

The Birth of the Báb

By Susan Gammage ¹

This program takes just over an hour

Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yylXcslvZ0A>

Or: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aWyo0uSIRgQ>

Opening Reading

This glorious Tablet hath been revealed on the Anniversary of the Birth [of the Báb] that thou mayest recite it in a spirit of humility and supplication and give thanks unto thy Lord, the All-Knowing, the All-Informed. Make thou every effort to render service unto God, that from thee may appear that which will immortalize thy memory in His glorious and exalted heaven.

Say: Glorified art Thou, O my God! I implore Thee by the Dawning-Place of Thy signs and by the Revealer of Thy clear tokens to grant that I may, under all conditions, hold fast the cord of Thy loving providence and cling tenaciously to the hem of Thy generosity. Reckon me then with those whom the changes and chances of the world have failed to deter from serving Thee and from bearing allegiance unto Thee, whom the onslaught of the people hath been powerless to hinder from magnifying Thy Name and celebrating Thy praise. Graciously assist me, O my Lord, to do whatever Thou lovest and desirest. Enable me then to fulfil that which will exalt Thy Name and will set ablaze the fire of Thy love.

Thou art, in truth, the Forgiving, the Bountiful. (Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 234)

Pause to let the prayer settle on our hearts.

Almost nothing, it seems, is known about the circumstances attending the Báb's birth. We do know that He was born on October 20, 1819 in Shiraz, Persia.

In *The Dawnbreakers*, Nabil records stories that indicate Shaykh Ahmad was aware of the births of both Bahá'u'lláh (in 1817) and the Báb, but the Shaykh never met either of them and the births themselves are not discussed. Neither does H. M. Balyuzi, in his biography of the Báb, present any portrait of how the One who was destined to usher in not merely a new religion but a new cycle of religion, came into the world. We are left with only a few bare facts.

¹ Prepared by David Bowie (2023) for posting, with permission of author, at https://bahai-library.com/gammage_holy_day_programs

In these two passages the Bab refers to His own birth:

Through the revelation of Thy grace, O Lord, Thou didst call Me into being on a night such as this, and lo, I am now lonely and forsaken in a mountain. Praise and thanksgiving be unto Thee for whatever conformeth to Thy pleasure within the empire of heaven and earth. And all sovereignty is Thine, extending beyond the uttermost range of the kingdoms of Revelation and Creation.

Thou didst create Me, O Lord, through Thy gracious favour and didst protect Me through Thy bounty in the darkness of the womb and didst nourish Me, through Thy loving-kindness, with life-giving blood. After having fashioned Me in a most comely form, through Thy tender providence, and having perfected My creation through Thine excellent handiwork and breathed Thy Spirit into My body through Thine infinite mercy and by the revelation of Thy transcendent unity, Thou didst cause Me to issue forth from the world of concealment into the visible world, naked, ignorant of all things, and powerless to achieve aught. Thou didst then nourish Me with refreshing milk and didst rear Me in the arms of My parents with manifest compassion, until Thou didst graciously acquaint Me with the realities of Thy Revelation and apprised Me of the straight path of Thy Faith as set forth in Thy Book. And when I attained full maturity Thou didst cause Me to bear allegiance unto Thine inaccessible Remembrance, and enabled Me to advance towards the designated station, where Thou didst educate Me through the subtle operations of Thy handiwork and didst nurture Me in that land with Thy most gracious gifts. When that which had been preordained in Thy Book came to pass Thou didst cause Me, through Thy kindness, to reach Thy holy precincts and didst suffer Me, through Thy tender mercy, to dwell within the court of fellowship, until I discerned therein that which I witnessed of the clear tokens of Thy mercifulness, the compelling evidences of Thy oneness, the effulgent splendours of Thy majesty, the source of Thy supreme singleness, the heights of Thy transcendent sovereignty, the signs of Thy peerlessness, the manifestations of Thine exalted glory, the retreats of Thy sanctity, and whatsoever is inscrutable to all but Thee. (Selections from the Writings of the Bab, pp. 173-174)

And:

Thou art aware, O My God, that since the day Thou didst call Me into being out of the water of Thy love till I reached fifteen years of age I lived in the land which witnessed My birth [Shiraz]. Then Thou didst enable Me to go to the seaport [Bushahr] where for five years I was engaged in trading with the goodly gifts of Thy realm and was occupied in that with which Thou hast favoured Me through the wondrous essence of Thy loving-kindness. I proceeded therefrom to the Holy Land [Karbala] where I sojourned for one

year. Then I returned to the place of My birth. There I experienced the revelation of Thy sublime bestowals and the evidences of Thy boundless grace. I yield Thee praise for all Thy goodly gifts and I render Thee thanksgiving for all Thy bounties. Then at the age of twenty-five I proceeded to thy sacred House [Mecca], and by the time I returned to the place where I was born, a year had elapsed. There I tarried patiently in the path of Thy love and beheld the evidences of Thy manifold bounties and of Thy loving-kindness until Thou didst ordain for Me to set out in Thy direction and to migrate to Thy presence. Thus I departed therefrom by Thy leave, spending six months in the land of Sad [Isfahan] and seven months in the First Mountain [Maku], where Thou didst rain down upon Me that which beseemeth the glory of Thy heavenly blessings and befitteth the sublimity of Thy gracious gifts and favours. Now, in My thirtieth year, Thou beholdest Me, O My God, in this Grievous Mountain [Chihríq] where I have dwelt for one whole year.

