

## **Famous Dreams in the Bahá'í Faith**

By Susan Gammage <sup>1</sup>

The Bahá'í Faith is replete with stories of famous dreams.

Many of the Messengers of God had dreams or visions.

...the soul-shaking experience of Moses when confronted by the Burning Bush in the wilderness of Sinai; of Zoroaster when awakened to His mission by a succession of seven visions; of Jesus when coming out of the waters of the Jordan He saw the heavens opened and the Holy Ghost descend like a dove and light upon Him; of Muhammad when in the Cave of Hira, outside of the holy city of Mecca, the voice of Gabriel bade Him "cry in the name of Thy Lord, and of the Báb when in a dream He approached the bleeding head of the Imam Husayn, and, quaffing the blood that dripped from his lacerated throat, awoke to find Himself the chosen recipient of the outpouring grace of the Almighty. (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 93)

Large numbers of people were led to recognize the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh through dreams.

During the ministries of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, great numbers were led to the Fountain-head of God's Revelation in mysterious ways -- through dreams and visions, through intuition or even through miraculous circumstances. (Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh v 3*, pp. 10-11)

Most of the Letters of the Living recognized the Báb through dreams.

Not until forty days had elapsed, however, did the enrollment of the seventeen remaining Letters of the Living commence. Gradually, spontaneously, some in sleep, others while awake, some through fasting and prayer, others through dreams and visions, they discovered the Object of their quest, and were enlisted under the banner of the new-born Faith. (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 7)

### **Dreams in the Time of the Báb**

The Báb dreamt that He drank Imam Husayn's blood.

In one of His writings revealed in the year '60 A.H., the Báb declares the following: "The spirit of prayer which animates My soul is the direct consequence of a dream which I had in the year before the declaration of My Mission. In My vision I saw the head of the Imam Husayn, the Siyyidu'sh-Shuhada', which was hanging upon a tree. Drops of blood dripped profusely from His lacerated throat. With feelings of unsurpassed delight, I approached that tree and, stretching forth My hands,

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<sup>1</sup> Prepared by David Bowie (2023) for posting, with permission of author, at [https://bahai-library.com/gammage\\_various\\_essays](https://bahai-library.com/gammage_various_essays)

gathered a few drops of that sacred blood, and drank them devoutly. When I awoke, I felt that the Spirit of God had permeated and taken possession of My soul. My heart was thrilled with the joy of His Divine presence, and the mysteries of His Revelation were unfolded before My eyes in all their glory." (Shoghi Effendi, *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 253)

The Báb's uncle recognized His station in a dream, when the Báb was only 5 years old.

The uncle then confided to the priest the dream which he had had about his nephew when the Báb was five years old.

"I dreamed that a pair of scales hung from heaven," he said. "On one side of the scales was one of the Prophets. On the other side, this child was placed by an invisible hand. Then, the side with the child slowly weighed down the other." (William Sears, *Release the Sun*, p. 45)

Táhirih recognized the Báb in a dream:

After the Báb had declared His mission, and His first book, "The Best of Stories," was circulated, Táhirih was reading a section of the text one day, and she came upon that same verse, which she had noted down from the dream. Instantly offering thanks, she fell to her knees and bowed her forehead to the ground, convinced that the Báb's message was truth. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Memorials of the Faithful*, p. 193)

Khadijih (the wife of the Báb), had several famous dreams.

In one, she dreamt of her marriage to the Báb.

One night I dreamt that Fátimih [the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad, the holiest woman in Islam] came to our house as a suitor to propose marriage. With great joy and ecstasy my sisters and I went to her. She then came forward to me and kissed my forehead. I understood in the dream that she had chosen me. When I woke up in the morning I felt very happy and joyous, but I felt too shy to share my dream with anybody. In the afternoon of the same day, the mother of the Báb came to our house. My sister and I went to her. Exactly as I had dreamt, she came forward, kissed my forehead and embraced me. She then left. My eldest sister said to me, 'The mother of the Báb came to propose and has asked for your hand in marriage [with her son].' I replied, 'This is a great felicity for me.' I recounted my dream and expressed the happiness of my heart because of its implications. (Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh v 2*, pp. 384-385)

In another, she recognized the Báb's station.

I dreamt one night that I was sitting in the presence of the Báb. It appeared as though it was the evening of our wedding. The Báb was dressed in a green cloak around the borders of which were inscribed the verses of the Qur'án ... and light

was emanating from Him. Seeing Him in this way, I was filled with such joy and gladness that I woke up. After this dream I was assured in my heart that the Báb was a distinguished personage. I cherished a love for Him in my heart, but did not disclose my feelings to anybody. (Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh* v 2, p. 385)

And in another she learned her marriage would only last two and a half years.

