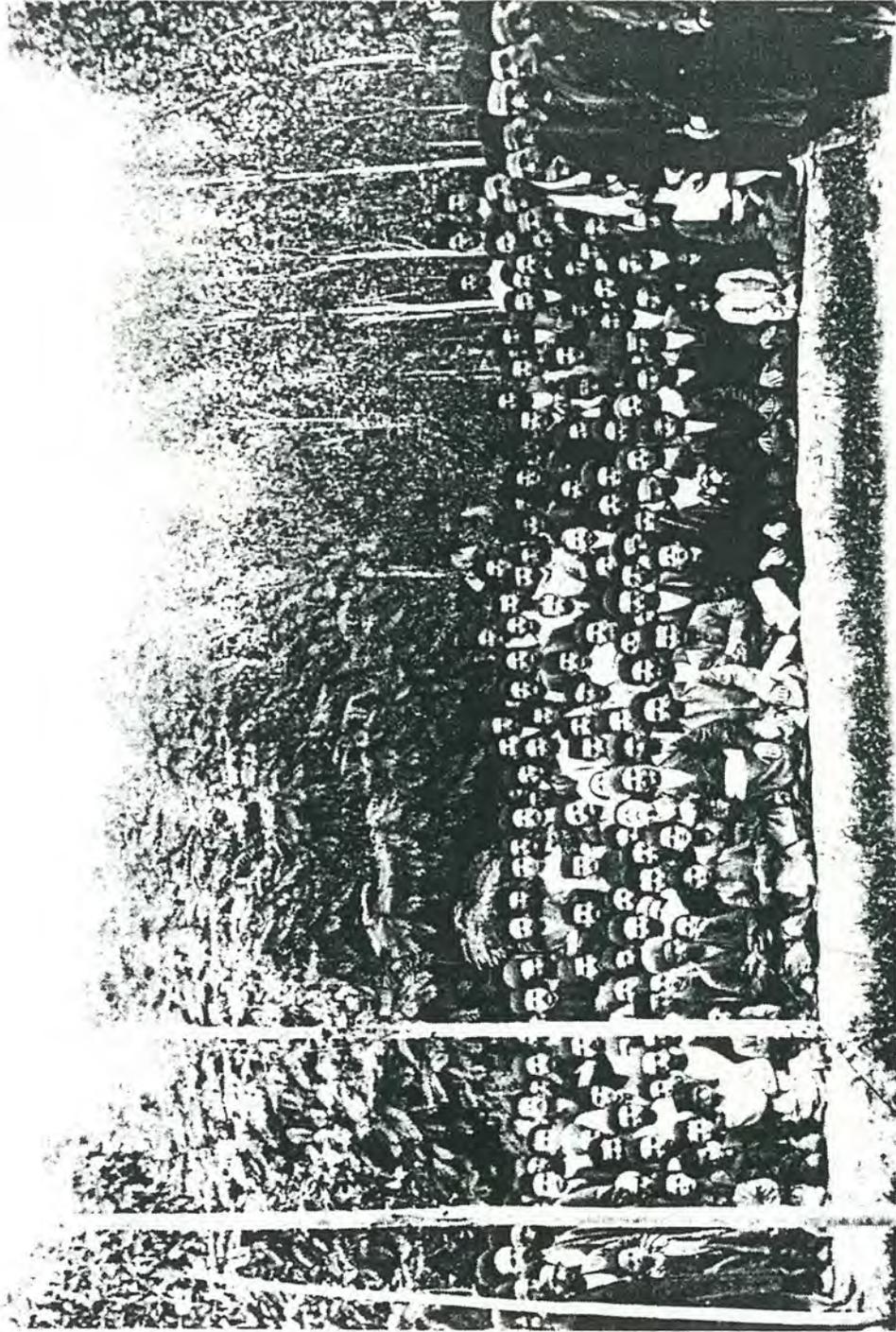
Second Journey to Europe and Palestine, and Attaining the Presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá Again

A little over two years had elapsed since my first trip to Europe. After receiving a Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá' for the second time, I made my departure for Europe on business, and set out as well for pilgrimage to the Holy Land. I carried with me a very worthy gift for my western friend, Mon. Dreyfus. When I presented it to him, he was very much surprised and asked for what reason? I replied "Don't you know we are Persians? It is customary among Persians to offer gifts and this is acceptable by Bahá'u'lláh. Doing this for a friend like you is not too much at all." So he accepted the gift, and this strengthened the bond and tie of friendship between us. Consequently, we were corresponding all the time and were constantly in touch. Whenever he intended to travel he would let me know and I would inform him likewise. In short, whenever I would go to Europe, I would make certain to meet him everytime. I would also attend his firesides. His style of presentation was like this: he would select a theme from the Blessed Beauty or from 'Abdu'l-Bahá, he would read the quotation (in the original) then would translate. Following this, he would elaborate on the significance of the text until his audience understood it thoroughly, and benefited from it. Mon. Dreyfus was always concerned over 'Abdu'l-Bahá's health, and would learn of his well-being through various means. Since he knew full well of my regard for 'Abdu'l-Bahá, he would share whatever news he obtained with me as well. Keeping to my purpose in writing this book - to give an account of days spent in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's presence - I shall get to the main point, and describe later the events which took place in Paris during my second trip to Europe.

Having taken care of personal affairs in Paris and London, I headed towards Southern France. In Marseilles, I boarded a ship to Alexandria and from there to Haifa, until at last I reached the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. After the initial meetings with 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in which I reaffirmed my

faithfulness to the Centre of the Divine Covenant, I settled down in an Inn known as Khán-i-'Avámíd, which served as the residence for most of the pilgrims as well as local friends. After several days, I began to notice that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was inwardly sad. He was thinking deeply -- would talk less, and between addresses would pause for an unusually long time. It was clear that He was immersed in an ocean of thought. Moreover, signs of grief were so apparent in His pure face, that the friends became heartbroken. For His joy brought upliftment and sparked warmth in the hearts of those near to Him, while his sadness would render His companions disconsolate. No one among the friends, pilgrims or locals, knew the cause. One day, Jináb-i-Mishkín Qalam, with agitation and profound sadness told the circle of friends and pilgrims: "I have made up my mind that, either I will be expelled from His presence this very day and be debarred forever from gazing upon His loving face, or I will take Him out of this tremendous grief and sadness." The friends then asked Him, "What do you contemplate doing?" He said, "I know what to do." All the friends of course had heard of Mishkín Qalam, for specimens of his calligraphy had circulated throughout the East and the West of the Bahá'í world, and they had gained international fame. No Bahá'í home is there in the East which is not ornamented by a piece of his work, or at least a print of it, and nearly the same is true in the West. In all the Bahá'í Houses of Worship, artifacts of his calligraphy on display continue to impress pilgrims and visitors alike. (The present writer himself witnessed in one of the renowned museums in the capital of Switzerland a piece of his work on display in 1950. It was a rather large piece, approximately 1 1/4 x 1 metre. The calligraphy was a form of The Greatest Name, and was hung in the first room after the entrance itself, and would draw the attention of practically any visitor.) Mishkín Qalam had very delicate features. His face was not very attractive. He was nearly beardless, having only a few threads on his chin. But he was quite well-spoken and humorous in speech, and he would pull faces and look extremely funny. The most stoic of listeners had no choice but to break out in laughter. Friends and pilgrims would love him, forever relishing his company. Every now and then the friends would request a sample of his masterful calligraphy, and this he would never deny anyone. Right there on the spot he would create a piece and would present it to the one who asked for it. He created a few pieces of his art for me, both large and small. The last piece he did for me was when he was 88 years old. This was the invocation, "Yá Bahá'ul-Abhá," written in small characters, signed with a colophon as to the date and his age at that time. The calligraphy in this piece is no different from his previous works and is as striking and as breathtaking as his earlier pieces! (These works of art were in the possession of the martyr Jalál Azízí. They were subsequently taken out of Iran and are with his relatives who





Mon. Dreyfus at a Baha'i gathering in Jaláliyeh Garden.

Mon. Dreyfus at a Baha'i gathering in Jaláliyeh Garden.



next to Mon. Dreyfus.

Mon. Dreyfus at a Bahá'í gathering in Jaláliyeh Garden
Jináb-i-Azízí is seated 2nd row, 3rd from the left,
next to Mon. Dreyfus.

survived him, in Vancouver) However it is not our purpose to describe the life story of Mishkín-Qalám but at this juncture I had decided to make mention of one of his actions in the presence of `Abdu'l-Bahá.

Mishkín Qalam was always a source of joy to `Abdu'l-Bahá

Though he would always bring gladness to 'Abdu'l-Bahá this time was different. This time he was determined either to succeed in lifting 'Abdu'l-Bahá out of His depression, sorrow and deep thoughts, or be apart from Him forever. The friends and pilgrims together were waiting to see His blessed person. After His arrival and the exchange of greetings with the friends, Jináb-i-Mishkín-Qalam very soberly -- and without advance permission -- stepped forward and with a very earnest expression on his face, started to talk. But what he was

saying would make no sense. His words were nonsense -- some Persian, some Arabic. His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá was listening intently to see what he was trying to say, and was unaware that something was going on. Mishkín-Qalam was talking very seriously and in between sentences would tell a joke and make funny faces. Suddenly, losing his composure, 'Abdu'l-Bahá started to laugh out loud. As a result of this display of laughter and happiness, everyone present was affected as well. Still, Mishkín-Qalam was carrying out his plot a little further to the point where everybody lost control and broke out in riotous laughter, until at last 'Abdu'l-Bahá restored the gathering to silence. When silence at last prevailed, Mishkín-Qalam stated very soberly, "Yes indeed, why shouldn't you laugh and make fun of me? You ('Abdu'l-Bahá) have created this crooked body and funny face in order to laugh at it." Now as a result of this comic scene, happiness once more was restored. 'Abdu'l-Bahá praised him and was most kind to him. For the depression of 'Abdu'l-Bahá was removed, but the cause of his depression remained a mystery and a secret to all the friends.

Smoking Cigarettes and the Water Pipe

As previously mentioned, the friends residing in 'Akká were living in a Caravansarai, known as Khán-i-'Avámíd. On the second floor was a long wrap-around balcony to which all rooms would open, overlooking the courtyard to the caravansarai. Each room had another door, which would open up to a small porch. His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá would once in a while come to visit the friends there, to inquire after their well-being. Usually He would return after saying a few things to all the friends.

One day we were sitting in the meeting room. Some were

smoking water pipes and would talk about various things. There were a few knocks on the door. The door was opened right away and 'Abdu'l-Bahá entered the room to visit the friends. The room was full of smoke. The Master then walked quietly to the other door, opened it all the way, and stepped out onto the balcony. There He stayed for more than a few minutes. He was gazing at the distant horizon. The door behind Him was still open. Then it dawned on everyone that the door was ajar to clear out the stale air in the room. When 'Abdu'l-Bahá had first entered the room, everyone stood up and removed the water pipes to a corner of the room. And still, everyone was standing, waiting for Him to re-enter the room. After 'Abdu'l-Bahá returned to that place, He made no mention of the foul air there. His greetings to the friends were brief, and He left earlier than was usual. This short visit and lengthy stay on the balcony outside caused the friends to feel shame. Everyone knew that the smoke from the hookahs and the impure air in the room deprived them of the good-pleasure of His company, and from being uplifted by His talks. Everyone there expressed regret. Following this incident, I went on pilgrimage many more times, but never again saw either Bahá'ís resident there or pilgrims smoking cigarettes or puffing hookahs. (The author of this memoir believes that, until that incident, the Tablet of Purity had not yet been revealed, and that the circumstances of this encounter might well have led up to the occasion of that momentous and valuable Tablet being revealed for the peoples of the world. Certainly, had the friends seen that Tablet beforehand, it would not have been possible for them to have indulged in smoking, or in the practice of any action which was not satisfactory to their dear Master. Since the purpose of this narrative is to enlighten the honourable reader, I shall thus ornament this section with the text of the Tablet of Purity:)

[English translation is taken from *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.. pp 146-150 E*]

O Friends of the Pure and Omnipotent God! To be pure and holy in all things is an attribute of the consecrated soul and a necessary characteristic of the unenslaved mind. The best of perfections is immaculacy and the freeing of oneself from every defect. Once the individual is, in every respect, cleansed and purified, then will he become a focal centre reflecting the Manifest Light.

First in a human being's way of life must be purity, then freshness, cleanliness, and independence of spirit. First must the stream bed be cleansed, then may the sweet river waters be led into it. Chaste eyes enjoy the beatific vision of the Lord and know what this encounter meaneth; a pure sense inhalet the fragrances

that blow from the rose gardens of His grace; a burnished heart will mirror forth the comely face of truth.

This is why, in Holy Scriptures, the counsels of heaven are likened to water, even as the Qur'án saith: "And pure water send We down from Heaven," (Qur'án 25:50) and the Gospel: "Except a man be baptized of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." (John 3:5). Thus is it clear that the Teachings which come from God are heavenly outpourings of grace; they are rain-showers of divine mercy, and they cleanse the human heart.

My meaning is this, that in every aspect of life, purity and holiness, cleanliness and refinement, exalt the human condition and further the development of man's inner reality. Even in the physical realm, cleanliness will conduce to spirituality, as the Holy Writings clearly state. And although bodily cleanliness is a physical thing, it hath, nevertheless, a powerful influence on the life of the spirit. It is even as a voice wondrously sweet, or a melody played: although sounds are but vibrations in the air which affect the ear's auditory nerve, and these vibrations are but chance phenomena carried along through the air, even so, see how they move the heart. A wondrous melody is wings for the spirit, and maketh the soul to tremble for joy. The purport is that physical cleanliness doth also exert its effect upon the human soul.

Observe how pleasing is cleanliness in the sight of God, and how specifically it is emphasized in the Holy Books of the Prophets; for the Scriptures forbid the eating or the use of any unclean thing. Some of the prohibitions were absolute, and binding upon all, and whoso transgressed the given law was abhorred of God and anathematized by the believers. Such, for example, were things categorically forbidden, the perpetration of which was accounted a most grievous sin, among them actions so loathsome that it is shameful even to speak their name.

But there are other forbidden things which do not cause immediate harm, and the injurious effects of which are only gradually produced: such acts are also repugnant to the Lord, and blameworthy in His sight, and repellent. The absolute unlawfulness of these, however, hath not been expressly set forth in the Text, but their avoidance is necessary to purity, cleanliness, the preservation of health, and freedom from addition.

Among the latter is smoking tobacco, which is dirty, smelly, offensive -- an evil habbit, and one the

harmfulness of which gradually becometh apparent to all. Every qualified physicial hath ruled -- and this hath also been proven by tests -- that one of the components of tobacco is a deadly poison, and that the smoker is vulnerable to many and various diseases. This is why smoking hath been plainly set forth as repugnant from the standpoint of hygiene.

The Báb, at the outset of His mission, explicitly prohibited tobacco, and the friends one and all abandoned its use. But since those were times when dissimulation was permitted, and every individual who abstained from smoking was exposed to harassment, abuse and even death -- he friends, in order not to advertise their beliefs, would smoke. Later on, the Book of Aqdas was revealed, and since smoking tobacco was not specifically forbidden there, the believers did not give it up. The Blessed Beauty, however, always expressed repugnance for it, and although, in the early days, there were reasons why He would smoke a little tobacco, in time He completely renounced it, and those sanctified souls who followed Him in all things also abandoned its use.

My meaning is that in the sight of God, smoking tobacco is deprecated, abhorrent, filthy in the extreme; and, albeit by degrees, highly injurious to health. It is also a waste of money and time, and maketh the user a prey to a noxious addiction. To those who stand firm in the Covenant, this habit is therefore censured both by reason and experience, and renouncing it will bring relief and peace of mind to all men. Furthermore, this will make it possible to have a fresh mouth and unstained fingers, and hair that is free of a foul and repellent smell. On receipt of this missive, the friends will surely, by whatever means and even over a period of time, forsake this pernicious habit. Such is my hope.

As to opium, it is foul and accursed. God protect us from the punishment He inflicteth on the user. According to the explicit Text of the Most Holy Book, it is forbidden, and its use is utterly condemned. Reason showeth that smoking opium is a kind of insanity, and experience attesteth that the user is completely cut off from the human kingdom. May God protect all against the perpetration of an act so hideous as this, an act which layeth in ruins the very foundation of what it is to be human, and which causeth the user to be dispossessed for ever and ever. For opium fasteneth on the soul, so that the user's conscience dieth, his mind is blotted away, his perceptions are eroded. It turneth the living into the dead. It quencheth the natural heat. No greater harm can be conceived than that which opium inflicteth.

Fortunate are they who never even speak the name of it; then think how wretched is the user.

O ye lovers of God! in this, the cycle of Almighty God, violence and force, constraint and oppression, are one and all condemned. It is, however, mandatory that the user of opium be prevented by any means whatsoever, that perchance the human race may be delivered from this most powerful of plagues. And otherwise, woe and misery to whoso falleth short of his duty to his Lord. (Qur'án 39:57)

O Divine Providence! Bestow Thou in all things purity and cleanliness upon the people of Bahá. Grant that they be freed from all defilement, and released from all addictions. Save them from committing any repugnant act, unbind them from the chains of every evil habit, that they may live pure and free, wholesome and cleanly, worthy to serve at Thy Sacred Threshold and fit to be related to their Lord. Deliver them from intoxicating drinks and tobacco, save them, rescue them, from this opium that bringeth on madness, suffer them to enjoy the sweet savours of holiness, that they may drink deep of the mystic cup of heavenly love and know the rapture of being drawn ever closer unto the Realm of the All-Glorious. For it is even as Thou hast said: "All that thou hast in thy cellar will not appease the thirst of my love -- bring me, O cup-bearer, of the wine of the spirit a cup full as the sea?"

O ye, God's loved ones! Experience hath shown how greatly the renouncing of smoking, of intoxicating drink, and of opium, conduceth to health and vigour, to the expansion and keenness of the mind and to bodily strength. There is today a people (The Sikhs) who strictly avoid tobacco, intoxicating liquor and opium. This people is far and away superior to the others, for strength and physical courage, for health, beauty and comeliness. A single one of their men can stand up to ten men of another tribe. This hath proved true of the entire people: that is, member for member, each individual of this community is in every respect superior to the individuals of other communities.

Make ye then a mighty effort, that the purity and sanctity which, above all else, are cherished by Abdu'l-Bahá, shall distinguish the people of Bahá; that in every kind of excellence the people of God shall surpass all other human beings; that both outwardly and inwardly they shall prove superior to the rest; that for purity, immaculacy, refinement, and the preservation of health, they shall be leaders in the vanguard of those who know.

And that by their freedom from enslavement, their knowledge, their self-control, they shall be first among the pure, the free and the wise.

Third visit to the Presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

After completing my business trip in Europe, I set out to make my visit to the beloved Master in Palestine by way of southern France. When I arrived in Haifa, I approached Seyyid Muḥammad Taqíy-i-Manshádí and requested permission to attain the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. At that time he was in charge of all correspondence and contacts. As permission was given, I at once left for 'Akká and attained the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. I found myself overwhelmed and threw myself at His feet. He showed me so much kindness and love, asked about my trip and my wife and children. Each day He would demonstrate His compassion in a special way, and would discourse on subjects with such subtlety as the tongue cannot recount. In those days, Jináb-i-Aqá Mírzá Asad'u'lláh Najaf Abádi and Mírzá Aqá Sahhaf were there for sometime as well. One day Jináb-i-Mírzá Asad'u'lláh, known as Ḥájí Asad'u'lláh Zayni grabbed hold of the cloak of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and said, "Your Honour, I beg my wish to be fulfilled." The Master stopped and quietly looked into Ḥájí Asad'u'lláh's face. Ḥájí Asad'u'lláh said, "Your Honour, I pray you make me knowledgeable, or make me rich -- otherwise, kill me." With a smile, 'Abdu'l-Bahá responded, *"Should you desire to become a man of learning, go and study; to become rich, work diligently; and rest assured that death will come in its own good time."* These were not the exact words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, but what in effect He meant. Of course, Ḥájí Asad'u'lláh chose the second option, and as a result of perseverance and hard work went later on to become quite wealthy, never forgetting the Cause and all the while giving very generously to it. In many instances, I was myself witness to these kinds of supplications at the sacred threshold. The Master would reply with utmost patience and during His talks would state again and again, *"Unreasonable requests should not be sought. The blessings of the Blessed Beauty should be according to His own will. His purpose in bearing all manner of hardship was not for material concerns."* And also other points similar to this would be made by him. Nevertheless, most of the friends would still present irrelevant requests.