Praise be unto Thee, O My Lord, for all times, heretofore and hereafter; and thanks be unto Thee, O My God, under all conditions, whether of the past or the future. The gifts Thou hast bestowed upon Me have reached their fullest measure and the blessings Thou hast vouchsafed unto Me have attained their consummation. Naught do I now witness but the manifold evidences of Thy grace and loving-kindness, Thy bounty and gracious favours, Thy generosity and loftiness, Thy sovereignty and might, Thy splendour and Thy glory, and that which befitteth the holy court of Thy transcendent dominion and majesty and beseemeth the glorious precincts of Thine eternity and exaltation.
(Selections from the Writings of the Báb, pp. 180-182)

David Merrick has compiled the following stories on the Báb's childhood and early life.
<http://www.paintdrawer.co.uk/david/folders/Spirituality/005=Collections/holydays.htm>

Family

It was 20 October 1819; the very first day ushering in a new Islamic year. In south-western Iran, in the lovely city of Shíráz; within the upper chamber of His uncle's house, the Báb was born; and in that very house, His future wife Khadijah was also to be born. He was given the name, 'Alí-Muhammad, after the Prophet Muhammad, and His Successor 'Alí. His family was highly-regarded; both His mother Fátimih and father Muhammad-Ridá, traced their ancestries back, beyond the illustrious martyr Husayn, to Muhammad Himself. The Báb's father was a cloth-seller in comparatively humble circumstances, and many of their relatives were merchants, considered exemplary by the whole region for their integrity and purity, and well loved by all.

First Two Years

His mother would often relate, how from the very first moment of birth, the Báb was utterly unlike all other children; He was so perfectly serene, all the time; wholly lacking any sign of displeasure, often His mother would become taken over with anxiety.

Stories

Whoever encountered Him, whether friend or stranger, was struck with wonder at the extraordinary character of the Child. Being only a few years of age, He would lift up His hands to the threshold of the One God, reciting beautiful prayers. Rising up in the midst of the night, He would stand to offer His prayers, and be brought to tears. Always preoccupied with the celestial world, immersed in rapture, the Báb would at times be sad, or happy. Mothers-to-be would pass Him, and He would disclose what they were due, and He would reveal to those around incidents before they were known.

Bathhouse Collapses

One day, as the Báb was sleeping at the bathhouse between His uncle and father, He suddenly arose, and stated to them, "The vaulted roof of the steam chamber of Mírzá Hádí's bathhouse has just caved in; five women and one child were killed under the rubble." His uncle protested. "What manner of foolish talk is this!" he exclaimed; "Go to sleep, and stop saying such things!" "It is just as I say," answered the Child. In a short while, a tumult of voices began to arise, crying that Mírzá Hádí's bathhouse was wrecked and there were women under the rubble. One person said twenty women; another said thirty, or forty; and later it was determined that it was exactly as the Child had informed them.

Dream of Balance

One morning, the Báb shared with His family a significant dream. "Last night," He said, "I saw a large balance hanging in mid-air within a vast space. The revered sixth Imám was sitting on one of the two plates. He was so heavy, his plate touched the ground, and the other stood high in the air. An invisible person lifted Me up, and placed Me onto the empty plate; My plate was so heavy, it returned to the ground, and the dish with the Imam rose up into the air." The Child's father recoiled at such a blasphemy, and sternly warned Him to cease speaking in such ways.

Soothsayer

With so many astonishing things occurring, an astrologer was brought in to see the Child, to say protective prayers for Him. The astrologer made some calculations, and said, "He is protected from evil influence; he has suffered no harm." On learning the Báb's birthdate, he wrote down some protective charms and prayers, entrusted them to the family, and recited some mysterious verses; then he left. On His departure, the Báb immediately tore up all the talismans, writings and instructions he had given

the family, and tossed them all out, and observed to His father, "You make a great show of assistance: - but I am that Assistance."

About the School and Tutor

The Báb was disinclined to study; all the same, once He was passed four years, His uncle took Him off to school in the old neighbourhood of Shíráz, close by where His grandfather and uncle lived. This mosque-like school had several rooms, with an encircling porch; in its courtyard were a number of revered graves of saintly people. The honoured schoolmaster was a tall, dignified man with a long beard, and ranked among the leading clergy of Shíráz. He accepted only children brought up with good manners, and parents wishing their youngsters to be tutored by him came beforehand to meet him in person, requesting a place either by letter or distinguished acquaintance.

Submission to School

The Báb's father, therefore, came one morning, and sat next to the schoolmaster, who was an old friend of his from the past. He told him how he had finally been graced with a Child, and yet His behaviour was such, as to cause wonder and astonishment to everyone. Pressed hard to continue, he was quite at a loss where to begin. After describing the exceptional challenges and circumstances of the Child, he said he felt it was now time for His education and training, and desired the schoolmaster to give Him that necessary tuition. The master and principal were quite astounded at everything they heard, and decided the Báb would be brought into the school the following Thursday morning. The Child arrived as planned, and a servant brought in the customary small copper-tray, filled with sweets and a student's version of the Qur'án.