Not long after her marriage, she dreamt one night that a fearsome lion was standing in the courtyard of their house, and she herself had her arms around the neck of the lion. The beast dragged her twice round the whole perimeter of the courtyard, and once round half of it. She woke up, alarmed and trembling with fright, and related her dream to her Husband. His comment was: 'You awoke too soon. Your dream portends that our life together will not last more than two-and-a-half years.' Khadijih Bagum was greatly distressed, but her Husband's affection and His words of comfort consoled her and prepared her to accept every adversity in the path of God. (H.M. Balyuzi, *Khadijih Bagum - Wife of the Báb*)

Anis Zunúzí was among those who heard of the message from the Báb in Tabriz, and was fired with the desire to hasten to Chihríq and attain His presence. Those words had kindled in him an irrepressible longing to sacrifice himself in His path. His stepfather strenuously objected to his leaving the city, and was at last induced to confine him in his house and strictly watch over him. Anis languished in his confinement until the time when he had a vision in which the Báb promised that he would be martyred with Him. Here is the story in his words.

After the Báb had been taken back to Chihríq, one day, as I lay confined in my cell, I turned my heart to Him and besought Him in these words: "Thou beholdest, O my Best-Beloved, my captivity and helplessness, and knowest how eagerly I yearn to look upon Thy face. Dispel the gloom that oppresses my heart, with the light of Thy countenance." What tears of agonising pain I shed that hour! I was so overcome with emotion that I seemed to have lost consciousness. Suddenly I heard the voice of the Báb, and, lo! He was calling me. He bade me arise. I beheld the majesty of His countenance as He appeared before me. He smiled as He looked into my eyes. I rushed forward and flung myself at His feet. "Rejoice," He said; "the hour is approaching when, in this very city, I shall be suspended before the eyes of the multitude and shall fall a victim to the fire of the enemy. I shall choose no one except you to share with Me the cup of martyrdom. Rest assured that this promise which I give you shall be fulfilled. (Shoghi Effendi, *The Dawnbreakers*, pp. 307-308)

### **Dreams in the Time of Bahá'u'lláh**

Bahá'u'lláh's father had a dream which foretold his son's station. Here is this famous story about Bahá'u'lláh and the Fishes.

When Bahá'u'lláh was still a child, the Vazír, His father, dreamed a dream. Bahá'u'lláh appeared to him swimming in a vast, limitless ocean. His body shone upon the waters with a radiance that illumined the sea. Around His head, which could distinctly be seen above the waters, there radiated, in all directions, His long, jet-black locks, floating in great profusion above the waves. As he dreamed, a multitude of fishes gathered round Him, each holding fast to the extremity of one hair. Fascinated by the effulgence of His face, they followed Him in whatever direction He swam. Great as was their number, and however firmly they clung to His locks, not one single hair seemed to have been detached from His head, nor did the least injury affect His person. Free and unrestrained, He moved above the waters and they all followed Him.

The Vazír, greatly impressed by this dream, summoned a soothsayer, who had achieved fame in that region, and asked him to interpret it for him. This man, as if inspired by a premonition of the future glory of Bahá'u'lláh, declared: "The limitless ocean that you have seen in your dream, O Vazír, is none other than the world of being. Single-handed and alone, your son will achieve supreme ascendancy over it. Wherever He may please, He will proceed unhindered. No one will resist His march, no one will hinder His progress. The multitude of fishes signifies the turmoil which He will arouse amidst the peoples and kindreds of the earth. Around Him will they gather, and to Him will they cling. Assured of the unfailing protection of the Almighty, this tumult will never harm His person, nor will His loneliness upon the sea of life endanger His safety."

That soothsayer was subsequently taken to see Bahá'u'lláh. He looked intently upon His face, and examined carefully His features. He was charmed by His appearance, and extolled every trait of His countenance. Every expression in that face revealed to his eyes a sign of His concealed glory. So great was his admiration, and so profuse his praise of Bahá'u'lláh, that the Vazír, from that day, became even more passionately devoted to his son. The words spoken by that soothsayer served to fortify his hopes and confidence in Him. (Shoghi Effendi, *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 119-120)

Bahá'u'lláh received His intimation in a dream:

One night in a dream," Bahá'u'lláh Himself, recounting His soul-shaking experience of the first stirrings of His prophetic Mission, in the Year Nine, in that abominable pit, has written, "these exalted words were heard on every side: 'Verily, We shall render Thee victorious by Thyself and by Thy Pen. Grieve Thou not for that which hath befallen Thee, neither be Thou afraid, for Thou art in safety. Ere long will God raise up the treasures of the earth -- men who will aid Thee through Thyself and through Thy Name, wherewith God hath revived the hearts of such as have recognized Him'." (Shoghi Effendi, *This Decisive Hour*, p. 125, paragraph 158.20)

### **More Modern Dreams**

'Abdu'l-Bahá used his dreams to gain insights into what He should talk about.

I have made you wait awhile, but as I was tired, I slept. While I was sleeping, I was conversing with you as though speaking at the top of my voice. Then through the effect of my own voice I awoke. As I awoke, one word was upon my lips—the word *imtiyáz* ("distinction"). So I will speak to you upon that subject this morning. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 189)

In the early days of the Faith, people often associated many beliefs of their own with the Faith. Here is a story by Marzieh Gail of what happened in Chicago.