One day the Master summoned me and ordered me to take two men (Mírzá Asad'u'lláh Zayni and Mírzá Aqá Sahhaf) with me back to Tehran. I instantly accepted, went back to these friends, communicated the message and said, "By order of the Master, I have been given the mission of taking you back to Tehran." They said, "But, we don't have the money." I replied, "I don't care whether you have the money or not. I have my order to take you to Tehran and I am ready to do so. I know my

duty." But in my heart I was unhappy, since the length of my pilgrimage this time was of such short duration, and I would be denied attainment of that bountiful threshold so soon. When the two friends were ready for the journey back, permission was once more granted to attain His presence, to which we were summoned for His farewell and blessings. But one of the friends again pleaded for something and this upset the Master, who said in exasperation, "*O Shaykh, excuse us.*" and then said, "*God be with you,*" and thus left the room.

This incident upset me terribly, disturbed as I was over this cause of annoyance to the Master. At that time, Shoghi Effendi was but a child, yet bright and advanced for his age, and infinitely loved by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. To him I then turned, since in my mind I knew he was different from other members of the Holy Family. His behaviour was so special that it was incomparable with that of others. Through the child, I sent a message to the Master's presence to this effect, "Your Excellency, to dismiss us like this -- in such a state, we cannot even make it to the ship, let alone Tehran. What indeed is the short coming of these believers? After all, had I been informed beforehand of their plea I would have prevented them (from asking)."

Shoghi Effendi had related this exact message to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Scarcely a few moments had passed when 'Abdu'l-Bahá entered the room again and presented me with a handkerchief full of crystal sugar (*nabát*) and displayed great affection, embraced each of us and again reiterated, "*Take them to Tehran.*" I obeyed, and after expressing deference to Him, left Haifa and embarked for Istanbul.

I recommended that, to save on expenses, we cook our own meals, that we share in the preparation, eating and clean-up, which of course they accepted. In Istanbul, I received a telegram, and as a result had to go to Vienna. So I purchased tickets for the friends to Badkubih, and sent them off. I asked them to wait for me in Badkubih so we could return to Tehran together. Thus they left for Badkubih and I for Vienna. After finishing my business in Vienna, I set out for Badkubih, found the friends, and was-overjoyed to see them again. We were about to leave for Tehran, when Mírzá Aqá Sahhaf said he wished to go to 'Ishqábád. Despite my objections that 'Abdu'l-Bahá had ordered us to go to Tehran, I failed to persuade him otherwise. So I obtained for him a ticket to 'Ishqábád, and gave him the means to meet his expenses for the trip, and after saying farewell, sent him off to 'Ishqábád. So Hájí Asad'u'lláh and I, after a few days of more visits with the friends in Badkubih, left by ship for Anzalí. Till now the journey had gone smoothly and in good spirits, but in Rasht the carriage we took to Tehran had far too little room. We tried our best to make room for two seats, but this was not possible. So the driver, seeing how we insisted on leaving, accepted that one of us should ride next to him. Since Hájí Asad'u'lláh at that time was a youthful and sturdily-built

labourer, the driver suggested he sit by him. He suddenly got mad and, like a volcano, practically erupted and retorted, "Why should I sit there?" He demanded that I should go and sit there myself. I chuckled over this unabashed outburst and the surprising intensity of it all and said, "My friend, it wasn't me who told you to go and sit there. The carriage driver said so because he found you young and stronger but, by all means, I am more than ready to give you my seat. I'll sit by the driver myself." So, with this sort of conciliatory talk he calmed down and realized how clear cut the whole situation was. In fact all along the way, by ship and by train, during our travels he always had the same accomodation as I had. He finally accepted the reasoning behind all this and offered to take the seat by the driver, but I insisted that along the way we every so often trade seats. I also gave him my *aba* (overcoat) so he could have a warmer and softer seat. So we thus set out for Tehran in good spirits. In Tehran he was my guest for a few days until I introduced him to Baqiroff to work for him on his properties, and when he at last departed, he was quite happy about everything.

I should also mention that Hájí Asad'u'lláh did take to heart the wise admonition of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and with much diligence and perseverance became quite wealthy and owned lots of property. He was the one who tugged at 'Abdu'l-Bahá's cloak and sought wisdom, fortune, or martyrdom. The Master had replied, "Should you desire to become a man of learning, go and study; to become rich, work diligently; and rest assured that death will come in its own good time."

This individual was kind and good natured and until his last breath remained steadfast in his convictions. Frequently he would pay me visits and would bring with him various souvenirs from his estates. He passed away at the age of 65 to partake of heavenly blessings as he ascended to the Abhá Kingdom.

He had a brother named Nasr'u'lláh and had named me as his guardian. Since the Hájí had no children, he willed some of his fortune to Nasr'u'lláh and a part to his wife, but most of his wealth he gave over to the Cause.*

The Fourth Visit to 'Abdu'l-Bahá

My brother, Aqá Murtida Khán, wished very much to go on pilgrimage, and to meet 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He would endlessly express his wish for this consummate blessing. So, through

*The present author had met Hájí Asad'u'lláh in his childhood. He was a heavy set man with a sunburned face, and every time he would come to pay my father a visit, he would bring with him a chick rooster as a gift. For this reason I loved him very much and became quite happy whenever he'd come, because of that chick.

Hand of the Cause, Jináb-i-Mullá 'Alí-Akbar, he sent a letter with this request and sought permission for a visit. A Tablet addressed to Jináb-i-Mullá 'Ali-Akbar arrived and contained the following glad-tidings:

HE IS GOD!

O Thou Herald of the Covenant!

Thy letter of the 19th of Muharram was received, and from its contents signs of contentment, resolve and great expectations were perceived. It is My desire that, from the secret bounties of God, you will with joy and happiness sing a new song and raise a wondrous melody.

Should letters such as yours convey happiness when they are read, the breezes of happiness will waft aloft; and should traces of sorrow be imparted, these too, leave a strong impact.

Praise be to God! By the grace of the Abhá Kingdom, certain persons will listen to your words, and this will continue into the future. I am hopeful that through the blessings of the Creator they might rend asunder the veils, and disperse the clouds. Each of those blessed individuals, who make their homes the nests for divine birds (spiritual friends) and a place for the radiation of proofs of the divine Revelation (referring to feasts and firesides) are dear to Abdu'l-Bahá, and are glorious in the Abhá Kingdom. By God! These have arisen with the utmost strength to serve, They show forth every endeavour and, with heart and soul, strive to cause the blind to see, to quicken those who are as dead and to turn the stranger into a friend.

I cherish the hope that these individuals are those souls whom the Blessed Beauty had promised to `Abdu'l-Bahá from His pure lips -- may My soul be a sacrifice to His friends-- to raise up. Of course, all the dear friends who follow their example and initiate similar endeavours, become each a source of results, illumination and a mine of mysteries.

Convey Abhá greetings to Jináb-i-Azíz'u'lláh Khán, the Tailor and to Jináb-i-Azíz'u'lláh Khán, the teacher at Tarbiyat school, on my behalf. Both are dear, renowned and close companions at the Treshold of the Almighty.

Jináb-i-Aqá Siyyid Jalál and Jináb-i-Mírzá Hájí Aqá are, in reality, each like unto the Hoopoe of Sheba, conveying the message of the Solomon of fidelity to lands and countries abroad, spreading the sweet savours (teaching) and erstwhile reciting the verses and explaining the hidden meaning of the

words of God with heart and soul.

I beseech God to endow each of these honourable gentlemen with power to shake the pillars of the East and West, and that people will be moved by these two illumined souls.

Moreover, may Jináb-i-Mirzá Abdu'l-Husayn in the land of Alif -- be assisted by a thousand angels! Jináb-i-Akháván Safá will soon be sent on a mission to Mázindarán. Jináb-i-Yúsuf Khán's trip was quite proper. My hope is that by the bounty of God, Hadrat-i-Malik Ará will obtain the beauty of the realm above. It is my wish that both material and spiritual affairs will be set in order.

Upon you rest the Glory of the All-Glorious!

-- `Abdu'l-Bahá Abbás
(unauthorized translation)

It was the beginning of the constitutional Reform. In those troubled days of revolution, the Mujahadin (Communists) were heading for Tehran from the north, and we were ourselves traveling north, to meet the beloved Master. In the course of our journey, we witnessed clashes between government troops and the Mujahadin. We also saw heavy casualties and war dead piled up on carriages and corpses, transported here and there with blood dripping off each of the body wagons. All along the way we heard the boom of cannons and heavy rifle fire. Every so often a bullet would zip past our carriage and would instill in us anxiety, fear and dread.

It was so fearful, that my brother urged us to go back, but I would not give in. We kept on course towards the Beloved of the Worlds. Government troops would not harass us. But as soon as the Mujahadin appeared, they would detain and interrogate us. Even when they conceded to our innocence, they would try to coerce us to join ranks with them and their cause, insisting that we fight for our rights and the rights of our fellow countrymen. At any rate, as soon as we would free ourselves with great difficulty from one group, we would be encountered and detained by another. On one occasion they took us for wealthy landowners trying to escape, and they determined to execute us by firing squad. As they were preparing to do so, one of their leaders, who had known me beforehand, at once came to our rescue and prevented the execution. With utter surprise, he asked why would I ever undertake such a trip under such precarious circumstances. He knew that I was a Bahá'í but he tried to persuade us to join their ranks and do something to save ourselves and our comrades. The time was short and we should scarcely miss this

opportunity otherwise we would regret it. At last I convinced him our principals would not permit us to wage war and that we were averse towards political strife of any kind. So he let us go and said, "At least, pray for our cause." I assured him that since they were fighting for noble and worthy goals, they would prevail. Also I gave him some tea and sugar and he ordered an escort to give us safe passage through the danger zone. After travelling the distance and enduring countless calamities and dangers which I will not recount for the sake of brevity, we arrived in the Holy Land along with a number of friends from different cities and countries. Along the way on this trip, joining our group were Mírzá Taríz'u'lláh Samandárf and Mírzá 'Alí' Akbar Rafsanjani. As we attained the Blessed Presence, His Excellency displayed infinite kindness towards each of the friends. 'Abdu'l-Bahá was enquiring about services to the Faith among the friends in Tehran. Some present were responding with their own reports as to the situation there. The Master would likewise admonish the friends by stressing that each one should strive to render service both in spiritual and material affairs. The friends should take an active interest in all fields in order to truly progress.

These addresses encouraged Mírzá Taráz'u'lláh Samandárf to make mention in His presence of some of the services rendered by certain of the Bahá'ís. He also made reference to one particular Bahá'í--an honest man -- who was quite well-known and formerly a man of wealth, who had recently gone bankrupt and asked for blessings from the Master.

The Master suddenly raised his head high and with a loud voice said, "*We should never interfere with God's work.*" He then gave a long discourse and the gist of it was this, "*Blessings should be the result of God's will and should not be sought (by asking)*". These are not the exact words of His blessed statements, but covers the meaning of His utterances which, after 40 years, still echoes in my ears. I was witness to many of these kinds of meetings. This was especially so in the instance of Hájí Asad'u'lláh's request. Thereafter I would advise close friends of this experience and though I myself had something in my heart to express, I would never voice it, persuaded as I was, that blessings should descend from the will of God and not by means of supplication, as pleading is forbidden.

Seeking Permission for My Brother to get Married

My brother Aqá Murtida was young and single and very much open to marriage with a Westerner. He would persist in expressing this wish, and all the while I would oppose it I would argue that now is not the right time for Eastern friends to embrace Westerners, for their lifestyle and manners are so very different from ours especially if they are not Bahá'ís and abide by different moral standards. Generally speaking,

Westerners regard us as lower and consider themselves as superior to us. Besides which, even should they deign to enter into marriage with us, living in so inhospitable an environment as Tehran is difficult, if not impossible for a foreigner.

But my brother remained unconvinced by this and persisted in his intentions. He had not yet had a chance to see Europe, nor was he aware of their manners nor of the European outlook. Since he was so insistent, I decided one day to approach 'Abdu'l-Bahá to seek permission for such a marriage. When one day 'Abdu'l-Bahá granted us an audience, I thought the timing right and was confident this was no imposition, but rather would be some relevance for others as well. I therefore mentioned these points and said that my brother wishes to marry a Westerner and seeks permission to do so. 'Abdu'l-Bahá said many things about marriage and gave in detail the ideal conditions for it. Alas and alas! - that I should have no record of this discourse in all its specifics. All these subtle points are no longer crystal clear in my memory, and there is a fear of altering the original. But the one and only point which my brother took full advantage of and on the basis of which he insisted even more strongly was the Master's statement, "*East should embrace West, and be so distinguished from the rest of the world. The world should intermarry until at last everyone would become united and distinctions of colour would disappear. And thus would all people enter the canopy of unity!*" The beloved Master has also said, "*The more diverse the marriage, the better.*" As there was so much emphasis on and encouragement for such marriage, we paid little attention to the other prerequisites and conditions He set forth, which he certainly did not put to practice. So we arranged for my brother's engagement to a girl in Austria but, as we paid little heed to the other conditions stipulated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, this engagement did not have a strong foundation and after the slightest misunderstanding the engagement was broken. In short, since I wished to travel to Europe with my brother accompanying me, we sought permission to go and were given leave to do so. We thus went to Vienna and, following completion of business affairs there, and after arranging the engagement for my brother we returned to Tehran.

The Fifth Visit to 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Every two or three years I was obligated to go to Europe for business purposes. Usually for each trip I would seek permission to visit and attain the presence of the Master, and there revive and refresh my spirit. The beloved Master was renowned for His kindness towards the friends, and would never deny me this bounty. This was especially true on previous visits when He would say, "*You have leave to visit whenever you wish.*" On this trip, His blessings were more abundant than

ever, and He was bestowing such kindness on me that it was difficult to handle, and I was ever beseeching God to protect me from tests afterwards. The most significant honour I experienced during this visit was, when one day He summoned me to meet with Him, and to come alone. As I attained His presence, I saw that an Englishman, arrayed in Ottoman attire with a red *finnih* on his head*, was standing before the beloved Master. 'Abdu'l-Bahá then said, "Today, we will go out together." In 'Abdu'l-Bahá's carriage, he introduced the British gentleman in the following way (of course these may not be his exact words but the essence of them was this), "This is Dr. Esslemont from England. Previously, he had been of Jewish persuasion, but now has declared, and become a Bahá'í. He is currently writing a history of the Faith." There were many other points which I cannot now recall. I do not know whether or not this Englishman understood what 'Abdu'l-Bahá was saying in Persian, but what was interesting to me was his profound humility and respectfulness in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's presence. He always had his hand upon his chest and was paying utmost attention to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's every word.

As the carriage reached the summit of Mount Carmel, 'Abdu'l-Bahá ordered the carriage to stop. As he stepped out, he faced the sea, swept his hands across the lands on the slopes below, and said, "*The Bahá'í friends should endeavour to purchase these sacred places as soon as possible, since these would soon fall into the hands of the people of Israel, after which this land would both be expensive and difficult to secure. Encourage the friends -- encourage all of them to make efforts to purchase these properties. It should not be an individual effort, but rather a collective enterprise.*" He then continued, "*Haifa will become foremost among the ports of the world, will develop extensively and in time will fall under control of the Jewish people.*"**

'Abdu'l-Bahá covered many other points of interest which I had at the time recorded in a notebook, but I'm sorry to say that I lost these notes. What is recounted here is the gist of what he said and represents a fraction of all the important statements I myself had heard. For years I had intended to write the story of all my travels and visits to the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and to weave these into an autobiographical narrative.

For the same reason I made some record of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's statements as I recalled them, but as I was struck by the

*Prior to and after World War 1, under Ottoman rule, Egyptians would wear a red *finnih* with a black *mangulih* (red cap with black tassel)

*Some 50 years later, the present writer attained the presence of Shoghi Effendi. One day, he asked, "What had 'Abdu'l-Bahá told your father concerning Israel?" I recounted the episode above whereupon he asked, "Had the government also been mentioned?" I said yes.)

greatness of the Faith and my own comparative insignificance, I washed away what was written from the notebook, no doubt with some of my own tears in the process. I started to believe that memoirs of this kind, not to mention my own, should not remain alongside all His authenticated statements. But Mr. Fa'iz, since you insist that such a record is in fact a priceless inheritance to pass on to my children, I'll do my utmost to search in the inner reaches of my memory to recount just a few out of a thousand events that transpired. I might be mistaken in a few of my dates so please pay attention to the main points and not so much to the dates. Now after 40 years, I am witnessing many of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's statements and warnings come true, one taking place after another. A prime example is the coming into being of the State of Israel, along with all the press you read in the papers today.*

As we returned from this audience with 'Abdu'l-Bahá, I asked about Dr. Esslemont from Dr. Lotfulláh Khán Hakím, who was a fellow pilgrim, and so my information about Dr. Esslemont was verified. I learned he was a medical doctor of Jewish ancestry. He had resigned from his occupation and was living in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's presence while compiling notes for a book to be entitled, Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era. What he had written was translated into Persian by Dr. Hakím and another individual whose name escapes me, and was then presented to 'Abdu'l-Bahá for approval or additions. Upon return of the text to Dr. Esslemont, he would assiduously labour on the necessary revisions until at last there emerged a document that was presented to the world as Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era. What was most interesting about this respected and knowledgeable individual was his profound sense of humility before 'Abdu'l-Bahá. It was customary among us Persians, to remove our shoes when attaining the presence of the Master and he would do likewise he also observed the practice of *Ziyarat* (observance of pilgrimage) much better than Easterners. He was always crossing his arms over his chest before the Master, and would not seat himself until given leave to do so.

One day the Master enquired about the feasts and Bahá'í gatherings in Iran. I stated that in those days it was customary to serve a complete meal after each feast. The reason was that the friends were few in number, so they would eat supper or dinner following meetings and disperse afterwards. Those friends who had come from some distance would stay over night for reasons of safety, and would return home the next morning after breakfast. Since there were many such gatherings in my home, my mother would work hard to prepare for hospitality and would serve the friends with love and utmost kindness. On that day, since 'Abdu'l-Bahá had asked about the feasts, I made mention of my mother and her sacrifices. I said that, though not a believer, she served

* The writing of this memoir was contemporary with the return of the Jews to Israel and the formation of their government there.)

with all her heart to the end of her life and has now ascended to the Abhá Kingdom. As I was relating all these things, I was overcome by emotion and as I thought of my mother I became choked up with a sense of sadness and was holding back the tears. In that wistful state I sought from His Presence forgiveness on my mothers behalf. Right away, the Master asked for pen and paper and revealed a special Tablet, as mentioned before.

**Pilgrimage to Bahjí in the Company of Shoghi Effendi,
on Behalf of 'Abdu'l-Bahá**

One night, the blessed Master was pacing back and forth in the room while giving a talk. As He finished, He turned His blessed face towards me and said, "Jináb-i-Khán, tomorrow you and Shoghi Effendi shall pay a visit to the Most Holy Shrine on my behalf." At once, I bowed and replied, "As you wish." Jináb-i-Mirzá Azíz'u'lláh Khán Vargá who was standing beside me immediately spoke up, saying, "I, too, wish to share that honour and go as well." I interceded before the Master and stated, "Jináb, the son of Vargá requests to have this honour also." The Master responded, "Very well, very well. My two Azíz's proceed together. A Syrian doctor, who was also present was granted permission to go as well. The next day, food was sent to us and in the company of Shoghi Effendi, who was barely 14 or 15 years of age, we set out for the Most Holy Shrine in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's carriage. After the visit to the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh, the Bahá'í friends took some time to relax and a few of them started picking oranges from trees nearby. I noticed that Shoghi Effendi was preparing food and was about to wash the utensils. At once I approached him and said, "Your Honour, why do you take the trouble to do this work? " And I took the dishes from his hands. He said, "It doesn't matter, really." In any case I besought him to permit me to take over, which at last he did. At that time, no one was aware of the future station of Shoghi Effendi and people simply considered him a member of the Holy Family, and did not consider him unique or superior. But I had observed for some time, ever since he was a child, that there was something special about him. Whenever he would enter the room, for instance, Jináb-i-Hájí Mírzá Haydar-'Alí - that elderly, extremely spiritual man - would always stand-up, which he would not do for others. I would always think to myself about this, and would wonder why this wise old man would show such respect for a child.