Close Observation

The Báb entered, greeting everyone present, then He sat down before the schoolmaster. The master, principal, and several mature students, were thoroughly enthralled as they watched the Báb closely. Soon after, His uncle arrived and sat next to the master, and some pleasantries followed.

Alphabet, Reads Qur'án, Reads Persian

The schoolmaster wrote out the alphabet for Him to learn. In a while, he went out on some business, and upon his return, he heard someone reading the Qur'án in a most sweet and plaintive voice. Enchanted, he entered the room and enquired who had been reading so beautifully. The other children pointed at the Báb, saying, "It was Him!" When the schoolmaster asked if He had really been reciting the Qur'án, He kept His silence. So the schoolmaster advised he try reading Persian books, and

placed one in front of Him. Seeing the Báb could easily read whichever page was opened, he tried Him with some Arabic.

Reading from Qur'án

The master took the Qur'án from the tray of sweetmeats and opened it, saying to the Báb, "Come, read!" The Báb smiled. "As you please," He said. The master asked Him to repeat, "He is the Deliverer, the All-Knowing." The Child remained silent, and the master repeated the verse; yet He still kept silent, and the master continued persistently. The Báb asked the master, "Who is 'He'? Please explain." The master replied, "'He' is God. You're merely a child, why concern yourself with the meaning of 'He'?" The Báb answered the master:- "I am the Deliverer, the All-Knowing!" The master flew into a furious rage and picked up his stick. "Never utter such things here!" he exclaimed, shaking. His uncle couldn't restrain his smile. The Báb commenced reciting, and after ordering certain arrangements, His uncle left.

Báb Silent and Refined, Hafiz

The Báb was soon kneeling in a refined way between two twelve-year-old pupils, His head bowed over the student Qur'án; yet He held Himself in peace. His fellow pupil noticing this, asked Him, "Why are You not reading out the lesson like the other children?" Two other pupils were sitting nearby, reading aloud some poems; shortly they uttered the verse: "From Heaven's heights, the birdsong calls to you, in sorrow that you're trapped in walls of clay;" the Báb turned to His fellow pupil, and told him, "There is your answer," which charmed His companion.

Bismillah

On another occasion, the Báb was asked to recite the opening words of the Qur'án. The Báb was unwilling, pleading that He would need to know what the words signify before attempting to pronounce them. When the schoolmaster pretended not to know their meaning, the Báb began to explain them with such a sweetness, knowledge and fluency, that the master was left dumbstruck that he was the student of this Child.

Sent Back to Uncle

Amazed at everything he was witnessing, the schoolmaster brought the Child back to His home. His grandmother came to the door, and the schoolmaster informed the family of what had passed, saying he was not fitted to instruct their Child. The family warned Him sternly to follow the example of His fellow-pupils, and observe silence, listening attentively to the teacher.

Returns to School

So the Báb returned to the school, and set about learning His lessons like all the other boys, starting with the alphabet, whilst His master tried hard to dissuade Him. Yet the soul of that Child could not be restrained, and no discipline could repress His flow of intuitive knowledge. Day after day, He continued to manifest an unearthly wisdom impossible to put into words.

Writing

Before the Báb had begun to practise writing, He used to bring with Him a pen case and engage in writing. His schoolmaster assumed He was trying to imitate other boys by scribbling on the paper. After several days, the master took the paper from Him to see what He was doing, and saw to his surprise that He had actually written something, though He had never practised; and on reading it, discovered it was a study of the mystery and knowledge of Divine Unity, written in the purest and most eloquent style, of unfathomable profundity.

Calligraphy Exercises

As the Báb was returning from school one afternoon, a certain man noticed He was carrying a bundle of papers, and he asked what they were. Very courteously, the Báb replied that they were His calligraphy exercises. When the man inspected them, he was amazed and marvelled at their excellence for such a very young child.

Praying in Garden Outings

When the season was clement, on Fridays it was customary for the boys to invite their teacher and fellow-pupils on an outing to one of the numerous gardens bordering the city, and as they enjoyed themselves, they would often find the Báb had become drawn away into a secluded, shady spot in a corner of the orchard, where He would become enrapt in prayer and meditation.

Late for School and Devotions

Some mornings the Báb was late coming to school, and whenever the master would ask the reason, the Child would remain silent. So the master would sometimes send out his pupils to call at His home, and ask Him to come in to school. The boys would return with the news that they found Him deeply immersed in His devotions. On one occasion when He arrived late to school, the schoolmaster questioned Him on this, and the Child said, quietly, that He had been in the house of His 'Grandfather', in allusion to the Prophet Muhammad. The schoolmaster remonstrated that He was only a young child, from whom such conscientious devotion was not required, yet the Child replied again quietly, 'I desire to be as My Grandfather', and His schoolmaster dismissed these words as childish naiveté.

Fly Beyond Throne

One day, the Báb said to the boy next to Him, "I am so light, if I wish, I can fly up beyond the Throne of God; would you like Me to journey there?" He made a movement from the ground. The schoolmaster, who had been secretly listening to their whisperings, smiled in astonishment, and as he did so, the Child suddenly ceased speaking.

Scientific Debate

Each morning, the learned schoolmaster would gather with the theological students, to engage in discussion and debate together. One day, a scientific topic was being discussed, and despite the considerable debate that followed, it still remained unresolved. The schoolmaster promised to study the matter overnight, and they would explore it again until it was resolved satisfactorily. At this, they ended the debate. At this point the Báb raised up His head, and addressed them, resolving for them the answer they sought. The students and master were completely dumbfounded and bewildered. They asked the young Child how He could possibly have gained this knowledge, and the Child responded, "Should through grace the Holy Spirit again assist, others will do what Christ has done."