What had happened in Chicago was this: the Syrian, *Khayru'lláh*, had been teaching the Cause, adding to the Faith many beliefs of his own, such as reincarnation, dream interpretation, occultism and the like. He had written a book incorporating these beliefs with the Teachings, and had gone to Akká and asked permission to publish it. The Master told him to abandon his superstitious beliefs, saying further that he would become a leading teacher if he would give them up and spread the Faith. But he returned to America and published his book. A rift resulted among the believers; Mirzá Abu'l-Fadl and I were sent to heal the rift. In Chicago we found Asadu'lláh, who had come to America with the two devoted Baha'i merchants of Egypt... although still a recognized teacher he was busily interpreting dreams for the believers and hemming them in with superstition. After listening to Mirzá [Abu'l-Fadl] for awhile, some of the believers said he was 'cold and intellectual'. They said Asadu'lláh was 'spiritual', because he interpreted their dreams. They would walk down the hall, past Mirzá's door, and go on to Asadu'lláh. They would come and tell us that they were personally led by the spirit, or had had a vision warning them against a fellow-believer, and so forth. (Mirzá's name for them was *jinn-gir*—'spook chasers'.)

We saw that all this occult confusion would lead to divisions among the friends, especially as many of them were not yet well grounded in the Cause. We talked the matter over and decided on the following procedure: when anyone came to us, saying he was guided by the spirit to do thus and so, we would answer, 'The Universal Spirit is manifested today in Bahá'u'lláh. If you have visions or experiences urging you to some action, weigh this action with the revealed Teachings. If the act conforms with the Teachings, it is true guidance. If not, your experience has been only a dream.' (Marzieh Gail, *Dawn Over Mount Hira*, pp. 101-102) [https://bahai-library.com/pdf/g/gail\\_dawn\\_mount\\_hira.pdf](https://bahai-library.com/pdf/g/gail_dawn_mount_hira.pdf)

Even in the West people discovered the Faith through dreams:

We were sometimes led in America by dreams and visions," said Georgia Ralston, a member of the [Phoebe] Hearst circle. "We had to be. There were no books." Also, there were no local, national or international Baha'i bodies then. The individual

simply wrote to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, that he believed. (Marzieh Gail, Arches of the Years, p. 59) [https://bahai-library.com/pdf/g/gail\\_arches\\_years.pdf](https://bahai-library.com/pdf/g/gail_arches_years.pdf)

Mona Mahmudnizhad was a 16 year old girl who was put to death for teaching children's classes in Iran in 1982. Prior to her arrest, she had a dream in which she was offered her choice of three garments: one was red, and it symbolized martyrdom; one was black, it meant a life of sadness and suffering; the third was blue, Mona's favorite color, it stood for a life devoted to serving humanity. In her dream, Mona chose the blue. In her life, Mona eventually chose to wear each of them.

### **Mona's dream**

Ten months before she was killed, Mona had another extraordinary dream which was later related by family and friends. Following is the version transcribed from her diary.

She had been saying prayers with a small group of friends for several hours. After they left her home, she was so moved by the prayers that she went into the living room and sat down in front of a photograph of 'Abdu'l-Bahá meditated quietly and then fell asleep.

In her dream, she saw 'Abdu'l-Bahá's chair and desk, with a vase on it, as in the picture before her. She was very happy and said: "How happy I am to see your desk and chair." At the same moment she saw Bahá'u'lláh entering the room. The Blessed Beauty went out into an adjoining chamber and brought out a box containing a beautiful red cape. He unwrapped it in front of her, saying, "This is the cape of martyrdom in my path. Do you accept it?"

Mona was speechless with happiness. Finally, she said, "Whatever pleases you..."

Bahá'u'lláh put the cape back in the box and returned to the adjoining room bringing back with him a second box, containing a black cape which he unwrapped and said:

"This black cape symbolizes sorrow in my path. Do you accept it?" Mona replied, "How beautiful are the tears shed in thy path."

He put the cape back in the box and again returned to the other room, emerging with yet a third box containing an elaborately beaded blue cape of the same design as the others.

Without a word of hesitation, he placed the cape around her shoulders, and said: "This is the cape of service." Then he seated himself in the chair and said to Mona: "Come and take a picture with me!"

Mona was breathless with astonishment at the bounties being showered on her and could hardly walk. She looked up and saw a man sitting behind an old-fashioned camera covered by a cloth. Bahá'u'lláh repeated his instruction but Mona could not move.

Then Bahá'u'lláh took her arm, saying, "Mehdi, take our picture." And he took a picture of them together. The flash of the camera wakened her abruptly and she pleaded tearfully to

be able to finish her dream and then fell asleep again. Bahá'u'lláh had left the room. Only the photographer remained, carrying the tripod and camera on his shoulder as if to leave. He turned around and asked Mona to convey his love to his children. But Mona could not tell which "Mehdi" he was since there were many people by that name in the long history of the Faith and in her own community. But still he looked familiar to her. "Mehdi" was busily tying his shoes and noticed that Mona did not recognize him. As he was leaving the room he turned and said, "I am Medhi Anvari." Mona instantly recognized him as one of the Bahá'ís of Shiraz who had previously been killed. (<https://bahaichronicles.org/mona-mahmudnizhad/>)