But on that blessed day when we were returning from our pilgrimage to the Shrine, I knew inwardly what this individual had a much higher station than we at the time had thought. Jináb-i-Hájí Mírzá Haydar-'Alí was right. Perhaps the purpose of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in arranging this pilgrimage was to give us this awareness.

At my insistence, we picked some oranges for the Holy Household and then set out in the blessed carriage for our return to Haifa. Along the way, Shoghi Effendi would ask each of us questions. He would then listen with the utmost attentiveness to our answers. Then he asked, "Recount the most historic event that has ever happened to you." The visionary wisdom of these kinds of questions from the future Guardian parted the veils before my eyes. And thus I saw his greatness more than ever before. I could appreciate that the profound respect shown by Mírzá Ḥaydar-'Alí had a sound basis. Indeed, Shoghi Effendi was a superior member among the household of His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

After our return, we attended the feast held in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's home and we were in His presence. There were many guests. When 'Abdu'l-Bahá ended His address He asked me, "*Did you undertake the pilgrimage?*" He then gave me a lengthy explanation regarding this, and asked, "*What did you bring with you?*" I replied, "Oranges." He then ordered the oranges be brought and He gave each one present an orange by His own blessed hand. He began with me, and at the very last gave me another one. With a smile, he said, "*I know you should get two...*"

His blessings had enveloped me and His bounty was ever pouring forth, to the extent that I could scarcely recognize my own person in such a state of joy. I begged God to somehow make me worthy of all these blessings. But what could possibly be done? Sometimes His kindness is bestowed on individuals without their deserving it.

Bahá'í friends who attained the Blessed Presence would try to take a picture with 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Such permission was sought from Him and He consented that a picture be taken in front of the Blessed House. How dismayed I was, whenever I realized that very soon I would have to be dismissed and thus would be deprived of the experience of hearing Him with my own ears. After a while, every one was dismissed, and each went His own way. At times, small groups would travel together and enjoy each others company along the way, recalling their experiences with 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Visiting 'Abdu'l-Bahá in London

Two or three years prior to World War I, I was in Europe taking care of some business. Dr. Lotfulláh Khán Hakím who was also in Europe, had learned that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was about to come to Europe and he shared this news with me. Since I had to travel to various cities in England, I asked him to let me know of His arrival the moment He would reach London. This he did, and one day I received a letter from him giving me the good news of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's arrival in London and His stay at Lady Blomfields's residence. I immediately entrusted my business affairs to an assistant and departed for London.



Jináb-i-Azízi, wearing a Persian hat in London

I had on a clean black suit and wore a Persian hat made of Bukhara lamb's wool. I was tidy in appearance and made sure I was the epitome of neatness and cleanliness. With a happy smile I set out for Lady Blomfields's residence. As soon as I arrived, I introduced myself to the butler and requested to be admitted into 'Abdu'l-Bahá's presence. The time spent waiting for this permission seemed like an eternity and was difficult to endure. Thank God, the butler came back with the welcome news of this permission.

He opened the door for me, and suddenly I observed that the blessed Master was seated in the centre of the third room (there were two other rooms filled with guests). The doors to this room were open so that all present could hear His blessed voice. As I glimpsed at His blessed face, I threw myself to the floor and paid my respects. The Master, with a loud voice, bade me enter. As I reached the threshold of the second room, again I prostrated myself and again with a loud voice He bade me enter. He said, "Come in! Welcome, Jináb-i-Khán." And thus ordered me to enter the room where he was seated by saying, "In God's name, Jináb-i-Khán. He then gestured with his hand the seat I should take. After I seated myself close to the blessed Master and settled down, I came to realize how crowded all three rooms were with guests. At first I was so excited over seeing the Master that I had taken no notice. The Master greeted me, asked me how I was, then with a booming voice declared, *"This individual is Persian with a Persian hat. He has come to visit us. He has not lost his Persian identity, has not forgotten that he is Iranian, and what indeed is wrong with this? What shame is there in this? Could anything be more ideal than this? Not only is there nothing wrong with this, but nothing in fact could be better."* He then turned His blessed face towards me and addressed me thus, *"Jináb-i-Khán, find a Persian hat for Tamaddun. I am not pleased that my interpreter should wear a western hat."* I bowed and said I would obey. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's interpreter at this time was Tamaddun'ul-Mulk, who was wearing a European hat.

At the end of the Master's address, when feeling quite content, I realized I was sitting next to Mon. Dreyfus. Quietly we greeted each other and exchanged courtesies. Among the friends who were seated in the room with the Master were Lady Blomfield along with her daughter, Miss Laura Clifford Barney, and Lua Getsinger. Also seated were: Mírzá Muḥammad Báqir Khán Shírázi (father of the Dehqan family), Tamaddun'ul-Mulk, as well as Mon. Dreyfus -- and beyond these I cannot recall any other names. There was also a German Lady present, who Mon. Dreyfus introduced to the Master saying that she was a famous singer, who wished to perform in His presence to win His approval. The Master consented and that woman began to sing a son in German in a most beautiful voice. The Master enjoyed it very much and praised her for her performance.

Obtaining a Persian Hat in London for Tamaddun'ul-Mulk, the Master's Interpreter

The wish of the Master was that Tamaddun'ul-Mulk should wear a Persian hat. At first I had him try on a hat of my own, but it was too large for him and there was no way to alter it either. So I began looking for a hat for him in London. Whoever I asked about where to find a Persian hat would laugh and make fun of me. They would say, "How could you possibly find a Persian hat in London?" But since the seeker is also a finder, and in as much as it was the wish of the Master, I was certain that it should not be impossible to locate such a hat, if only I tried hard enough. So I came upon an exhibition, which had a booth from Iran. There were some samples of Persian wear there, including some hats, one of which was a *Nahuti* hat. Though it was not for sale, after trying my best I succeeded in purchasing it and then tried it on Tamaddun'ul-Mulk. It was a bit large and he was not prepared to accept it. I lined some paper inside the hat until it fitted. He kept on complaining and still would not accept it. I got upset and forced the hat on his head, snatched his European hat away from him and said, "It is the Master's will that you should wear a Persian hat. So that's that and so shut up! Do you think we are in the habedashery section of the bazaar in Tehran that you think you can be so choosy? This is the only such hat in London, which I obtained by accident and with great difficulty. You should know, that were it not for the will of the Master that you should wear a Persian hat, this very hat would never have ended up in London. It is in fact a miracle to chance upon any Persian hat in London, so why do you complain?" When Tamaddun began to realize that he was dealing with a person who under no circumstances would overlook his Master's order, he gave in as he had no other choice. Tamaddun kept asking and insisting that I fit one of my own hats which were made of Bukhara lamb's wool, since it would be elegantly pleasing to the eye. I wanted to do so but lacked the instruments for it. At any rate with a lot of pressure and threats, I put the hat on his head, took him by the hand and led him back to the Master's presence. The Master smiled and praised the hat greatly and said, "*What is wrong with the hat, that you should wish to make yourself look like Europeans?*"

How Tamaddun'ul-Mulk's Conduct displeased 'Abdu'l-Bahá

I have visited 'Abdu'l-Bahá on many occasions and was abundantly blessed. Most of the people in His company and at His service showed a certain respect for me and were all quite considerate, especially since I would do whatever I could to be of service to them. Though I was ready and willing to make some sacrifices for each and every one of the friends, yet

those who were in the service of 'Abdu'l-Bahá had a special place in my heart. Among them was Tamaddun'ul-Mulk, who was the most outgoing of them all. However, I would at times notice that certain of his actions were morally questionable and not to the liking of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. I would bring this up in private to Tamaddun and would ask him, "Why are you doing this? Why do you hurt 'Abdu'l-Bahá?" Every time I would bring this up, he would prove himself innocent but I would make him promise not to persist in this behaviour. As a result, he would make an insincere promise to not do anything which might displease 'Abdu'l-Bahá. What was in fact distressing the Master mostly were the inaccurate translations he would give, so that I would repeatedly hear from 'Abdu'l-Bahá His admonition, "*Translate exactly what I say, neither more nor less.*"

One day in London, 'Abdu'l-Bahá summoned me to His presence, to which I obeyed right away. We then went for sightseeing in a long car, in the company of several English ladies. After He seated Himself in the car, He ordered me along with Tamaddun to get in the car and take our seats in front. The ladies were sitting right by Him or right in front of Him. The Master beckoned to Tamaddun, "*Translate My statements for the ladies*" with special emphasis on "*My statements.*" 'Abdu'l-Bahá started to talk and I was enjoying what He had to say. Since I did not know English, I was watching 'Abdu'l-Bahá closely. I was very much moved by His remarks and was all the time looking at Him. But it seemed that either the translation was bad or something was added that provoked 'Abdu'l-Bahá, so that He said angrily, "*Translate exactly as I say.*" The Master then sat back and said nothing further. At the time, I was sitting behind Tamaddun, nudging, pushing, and even pinching him from time to time, saying, "Why do you provoke The Master so? Why do you cause him such irritation? What did you just promise me?"

But nothing would swerve him and he persisted in this kind of behaviour, to the extent that 'Abdu'l-Bahá at last dispatched a telegram to the Bahá'í world, stating, "*Tamaddun is uncivilized*" (in contrast to his name, Tamaddun meaning "*civilization*") and "*... is (spiritually) moribund.*" One day, towards the end of his life, I caught sight of him in Tehran. He was very downcast, filled with remorse, and would express profound regret. But, alas, the time has past, and there was no way to make up for the past mistakes.

'Abdu'l-Bahá teaches in the Churches of London

The day following the sight-seeing excursion in the company of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, I was again in His presence. The conversation turned to Mon. Dreyfus and his encounter with a certain Christian priest. The priest had in fact invited 'Abdu'l-Bahá to visit his church and to address the

congregation. This opportunity prompted me to beg Mon. Dreyfus to seek 'Abdu'l-Bahá's permission for me to be among the Master's retinue when these kinds of meetings would take place my primary purpose in coming to London was to be in His company and I was free of other obligations. Mon. Dreyfus did ask on my behalf and permission was thus given. One Sunday afternoon, the blessed Master made his way to the City Temple Church. Excluding Westerners, four Persians in addition to myself accompanied the Master: Jináb-i-Mírzá Lotfulláh Hakím, Tamaddun'ul-Mulk Mírzá Muḥammad-Báqir Khán Shírázi, 'Aqá Mírzá Maḥmúd Zargání. When the Master entered the church, the congregation was engaged in prayer and a group of girls were singing chorals in front of the sanctuary. The ministers were either seated or standing, relative to their respective ranks as they were want to do. The Master, with His dignified presence, coupled with an attitude of respect, entered the church, ascended the stairway to the stage in front, and took his seat in full centre view. The priest came forward and welcomed Him and after certain formalities introduced 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the audience. Dr. Lotfulláh Khán Hakím - who was an old friend of mine and was standing by me at the time - was interpreting the priests statements to me. From what I recall of that occasion, what the priest had said was this, "It is my honour to present to you our guest speaker. His name is 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the son of Bahá'u'lláh. He has suffered imprisonment for over 40 years. He holds special beliefs. His teachings and indeed all of His addresses are akin to those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and are all in the Persian language. Till now He has been promulgating His Faith through correspondence mainly, and this is the first time He is delivering a public address freely. It is indeed unique and unprecedented that someone could achieve such widespread influence through pen and paper. He will give His address in Persian, then it will be interpreted for you." Thereupon, the blessed Master gave his address, which began with words such as *"Oh respected members of the congregation. Oh seekers in the path of God. Verily, this day is unique and this century glorious. Soon will the world be transformed into a heavenly realm, and the unity of mankind will shine forth from every horizon."* As His address continued, it was so very moving and powerful that all of us Persians were trembling and wrapt in absolute silence. Not a sound from anyone was heard. After the address was over, the Master raised up His hands and began chanting a prayer in Persian. By this time the entire congregation was standing, utterly attracted by His address and the prayer that followed. After the translation was completed, the minister again expressed gratitude to 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

It was the Master's intention to leave as He descended from the pulpit stage, but the congregation thronged around Him to meet Him and show their respect (literally kiss His hands). Mon. Dreyfus, who was aware of what was going on,

signalled to us Persians who were standing in front of the stage to hold back the crowd to prevent them from disturbing the Master, as He could not possibly shake hands and greet every one of them. Since it would have resulted in some hardship for Him, we took hold of one another's hands to form a chain to fence off the crowd. So the Master retired to the church library to rest for a while. The head priest brought a large and weighty book to 'Abdu'l-Bahá and requested He write in it. The Master accepted and inscribed a few lines in Persian, then instructed Mon. Dreyfus to translate it. Mon. Dreyfus was conversant with the Persian language. As he himself stated, he had studied under 'Ayn'u'l-Mulk, the son of 'Aqá Muḥammad Ridáy-i-Qannád.

One of the wealthy English ladies named Miss Cooper owned an elegant car, which was given to the Master during His sojourn in London. When the Master emerged from the library with an air of utmost dignity and majesty, together with the impression created by His mane of white locks flowing onto His white wool robe, He seemed to strike in the eyes of those around an image of someone like His Holiness Christ. As the car started to move slowly away, everyone began to wave their handkerchiefs and hands, expressing their gratitude and sense of upliftment. This left a picture in my memory which was unforgettable.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's Tour in London and His encounter with an East Indian

It is beyond capacity to attempt to recount in every detail the events which then transpired, as more than 30 years have past since. A few outstanding events remain in memory, which I will mention briefly: One day, the blessed Master went to a park in the heart of London. An exposition was being held there at the time. At the insistence of several British Bahá'í ladies, 'Abdu'l-Bahá consented to come, which He did in Miss Cooper's car. I was also in His company. The Master praised the floral garden and landscaping of the park very much. He said, "*Scenery such as this serves to heighten the spiritual mood in man, if he is perceptive -- especially in the secluded spots where the individual is free to be alone.*" As the blessed Master became somewhat tired, one of the ladies present urged him to enter a restaurant to take a rest. As the Master entered, a hush fell over all who were present and no sound was to be heard, not even from fork and knife. But there was no place for Him to sit. The Master then proceeded to the upper part of the hall. At that moment, some Britons at once left their table and waiters immediately cleared the table and set it, so that it was ready and awaiting the Master when He reached it.

At whatever gathering 'Abdu'l-Bahá would speak, He would impart the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and His admonitions to the

peoples of the world, laying the foundation for universal peace and love of mankind. Speaking to each occasion, He would deliver talks which were pleasing to the heart and of benefit to the audience at hand. Among various visitors one day was an East Indian Maharaja. He was drawn so totally to the Master's discourses that he would come over to wherever the Master spoke. The Maharaja had his attachments to his own Indian ways and customs, but at the same time had a great liking for the Bahá'í Faith. So he desired to have them both. One day, he besought 'Abdu'l-Bahá to forbid the eating of meat. In support of his request, he cited his reasons and spoke at length in an effort to be persuasive. But the Master gave no answer nor acknowledgement. On another occasion, the Master stated, *"We really cannot give such instruction."* On yet another occasion, this Indian man -- whose name, I believe, was Raj Butana -- had invited the Master for dinner in Mr. Sadly's home. All the companions of the Master were present. The discourse that evening concerned prejudice. 'Abdu'l-Bahá said words such as these *"Prejudice is the cause of the ruin of a people. It is as a result of prejudice, that blood is shed. It is due to prejudice that factions and nations are locked in reciprocal hatred. Were prejudice alone to vanish, the world would become a veritable paradise, souls would create a garden of Ridván, and hearts would mirror forth the highest heaven."* The guests were then invited to a large room with many kinds of foods on display. All those various entrees and delicacies were entirely of vegetables, as the host and most of the guests were vegetarian. After dinner, Mr. Sadly gave a speech and praised 'Abdu'l-Bahá as "Master of the East and Messenger of Peace." Others among the guests themselves expressed appreciation and praise for the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. Towards the end of the evening, the Indian gentleman insisted once again that the eating of meat be forbidden. In response, the Master replied, *"Of course, if man could indeed be content with a vegetarian diet, it is better. But as the consumption of meat is so engrained an eating habit, it is not realistic to expect people to stop."* He then related the following story, *"Once in Baghdad, I met a man from India. He insisted vigorously that men should desist from eating meat. He was, moreover, very compassionate towards all living creatures. He would maintain it is most unjust to kill in order to feed ourselves, and would give numerous examples. So I told him, 'You yourself are eating a multitude of animals.' He replied, 'Not at all.' I asked, 'Do you drink water?' He said, 'Yes' 'Do you eat cheese and yogourt? The Indian said yes. I said, 'Put them under a microscope to observe how many animals are in those substances. How many animals do you kill when you simply boil water.' He, replied, 'But these animal are tiny.' I said, 'All animals feel pain whether large or small.'" The Indian man grew silent and began to ponder over all this, and later his thoughts became clear and love welled up within him. As the Master was about to depart, according to Indian custom*

the man prepared a garland of lovely flowers. He was hoping to place it around 'Abdu'l Bahá's neck. The Master quietly instructed me to prevent him from doing so. So I advanced towards the Indian and with utmost courtesy and tact, without creating the least offence, convinced him that this wreath of flowers might cause irritation to the Master's neck, and surely he would not wish this to happen. So I accepted to take the garland and, to satisfy him, consented to place it about His feet in the train. On the train one room was reserved for 'Abdu'l-Bahá and another one for His companions. The Indian gentleman was most pleased and happy that his flowers were to be placed at last on the Master's feet. Such was the crowd at the station that the atmosphere of joy and excitement was beyond belief. The train began to move and all those present at the station for sometime continued waving farewell with laughter and happiness.

Portrait Taken of the Master in London

News of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's arrival spread far and wide, especially following the talks he had given in many of the churches in London. News stories about the Master were published and journalists rushed to get further news and photographs as well. At first the Master would not accept any picture to be taken, until one of the journalists succeeded in snapping a photo from behind. That picture subsequently appeared in the papers and caught 'Abdu'l-Bahá's attention, and from that point on he never attempted to prevent any further pictures from being taken. In London one day he instructed me to arrange a session with a professional photographer. I complied at once and called upon one of the most widely-acclaimed photographers around.* The Photographer took a few portraits of the Master and I presented the proofs to him. He instructed me to voice freely my preference and asked, "*Which one is better, in your judgement?*" I replied, "Your Honour, all are blessed -- each one of them is worthy." So He chose two of them which were clearer and sharper for publication, then autographed a few and blessed me with keeping them.**

A Persian Who was Pretending to be British

Various accounts of events during the Master's stay in London are quite detailed and of course are fully narrated in -----

*LafaYette, Ltd., Photographers to the King and Queen ---
London, Dublin, Glasgow, Manchester and Belfast.

**Those pictures were in the possession of the present writer after the passing of my father, and then distributed among my brothers and sisters.

a number of books. I merely make mention of certain incidents which stand out in my memory.