Night Prayer on a Mountain

The Báb was still eight, when He journeyed out amidst a group, for a certain holy shrine. It was an arduous route, that tested even the strongest men. They arrived, completely exhausted, and offered the late afternoon and evening prayers, ate dinner, and went straight to bed. At about midnight, His uncle awoke, and discovered the Báb was not in bed; deeply perturbed, he was overtaken with anxiety that He might have fallen from the mountain. Searching around extensively, he eventually heard a voice coming from the lower extremities of the mountain, raised in prayers of glorification to the Lord. Following the melody of the chanting, the uncle found his Child, standing alone and in private, in consummate rapture, voicing prayers and supplications to the One Who transcends all mention, on the cold and deserted mountainside, at that late hour of the night.

Báb's Father Dies, Maternal Uncle Rears

When the Báb was only nine years old, His father passed away, and from that moment He was reared in the bosom of His uncle. His uncle witnessed such remarkable things, that years later when the Báb raised the new Call of God, he pledged himself in the path of the Cause, and willingly sacrificed both possessions and life. His uncle removed his Nephew from the school, and associated Him within his own commercial venture; and in this the Báb revealed signs of a power and greatness that few could approach and none could rival.

Commerce in Búshih

The Báb moved from His uncle's office in Shíráz, to the port city of Búshíhr. There He engaged in commerce, associating with all levels of society, dealing with everyone in such a fair way, they were most satisfied and grateful. In every gathering and assembly, men praised His splendid qualities. There, the many signs and evidences of His sanctity and the wonderful verses flowed freely from Him, attracting great envy and jealousy from the men of learning and position.

Purity

The Báb was always to be found in a state of utmost humility and lowliness; His downcast eyes, His extreme courtesy, and the serene expression of His face, made an indelible impression upon all who met Him. His purity of character, simplicity, sweetness of spirit, charm of manners, captivating gentleness, self-effacement, high integrity, and extreme devotion to God, drew people about Him. He could not open his lips without stirring the hearts to their very depths, opening before those who heard Him, unlimited horizons, varied, coloured, and mysterious, revealing a blinding light that transported people into a state of ecstasy.

Husayn Eulogy Gatherings

With exceptional care, the Báb attended gatherings extolling the virtues of the Imam Husayn. Entranced with the chanting of eulogies, tenderness and devotion raining from His eyes in streams of tears, and words of prayer and praise murmuring from His trembling lips, He inspired all around with tender sentiments and dignity.

Worship

The Báb would climb on to the roof of His house each Friday at noon, to hold communion with His Beloved. Rapt in hours of prayer and glorification, He was wholly unmindful of the fierce summer sun and the bustling world around. At the dawn break of every day, with face gazing toward the city where Bahá'u'lláh moved, He would greet the rising sun with a heart overflowing with love, joy and adoration, as He looked forward to the Spiritual Sun soon to arise in that city. With such transports of delight He greeted its beaming rays, that those around thought He was in love with the sun itself.

Sends Excessive Sum

During business one day, a man entrusted to the Báb an article to be sold at a fixed price, and the Báb in due course sent its value to him. When the man discovered it greatly exceeded the price, He wrote immediately to the Báb, asking how it could be. The Báb answered, He had received his due; the article had at one point reached that value, and although it was sold later at a lower price, the Báb assured him it was His duty to offer him that higher price. No amount of entreating by the client, could convince the Báb to receive back the excess He had given him.

Overthrow of Corrupt Customs

Some merchants came to the Báb one day and negotiated for some indigo dye. After sealing the bargain and carrying away the dye, they returned again to bargain, as was the custom; they insisted and pleaded, yet the Báb stood firm by what they had agreed, declaring that many of their customs were wrong and would soon be abolished. At length, He informed them they could bring it back, but He would not bargain. They complained they would lose their standing with the merchants if they brought it back. The Báb notified them: "I am ending this custom." The Báb did not yield to their efforts, and eventually ordered the merchandise brought back to His shop. When one of His uncles arrived a little while later, they came to see him and complained about His behaviour, saying, he had insulted them and ruined their reputation by receiving back the dye, and that he should counsel Him never to repeat such offences. The uncle approached the Báb, requesting why he so disrupted the customs of the land; the Báb stood firmly, and said He would do so again should it arise. Through the Báb's unflinching justice, He thoroughly demolished the corrupt practices of the people.

Counselling the Báb to Forebear

As His remarkable character shone its influence far and wide, a great many people were agitated with jealousy and concern, seeing such a young merchant of little schooling demonstrating such erudition and influence. From their chairs, altars, and pulpits, the clergy and lawyers of repute and learning, unanimously engaged in His eradication and suppression.

One of the Báb's uncles tried to pressurise the Báb through an acquaintance, to cease writing and speaking in ways that would raise up their jealous reactions, only to be informed of its little use. "We are earthbound," he was told, "and He is celestial - our counsel has no influence on Him."