In any gathering 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed, unprecedented joy and happiness beyond description would sweep through those present. One such episode was this: One night the Master gave a talk before a large crowd from various walks of life and at the end of the talk people rushed forward to meet Him and to kiss His hand. No matter how hard the Master's companions tried to hold them back, it was to no avail. So the members of the audience were permitted to approach the Master, on the condition that they did not engage in shaking hands. So one by one they came forward, and each in turn said good-night. Some would bow out of respect, others would take gently hold of His hand before leaving the church hallway, which was not very lightly lit.. We then realized the Master was clasping someone's hand in His own and said to him, "*You are Persian -- why do you conceal that fact and say farewell in English?*"

This astonished those present, who observed all this with some amazement. Everyone was asking each other who this man was who 'Abdu'l-Bahá should single out for attention in spite of the crowd around Him and the weariness it undoubtedly caused. How did 'Abdu'l-Bahá know this individual? I inquired at once, went to him and found out that he was from the family of Naser'ul-Mulk and was known as Ezz'ul-Mulk Hamadáni Qara-Qazlu. He had been brought up in Europe and the amazing thing was that his manners and the way he looked was exactly like Britons. Even his eyes were light green and not black.

'Abdu'l-Bahá had never before met him and that man himself was taken aback. Later on, he would recount this incident to members of high society and people of influence in Tehran. He would say, "I was quite astonished, for 'Abdu'l-Bahá had never known me before in His life, and in such a brief encounter under such crowded circumstances in a dimly-lit room He was able to recognize me as Persian. Even my accent had diminished to the extent that no one could tell I was a foreigner, as a result of my long stay in England. Besides, I disclosed nothing which might give me away even if I had an accent." *

Since the point he would make concerned Persians in England at the time of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit and their reactions to His presence there, I will not go into any further detail.

The Generosity of 'Abdu'l-Bahá Towards British Ladies

It was the Master's practice, whether at home or abroad, to always give presents to those around Him. He would bring

* The present writer met Mr. Ezz'ul-Mulk Hamadáni in Tehran when he was over 50 years of age. He was very refined and dignified, and he would embellish on the story often.

happiness in a special way. To the poor, He would usually give money. One day while He was in London, the Master summoned me and told me, " *You should go and obtain some ornamental accessories. I wish to give these to the British ladies. The things you purchase should only be necklaces, bracelets and broaches.*" He then gave a proper description of their respective types and shapes. At length He emphasized that, " *These should not be very expensive. These people simply wish to have something to remember me by.* " He then asked Tamaddun to accompany me. Shopping on behalf of 'Abdu'l-Bahá should be for merchandise which was reasonably-priced and of good quality. So I went to every store I could recall from past visits, and to my British friends as well. At last I succeeded in obtaining items which I felt would meet His expectations according to His instructions. As the number of items was quite a few, towards the end I asked for some more discount -- in other words, I bargained as best I could. In any event the sales clerk accepted the offer and gave a better discount. After all that, I asked for a commission for myself. Of course, I had no intention of benefiting personally from the deal. I simply wanted to do the best I could for the Master. The sales clerk would not accept these terms at all, saying that I had bargained exhaustively and got such a substantial discount that there was plainly no room left for any commission. To this I kept insisting and he kept declining. At long last he gave in and threw in a watch as commission. I presented all the purchased items to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He asked about the prices. I explained in some detail and He seemed very impressed over both price and quality, to all of which He returned a smile of approval. He also took special notice of the watch from among the women's accessories. He picked up the watch and asked, " *What is this?* " So I related the whole story. This made Him very happy. The Master kept the watch in hand for some time, examined it, and while holding it, gave a lengthy discourse concerning business and trade. The point He would emphasize the most, was that, "*One should buy good quality at the most competitive price.*"

At the end of His discourse He gave the example of when the Báb had made a purchase of honey: after such a purchase had been made on his behalf, the Báb discovered it to be of very poor quality and over priced as well. He then returned the honey and said, "*One should be very prudent in purchasing goods, with the aim being to buy good quality at a cut-rate price.*" At last the Master gave back the watch which He had held in His Hands for some time and said, "*You keep this*" (ie, Aziz'u'lláh). Tamaddun was present and said to Abdu'l-Bahá, "*Your Honour, this watch should be mine since I served as the translator. Otherwise,...*" I saw a wave of sadness sweep over the Blessed Countenance, as His expression changed. Tamaddun would not keep quiet making his rude behaviour still worse. So at once I kissed the watch, placed it on my eyes, and politely handed it to Tamaddun and said: " *You keep this. It will be as*

if it were my very own on the condition that you keep it safe. It is 'Abdu'l-Bahá's gift to you."

This action of mine brought happiness to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, though He said nothing at the time. But in subsequent travels together, He was increasingly friendly towards me. One day, for instance, He gave his *Finih* (Egyptian-style Fez) to me, and on another occasion he presented to me his exquisite pen-case, as well as other blessed gifts.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's Gifts to Me

It is necessary in this narrative to make reference to the gifts bestowed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá upon me. In no way is their mention intended as boasting, nor should it be interpreted as showing off. These blessings in fact were not exclusive to me. Because each one in a different way would be favoured from His table of blessings. One day the Master took His ring with the Greatest Name from His very finger, gave it to me and said, "*You keep this.*" This kindness of 'Abdu'l-Bahá became such a source of joy for me that sometimes I would lose my senses. The ring was for me a new-found treasure, especially after I had determined that it had been worn by Him for a long time -- and also because He had given it to me by His own will and not because I asked Him. (This Bahá'í ring is with my older brother, Dr. Ezzat'u'lláh-Azízí.)

One day, after writing several Tablets, the Master gave me a precious pen case containing pens and an inkwell all-in-one, and said, "*Keep this as a reminder.*" On another trip He gave me His *finih* (headdress), in which there remained some of His Blessed Locks. On a later trip He gave me some Ottoman coins.* Sweets, candles, oranges, and so on, were some of the kinds of gifts the Master would usually present to me and to the other friends, usually when we were dismissed from His Presence. Other times He would choose to reveal a Tablet from His pure heart and then to send it to its recipient. On occasion He would even mention my name in Tablets to other recipients (these Tablets appear at the beginning of this book).

'Abdu'l-Bahá at Oxford University Faculty Club

On one of the last remaining nights of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's sojourn in England, He was invited to the Oxford Faculty Club by certain of the British professors and scholars. It was a breathtaking and luxurious place. In addition to the assembly

* After Jináb-i-Azízí passed away, on a particular Holy day, His widowed wife -- after relating the story of the coins--- distributed them among her 11 children as a gift.

of scholars and professors, there was a large number of onlookers. The auditorium was divided into two parts: one side was higher, the other lower. The Master, his companions and the professors were seated in the higher section. 'Abdu'l-Bahá stood up and delivered a profound address. The sheer impact on the spirit of the audience was beyond description. It seemed just about everyone present either raised a question or had a point to make. His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave leave for everyone who wished to address questions, to which he would respond.

At the close of the evening the Master made a statement which I remember to be approximately as follows: "Tonight is the night for saying farewell as we are about to depart from here. Inevitably, there are those who will rise in opposition and will write articles and essays against the Faith. These actions will not only prove futile, but will become the means for creating greater awareness among people in general and will serve as a source for further information. In Persia, both religious as well as political leaders combined forces to persecute the Faith. They wrote a number of books against this Cause and made every effort to harm this Faith and destroy its very foundation but they did not succeed. One of these individuals was Hájí Muhammad Karím Khán. He wrote several books, but all of them rapidly diminished in influence and are practically forgotten. Yet the cause of God was proclaimed in East and West, introduced as it was to the peoples of various nations and Faiths. Observe how, when His Holiness Jesus appeared, the Jewish leaders rose up against Him, even slandering Him as Beelzebub did. Our ears today are filled with these same kinds of accusations. Persian Bahá'ís, in whatever village they travelled, would start to teach until a level of general awareness of the Faith would provoke opposition. The opponents would start to slander these Bahá'ís, yet the Bahá'ís themselves would be all the more confident that knowledge of the Faith would doubtlessly spread. The Bahá'ís would say, "Should we suffer injury, or simply be insulted by our opponents, this will cause us to rejoice and this is our only wish and desire. What finer way than this to become ever more humble yet ever more successful in the path of God? This sense of service imparts such fulfillment as cannot be described. When we arrived at 'Akká, we were in a state of abject misery each and every one of us endured hardship and calamity. Yet we experienced a joy and happiness that was far beyond description. At one time, at least 80 of us were crowded into but a few cells of that fortress-prison and all contracted fever to such a degree that no one except Aqá-Ridá and myself were able to move. We were night and day engaged in tending the sick, administering medicine, and so on. By the way, my own room was very cold and damp, and the floor was made of stone. This room was in fact a morgue. Still under conditions such as these, we were under the blessings of Bahá'u'lláh and were so happy that we

would consider any hardship a comfort."

At the end of the gathering of scholars and scientists in The Faculty Club, a portrait was taken, which will grace these pages.* The next day, 'Abdu'l-Bahá left for Paris. As I had to stay on longer in England to tend to personal business, I sought and obtained permission to remain. I then made my way through various cities in England, swiftly took care of my business and again attained the Master's Presence in Paris.

Attaining the Presence of the Master in Paris

Upon my arrival in Paris, I went to see Mon. Dreyfus and enquired as to 'Abdu'l-Bahá -- his present condition, health, and his address. Mon. Dreyfus had acquired a lovely place close to "Palais de Chaillot" on Kleber Avenue. When I arrived there and kissed the sacred threshold out of respect, the Master honoured me with permission to be in His company the whole time in Paris. 'Abdu'l-Bahá was dissatisfied with Paris and never took a liking to the city itself. On more than one occasion He remarked, "*This city is dark, and most of the city-dwellers here are drowning in a sea of materialism.*" He would not leave His quarters very often, so that most people would meet Him at His place of residence. It was there that He would discourse to those present. The subjects addressed varied according to the occasion. Sometimes He would speak of the United States and other times He would refer to His trip to London. He would speak even more about Persia and other places. Translations of some of these talks which appeared in the newspapers of Paris would be presented to the Master. One day a man, whose name now escapes me, brought up the subject of government and religious leaders in Iran working in collaboration with each other. His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá responded with a verse from the Qur'an; "They are destroying their house with their own hands." In Paris various individuals would attain the Presence of The Master. Some Persians, some Europeans, and some from a number of different countries until one day even a group of Russians came. Persians residing in Europe at that time were mainly from the upper class and nobility. They would seek His Presence, express their concerns, and would come away, having heard answers which satisfied them very much. One day, one very wealthy Persian named Dr. Isa Raffi, a dentist by profession but engaged in the antique trade, came to see the Master. I knew him well, as he was Jewish, but ever since his marriage to a French woman, he had changed his own habits and

* The Master signed one of these pictures and blessed me with keeping it. -- (At present, this picture is in the home of the widow and children of the Bahá'í martyr, Jalál Azízí, in Vancouver, Canada.



Abdu'l-Bahá with scholars in London.
Jinnab-i-Azizi is seated in the back.

beliefs. He followed the materialist school of thought. And he would go on and on about philosophical materialism, and would insist that God did not exist -- that the universe was the product of natural forces, etc; but the Master would not respond. One day, however, 'Abdu'l-Bahá stated with a wry smile, *"European professors, for certain reasons, incline towards materialism. When we discourse with them, we simply point out to them fallacies in their assumptions, and they take this to heart and depart. But Persians just make false pretences and put forward positions they themselves do not even comprehend. They have no purpose, in short, and as such cannot be swerved either."*

In Paris, as time passed, Persian nobility, especially Qajar princes and high-ranking court officials, as well as Turkish *Páshás*, (even those who opposed the Faith vigorously) would come to pay their respect. They usually travelled in groups. When in the Presence of the Master, they would show profound humility and respect towards the Master, and would be dismissed after listening to his wondrous discourses. I recall how one day a high-ranking man displayed such utter respect that one of the companions exclaimed, "Thank God that I lived long enough to witness with my own eyes the power and influence of the Faith." On another occasion the Master said, "At what time now will Násir'd-Din Sháh come and witness the greatness of the Cause of the Blessed Beauty?"

At most of the Bahá'í gatherings and Feasts in Paris, the Master would be invited and would address those present. One night, Miss Anderson who was known as "Ruhiyyih Khánum" hosted a Feast at her place. 'Abdu'l-Bahá invited each of the companions to the feast and later on stated, *"I am a little tired and would like to take a stroll and do some sight seeing."* He then dismissed everyone present except me, asked me to get a car ready and from there we set off for Champs-Elysée Avenue. There He stepped out of the car and started to walk around. This avenue, one of the most celebrated avenues in the World, had a particular charm about it and was quite glamorous and luxurious. 'Abdu'l-Bahá enjoyed this place immensely, praising its beauty and the bright street-lights in particular. At length he expressed disappointment over the spiritual darkness of the city and said, *"If civilization is not infused with spirituality, it is a total loss. These are but civilized animals, while the inhabitants of Africa are savage humans."* On this particular night, it came to my mind to ask Him certain questions to which I had given much thought, so that I might hear what He would say. So after being given leave to speak, I asked, "Should an undertaking be carried out to completion, or should affairs be left up to God until His blessings are given and the means of achievement are made possible?" At once he turned His Blessed Face to me and replied, *"Why would you say things like this? A man should make constant efforts and for every undertaking follow through with steadfastness and perseverance. Any undertaking should be*

carried out to completion and, of course, all the while divine assistance should be sought." During the course of our stroll, according to Persian custom, I walked respectfully behind Him, arms crossed over my chest, and at the same time happened to be wearing a Persian hat. It happened that a certain Persian Prince who was in Paris at the same time as we were, took notice of us and recognized me. This Prince was related to Zillu's-Sultán and was an enemy of the Faith. He ran over to me, took me by the sleeve and inquired, "Who is this man?" With a brusque movement I broke free my sleeve and stated, "His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá, 'Abbás Effendi." The instant the Prince heard this name, he escaped like a burst of wind, while the Master paid no heed to him whatsoever.

All that evening I was able to spend in the company of the Master, deriving blessings from conversing with Him. And after the Prince went his way, His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá, began to inquire after my business and of the workers in my employ. He asked how many they were and of them how many were Bahá'ís, to which I gave a detailed reply. At that time, not counting secretary, bookkeeper, clerks and office personal, there were over 100 trained tailors in the business, more than half of whom were Bahá'ís. As I observed the Master's concern over the workers, I begged Him to write for them a few words. By addressing them in a Tablet, he would impart joy to their hearts and they would be proud that the Beloved of the Worlds was keeping them in His remembrance. The Master right away accepted to do so and asked for their names.

We returned home with utmost joy. As we entered our quarters, the Master said to the companions, "Tonight we went for a walk with *Jináb-i-Khán*. By chance we were able to take in some of the glamorous avenues of Paris we had not seen before. Then we returned by cab, which is cheaper here than in America." He then dismissed everyone and afterwards I gave Him a list of the tailors in my shops which He had requested. I thought that He would tend to it when time permitted. But instead, He immediately wrote the following Tablet for the workers in my shop while still standing and handed it to me.

To: *Jináb-i-Aqá Murtidá,*
Jináb-i-Aqá Mírzá Shukr'u'lláh
Jináb-i-Aqá Sayyid Ismá'il who was a pioneer
from Isfahán
Jináb-i-Aqá Mírzá Abdu'l-Husayn Yazdí
Jináb-i-Aqá Mírzá `Alí
Jináb-i-Aqá Ridá
Jináb-i-Aqá Ridá Khán

upon them, and upon the other friends
in the shop rest the Glory of the All-Glorious!

In the name of the Supreme Goal!

O Lovers of Truth! Though night and day Abdu'l-Bahá is immersed in the sea of proclamation, teaching and the providing of proofs, Jináb-i-Azíz requests a Tablet in the sweet-toned speech of parrots. And under any such exacting commander (as yourself!), I remain obedient and considerate (of your wishes), because Jináb-i-Azíz is very dear to Me! At this very moment, as it is now nightfall, I am standing beside a lamp, writing swiftly as I stand, in order to impart joy and delight to those friends in spirit.

Praise be to God, that in Paris souls were found who were cordial and dear; and that the Cause of God has bestowed spirit upon this old place and established there the Teachings of God. Our hope is that in this very centre of materialism, the friends might rally forth and find victory in the field, raise the divine pavilion, and the banner of "Yá Bahá'u'lláh!" be unfurled. Greetings to you all, and upon each of you be the blessing of God.

- `Abdu'l-Bahá
(unauthorized translation)

In the Master's Presence in Paris

Late afternoon one Thursday we were in the presence of the Master. Those assembled there to the best of my recollection were -- Jináb-i-Aqá Mírzá Azíz'u'lláh Khán Vargá, Mírzá Muhammad Báqir Khán, 'Aqá Mírzá Asad'u'lláh and Tamaddun'ul-Mulk, along with Mon. Dreyfus, some others and myself. The Master was speaking of the progress of the Cause and, after citing several instances, turned His face towards me and said, "*Inscribe in the margin of your book: All the forces of the world are being defeated. Have patience for a few years. The light of the Revelation of Bahá'u'llah will envelop the whole world.*" *

All the addresses and discourses of 'Abdu'l-Bahá throughout Europe -- especially in London and in Paris -- at which I was present, were quite long and detailed. Since I took no notes, I will not attempt to elaborate on them. Particularly since all these have been meticulously detailed in the book, Paris Talks, as well as in other sources. I shall only make mention of those events and statements which stand foremost in my memory. These episodes are a constant source of joy and upliftment for my soul. Each one of the utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá were taken down in shorthand by several secretaries. I was merely a humble observer, witnessing with my own eyes how those of nobility with whom I used to associate in Tehran, fully aware of the degree of their pride, would be transformed

*The substance, of this remark, has been attested to by Jináb-i-Aqa-i-Bar-Afrukhtih, member of the NSA of Iran.

into a state of lowliness and humility in the presence of the Master. The power and influence of the Master over them was so profound that the picture of it all will never fade from my mind.

The Theosophical Society

On a night pouring hard with rain, 'Abdu'l-Bahá attended a gathering of Theosophists to which He was invited. Many people were assembled there. Upon 'Abdu'l-Bahá's arrival, all present paid their respect to Him. Their convenor introduced Him as follows: "His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in our eyes, represents the epitome of a perfect man and spiritual being. In these times, his discourses and pronouncements present a model for the entire world to follow. This new Cause has been founded some eighty years ago. At its inception the Báb appeared among the Moslems to bring healing to the world. Then Bahá'u'lláh, the greatest of the Divine Manifestations, laid stress on universal peace and the federation of nations. 'Abdu'l-Bahá is presenting these very teachings. He has given talks and Theosophists have been drawn to His discourses. So it is our great honour to give audience to the discourse He is about to deliver to us. Let us put aside all our preconceptions and absorb ourselves in His discourse, which will undoubtedly prove to be a source of wisdom and illumination. We have asked Him this evening to address us, to which He has kindly assented. His talk will be fully translated for us and at the end of His discourse, He will chant a prayer in Persian, which will however, not be translated. Doubtlessly our spirits will ascend to loftier planes as a result of that prayer. Now, with our utmost deference, we beseech 'Abdu'l-Bahá to commence His address." Thereupon the Blessed Master gave a talk and Mon. Dreyfus translated it, sentence by sentence.*

Newspaper Coverage

One day, a large number of people were gathered in the presence of the Master. One of the Bahá'ís, who had just returned from London, brought back with him some newspapers. He stated to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Your Honour, most papers have covered your itinerary there. The majority of stories were quite positive. But a few have penned some false statements." The Master smiled and replied, "*We knew this full well, and at our farewell night in the presence of scholars and professors and others, we made mention of this fact. We stated, 'We are about to depart. No doubt certain individuals will arise in opposition. They will publish articles against the Faith.*

(*For the text of this discourse, kindly refer to Mahmud's Diary.)

And what would result from it? The fruit of it all is the increased awareness and understanding all this would create. From the very inception of the Faith till the present, evil wishers have written a number of unjust statements. Had you yourself seen what Ḥájí Muḥammad Karim Khán stated about the Faith what would you have said?" It later became clear that these articles were partially written by Professor Browne.

The Master continued, *"I will have someone write a crushing response to Professor Browne."* Then He told me to accompany Him to Mon. Dreyfus' house. At once I hired a taxi and the Blessed Master thus honoured Mon. Dreyfus' residence with His presence. He asked Mon. Dreyfus to read Browne's narrative, together with the description of His attainment of the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. Mr. Dreyfus was thus reading aloud, and translating. The Master was listening most attentively. What has stuck in my memory was more or less as follows: I recall how Browne wrote that he had tea in Haifa, then proceeded to 'Akká by carriage, and at last attained the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. As he himself writes, *"When I desired to proceed to 'Akká, a few of Bahá'u'lláh sons were in my company. I entered the room and found myself in the presence of a wondrous figure. The face on whom I gazed I can never forget though I cannot describe it. Those piercing eyes seemd to read ones very soul; power and authority sat on that ample brow. I found myself entranced in His presence. Thereupon Bahá-u'lláh stated, "Thou hast come to see a prisoner and and excile. We desire but the good of this world and the happiness of the nations. Does not your country need this also?"* He then bade me be seated, and ordered tea for me. I then was able to regain my power to speak."

Up to this point 'Abdu'l-Bahá approved the truthfulness of these statements! What was written in the newspapers after that he said was nothing but falsehood. This man is a hypocrite. The Master then repeated over and over, *"I will order someone to write a crushing response to him."* After stating this, 'Abdu'l-Bahá left Mon. Dreyfus' residence and returned to His own.

Jalálu'd-Dawlih Attains the Presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Paris

The Master would receive, from morning to evening, eminent scholars from both East and West, who had requested the honour of meeting Him. Each such individual who put forth a question, would be granted a sufficient response, and would depart completely satisfied. Nevertheless, the Master did not enjoy his stay in Paris, and would frequently remark that the city was dark "like a beehive." His wish was to leave Paris as soon as possible.

One day, Jalálu'd-Dawlih, who was of Persian aristocracy, rich and powerful, and also a friend of mine, came to the

Master's presence, whereupon he was invited to have lunch. At the table, 'Abdu'l-Bahá talked mainly on the greatness and achievements of the Faith. Jalálu'd-Dawlih was listening most carefully. At last he decided to say something, and began by paying me a compliment. The Master stated at this point, *"It is not necessary to introduce him to me. I know him quite well."* But the reason for Jalálu'd-Dawlih's insistence in doing this was that one of the sons of Zillu's-Sultán's* named Hormouz Mírzá, had written a letter to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. I was the one who had delivered the letter to the Master. The Master had given response which I had taken back to the questioner. Jalálu'd-Dawlih was aware of this, and therefore encouraged me to approach Zillu's-Sultán and his brothers and inform them of the Faith. As I was well liked by Zillu's-Sultán and his family, I was comfortable to speak of the Faith quite openly and had no fear whatsoever in doing so. Zillu's-Sultán, though he would listen, would at the same time turn a deaf ear to it.

Though the Master was rather ill and weak in Paris, every day he would meet people either in His residence or at other gatherings of both Eastern and Western Baha'i friends. He would deliver elaborate discourses. Jináb-i-Dighan was in the presence of the Master and would take notes. Every day He recovered correspondence which consisted primarily of invitations from various cities. Many invitations came from Germany -- especially Stuttgart -- in which the friends in those regions expressed their longing for 'Abdu'l-Baha to visit. Upon regaining some of His health and vigor, He set out in that direction. Due to personal buisness, with the Master's permission, I remained behind in Paris. In my stead, Jináb-i-Báqir accompanied the Master to Germany.

The War of 1914-1918 and the Days Following

After my journey was completed and I had returned to Iran, World War I broke out. The Master had warned about the war long beforehand, but no one could imagine its eventual outbreak. At any rate, not only during the course of the war, but in the period following as well, I was kept in suspense as to when I would be able to attain the Master's Presence once again. Other friends were more fortunate and would succeed in attaining His Presence. I often expressed my servitude to Him through Jináb-i-Amín and other pilgrims. Each time I would beg for the opportunity to attain His presence, once again, even though in principle the Master had long ago granted me such permission. I somehow did not have the opportunity until I at last received a Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá which delighted my heart and uplifted my soul:

*Son of Násiri-d'Din-Sháh and governor of Isfahán at the time of the death of the King of Martyrs and the Beloved of Martyrs.

In care of Jináb-i-Amín, Tehran.
 To Aqá Mirzá Azíz'u'lláh Khán, the Tailor.
 Upon him be the Glory of God.

He is God!

O Spiritual Friend! Signs of divine assistance, in this blessed year, are radiating from all horizons, even as the rays of dawn. Verses of proof are chanted in village and city alike and whole streams of heavenly blessing flow throughout societies the world over.

From every side an anthem is raised, and from every land a melody and refrain. These are the overall bestowals of God. Give ear to the cry of "Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá", ascending to the Concourse on High, and to the call of "Yá 'Alí'u'l-'Alá," imparting joy and rapture to the ears of (those in) the Kingdom.

The friends must be at the apex of joy and happiness because, thanks to God, the desires of the pure in heart and the utmost wish of luminous souls, are now visible and manifest through the bounty and grace of His Holiness (Bahá'u'lláh), the Supreme Goal.

The Beloved One of our desire is present in this gathering in His Most Great Beauty and has manifested Himself to all the friends. Jináb-i-Amín has the utmost praise for the spiritual meetings of the friends of Jewish heritage, who in truth have taken great steps and made every effort toward service in the Cause of God.

At this point, I wish very much to bring each and all to mind, and write a word for each of those dear friends who are in my heart. Alas, time does not permit mention of each, one by one, so they will be given recognition together. Know that Jináb-i-Amín has made mention of each individual.

Praise be to God, that in this great Dispensation, the glances of divine favour have embraced the people of Israel, that the promises of the Prophets of old might be fulfilled, in the realm of visible existence.

O Jewish friends! His Holiness Kalím (Moses), from the precincts of the sacred Kingdom, is, at this very moment, voicing praises for your attraction and enkindlement (devotion). The Concourse in the realm above are lauding you and recounting your deeds. At every moment, the denizens of the spiritual realm raise aloud the call: "Blessed are ye!"

It is therefore my earnest wish that the Jewish friends will continue to render evident service to the Lord of the Friend (Abraham), and thereby augment the joy and happiness of His Holiness Abraham, in the lofty retreats of the Kingdom.

Upon you all rest the Glory of the All-Glorious!

- `Abdu'l-Bahá
(unauthorized translation)

Visit with the Master after a Lengthy Lapse of Time

After the end of World War I, in the year 1919 to be precise, I set out for Istanbul via Russia in the company of Mírzá Ghulám-'Alí Khán Daváchi. Travel following the war was not without its difficulties. This was mainly due to the presence of enemy forces scattered throughout the territories. Countries which had surrendered were under occupation by the controlling military forces, which oversaw all traffic. At the border crossing at Badkubih, we faced a number of problems. Jináb-i-Daváchi had left me alone while he sought help at the Bahá'í Centre. Fortunately for me, the British Consul there had known me previously in Tehran. He was informed as to the nature of my business and with his assistance, the immediate difficulties were resolved. Jináb-i-Daváchi and I were transporting a fair amount of merchandise and because bandits were plentiful, the roads were unsafe. I approached the Consul to see if he could consider means for our protection. As a result, he charged two guards to escort me to the Ḥaẓírat'u'l-Quds at Badkubih, where I found Jináb-i-Daváchi. In Badkubih, we had the bounty of meeting with the Bahá'í friends.

In the company of 'Alí-Akbar Nakhjavání we undertook to pay a visit to Mirzá Naqiov. He was ill and bedridden. Jináb-i-Nakhjavání stated that these two gentlemen were on their way to pilgrimage. "Permit them to supplicate for your recovery," he said. The ill man burst into tears and sobbed so deeply that we were all deeply touched. Later, in Batum, we heard the news of his passing.

Together with Ghulám 'Alí-Khán we reached Batum and from there set out for Istanbul. I had plans to travel first to Europe and from there embark on pilgrimage on the way back. When I notified Ghulám-'Alí Khán of my intentions, he decided to accompany me on the rest of my itinerary, because we were good friends even though I knew then that his only mission was to make a pilgrimage. I advised against it, but he insisted on travelling through Europe. Unfortunately he had no visa and therefore officials denied him passage. He implored me to stay behind and try to obtain for him a visa. We prepared



Bahá'í friends in Istanbul. Jináb-i-Azízí is seated in the Centre, next to Jináb-i-Ghulam-Ali-i-Davachi.

all the documents we could, even to the extent of supplying precise dates for the major points of our itinerary. But the will of God was otherwise. One night he was seized by severe abdominal pains. At once we consulted a physician, who diagnosed the ailment as appendicitis. He had to undergo an operation immediately, so I took him to a hospital and -- thank God -- the operation went smoothly. I remained in Istanbul until his recovery. I then insisted that he give up his plans for Europe and proceed directly to 'Akka. After saying goodbye, he set out for Haifa, and I for Europe.

After taking care of personal affairs in various European cities, I embarked at once for the Beloved of the World. Upon attaining His presence and kissing the sacred threshold, the first words my Master spoke were these, "*Jináb-i-Khán, we were waiting for you for a very long time. This time you were very late.*"* Thereafter the Master showed special kindness to me and would often express words and sentiments which meant a great deal to me. Bonds of love and loyalty grew so strong, that I was simply unwilling to leave His threshold save for his dismissal. In reality, I was unable to tear myself away.

One day the Master was out for a walk with Mirzá Haydar-'Alí on the slopes of Carmel. I was present as well. The conversation was generally about Carmel, the shrine of the Báb and the advisability of purchasing surrounding properties. The Master thereupon turned His Blessed Face towards me and stated, "*Encourage the friends to endeavor even more to purchase land on Mount Carmel, because it will not be possible later on.*"

Afterwards the Master asked Ḥájí Mírzá Ḥaydar-'Alí, "*Tell me some news.*" To which Mírzá Ḥaydar-'Alí replied, "Your Honour, Ibtihajul-Mulk has sent a letter." He had scarcely finished speaking when the Master broke in, "*Write to him. Respond immediately and tell him to move right away and come here as soon as possible.*" Though I do not recall the exact words, it seems this statement was reiterated several times. As I was dismissed, Mírzá Ḥaydar-'Alí explained to me, "*Jináb-i-Ibtihajul-Mulk in his letter had only expressed his servitude and had not requested permission for pilgrimage but I will write him to convey that permission has been granted.*"

The Son of Azal, Who Sought Refuge at the Sacred Threshold

At the Inn in Haifa, it was customary for newly arrived travellers and pilgrims to be introduced to each other in order to foster fellowship among all the friends. Among the newcomers was a man with a very sad face. He had a long moustache and a tall red *finih* (headdress). He would talk to no one and would not introduce himself. He would not take part

(*When Jináb-i-Azízí was recalling this statement he was filled with emotion.)

in discussions, and would refuse to socialize.

I asked who he was and why was he such a loner. Why did he refuse to talk and why would others show him no kindness? I was told, "He prefers things that way, and the Master has ordered that no one disturb him." I was further told "He is Azal's son, and has come from Cyprus and has sought refuge with the Master. He is the Master's guest and 'Abdu'l-Bahá is taking care of his expenses." I was also observing Mírzá Badí'u'lláh, who was standing in the Master's Presence respectfully, with arms crossed over his chest, eyes fixed on the ground and very quiet. As I knew of his actions in the past, I exclaimed, "What is he doing here?!" I was told that he had expressed shame for his past actions and had sought refuge at the threshold of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The Master was also taking care of him.

Dr. Faríd was likewise utterly selfless and humble in the Master's presence. While 'Abdu'l-Bahá would discourse, everyone would be all ears, with arms crossed in the Blessed Presence. The actions by covenant-breakers alone suffices to furnish irrefutable proof of the grandeur of the Cause for one imbued with insight.

The Counsel of the Master that I should not Travel Alone

I was one day in the presence of the Master on the occasion of an outing. So drawn was I to the Master's perfections that in my state of intoxication, I lost all sense of self. I found myself soaring in the atmosphere of wonder and rapture as I took in the wisdom of His utterances. Among the many things He had to say to me was that I should not undertake to travel alone in the time to come, and that I should try to have with me a trusted companion. Having said this, he related the story of a robust man who used to carry the sacred messages of Bahá'u'lláh to the Bahá'í friends, and would deliver their letters and gifts back on return to the Holy Land. Often he would bring with him considerable funds of money as well. His name was Amín. In fact, he was a very strong and imposing man. Towards the end of his life, he still considered himself somewhat invincible, even when passing through unprotected and remote villages. En route he would also conduct some personal business. His pride and over-confidence were his downfall. Suddenly he vanished, and nothing was heard from him again. Indeed he had become too self-assured and eventually met an ill-fated end. Therefore He told me that in the course of my travels I should never again travel alone, but to always take someone with me. Such of course was the gist of His statements, His exact words escape my memory. I simply relate what I took to heart then and what has remained with me since. There in fact may have been other meanings in His statements beyond what I understood, but I absorbed what I was able to, based on my capacity back then.

A while later we were in the presence of the Master, partaking of His blessings when the friends requested we all be photographed with the Master. So a picture was taken in front of His residence. At that time Shoghi Rabbani was not present. Upon his arrival, the Master ordered that another picture should be taken in front of the shrine of the Báb on Mount Carmel. This resulted in the joy of the friends.

A Mission Given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá

One day the Master sent word that I should prepare to embark on a mission. At once I expressed my complete obedience and readiness to execute His wish. As the Blessed Master wished to see me before my departure, He called me to His Presence. He then entrusted me with a considerable number of Tablets and sealed envelopes. He placed these with His Blessed hands in my pocket and stressed, *"Be careful, along the way, deliver these to their intended recipients. You must endeavour to exercise vigilant caution."*

I kissed His blessed cloak, tears streaming from my eyes. His kindness to me was endless and comforting, and He advised me to persevere. I was scarcely able to fathom the foresight behind His admonitions to be patient, the reasons for which were later to become evident (as I shall explain later). Anyway, with heart filled with love, and eyes brimming with tears, I made my departure.

The harsh martial restrictions immediately following the war had not yet been relaxed. Guards at every border would carefully make their searches. Spies were being watched for and sealed envelopes were forbidden as a matter of course. Warnings to this effect were made public everywhere. Remarkably, no official took pains to search me. It was as if all the officials with whom I had contact were somehow negligent in their duties.

Accompanying me on this journey were Jináb-i-'Alí Khán Firuz Hamadání and Jináb-i-Ayyub Raza'at. Jináb-Ayyub Raza'at was a tall and sturdy young man. I asked him to stand guard over my luggage. En route, in Istanbul, I delivered a number of Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to their respective owners. In particular, there was a Tablet in honour of the friends in Badkubih, through its recipient Mírzá 'Alí Akbar Nakhjavání, who was in charge of the business interests of Nagiov. Upon receipt of the various Tablets, all the friends held a magnificent Feast at the Bahá'í Centre. At that Feast, an announcement was made that visitors from the Holy Land had arrived, bearing a Tablet addressed to the friends of Bakubih which would be read for all the friends present. Everyone there was thrilled with anticipation. The entire Tablet was chanted aloud and was a cause of great rejoicing.

This occasion coincided with the Russian Revolution, when the fire of chaos had been sparked by the Bolsheviks. The



A Gathering of Bahá'ís in the Presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in front of the House of the Master. Jinnáb-i-Azíz'u'lláh Azízí is standing in the second row, third from the left



A gathering of Bahá'ís in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá on Mount Carmel in front of the Shrine of the Bab. Shoghi Effendi is the first person on the left in the front row. Jinnáb-i-Azizí is the fourth person from the left in the second row

friends were in a state of bewilderment, and knew not what course of action to take. The Czar of Russia had been ousted, yet the Bolshevik regime was not yet in full control. In that Tablet, the friends of Badkubih were advised to remain calm, and not to side with or join ranks with any political faction, and to live up to the Bahá'í teachings. Conscientiously, after saying our farewell to the friends of Badkubih, we set out for Tehran.

In Rasht, Ibi-haju'l-Mulk, who was an old friend, had invited me to visit. Since he knew I had just come from the Holy Land, he asked about the well-being of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Suddenly I recalled the time on Mount Carmel when 'Abdu'l-Bahá asked Mírzá Ḥaydar-'Alí, "Tell me what is new?" And when mention was made of Ibtihaju'l-Mulk's letter the reply came, "Write him to come right away."

All this I related to Ibtihaju'l-Mulk, and urged him, saying, "You must go as soon as possible to the Holy Land, as the Master has willed you should" Jináb-i-Ibtihaju'l-Mulk responded, "Yes indeed. In fact the letter from Mírzá Ḥaydar 'Alí has arrived as well, admonishing me to do the same, but the trouble is -- I have not asked for permission to go on pilgrimage! I had merely enquired after the well-being of the Master." Ibtihaju'l-Mulk did not choose to go to the Holy Land, and, sadly, he was found murdered a short while later in Rasht. Not only his family but friends as well were caught up in grief caused by his loss.

In Tehran, I presented the Tablet addressing the friends to the Spiritual Assembly, so that it could be copied and circulated among the friends. You will find the text in the pages following:

*In care of Aqá Mírzá Azíz'u'lláh Khán, the Tailor, -
- on him be the Glory of the Most Glorious!*

*To all the spiritual friends in Tehran. Upon each
and all rest the glory of the Most Glorious!*

HE IS GOD!

*O my Lord, O my Lord! Thou beholdest Thy loved
ones, attracted to Thy Abhá Kingdom, enkindled in their
inmost being, enflamed with the fire of Thy love, that is
blazing in the Tree of Sinai, submissive to Thy lofty
Word, humble in Thy Cause amongst all people, obedient to
that which Thou hast commanded in Thy Epistles and
Tablets, excelling in the promotion of Thy Word, and
clinging to Thy Most Great Bounty.*

*O God! They are surging as the billowing waves,
raging as the blowing breeze. They have scattered Thy
fragrances amongst the peoples of the earth and, not
concealing themselves in obscure corners, they came forth*

and called out in Thy name, openly beckoning all to Thy love at every morn and even-tide. Thou seest them, bowing, prostrated, humble and submissive at the door of Thy Oneness, self-effacing and lowly, and they have resisted those, who, in their pride and arrogance were negligent in their remembrance of Thee.

O God! Thou knowest that Thy servant is intoning at every morn and eve the verses of His contentment with them, His tongue, breaking forth at every dawn and dusk in thanksgiving to them. Praised be Thou, O Bestower of Bounty for having enabled them to serve Thee and confirmed them in worshipping Thee, attaining to Thy knowledge, being steadfast in Thy love, and grateful to Thy Bounty and Mercy.

O my Lord! These are the birds of the apex of knowledge, sustain their wings with the ensigns of might and power, that they may soar to the highest realm, to the ultimate aim, to the endless heaven and make of them towering trees, waving banners, surging fountains, beautiful gardens, and mighty mountains, unmoved by the blowing winds even though it were raging storms, breaking down the hollow palm trees, and assist them in all their affairs under all conditions and give them to drink of the chalice of Hope, overflowing with Joy in the Kingdom of Beauty.

Verily, Thou art the Compassionate, Thou art the Bounteous, and Thou art the Most Beloved and Exalted One.

O companions of 'Abdu'l-Bahá! At this very moment, on the slopes of Mt. Carmel, near to the Shrine of the Báb, This Servant is engaged in your remembrance and occupied with your mention in a state of utmost happiness and joy. This is due to your recent initiative, enthusiasm and efforts, deserving of recognition, which were reported recently from Tehran. The flames of the fire of the love of God have leapt to great heights. I am in a state of rapture and happiness, for that land is the birthplace of His Holiness, the Supreme Goal (Bahá'u'lláh), and should therefore become the centre of divine inspirations. From that blessed city the rays of the love of God should radiate in all directions, and the fragrances (of the teachings) spread throughout. Teachings which shake the pillars of ancient imitations and overthrow the foundations of decayed beliefs.

At any rate I supplicate morning and evening, day and night, imploring His Divine Holiness (Bahá'u'lláh) to impart renewed strength at every moment and to manifest

a fresh flavour and exuberant vigour.