Wish to Leave, Uncles' Procrastination

After six years' residence in Búshihir, the Báb wished to visit the holy sites of the Imams. He wrote several times to His uncles, requesting them to take charge of the business. The uncles procrastinated and did nothing, and eventually the time came for departure. The Báb settled His accounts with everyone, prepared a detailed ledger, closed the books, sealed the entrance, and entrusted the key to the building's custodian, to give it to the first of His uncles who should arrive.

Uncles' Reaction

The uncles received a letter from the Báb, explaining what He had now done; there was deep worry and complaint at Him, as they expected their excellent reputation in the commercial community to be ruined by clients left with broken dealings. When His uncle arrived and received the key, he found everything was most satisfactory

and accurate, and with great relief he wrote back to his brothers and praised the Báb for leaving everything in such exceptional order.

Mulla Husayn

The Báb journeyed to the vicinity of the holy shrines, and as He stood in prayer at the sanctuary of the Shrine of the Prince of Martyrs, He caught the sensitive eye of Mullá Husayn.

Báb Enwrapped

Mullá Husayn saw the Báb offering His entreaties with an intense humility and rapture unknown among any of the clergy, the mystics, or the pilgrims; he was astounded and attracted by His beauty and perfection. He approached the Báb, and greeted Him. Wrapped in devotions, the Báb was unable to reply; Mullá Husayn moved to the back, and awaited Him there. Having completed His prayers in the inner sanctuary, the Báb went out into the courtyard, and to Mullá Husayn's utter astonishment, He repeated the prayers. Again Mullá Husayn approached, and greeted Him. Still occupied with His prayers, the Báb made no response, further deepening the young scholar's wonder. Once He had completed His prayers, the Báb moved outside the courtyard, and a third time, Mullá Husayn approached Him with greetings. This time, the Báb returned his welcome, and explained that twice having been shown his courtesy, yet He was too absorbed and transported to offer a response; whoever should attain so sacred ground as they were on, must forget themselves and all earthly matters.

Mullá Husayn's Reaction; with the Báb

Amazed that a young merchant could manifest such extraordinary depth of humility, reverence, piety, and veneration, he expressed his deepest gratitude and thanks, and asked if he might make a courtesy call. Receiving directions to reach the Báb's home, Mullá Husayn said it would be a great honour in return to receive him at Siyyid Kazim's assembly. The Báb assented that there could be no harm, and promised to attend the session.

Siyyid Kazim

Mullá Husayn conveyed to Siyyid Kázim all that had occurred. Siyyid Kázim had devoted his last few years to broadcasting the characteristics of the coming Lord of Command, and smiled, and said, "That which my heart had understood in dreams was hidden behind a veil, and is now found." Before dawn one day, Siyyid Kazim arose and dressed in his cloak, and made ready to leave his home. He requested a

student to accompany him, saying that a highly distinguished Person had arrived. As they walked through the streets in the breaking light, they reached the house of the Báb, who was standing expectant at the door, wearing a green turban, showing indescribable humility and kindness. He lovingly embraced Siyyid Kazim, who stood speechless in a state of profound reverence. The Báb led them to the upper floor, and they entered a chamber filled with flowers and the loveliest perfume. Seated and overpowered with a sense of delight, the Báb handed to Siyyid Kazim a silver cup filled to overflowing. He held the cup with both hands, and drank deeply with unrepressed joy. A single verse was all that was uttered in that encounter. The Báb arose, and accompanied them to the threshold, and bade them farewell. The student was mute with wonder at the cordiality of the Báb and the astonishing reverence of His teacher.

Báb Visits Siyyid Kazim's Session

On the Friday morning, the Báb made His promised visit to Siyyid Kazim's capacity-filled home. The Báb sat at the threshold, and the Siyyid fell absolutely silent for quarter of an hour. Everyone was astonished. When one of his disciples begged him to continue, He resumed again on the signs of the Promised One. "He is manifest as the sun! the Truth is more manifest than the ray of light that has fallen upon the lap of that Youth," he said, pointing to the Báb. "Why is it," the questioner enquired, "you indicate neither His name nor person?" The Siyyid replied by pointing to his own throat, implying they would both instantly cease to live. He descended from the pulpit, and Mullá Husayn brought the Báb to be seated beside the Siyyid. Suspecting that the Báb held a clue to the mystery, one of the students sought out His presence, as He stood rapt in prayer at the doorway of the shrine of the Imam Husayn. Tears were raining from His eyes, and from His lips, words of glorification and praise of unutterable power. The words, 'O God, my God, my Beloved, my heart's Desire!' were uttered with a frequency and ardour that the visiting pilgrims near enough to overhear, instinctively interrupted their devotions, and marvelled, and were moved to tears, as they learnt from Him directly the lesson of true adoration. Having completed His prayers, the Báb would return quietly to His home. Each time that student ventured to approach Him, a force he could neither explain nor resist held him back.

Uncle goes to 'Atabát and Appeals Return

After six months, His mother insisted her brother go out and bring the Báb back to Shíráz. The Báb desired to stay, and promises made by local notables during some tea and sherbet confirmed His uncle in his inclination towards the Báb's higher callings. Pursuing his sister's request, the uncle explained to Siyyid Kázim how the Báb's mother had not seen her only child for so long, and wished to arrange His marriage. The Siyyid though wishing not to interfere, eventually asked if it should please the Báb, that He should return, and so His uncle returned to Shíráz, followed a little later by the Báb.