Jináb-i-Mirzá Subhi did not fall short in recounting your praise. Indeed he adorned his speech with your mention and praise, stating that each of these friends is worthy of blessing from the Realm of Glory, and ever deserving endless bounties from the Concourse on High.

Upon you be the Glory of the Most Glorious!

ʿAbdu'l-Bahá ʿAbbas 1920 Haifa
(unauthorized translation)

**My Wish for a Ninth Visit to the Beloved of the World,
His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá**

(The account of this pilgrimage is taken from the traveller's narrative, penned by his own hand.) The longing kindled in my heart and soul for a ninth visit had now set my being aflame. So in 1921, both for business purposes and to behold once again the beloved Master, I embarked on yet another journey. A company of us Persians made our way through India. The route through Russia was no longer possible due to the closure of the borders as a result of the Bolshevik Revolution, making entry by foreigners practically forbidden.

We went by way of Qazvín, and following our visit with the venerable Hakím Ilahí, we left for Hamadán and from there to Kirmansháh and Qasr-Shirin. In every place and town we experienced honour and joy as a result of meeting the friends.

This was especially true in Hamadán, where the friends hosted a festive gathering of some fifty people. The eminent scholar Jináb-i-Fadil Shírízí delivered an address for the occasion which was pleasing to all. Another Feast, held in our honour at the invitation of Jináb-i-Mírzá Mihdí, saw a large number of friends attend and our spirits were uplifted. Since the Master had ordered me never again to travel alone, I set out once more with a group of Persian merchants in my company, some of whom were Jewish (Jináb-i-Cohen, his son Soloman Khán, and Jináb-iHarunian.) We became good friends along the way and, upon reaching Baghdád, stayed there for a week. I had the honour of visiting the sacred house of Bahá'u'lláh there. This encouraged the Jewish friends to undertake visits to their own holy places in Baghdad. They likewise went to the town of Hileh to visit the shrine of Navi Yizgil. Of course I accompanied them.

Our host in this shrine was Khajih Davúd. On the day of our visit, his friends warned him, "A local gang of Arab thugs are intent on ambushing your guests, with the justification that they are, after all, non-Moslem. Acting on this tip-off, Khajih Davúd informed the local constable. A police escort of several officers, upon orders from the British governor of

'Iráq, then escorted us to the railway station.

Poor Khajih-i-Davúd, barefoot with a dagger concealed beneath his cloak, followed us to the train depot in order to defend us, should the guards fail to do so. As we distanced ourselves from the town, the gang which was after us sent word to other gang members at the next station. It was quite possible that our porters had been offered bribes, since they seemed anxious to drop our luggage and leave. The presence of the police escort was an effective deterrent.

At any rate, we passed through some precarious, unprotected countryside, but at last made our way to the station. Alas, the train had left and we would have to wait one week for its return. There was no choice but to return to Baghdád. Because of this we became quite disturbed. We had made it all this way after so much hardship. Now, how could we even make a return journey without risking further danger from the gang still on the look-out for us?

Each of us was mulling over our predicament in our own way when, quite unexpectedly, a non-scheduled train made a stop about a kilometre away. Each of us put his own belongings on his back and we hurried to reach the train. That night, I had truly tasted the fear of death, wondering what my plight would have been, had I travelled alone.

After five days and five nights of sailing in a ship by the name of Zobaydih, we reached Vasra. During all this time, we had neither room nor space for ourselves. The whole time we would wander endlessly on deck. Imagine, five days and five nights without any means of rest or the necessities of simple accommodation. All this eventually passed as we reached Basra. We had intended to travel through Yemen, but for some reason the required visas were not issued.

I personally knew Mr. Wilson, the British consul in Basra. I approached him and with his influence was able to arrange for tickets to India. As the ship was to dock for five more days, I travelled through the city to do some sight-seeing.

Karachi was a charming and lovely town. It brought to mind images of beautiful cities in Europe. Along the shore, children would throw themselves into the water, swim like frogs out to us and beg for money, as they would from other travellers who threw coins into the water to watch the children dive. The little divers would retrieve each coin with dexterity and ease. Though all this was brought on by poverty and the callousness of the residents there, it was not without enjoyment for all concerned, though the class disparity was something to behold.

The city itself had a special aura, with a beauty and order all its own. However, this landscape was marred by the dreadful poverty we saw.

After two-and-a-half days by ship, we finally reached Bombay. There we headed to Aqá Mírzá Ardashír's establishment, known as Edward's Inn. During our stay, I derived great

pleasure from visiting the Bahá'í friends in India. Most of my time I spent in the company of Aqá Mírzá Fadl'u'lláh Khán Banání, a good Shírází friend of mine. He likewise wished to see Europe with me and make his pilgrimage to the Holy Land on the way back. He urged me that we should become travelling companions. Unfortunately, I had already purchased my own ticket so I began to make every effort to obtain a ticket for him on the same vessel. Also during that time, I would visit the Hazíratú'l-Quds where he was staying, and was fortunate enough to meet several other friends.

Distressing News

One Day, I approached Mírzá Fadl'u'lláh Khán at the Bahá'í Centre to discuss our journey with him. In front of the stairs, I met one of the blessed friends. Uncharacteristically, he appeared quite depressed. This caused me to wonder. I ascended the stairs and at the top caught sight of Mírzá 'Alí Muhammad Khán Nabílí (son of Jináb-i-Aqá Shaykh Ahmad Nabílí Qazvíní). He was sobbing with a heart-rending grief. I asked, "What has happened? Why are you in tears?" He did not answer. I then entered the hall. There I saw the caretaker crying also. I grew more curious as to what was going on. I enquired once again, insistent upon an answer, yet was given no response. At this point I could no longer contain myself. Harshly, with unyielding insistence, I demanded to know why these men were grieving, and why no one was saying anything.

Jináb-i-Mírzá Mahmúd Zarqání, with grave sadness yet with great love, reported, "His Holiness Abdu'l-Bahá has passed away to the Abhá Kingdom."

Upon hearing this, I was thrown into turmoil and experienced such intense anguish that I lost all control. I struck my head and face so violently in grief that I eventually passed out. When I regained consciousness, I beheld a group of individuals circled around me, splashing me with cold water trying to rouse me. They sought to console me by saying, "This report of the Master's Ascension was not true, but could be the work of covenant-breakers. We should verify such rumours by telegram."

But, alas, they thought that by talking like this they would calm me down. God only knows the extent to which my broken heart was shattered beyond all possibility of comfort. I was sobbing loudly and there was no way to stop my tears. One of the prominent Indian believers, Mr. Vakil, was trying to console me, while sprinkling rose-water on my face. He was talking in Hindi, and Mírzá Mahmúd was translating rapidly as follows: "This is no small occurrence, and the news has reached us from an unofficial source. So we should make every effort to confirm this report."

Meanwhile, my grief was such that everyone else present

forgot his own pain while trying to find a way to calm me down. In the midst of all this, those around me kept insisting that we ought to send a telegram straightaway to get to the truth of the matter, and, moreover, there were those non-Bahá'is present for whom our display of emotion was not appropriate and might reflect negatively on the Cause. Yet what antidote is there for a heart rent asunder?

While this was taking place, my travel companions arrived at the Bahá'í Centre. The instant they saw me in such a pitiful state, they became distraught and concerned and, after discovering the cause of my sorrow, expressed their deepest sympathy and condolences, notwithstanding the fact that they themselves were not Bahá'ís. By force, they took me back to the residence to change my clothes, since what I was wearing was drenched down to my underwear.

When we approached Jamshíd Ardashír's Inn, the owner himself grew concerned over my condition the moment he saw me, and asked me what was the matter. I did not explain. The others simply said that I was not feeling well. All the friends came to see me and console me. They had forgotten their own sorrow to comfort me. Such was the state of things until the answer to our telegram came back: The Ascension of the Master had taken place on November 28.

Sheer sorrow made my trip to Europe impossible. I told my friends that I was not going to Europe and cancelled my tickets accordingly. Upon receiving the telegram, the Indian Bahá'í friends gathered in a large hall, garlanded it with memorial bouquets, and chanted prayers, especially the Tablet of Visitation.

Profound sorrow and anguish was felt that night. How utterly downcast the friends were. In that atmosphere of grief, the friends resolved that they should ever remain united, that -- God forbid -- there should never be any division among them. They swore they would prevent chaos and disunity from ever befalling the community, and never to thwart the advance of the Cause. Nor did they wish, by so doing, ever to give cause for the enemies and those jealous of the Faith to gain satisfaction.

Decision to Depart for the Holy Land

My heart was crushed and my spirit was consumed in sorrow. Whatever I tried to do to console myself was in vain. My only recourse was to visit the Holy Land. The only ship due to depart soon for Port Said was the "Sri Bijáná." But there was no space aboard that vessel. This mattered little to me. With unrelenting insistence, I succeeded at length in convincing the captain to allot me space on deck, en route to Port Said. To whatever objections the captain raised that the journey would be arduous, over rough seas, lasting a fortnight, lacking comfort, with no sleeping accommodations,

I swore that it was of no consequence to me.

As it turned out, the captain's warnings proved true. From the very first day, the sea was so storm-ridden that it was impossible even to eat. But compared to my own inner turmoil, the storm was nothing, and for that matter eating was of little consequence as well.

From Port of Eden to Port Said

Following two days of hunger, thirst and exhaustion, the ship anchored a ways off Port Eden. As the stopover was for some time, I went to Eden by boat to get some food. The town appeared civilized, even somewhat Western, but the women were half-naked and all walked barefoot. The city had a lively atmosphere that would attract most any tourist.

At any rate, we reboarded the ship as it embarked for Port Sudan. Upon entering the city, we encountered the exact contrary to Eden. Port Sudan was scarcely populated, the inhabitants appeared to live in abject poverty and filth. We boarded ship once more and set off for the Suez Canal. The ship moved calmly through the channel. On either side were enchanting gardens and magnificent trees. It was a breathtaking scene, a wonder to behold.

To resume, at night we reached Port Said. At once I took a boat to town to see Mírzá Ahmad Yazdí, and soon learned that the Bahá'í friends had departed for Haifa. Upon hearing this news we left immediately, and at midnight reached Qanta. I had with me a letter of introduction addressed to 'Abdu'l-Rahman Effendi, a high official in Immigration, and because of this the paperwork was quickly done and shortly after midnight I took the train for Jerusalem. 'Abdu'l-Rahman had already advised me as to where I should transfer trains.

I first reached Jerusalem. It was pouring rain all along. In the sector of Jerusalem which Muslims call the Noble Sanctuary, I visited every holy place and shrine sacred to Islam and Judaism, and in each place said prayers. I should mention that in all of the Jewish holy places, I would enter as a Moslem, since foreigners were otherwise not granted such permission.

My sole purpose in entering these shrines was to find some peace and consolation after pouring out my heart in prayer. It made no difference where, since in my eyes, all religions were one.

The Scene of Heart-Rending Sorrow

It was forty days following the ascension of the peerless Master when I reached Haifa. A magnificent memorial service was about to commence. From all neighbouring towns and countries -- Syria, Palestine, Lebanon, and Egypt -- leaders

of religion and nobility alike were in attendance, and each in turn delivered a special tribute concerning the greatness of the life and accomplishments of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. There were more than 500 Christians, Moslems, Jews, and Bahá'ís present. All were served some food, tea and coffee in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's house. Each paid a personal tribute and gave his own account of the many services rendered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who was many times referred to as the foremost individual in the entire world. Each person spoke in his own native tongue, and most were deeply struck with remorse. Many were moved to tears. Each tribute was given before a large picture of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, which was placed in the front part of the room. These tributes, which were in French or Arabic, were published, by and large, in the press. On that occasion, many powerful officials and people of eminence, together with various journalists, presented themselves. This gathering lasted from noon till dusk, at which time the crowd departed with deep sorrow.

Unaware of my own condition, I myself was overwhelmed with tears and pangs of sorrow. Only Jináb-i-Aynu'l-Mulk took notice of me, sat by me and tried to console me. Also 'Abdu'l-Bahá's sons-in-law manifested the greatest kindness and sympathy towards me. After the gathering had ended, my tears kept flowing. My state was such that all the friends expressed to me their sympathy. I had truly lost control of myself, and until it was suppertime, all present were drawn to the spectacle of grief and sorrow. At bedtime, the friends entrusted me to Mírzá Yúsuf-Khán Vojdání to take me to Mírzá 'Ináyat'u'lláh Khán Isfahání's residence to rest. Mírzá Yúsuf Khán tried his best to console me and impart words of advice, but nothing except my tears would quench the fire, flaming in my dark heart. I recall, that as a result of the entreaties of Mírzá Yúsuf Khán, I lost control of my speech and said, "What are you talking about? You -- such an old man -- wish to live, and simply let the father of humanity pass on." The poor man replied, "When did I ever desire such a thing? Don't you think that I myself am just as heartsick?"

The Occasion on which the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá was Read

It was Sunday, the day after the memorial service, and the friends were gathered in the blessed residence. In the adjoining rooms the ladies and all the women of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's household were gathered behind closed curtains with doors left ajar. The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá was about to be read.

Three Tablets written by the Master himself were brought to the gathering by one of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's sons-in-law. In the presence of all gathered these were given to Mírzá Yúsuf Khán Vojdání Hamadání to chant. He arose, and with a sorrowful

voice began to chant one of the Tablets. The gathering was filled with sorrow and I was overcome with emotion. I could not stop my tears. The chanting of the Will and Testament took place from morning till 1:00 pm. Because Mírzá Yúsuf Khán was emotionally drained in the course of his reading, the remainder of the Tablet was chanted by Aqá Muḥammad-Táqí Isfahání, a merchant from Egypt. The final Tablet was chanted by Mírzá Yúsuf Khán again.

During this entire time I was not alone in my tears. All the friends from Iran, Egypt and the United States were crying pitifully. Everyone was overwhelmed with a sense of loss and profound grief. Any Bahá'í who has read this document knows full well with how great an emphasis the unity of the friends was stressed, and also of the appointment of Shoghi Effendi as his successor. The Master referred to him as the "Incomparable Branch" and the Guardian of the Faith. Opposition to him was accounted as opposition to God. The Master had called upon the people of Bahá to obey the Guardian and to avoid all disunity.

When the reading of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá was over, one of the friends gave a very moving address. At the close of his remarks, he spoke of the naming of Shoghi Effendi as Guardian, in an optimistic and forward-looking manner. After this, the friends present entered the room in which the ascension of the Master had taken place. There they saw His táj and broke out in such expressions of sorrow as are beyond my power to describe. My own grief left me with eyes swollen by tears, and my appearance was quite pitiful to see.

A Wonderful Feast Following the Reading of the Will & Testament

After reading the Will and Testament, the friends were all invited to a luncheon hosted by Aqá Siyyid Jalál, son of the King of Martyrs, who was one of the sons-in-law of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

There were chairs arranged in four or five rooms to seat all the friends. After lunch was served, we returned to the blessed residence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. As my condition still was unstable, three of the friends were commissioned to take me on a walk. One of them was Jináb-i-'Abdu'l-Rasul, whom I had known previously. He was the one I had met during my first pilgrimage, when we visited the holy shrines together.

It was remarkable that however much I tried to calm down, it was all to no avail. Tears were streaming from my eyes unceasingly and I had no control over my grief. It was around dusk that I finally began to settle down, and we returned to the residence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. There was a gathering in the very place where we used to visit the Master and, as his absence again struck me, I once again lost my composure. My sorrow overwhelmed me once again, and my outburst moved all those present. But Jináb-i-Mírzá Yúsuf Khán Vojdání broke in

with a chanting of prayers and holy writings, and this affected me a great deal. I felt better and calmed down.

After the end of the meeting, we partook of dinner and following this, all went home to retire. Together with Mírzá Yúsuf Khán Vojdání, I went again to the residence of Mírzá 'Ináyat'u'lláh Isfahání.

Visit to the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh at the Request of the Greatest Holy Leaf

The next morning, Jináb-i-Mírzá Lotf'u'lláh Khán Hakím arrived with a message from the residence of the female members of the Master's household, which said that I should pay a visit to the Most Holy Shrine in Bahjí. On this day, pilgrimage to the most sacred threshold should bring me solace and impart tranquillity to my heart.

Upon chanting the Tablet of Visitation and circumambulating the Shrine, we returned to Haifa around dusk. As was our custom, we gathered with the friends in the Master's residence for prayers and reminiscing about the Master. The sorrow and sense of loss had abated little. The time came to retire and everyone returned to their quarters. Some went to their homes nearby, while most went to the Inn on Mount Carmel, and others went to the homes of friends to rest.

In the Presence of the Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, "The Chosen Branch"

The day following pilgrimage to Bahjí, Shoghi Effendi Rabbani, the Chosen Branch and Guardian of the Faith, accepted for the first time a group of friends to his presence, in spite of the fact that he himself was recovering and was in bed.

Prior to the meeting, everyone was advised to consider the condition of the Guardian, and not to show grief in his presence, for the very reason that he himself was in deep sorrow, and displays of emotion would only intensify his own. Those who counselled us in these matters were principally Mírzá Ahmad-i-Yazdí and one of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's sons-in-law.

Those who were summoned were:

Jináb-i-Aqá Muḥammad Táqí,
Jináb-i-Mírzá Ásadulláh Shírází
Jináb-i-Simum Effendi (one of the Armenian Bahá'ís),
Several gentlemen from Egypt,
Jináb-i-Maḥmúd Effendi from Port Said,
Aqá Aḥmad-i-Yazdí,
and myself.

We were in his presence for about half an hour. What he said to us I do not exactly recall, overcome as we were by our sorrow and grief. After showing great kindness to each one of us, he dismissed us.

Request for Pilgrimage to the Shrine of the Báb and to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Place of Rest

Through one of the Master's sons-in-law, I requested permission from the holy household to go to Mount Carmel to visit the shrines of the Báb and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. When permission was granted, I at once notified Darvish Tavangar, Jináb-i-Mírzá Yúsuf Khán Vojdání, along with several other Bahá'ís and together we set out for the precincts of the Beloved.

On the way, Darvish Tavangar chanted prayers in sorrowful tones. In the guest house we had tea, and afterwards performed our ablutions. Together with the rest of the pilgrims, we began our way to the Shrines, to pay our respects.

As we entered the Shrine of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, we bowed our foreheads to his threshold and cried in anguish from the depths of our souls. There no one interfered with or tried to console the other. The flames of sorrow were consuming our individual hearts.

Then Mírzá Yúsuf Khán Vojdání raised his voice to recite the Tablet of Visitation with his soft and sorrowful voice. Once the Tablet was chanted, we returned to the guest house. It was close to dusk when we made it back to Haifa from Mount Carmel. We again went to the blessed residence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Again all the friends were gathered in the Master's room and were intoning prayers. Again, following this each went to his own place to rest and sleep.

Request to Attain the Presence of the Guardian to Gain Permission to Wire Tehran

Following the reading of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and after a number of pilgrimages to the sacred Shrines, there was pause for thought and soul-searching and slowly but surely a sense of peace took hold once more in my heart. The audience with the Guardian, and the time spent in the Shrine of 'Abdu'l-Bahá had special effect. One day, through one of the sons-in-law of the Master, I requested leave to again see the Guardian. He summoned me at once, showered me with kindness, and proceeded to ask the reason for my visit. I replied, "Your Excellency, the friends in Tehran are aching in their hearts for word from this sacred spot. I request that a telegram be dispatched to Tehran." The Guardian said, "Write a draft and bring it to me." So a draft was created and presented, but the Guardian made certain revisions. The message was finalized, and with full

authorization, I wired the telegram to Tehran, which read as follows:

Tehran Spiritual Assembly

Praise be to God that we are most joyous to be under the shadow of the Chosen Branch -- the Guardian of the Faith, His Holiness Shoghi Effendi.

Azíz'u'lláh.