Marriage in Shíráz

After several months in Shíráz with His mother, the Báb desired to journey back. His mother anxiously spoke with her brother, and made arrangements for the Báb's marriage to Khadijah. The wedding took place on Friday 25 August 1842, in the presence of merchants, noblemen, and the clergy. According to custom, the men gathered in the house of the Báb's uncle, and the women next door in the residence of Khadíjah's father. Being close to the commencement of His Cause, the Báb did not travel, but prayers and verses flowed continuously from Him.

Ahmad, the Báb's Son (Dies)

Khadijah soon was with child, although the Báb had foretold it was not his destiny to live on this earth. The labour was very difficult, and several times all hope was lost for the mother. During her final pains, the Báb penned a prayer upon a mirror and it was held before her face. As Khadijah's gaze fell upon the mirror, the lifeless child was delivered, and she recovered. He entreated God, that the child might be received as a beloved sacrifice foreshadowing His own. The Báb's mother, however, was furious, that He possessed such incredible powers yet chose not to preserve the child's life.

Khadijah's Dream of the Lion

One night as Khadijah was asleep, she dreamt of a fearsome male lion that dragged her around her courtyard two-and-a-half times, with her hands around its neck. She awoke trembling, and the Báb told her their life together would last just two-and-a-half years. And so it would be, for soon the Báb arose with the new Call of God, and their world and the world of all people, would be forever changed.

What follows is a fictionalized account of his life, written by Jack Lenz, as part of a play called "Midsummer Noon". It's told from the perspective of the Báb's Mother and His wife:

The Mother of the Báb

I knew him well. He was my son. He was born on October 20, 1819 in the city of Shiraz.

From the time He was a baby I remember thinking that there was something different about him. As a child He was always very serene, and had a dignified manner.

My husband died when the Báb was very young, and my brother became His guardian. When it came time for him to go to school, my brother took him, but His teacher brought Him back to His uncle the following day saying that he had nothing to teach this gifted child. He said, "He stands in no need of a teacher such as I." My

brother was determined that the Báb should continue to attend school, and so He did, but as time went on, the schoolmaster became even more convinced of the Báb's superior intelligence. He said that he felt that in his relationship to the Báb, he was the one who was being instructed.

But my son's intelligence was not the only characteristic which made him stand out from other children. The character of His devotion to God was very unique. The Báb spent a great deal of time praying, and was often late for school, because, as He said: "He had been in His grandfather's house." You see, we were direct descendents of the prophet Mohammed, and this is an expression that we sometimes used for prayer. Sometimes His teacher would tell him that a 10 year old boy did not need to spend so much time praying. But the Báb would say, "I wish to be like my grandfather".

When the Báb was 17, He went to Bushihr with His uncle, where He worked as a merchant for 5 years. My brother told me that He won the esteem of all the merchants He met because of His honesty and trustworthiness. During that time, He continued to devote a large amount of time to prayer.

When the Báb returned from Bushihr, He was 22. I arranged His marriage to our neighbor's daughter, Khadijih. These were happy days. They were so perfect for each other.

Although I did not understand it, there seemed to be a change in my son's behaviour. I mean, He was always extremely courteous, and very mild, but a new radiance seemed to surround him. Other people must have recognized that there was something very special about him too, for many young religious students would come to visit him in the evenings.

Before long, I realized that Khadijih was going to have a baby. In due time, she went into labour, but it was a very difficult labour and I feared that at one point she was going to die. When I hurried to tell my son about the grave condition of His wife, He picked up a mirror which was beside Him and He wrote a prayer on it. He instructed me to hold the mirror in front of Khadijih. I did this immediately and the child was soon born, but its life was short. He was a boy and the Báb named him Ahmad. When Ahmad died, I was very angry at my son. I demanded that He tell me why it was, if He possessed such powers, that He had not attempted to save the life of His own child. He answered very quietly that He was not destined to have any children.

It was soon after this that the heart of the storm entered our lives. My son went on pilgrimage, and when He returned, the religious authorities summoned Him to the mosque. They told him that He must stop His teaching. After that we did have a few quiet months before my son moved to my brother's house. He told Khadijih that it was for our safety that He was leaving us.

You know, women were not allowed to be a part of religious affairs in those days and it was very difficult for us to learn what the religious talk of the day was. Sometimes we heard rumours of my son's claim to be the Promised One, but at the time I personally was not able to investigate this claim. It was toward the end of my life, when Bahá'u'lláh, the One that the Báb had said He had come to prepare the way for, sent two of His followers to teach me about the wonderful station and mission of my son.

It was soon after the Báb moved to my brother's house, that Khadijih and I heard of His arrest. You can imagine the grief and despair that we felt. We worried about him all of the time, but it was not until one year after His death that we heard about His execution. After all these years, I still can't begin to tell you how this news pained me. On that day in Tabriz, I was not with him...

The Wife of the Báb

I also knew Him well. I am Khadijah, the Báb's wife. We were childhood friends, and as our houses were beside each other, the Báb would often visit us with His family. Usually He wouldn't join in our games, but when He did He was always very kind and considerate.

After He went to Bushihr with His uncle, I had a very vivid dream in which I saw him standing in a field of beautiful flowers. He was facing toward the Qiblih in an attitude of prayer and He was wearing a beautiful coat, which was embroidered in gold thread with verses from the Koran. His face was radiant. When I told this dream to His mother and grandmother, they assured me that it was my friend, the Báb's, assiduous attention to His prayer that had brought this vision to me. He was 17 at that time.