Until that time, the honorific, "Chosen Branch," had not been current, and the station of the Guardian was not known. Thus the content of the message was in itself unique, though I know not what kind of response it generated in Tehran.* A few days after the dispatch of the telegram, and sensing within myself peace and calm, I requested permission to leave. The Guardian again summoned me to his presence. The ill-condition which had afflicted the Guardian was gone. His father, Jináb-i-Mírzá Hádí, was our guide, advising me not to display emotion and thus sadden the Guardian. Though I had found some peace and calm, yet my heart was still grief-stricken.

When I came into his presence, the Guardian embraced me and, after a few words, he asked me about my business enterprise. After this, with utmost reluctance I requested leave to depart. The Guardian turned his face towards me and said, "If you have anything you wish to say, don't hold back. Should you wish for anything, do not hesitate to ask."

At this moment, feelings of inner despondency transformed into confidence. I responded, "Your Excellency, I have nothing to say and wish naught save the welfare and progress of the Cause." On that note, the Guardian spoke a few words of direction and at the end, said, "Rest assured, rest assured, this Cause will progress and will triumph over the whole world." He then said farewell and departed. In the evening I said farewell to the friends, after asking them to pray for me for divine assistance, and at length retired to my place for rest.

The Trip to Europe

After obtaining permission to depart, I left for Port Said

 *The present writer on several occasions from Jináb-i-Rastigar at various gatherings: "At that time I was Secretary of the Local Spiritual Assembly of Tehran. Receiving that telegram brought joy and gladness to each and every one of the members of the Assembly. Once the message was published, all the friends rejoiced, especially over the title, 'The Chosen Branch', which was a new term to the friends."

on the following morning at dawn. With me were Jináb-i-Mahmúd Effendi (one of the Arab Bahá'ís from Port Said) and Dr. Sálíh (one of the most renowned and skilled physicians of Egypt) My old friends and dear companions Jináb-i-Lotf'u'lláh Khán and Aqá Mírzá Hasan Yazdí came to the railway station to bid us farewell.

Upon saying our final farewells, we started our trip. We travelled together till that afternoon when we reached the Egyptian border. As we reached Qantara, Dr. Salih went his own way, while Mahmúd Effendi and I set off towards Port Said. At Qantara on Egyptian soil, we disembarked from our Palestinian train, boarded an Egyptian one and reached Port Said an hour after midnight.

Jináb-i-Mahmúd Effendi would not tolerate my staying in a hotel, and put me up in his own home. As our arrival was unannounced and his family had not expected us, dinner had not been prepared. In fact we had not had a decent meal either for breakfast or for lunch. After waiting a while, as no dinner was served, we went to sleep hungry and the next day we feasted at both breakfast and lunch.

The following morning, Jináb-i-Mahmúd Effendi and I went to purchase my ticket for passage to Marseilles. Quite unexpectedly, a certain ship, which had set sail at midnight, mysteriously returned two hours later. After purchasing a ticket, I made the necessary arrangements, took care of personal affairs, lunched with Mírzá Ahmad-i-Yazdí in the company of Mahmúd Effendi, and then embarked on my journey with the 10,000 ton ship "Yorkshire."

After having endured hardships and deprivations during the course of my travel from Tehran, and having faced various calamities, discomforts, bad news and sorrows, I decided it was worth the extra expense to purchase a first class ticket to Marseilles for 25 English Pounds.

It was midnight when the ship arrived, which anchored a few kilometres off shore. Jináb-i-Mahmúd Effendi and I took a boat in order to board the ship. A red lantern hung in front of the boat as a signal. The small boat heaved to and fro beneath the enormous waves which made us seasick and anxious. It all seemed endless. It made me wonder how many more hardships and concerns we would yet have to endure in the course of this voyage! I had already endured so much suffering and hardship in my life, and had tasted so much bitterness, yet why was this particular hardship so hard on me then? Perhaps my broken heart, wounded yet as it was, had been sapped of its strength with no more power left to brave hardships. Even so, I was thankful, and surrendered myself to fate. At last I entrusted myself into the hands of the Blessed Beauty and prayed for divine assistance from 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

We reached the ship after two hours. The ship was large and luxurious, and I was assigned a spacious and lavish room. There were two beds in that room, yet the other bed wasn't reserved for another passenger. After moving my belongings to

the room (with Jináb-i-Mahmúd's assistance), we took a walk around the ship. Even for Mahmúd Effendi, who had seen many ships previously, this vessel was particularly magnificent and attractive. When the announcement was made that departure was imminent, I embraced Jináb-i-Mahmúd Effendi and said farewell. Our farewell was very emotional and drew the notice of passengers around us. Some turned to watch, wondering, "Who are these people -- one with the Egyptian *finih* and the other with the Persian hat? Why is he exchanging farewells with an Egyptian man and how is it that each is hugging the other with such devotion? What is the reason for such brotherhood, friendship, attraction and affinity?" At length, Mahmúd Effendi disembarked from the craft and, for as long as we still saw each other, we were waving to each other with our handkerchiefs. Onlookers enjoyed watching the whole scene, still wondering what was behind all this show of affection.

Half an hour after he left, moonbeams rippled across the sea, the view being one of peace and tranquillity, as if nature herself were giving us pause for thought on the meaning of peace itself. The moon, in all its calmness and patience, cast its glance upon everyone. It also cast its glance upon me in my loneliness, as if to say, "You are now alone, without friend or companion, and you are still touched by sorrow. Look upon me. Consider what patience I manifest, and take me as your example. I have witnessed many important events over time, yet I continue in my quiet way. No power of my own have I, nor can I resist; therefore I have surrendered myself to the order of the universe. You are no more important than I, and are not endowed with greater power. And you, too, abide by the dictates of your fate."

I was thus lost in contemplation while the ship sailed on. As I reached the shores of Europe, I experienced the opposite to what I had endured at the onset of my journey, with all its hardship, heartbreak and sorrow. In Europe, everything turned out well. I was successful in all my affairs and I achieved such progress in material concerns that I could no longer justify, with all my fortune, depriving my family the opportunity to visit the Holy Land and attain the presence of Shoghi Effendi.

Therefore I resolved that on my next trip, I would take my family and, after touring Europe, take them on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and visit the Guardian of the Faith.

A Third Visit to the Guardian of the Faith, Shoghi Rabbani,

In 1925, my family (including some of the children) and I set out on a trip for Europe. After six months of combining business with pleasure, travelling abroad in Russia, Germany, Paris (and other parts of France as well), England, Switzerland and Italy, we departed for Egypt. Through the Spiritual Assembly we sought permission for pilgrimage to



From right to left; Mr. Anayatollah Azízi, Jinab-i-Azíz'u'lláh Azízi,
Mr. Ezatollah Azízi, Heshmatollah Azízi, Mrs. Bibi Azízi, Tahereh Azízi

the Holy Land. Once the joyous news of our permission came, we left right away and reached Haifa forthwith.

My wife and our two small children -- Tahirih and Heshmat'u'lláh -- went to the blessed Household, where they attained the presence of the Greatest Holy Leaf, and were her guests. My oldest child, Anayat'u'lláh, and I stayed in the guest house on Mount Carmel. As we entered, the Guardian summoned me privately and blessed me with his special consideration. We stayed for nineteen days. Each day, the beloved Guardian would accept us into his presence and would converse with us.

He asked about the friends in Iran, and would talk often of the progress of the Cause, comparing past to present. He was thrilled with the speed of the progress of the Cause, especially in the West. He would admonish and encourage the friends of the East not to waste their time and let their Bahá'í brothers in the West surpass them in the teaching work. The believers of the East had ever been the standard-bearers of the Cause, and thousands of them had shed their precious blood to this end. The Guardian, moreover, stated that on the way back to Tehran, we should meet with the friends and encourage them to intensify their efforts to serve the Faith, and to ever remain steadfast. Such was the way, in which the Guardian was accustomed to "give orders" that is, to entrust one with a mission to carry out.

One of the interesting incidents on this trip concerned my small child Heshmat'u'lláh, who was not more than five years old at that time. As he had no playmate, didn't know the language and was far from his brothers and sisters, he kept pressuring us to return to Tehran in different ways each day. But as we reached the Holy Land, an unusual calm and peace settled over him. Without any advance instructions, or discussion as to the station of the Guardian, or how he should conduct himself in the Guardian's presence, my son was the first to show his respect, when we entered the presence of Shoghi Effendi. He threw himself at his feet to kiss his shoes. But the Guardian swept the boy up in an embrace, held him closely and made fast friends with him. This very child, who would not keep quiet for scarcely a minute along the way, was absolutely silent in the Guardian's presence, and would listen attentively to all that he said.

One day, the Guardian was speaking about events which had recently taken place in Baghdád, events which were disturbing to him. He gave me instructions as to how I might intervene on his behalf in these matters, and thus I was given a mission to carry out. According to his wishes, we were dismissed on the 19th day of our pilgrimage. We set out on our return journey home, and en route, whenever necessary, stopped and imparted the Guardian's message in various places.

Our stay in Baghdád was somewhat longer than expected since, in addition to delivering the Guardian's message, I was obliged to intervene in a dispute between two of the friends,

both of whom had rendered important services to the Faith and who were, in all other respects, steadfast. The unfortunate incident was this:

The dispute was related to the Faith. Each man, in his own estimation, considered his own service to the Faith as more meritorious than the others. The Guardian, upon learning of this dispute, was quite dismayed and consequently commissioned me to intervene to settle the matter, and to deepen the friends' understanding of the Bahá'í teachings which relate to such matters. In Baghdád, therefore, I addressed the friends as to the necessity of seeking guidance and direction from the head of the Faith, as well as the importance of concentrating our efforts on the teaching work and on creating unity in the Faith. As a result of this, there was a fresh spirit which revived the friends, who had prior to this become somewhat cold towards one another. Those who had been dissatisfied emerged with a positive outlook, and the inactive became spirited and anxious to serve. As bonds of friendship grew stronger among each and every one, and the fire of service to the Faith became rekindled in the hearts of all, I felt confirmed over the result of my mission, and thus set out for Tehran.

I suppose the friends in Baghdád had sent a report to the Guardian in the Holy Land concerning these events. I also took it upon myself to send a detailed summary of what had taken place after I finally reached Tehran. At the close of the report, I put to paper several humble recommendations of my own for the Guardian's consideration. The purpose of my suggestions was to sustain and consolidate the spirit of enthusiasm among the friends in that land. A while later, a letter came from his presence, in the handwriting of Jináb-i-Núri'd-Dín-i-Zayn, with the following response:

Letter from Shoghi Effendi, via his secretary

Tehran.

*Mr. Mírzá Azíz'u'lláh Khán Azízí,
upon him rest the Glory of the All-Glorious!*

*May my soul be a sacrifice for your devotion!
Your letter arrived this very moment, and was given
special attention by the dearly beloved Guardian of the
Faith -- may my soul be a sacrifice to his friends!*

*The glad-tidings of your arrival home -- safe and
sound with your respected family -- brought joy and
assurance. What likewise imparted joy and happiness was
the spiritual glad-tidings of meetings with the friends
of God in various cities and countries along the way. The
spiritual attraction and enkindlement of these divine*

friends, inspiring them to each arise and teach, in fulfilment of their sacred obligation -- all this added to that joy and happiness.

Especially welcome was news of spiritual activities in Tehrán, which is in effect like a heart throbbing and pulsing spirit in the sacred body of Iran, imparting life-giving power through the veins and arteries of the Bahá'í community in that glorious land. This news is worthy of the praise and recognition of the Concourse on High, and was the cause of joy and happiness for the Guardian.

I pray that God might increase your honour and power, that you might attain an apparent victory. Regarding the matter between Khájeb Ibráhím Shalim and Jináb-i-Qassabchí in Baghád -- a telegram was sent to Ibráhím Shalim. The response came from him that he has changed his mind altogether and will not mention the matter further. Moreover, a very knowledgeable teacher was sent to Iraq, rest assured.

Written in accordance with the blessed order,
Núridín Zayn
11 December 1928

The Following in Shoghi Effendi's own blessed handwriting

O spiritual friend!

This servant has, with utmost supplication, turned towards the sacred Threshold and sought continuous divine confirmation and invisible bestowals for that mighty pillar of the Cause of God in that land.

The wonderful endeavours and continuous efforts of that active, compassionate and self-sacrificing servant of His Holiness, the Unique One, is most praiseworthy, deserving of acclaim from the Concourse on High. Its traces are engraved as well on the heart of this servant.

I pray that God might increase your honour, power, victory and success. You are not, nor ever shall be forgotten in this place. Rest assured.

Servant at His Threshold,
Shoghi

(Unauthorized translation)

The most specific of my recommendations was this: that Shaykh Muhyi'd-Dín from the Egyptian Bahá'í community who was a renowned scholar and speaker, be sent to 'Iráq for the encouragement of the friends there. In fact I knew the Shaykh from the past. He was a dynamic speaker and a profound scholar. He would chant the sacred verses with a captivating intonation, and no one disliked his company. He was respected and praised by all the friends and was welcome wherever he went. I heard later that the Shaykh, by order of the Guardian, took up residence in Baghdad for some time, and made great efforts in consolidating the Bahá'í community there, news of which greatly pleased the Guardian and brought him peace of mind with respect to the Faith in Baghdád.

[Editor's Note: At this point, the direct narrative of Jináb-i-Azízí comes to a close]



Jináb-i-Azízí, upon his return from the Holy Land and Baghdad.

The Wishes and Aspirations of Jináb-i-Azízí

Azíz'u'lláh Azízí, who has since passed on to the Abhá Kingdom, was an active and stalwart believer from the beginning of his youth. To the best of his ability, he would avail himself of every opportunity to render service to the Cause.

To give an example: Once we were departing from the Hazírat'u'l-Quds, where a large and radiant meeting was held. Suddenly, great joy shone radiantly in his face, and asked the reason, he replied, "Don't you see for yourself what a grand crowd this is? What a magnificent gathering! Such a charming garden! What a glorious and handsome building! And take a look at all those late-model cars parked side-by-side, each and every one belong to Bahá'ís. Observe for yourself what progress has taken place in the space of just 30 years. Consider what the future has in store!"

God bless the soul of Jináb-i-Na'im! He once said, "Show me a Bahá'í who now owns just a carriage, and I'll toss my hat into the air! Where is such a man now to be seen, seeing that Bahá'ís now have the best of everything -- prosperity, good fortune, places to meet like this! Thirty years ago, Bahá'ís would assemble in dark underground rooms, for fear of their own friends and relatives. In such surroundings they would intone their prayers with sorrow and fearful voices. Now they assemble in a respectable building, under a large dome, and chant the verses of God in ringing tones. They stroll in landscaped gardens such as we see here. All these are from the bounties of Bahá'u'lláh. Why should we not be happy, joyous, and thankful?" During my youth, I was a member of those first Spiritual Assemblies, which were then known as Boards of Consultation. One, of which I was a member, had, as I recall, the following individuals elected as well: Hájí Mullá 'Alí-Akbar, Ibn-i-Abhar, Jahí Mírzá Abdu'u'lláh Saqát-Furush (later on surnamed by the Master, "Sahih Furush"), Nayyir and Sina. On that Assembly, after several sessions of deliberation, it was decided that Aqá Muḥammad 'Alí-Arbab be commissioned, for 10 tumans annually, to collect contributions for the Fund. During the first few months, donations were not enough to cover Aqá Muḥammad-'Alí's wages. Now consider what a glorious turn-round has taken place since then. At that time the funds were infinitesimal. Now the funds have become an ocean. And this can be seen, not only in Tehran, but the world over. The first meeting of that council which took place in my own home under fearful circumstances created a lot of turmoil. Now, in less than 30 years, there are meetings such as this held in such a magnificent building which is matchless in Tehran.*

*The beautiful dome of the Bahá'í National Centre was destroyed during the anti-Bahá'í campaign of 1335 A.H. (1955 C.E.) as a result of the edict promulgated by Falsáfi, in collaboration with General Bádtmán-Qalích, Commander-in-Chief of the Iranian Armed Forces.

These are all due to the bounties of the Blessed Beauty. In reality, until then, few buildings could match the excellence as that of the National Hazírat'u'l-Quds. Few buildings could boast of so spacious a hall.

Last Days

Jináb-i-Azízí had rendered over 50 years of selfless service to the Faith. For half a century he was always thankful, positive, service-oriented, ever-active and resourceful. He was a member of numerous committees and task forces. His sense of commitment was such that he would put the interests of the Faith above all-else, and would do whatever was in his power to serve those interests. He had no greater wish than the progress of the Faith, and the advancement of the Cause of God.

For instance, when for the first time he attained the presence of the Guardian, the Guardian asked him what his wishes were. Jináb-i-Azízí asked only for the progress and advancement of the Cause of God, to which the Guardian repeatedly gave assurance, "It will come to pass. Rest assured, rest assured."

His Exemplar was 'Abdu'l-Bahá. In every thought and deed, Jináb-i-Azízí looked to the Master. His love for Abdu'l-Bahá was beyond description. I can honestly say that he was unreservedly loyal to the Master, to the extent that, at the very mention of Abdu'l-Bahá, tears would well up and glisten in the corners of his eyes, which he would try to conceal as well as he could.

The Premonitory Dream of Jináb-i-Azíz'u'lláh Azízí

A few days prior to his passing, Jináb-i-Azízí confided to me, "Last night, I had a dream. During the dream I was quite anxious and agitated, but after waking, I grew calm. In my dream, I found myself in a car speeding away from the city. By dusk, we approached a desert. I had grown weary of the surroundings and wished to turn around and go back. As I started to do so, I suddenly realized that the car had vanished. I grew anxious over this and wondered how I was going to find my way back to town. I came upon a carriage and the driver agreed take me back for the sum of two tumans. I got into the carriage, but suddenly once again I discovered I was alone, as the horse and buggy vanished as well. I was in a quandary. I searched to and fro for a way out of there, and chanced upon two men who accepted to carry me piggyback all the way home. I paid them their fee for carrying me but after a while they too disappeared, and I awoke from my dream in great anxiety."

I responded to my father, "You've been far too busy and

overworked lately, and it's clear you have many things on your mind -- and these affect your condition. It's wiser if you rest a little more, and delegate responsibilities to others."

Several nights later, I myself had a dream which made me upset as well. I saw there had been a wonderful gathering in our home and when it was over, people were leaving in large groups. I was standing by the door with my father, Jináb-i-Azíz'u'lláh Azízí, saying good-bye to people as they were leaving. I wondered to myself how such a large crowd had managed to fit into our living-room. Though many were leaving, still some remained standing in the hallway. There I spotted Jináb-i-Dr. Yúnis Khán Afrukhtih and Jináb-i-Dabír Mu'ayyad, who had in real life already had died. As they were about to leave, they took hold of my father's arms and insisted on taking him with them. My father left with them, descended the stairs and walked several paces. He then told them, "You go on ahead. I will come on my own and join you shortly."

I woke up quite disturbed, but as I took a positive outlook, I prayed a prayer of thanks that God had not taken my father, but that he had remained behind. But little did I know that this was not to last beyond 20 days. On Sunday, the 14th of Isfand, 1328 A.H. (5 March 1949 A.D.), after a brief bout of illness which lasted but 16 hours, my father passed to the Abhá Kingdom, at the age of 75.

After his passing, he received an honourable burial in the Gulistan-Javíd Cemetery in Tehran. Friends, relatives, and family were all present. In the memorial service which followed, Moslems and Bahá'ís alike, as well as Jews and Christians, were in attendance. To those who loved and respected him, all suffered a great loss and each in his own way would pray on his behalf.

One day after Friday devotions, a Moslem priest chanted some verses from the Qur'an, after which he stated, "I thought it my duty to pay my respects to Jináb-i-Azízí. I am not concerned with his religion or professed beliefs. Rather, I consider it an obligation on my part to ask for blessings upon his soul."

This was a cause of astonishment to all, that a priest should act in such a way, considering what enmity there was on the part of some Moslems towards Bahá'ís.

As news of my father's passing reached the Holy Land, the following telegram, sent on behalf of the Guardian was received:

"Rest assured of our prayers for the bestowal of blessings upon your beloved one, before God."

Though I consider myself little qualified to do so, I should like to reflect on some of the more remarkable character traits of that wise and stalwart believer.

Insofar as he had the Master's example to follow and would never do anything contrary to His will, Jináb-i-Azízí was a

loyal servant of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. My father was ever content with the will of God. His heart was always turned towards God, and was intoxicated by his love for God. He was a very knowledgeable and cultured individual. My hope is that each of my father's offspring will seek to follow his example in life, and mirror forth his qualities.

Jináb-i-Azízí is survived by four daughters and seven sons. God-willing, each of them will become the cause of joy and gladness for the soul of their dear father, and go through life as lighted candles in memory of his service to the Faith.



Mrs. Bibi Azízi with daughters. From right to left: Bahereh Azízi (Soufer), Qudsieh Azízi (Darvish), Tahereh Azízi (Petri) and Ruhiyyeh Azízi



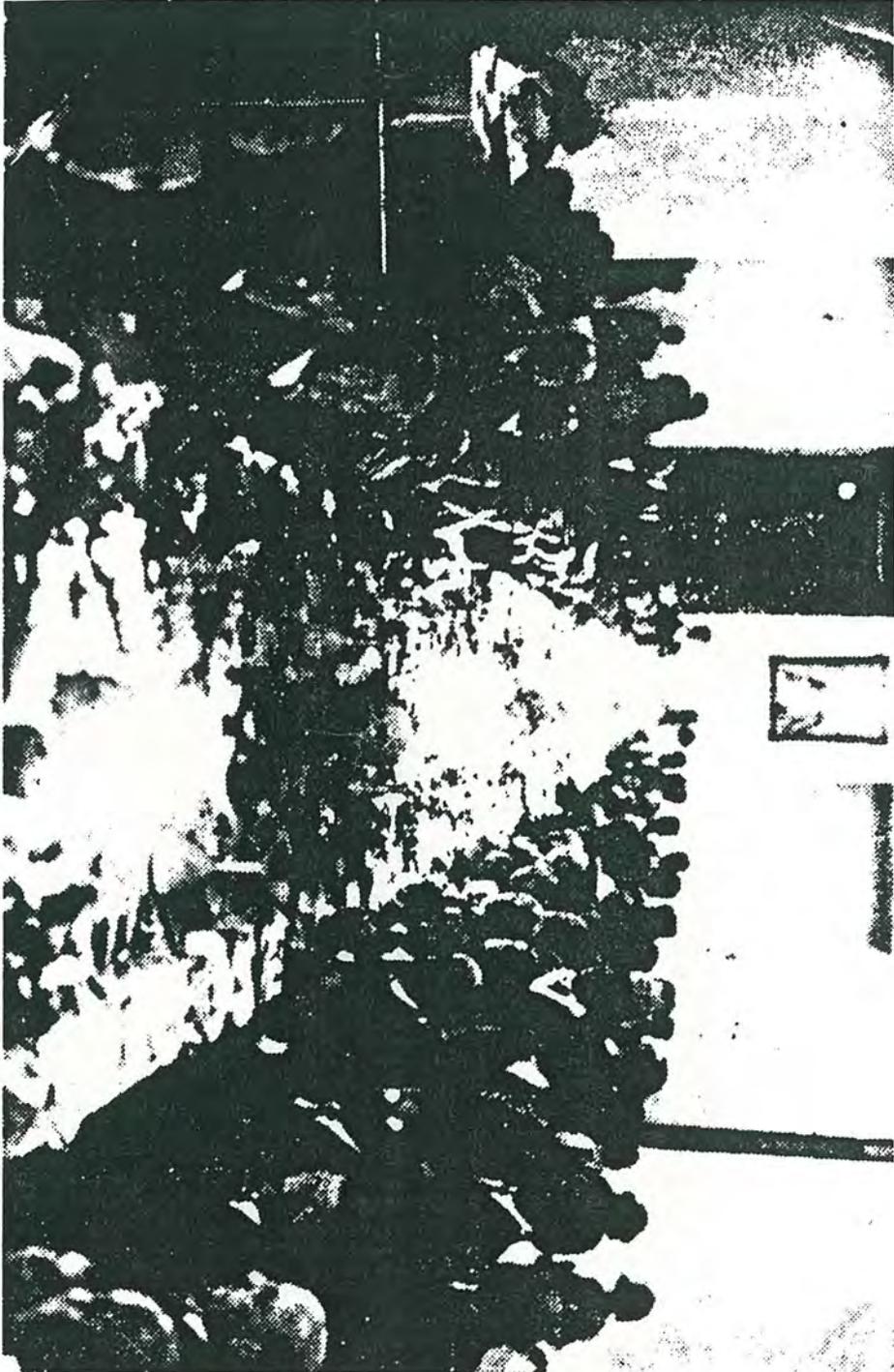
Jináb-i-Azízi'u'lláh Azízí and sons. From left to right: Jalál Azízí, Heshmatollah Azízí, Amir AzízEi, Anayatollah Azízí, Wskandar Azízí, Ezatollah Azízí and Zabihollah Azízí.



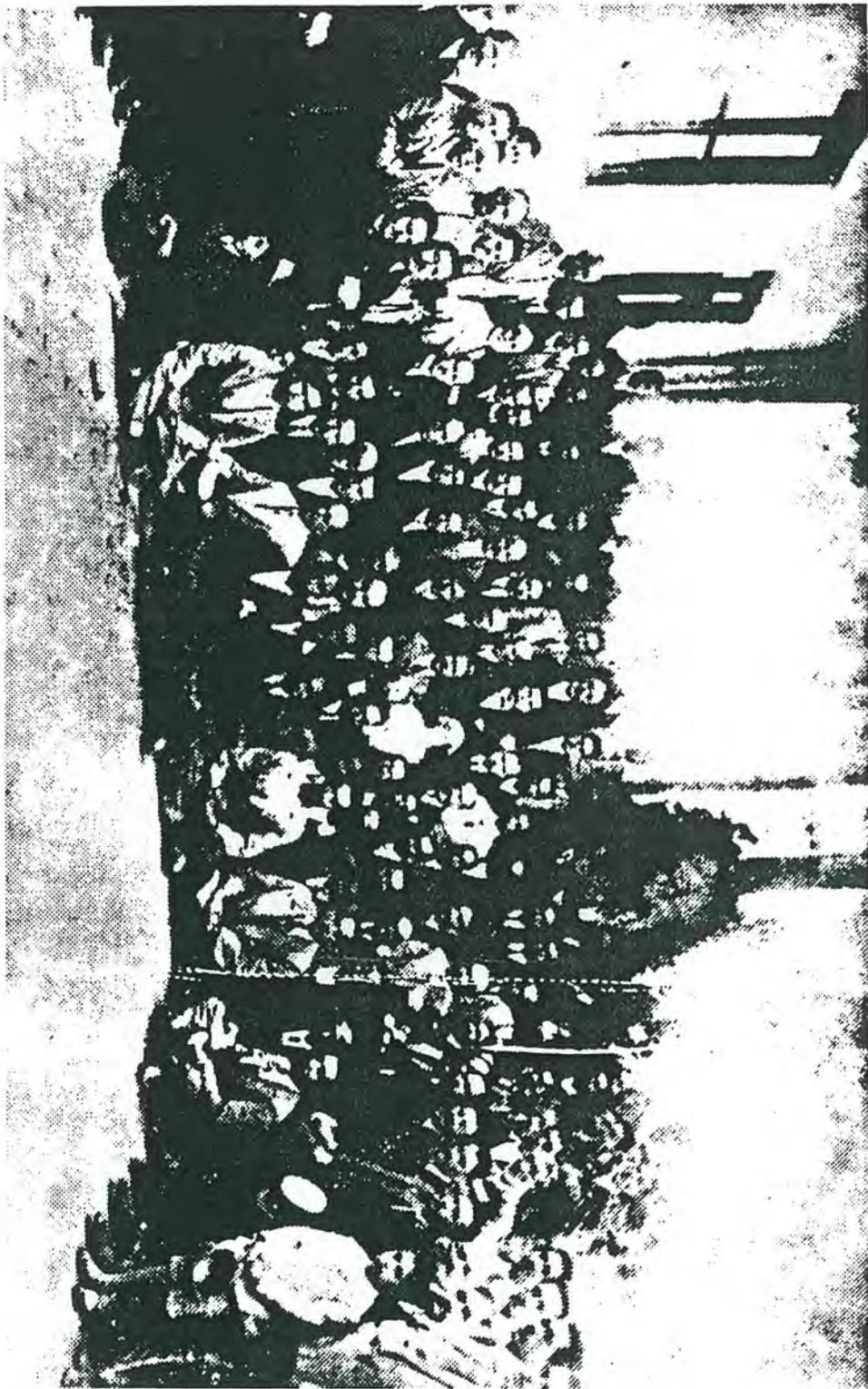
An Azízí Family Gathering.



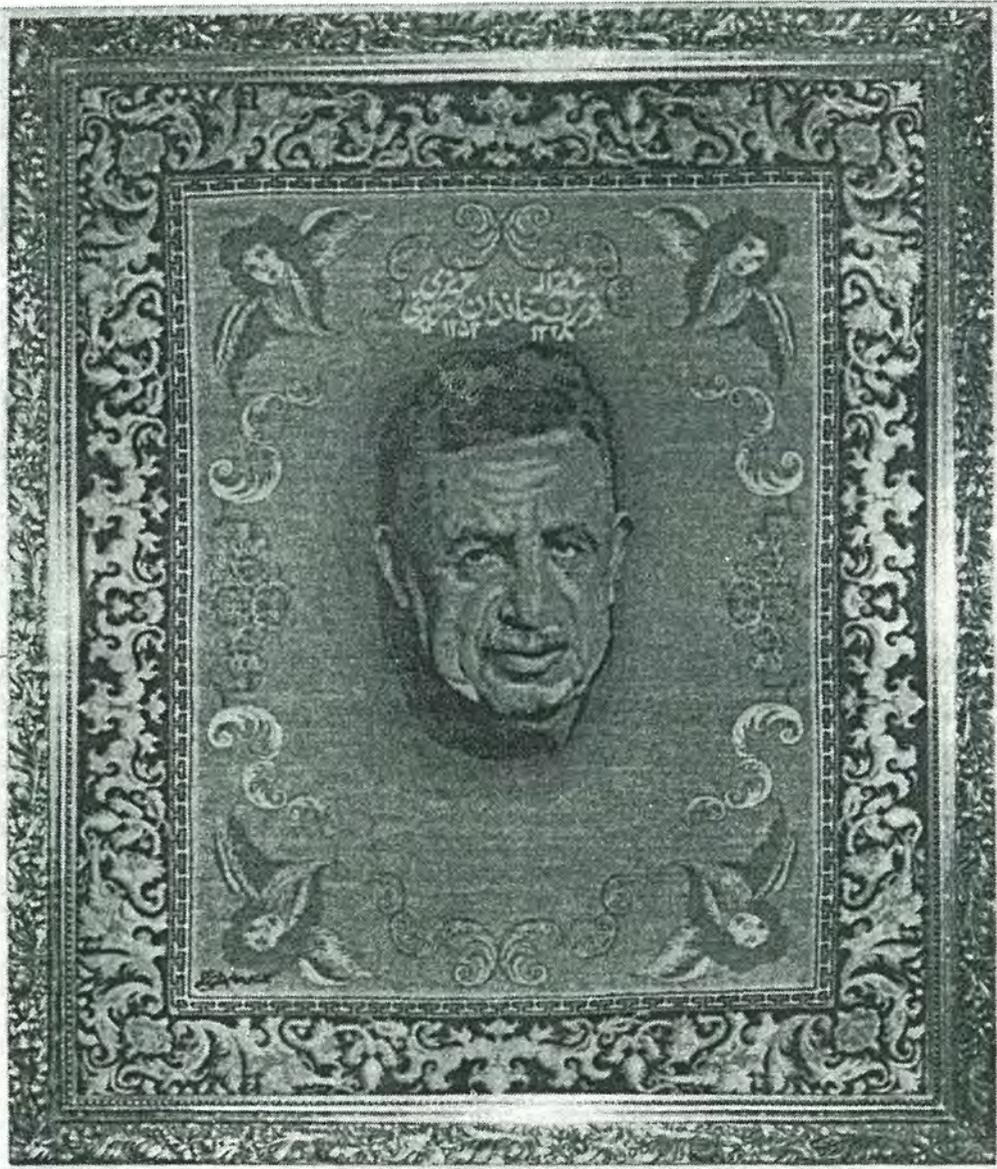
From left to right: First row: Farideh Soufer, Jalal, Jinab-i-Azizi, Zabiollah, Heshmatollah. Second row: Eskandar, Nura, Tahereh, Ruhiyyeh, Bahereh, Pourndokht, Qudsieh. Third row: Kambiz, son of Tahereh, Nurollah Petri, Azizpur



A Festivity for the Delegates at the National Convention
at the National Hazfirtu'1-Quds



Bahá'í Friends in Tehran with Martha Root at



A last picture of Jináb-i-Azízí, woven into a rug



Time for Refreshments, following a memorial meeting for Jináb-i-Azízí
at his Residence



Mrs. Bibi Ján Azízí, wife of Jináb-i-Azízí

A Brief Account of the Acceptance of the Faith
by Jináb-i-Azízí's Spouse

The spouse of Jináb-i-Azízí, Bíbí Khanúm, was the eldest child of Jacob and Qamar Khanúm. Jacob would often travel on business to the regions of Núr, Kujúr, Takur and Baladih, his line of business being fabrics. From the days of his youth, he was close friends with Nidamu'l-Mamalík, cousin of Abdu'l-Bahá, to the extent that each time he would pass through Takur, he would reside in their mansion. There he even had his own room, which he stayed in so often that it became known as "Jacob's Room."

Though he was Jewish, he was respected by all who knew him. They loved him because he was a handsome individual -- sociable, kind, honest in his dealings, and a stalwart believer. Conversely, whenever Jináb-i-Fad'u'llah Nidamu'l-Mamalike would visit Tehran, he would be received each time as a guest at Jacob's residence home. .

It was said of Jacob's father that he was known for his profound piety, particularly when it came to prayer. His manner of prayer was so heartfelt that he often poured out his soul in tears. This pattern was even more pronounced if he failed to make it to Núr. It was even said that he had developed a profound respect for His Holiness the Báb.

The present writer would often hear from his grandfather Jacob that in Jewish tradition, there were foretold two Messianic figures, the first of which would be martyred. Though Jacob was Jewish in all respects, faithfully observing all Jewish customs, he harboured no enmity nor ill-will towards the Bahá'ís, as was the case with some other Jews. Therefore he did not oppose, but rather consented to the marriage of his daughter to Jináb-i-Azízí, a union to which he gave whole-hearted support.

Bíbí Khanúm married at a young age. From the beginning of her life in her husband's home, she was dismayed to see her husband in frequent arguments with his father, and throughout all this she suffered a good deal. She did not know how to cope with the situation. She would beg her mother-in-law to step in to resolve the conflict. The mother-in-law unfortunately did not have the courage to side against her son, so the two women did their best to pacify father and son and do what they could to lessen the conflict. Years passed like this, until the outbreak of the cholera epidemic. It was at this time that Jináb-i-Azízí set out for pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

Bíbí Khanúm was praying tearfully that her husband would return safe and sound. One night, after her vigil of prayer, she fell asleep. She dreamt that she had entered the attic of her house, where they used to store food in order to bring down some rice to cook. Suddenly she saw a coffin there. Two quite respectable looking men were standing beside the coffin,

in silent contemplation, with an air of respect.

This took her by surprise and, alarmed and frightened, she cried out, "What are you doing here? What do you want?" The two men replied very calmly, pointing to the coffin, saying, "These are the sacred remains of the Primal Point. Keep your silence regarding this." Mrs. Azízí nervously asked, "Do you know if he was from God?" The two men signaled their assent, continuing to stand beside the coffin, respectfully crossing their arm each across his own chest, gazing at the coffin itself. Mrs. Azizi often said of this that at that point she threw herself onto the coffin and broke into tears. She cried to the Báb, "If you are truly sent by God, I beg you to protect my husband and return him safely to me. In return, I will dedicate myself in service to you for the rest of my life." It was then that she woke from her dream.

When Jináb-i-Azízí returned home from his sojourn in the Holy Land, he found that his wife had changed. From that time onward she gave her full support to her husband, and was faithful in service to the Cause. In each meeting she would serve whole-heartedly. She endeavoured to raise her children with Bahá'í attributes, as was the wish of her husband. She was proud and thankful that all her children were under the protection of the Cause of God, and engaged in service to the friends of God.

We can see that the blossoming of these attitudes in her is alluded to in the first Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Jináb-i-Azízí:

"My heartfelt regards to your respected spouse."

The Last Days of Jináb-i-Azízí's Wife, and Her Passing to the Abhá Kingdom

The esteemed wife of Jináb-i-Azízí, BÍBÍ Khanúm (whom certain relatives called Sany Khanúm) left her own residence and went to live in her eldest son's home, Anayat'u'lláh Azízí in her last days during the revolution in Iran.

BÍBÍ Khanúm kept abreast of current events, and would closely follow news reports on radio and television. In her own outspoken way, she would express her own ideas for the future and she refused to trust the religious leaders.

Most of her relatives, friends and immediate family would visit her every now and then. Though she was aware of the events taking place in the course of the revolution, relatives would try to downplay these things so as not to make her anxious and upset.

It happened that one night, when a number of her relatives came to visit, a committee meeting was taking place in her home, and others had come to contribute to the Fund. Suddenly, a group of revolutionary guards, armed and savage had surrounded the house, and broke into the home and ordered

everyone to keep still. One of the guards savagely ransacked Bībī Khanúm's room and frightened everyone around her. It was this shameful course of events that made her aware of the precarious circumstances affecting her children, by virtue of the fact that they were all Bahá'ís. It was then that her condition worsened.

Following the arrest and imprisonment of the Azízí brothers, the majority of family members often gathered together in her home to pray in earnest on behalf of the brothers in detention. Their mother, who was confined to her bed due to her condition, overheard all that was going on and thus grew more aware of the gravity of the situation.

She would ask to know of the circumstances involving her sons and was told in a general way that there had been some recent difficulties and to pray for them as well. The elderly mother had kept her silence and said nothing, but those around her noticed tears welling in the corners of her eyes and moistening her pillow in silent grief. After the Azízí brothers endured interrogations for a brief period of time, they were released. Their mother, who had kept silent for three days, after seeing Iskandar again said, " Iskandar, is that you? God be with you."

She then prayed quietly for her other children and, on the dawn of the 24th of Day, 1358 A.H. (15 January 1980), the mother of eleven children and grandmother of more than one hundred grandchildren and great grandchildren, with complete peace and silence, passed to the Abhá Kingdom. The lamp of her life was thus quenched in the midst of sorrow over her children's condition.

Due to the threat of the Revolution and the dangers it posed, her memorial service was not announced to the public. Nevertheless, a large gathering of friends, including Moslems as well as Bahá'ís, attended her memorial to pay their respects.

We supplicate the threshold of God, and beseech the Ancient Beauty (Bahá'u'lláh), to immerse the soul of this self-sacrificing mother in the Ocean of His blessings.

26 March 1987

Dr. Zabíh'u'lláh Azízí



Shāh-i-Azīzī is seated next to Hājī Abu-el-Hasan Ardekanī,
known as Hājī- Amin



Jináb-i- Azízí's wife with her youngest son after the passing
of Jináb-i-Azízí



The last Photograph of Jináb-i-Azíí



The last photograph of Mrs. Azízí, wife of Jináb-i-Azízí



Last gathering of the Azízí family before the Iranian Revolution at the home of Mr. Anayatolláh Azízí. Present are three Hands of the Cause of God, Mr. Dhikru'lláh Khadem, Mr. Shu'a'u'lláh Alá'i and Mr. 'Ali Akbar Furúṭan. Also present are five Baha'is, destined to become martyrs: Prof. Manúchihr Hakím, Mr. Yúsif Qadímí, Mr. Ḥabíbo''áh Azízí, Mr. Eskandar Azízí and Mr. Jalál Azízí.