After He returned from Bushihr to live in Shiraz again, I had another dream which puzzled me. I dreamed that Fatimeh, the daughter of Mohammad, had come to ask for my hand in marriage to her son, the Imam Hussein. When I woke up, I told my mother, and she said that this dream foretold good fortune for me. That same day the Báb's mother and grandmother came to visit my mother. I served them some fruit and tea, and then I left the room. Before our company left, the Báb's mother kissed my forehead. My mother told me that this kiss signified that the Báb's mother was asking for my hand in marriage to her son. She said, "you see, the dream you had last night came true".

From that day I felt a great stirring in my heart. I felt immeasurably proud of my coming union. We were married in His home two months later. It was August 1842. I remember the first few months as the happiest days of my life. His care and kindness towards me were indescribable. Both He and His mother showered me with kindness and consideration.

Not long after, however, I dreamt one night, that a fiercesome lion was standing in the courtyard of our house and I had my arms around His neck. The beast dragged me twice around the entire perimeter to our courtyard and once again around half of it. I woke up alarmed and trembling with fright. I told my husband about it. He said, "You awoke too soon". Your dream foretells that our life together will not last more than two and a half years. I was greatly distressed, but His affection and words of comfort consoled me. It must have helped to prepare me to accept the adversity which lay ahead.

First came the death of our son. I so wanted a child, and when Ahmad died, the Báb again gave me comfort and solace. He said that Ahmad was with Fatimeh, the daughter of Mohammed, in the sanctified paradise.

One day in the late afternoon He came home earlier than usual. That evening He said He had a particular task to attend to, so we had an early dinner with the family in His mother's room and He retired for the night. An hour later, when the house was quiet and all were asleep, He rose from His bed and left the room. At first, I took no particular notice to His absence, but when it lengthened to more than an hour, I felt some concern. I looked for him, but He was nowhere to be found. Then I walked to the western side of the house, looked up at the roof top, and saw that the upper chamber was well lit. So with some trepidation, I went up the steps at the northern side of the courtyard. There I saw him standing in that chamber, His hands raised heavenward, intoning a prayer in a most melodious voice, with tears streaming down His face. And His face! His face was luminous. Rays of light radiating from it. He looked so majestic and resplendent, that fear seized me and I stood transfixed where I was, trembling uncontrollably. I could neither enter the room nor retrace my steps. My willpower was gone and I was on the verge of screaming when He made a gesture with His blessed hands, telling me to go back. This movement of His hands gave me back my courage and I returned to my room and my bed. Sleep was impossible and the coming dawn was foreboding.

At sunrise, He went to His mother's room for tea. I followed Him there, and as soon as my eyes fell on Him that same attitude of majesty that I had seen the night before took shape before me. He raised His face to me and with great kindness, asked me to sit beside him. Then He passed to me what was left of the tea in His own cup, which I drank. He gently asked what was troubling me, to which I replied, "You are no longer the same person I knew in our childhood. We grew up together and we have been married for two years, living in this house and now I see a different person before me. You have been transformed and it makes me anxious and uneasy."

He smiled at me and said that although He wished I had not seen him in the previous condition of last night, God had ordained otherwise. It was the Will of God, He said, that you should have seen me in the way you did last night, so that no shadow of doubt should ever cross your mind. And you should know with absolute certitude that I am the Manifestation of God, whose advent has been invoked for a thousand

years. This light radiates from my heart and from My being. As soon as I heard Him speak these words, I believed in Him and my heart became calm and assured. From that moment, I lived only to serve Him, evanescent and self effacing before him; no thought of myself ever intruding.

It is very difficult for me to talk about what came after. Fierce, fierce opposition. As His claim became known; as many people became attracted to him, the greater the denial of the priests and government leaders. They arrested him one night, and it was rumored that they would put him to death. That same night, a cholera epidemic suddenly struck Shiraz taking a heavy toll of lives. Many people fled the city, including the governor. The Báb's life was spared. They said He saved the life of the son of the man who was to put him to death.

One day, to our incredible joy, He came home and stayed three days. These were the last days of my life with him. On the last night, He said He was leaving the city. We were happy that He might reach a place of safety. The family kept us informed of His whereabouts. Unfortunately, He was arrested again. He was taken to various prisons and then to Tabriz. Before He left Shiraz, He had confided to me the secret of His future sufferings and unfolded to my eyes, the significance of the events that were to transpire in this day.

He gave me a special prayer, revealed and written by Himself. He said: "In the hour of your perplexity, recite this prayer, ere you go to sleep. I myself will appear to you, and will banish your anxiety." I found this to be absolutely true. Every time I turned to Him in prayer, the light of His unfailing guidance illumined my path, and resolved my problems.

My greatest happiness came when I recognized the Great One that my husband had given His life for; Bahá'u'lláh. I believed that the Báb guided me to see this truth. So you see, those years with Him were so wonderful. The rest is history. How I wish that I could have been with him, on that day in Tabriz...

Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gLX6-021EWU>

**Tablet revealed by Bahá'u'lláh
in honor of the anniversary of the Báb's birth**

All praise be to Thee, O my God, inasmuch as Thou hast adorned the world with the splendour of the dawn following the night wherein was born the One Who heralded the Manifestation of Thy transcendent sovereignty, the Dayspring of Thy divine Essence and the Revelation of Thy supreme Lordship. I beseech Thee, O Creator of the heavens and Fashioner of names, to graciously aid those who have sheltered beneath the shadow of Thine abounding mercy and have raised their voices amidst the peoples of the world for the glorification of Thy Name.

O my God! Thou beholdest the Lord of all mankind confined in His Most Great Prison, calling aloud Thy Name, gazing upon Thy face, proclaiming that which hath enraptured the denizens of Thy kingdoms of revelation and of creation. O my God! I behold Mine own Self captive in the hands of Thy servants, yet the light of Thy sovereignty and the revelations of Thine invincible power shine resplendent from His face, enabling all to know of a certainty that Thou art God, and that there is none other God but Thee. Neither can the power of the powerful frustrate Thee, nor the ascendancy of the rulers prevail against Thee. Thou doest whatsoever Thou willest by virtue of Thy sovereignty which encompasseth all created things, and ordainest that which Thou pleasest through the potency of Thy behest which pervadeth the entire creation.

I implore Thee by the glory of Thy Manifestation and by the power of Thy might, Thy sovereignty and Thine exaltation to render victorious those who have arisen to serve Thee, who have aided Thy Cause and humbled themselves before the splendour of the light of Thy face. Make them then, O my God, triumphant over Thine enemies and cause them to be steadfast in Thy service, that through them the evidences of Thy dominion may be established throughout Thy realms and the tokens of Thine indomitable power be manifested in Thy lands. Verily Thou art potent to do what Thou willest; no God is there but Thee, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. (Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 233-234)

Tablet of Visitation

The praise which hath dawned from Thy most august Self, and the glory which hath shone forth from Thy most effulgent Beauty, rest upon Thee, O Thou Who art the Manifestation of Grandeur, and the King of Eternity, and the Lord of all who are in heaven and on earth! I testify that through Thee the sovereignty of God and His dominion, and the majesty of God and His grandeur, were revealed, and the Day-Stars of ancient splendor have shed their radiance in the heaven of Thine irrevocable decree, and the Beauty of the Unseen hath shone forth above the horizon of creation. I testify, moreover, that with but a movement of Thy Pen Thine injunction "Be Thou" hath been enforced, and God's hidden Secret hath been divulged, and all created things have been called into being, and all the Revelations have been sent down.

I bear witness, moreover, that through Thy beauty the beauty of the Adored One hath been unveiled, and through Thy face the face of the Desired One hath shone forth, and that through a word from Thee Thou hast decided between all created things, causing them who are devoted to Thee to ascend unto the summit of glory, and the infidels to fall into the lowest abyss.

I bear witness that he who hath known Thee hath known God, and he who hath attained unto Thy presence hath attained unto the presence of God. Great, therefore, is the blessedness of him who hath believed in Thee, and in Thy signs, and hath humbled himself before Thy sovereignty, and hath been honored with

meeting Thee, and hath attained the good pleasure of Thy will, and circled around Thee, and stood before Thy throne. Woe betide him that hath transgressed against Thee, and hath denied Thee, and repudiated Thy signs, and gainsaid Thy sovereignty, and risen up against Thee, and waxed proud before Thy face, and hath disputed Thy testimonies, and fled from Thy rule and Thy dominion, and been numbered with the infidels whose names have been inscribed by the fingers of Thy behest upon Thy holy Tablets.

Waft, then, unto me, O my God and my Beloved, from the right hand of Thy mercy and Thy loving-kindness, the holy breaths of Thy favors, that they may draw me away from myself and from the world unto the courts of Thy nearness and Thy presence. Potent art Thou to do what pleaseth Thee. Thou, truly, hast been supreme over all things.

The remembrance of God and His praise, and the glory of God and His splendor, rest upon Thee, O Thou Who art His Beauty! I bear witness that the eye of creation hath never gazed upon one wronged like Thee. Thou wast immersed all the days of Thy life beneath an ocean of tribulations. At one time Thou wast in chains and fetters; at another Thou wast threatened by the sword of Thine enemies. Yet, despite all this, Thou didst enjoin upon all men to observe what had been prescribed unto Thee by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

May my spirit be a sacrifice to the wrongs Thou didst suffer, and my soul be a ransom for the adversities Thou didst sustain. I beseech God, by Thee and by them whose faces have been illumined with the splendors of the light of Thy countenance, and who, for love of Thee, have observed all whereunto they were bidden, to remove the veils that have come in between Thee and Thy creatures, and to supply me with the good of this world and the world to come. Thou art, in truth, the Almighty, the Most Exalted, the All-Glorious, the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Compassionate.

Bless Thou, O Lord my God, the Divine Lote-Tree and its leaves, and its boughs, and its branches, and its stems, and its offshoots, as long as Thy most excellent titles will endure and Thy most august attributes will last. Protect it, then, from the mischief of the aggressor and the hosts of tyranny. Thou art, in truth, the Almighty, the Most Powerful. Bless Thou, also, O Lord my God, Thy servants and Thy handmaidens who have attained unto Thee. Thou, truly, art the All-Bountiful, Whose grace is infinite. No God is there save Thee, the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Generous. (Prayers and Meditations, pp. 310-313)