

*The Story of Anis Zunuzi by Houri Falahi-Skuce \**

*Transcript of video*

Ninety kilometers north of Tabriz, in the province of Azerbaijan northwest of Iran, lies a beautiful valley amidst the lush green hills. In the foothills of the surrounding mountains there lies the charming village of Zunuz, the birthplace of Anís. It is a picturesque collection of white-washed houses with white roofs, surrounded by flowering gardens and orchards. This fertile region is famous for its numerous varieties of apples and is often called the apple capitol of Iran. Within its walled gardens you will also find apricots, pears and countless herbs and flowers. The calcareous rocks, the colorful layers of silicated limestone and the profusion of mineral springs are unique to this region.

Anís, a title given to him by the Báb, means companion. He was born Muhammad Ali Zunuzi, the surname designating the place of his birth. His father was Mulla 'Abdu'l-Vaja, a respected theologian in the area, who moved to Tabriz later in life. His parents had three children. The oldest was a boy named Mulla Abdullah, followed by a daughter whose name we do not know. Anís was the youngest, and he was only two years old when his father passed away.

A short time later, his mother married a mujtahid by the name of Aqa Siyyid Ali, also a native of Zunuz who lived in Tabriz. He was highly respected among the notables and theologians there, many of whom attended his classes. He was also well known for his impeccable trustworthiness, piety and integrity, among all the people living there. He adopted his new wife's children, raising them as if they were his own. Knowing that their extended families all lived in Zunuz, we can presume that they regularly returned to the village to visit their relatives and enjoy its cooler summer days as well as partake of the bountiful fruit harvest.

Since his early childhood, Anís demonstrated a keen intelligence and gentle character. His stepfather, recognizing his extraordinary characteristics, endeavored to ensure that the boy received the best education possible in the region. Over time, by attending the best theological schools and through the dedicated efforts of his stepfather, Anís became an accomplished mulla at an early age. He was recognized and admired for his honesty and impeccable conduct. By all accounts, he lived a comfortable, happy, and fulfilling life. Unaware of the role he was destined to play in God's divine plan, Anís married and had two children whom he loved.

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\* See link at [www.bahai-library.com/video\\_story\\_anis\\_zunuzi](http://www.bahai-library.com/video_story_anis_zunuzi)

In the spring of 1847, Muhammad Shah ordered the Báb to be brought to Tabriz. The prime minister had given strict orders that no one be allowed to approach or contact Him. But the news of His arrival had stirred the people. Many of them, despite the order, came out to witness His entry into the city. A great number of them greeted Him with the shout "Alláh'u'Akbar!" God is the Most Great! While others cheered Him loudly. Some were even seen to kiss the dust of His footsteps with reverence. The Báb was confined to one of the chief houses of the city and guards stood at the entrance with orders to arrest anyone who approached. When the Báb became aware of this, He commanded the guards to allow those whom He desired to meet, to be allowed to attain His presence.

Among those who were admitted to His presence was Mulla Muhammad Ali, later named Anís, who upon hearing of the Báb's presence in that city, hastened to meet Him. During those precious moments he spent with the Báb, no one knows what was conveyed to him. But the power of His glance and utterance so permeated his soul and affected him so deeply that he could not conceal his excitement.

After forty days of confinement in the room at the chief house, the Báb was transferred from Tabriz to the castle of Maku, where He was incarcerated for a period of nine months. During the Báb's confinement there and His subsequent incarceration in the castle of Chiriq, Muhammad Ali visited Him again on several occasions. It was at those times he had the opportunity to listen to the verses revealed by the Báb and be charmed by their theme and their language. He observed how the Báb, without lessening the speed of His writing, was able to answer whatever questions those who were present were moved to ask Him. His love for the Báb had inflamed his soul with such a consuming passion that no one could resist its force or could belittle its influence.

Wherever he went, he openly and fearlessly began to announce the claim of the Báb. the Gate Whose advent they were eagerly awaiting. He called on the multitudes to arise and seek Him. He openly entered into heated discussions with other mullas. His boldness and the fearlessness with which he arose to preach the Báb's message, aroused the hostility of the clergy in Tabriz and provoked their anger. Until then, out of the respect and reverence for his stepfather, Aqa Siyyid Ali, they had kept their silence. Now they came to him complaining and accusing his son of blasphemy against Islam.

Upon hearing their accusations, Aqa Siyyid Ali was furious and severely admonished Muhammad Ali for his outrageous conduct. But he soon realized that any effort to try to force him to give up his convictions was futile. So, he tried to reason with him telling him that he had put himself and his family in grave danger, and urged him to conceal his faith. He asked him to exercise moderation and act reservedly, not to provoke those fanatical mullas and their followers any further.

When Aqa Siyyid Ali realized that his exhortations and advice produced no change in his son's behavior, he felt he had no choice but to confine him in his own house. He was locked up in a room and strictly watched over. Muhammad Ali accepted this hardship in the path of his Beloved with patience and resilience. Night and day, he prayed silently in his solitude, while concentrating his attention towards Chiriq. His weeping and lamentation, especially through the night, was heard by his family and would keep them sleepless. Finally, his health took a turn for the worse and his weak and fragile body was confined to bed.

It was during this time, that, in pursuance of the orders issued by the government authorities in Tehran, the Báb was brought to Tabriz from the prison in the castle of Chiriq, for interrogation before the ecclesiastical leaders of that city, and again returned there.

A few days after the Báb's departure, there was a sudden change in Muhammad Ali's behavior. To understand the reason behind this change, the following is an account from Siyyid Hasan-i-Zunuzi, a relative of Muhammad Ali and a prominent disciple of the Báb.

“During my stay in Tabriz, I often visited Siyyid Ali Zunuzi who was related to me and frequently heard him deplore the sad fate of his son. ‘He seems to have lost his reason.’ he bitterly complained, ‘He has by his behavior brought reproach and shame upon me. Try to calm the agitation of his heart and induce him to conceal his convictions.’

“Every day I visited him, I witnessed the tears that continually rained from his eyes. After the Báb had departed from Tabriz, one day as I went to see him, I was surprised to note the joy and gladness that had illumined his countenance. His handsome face was wreathed with smiles as he stepped forward to receive me.”

‘The eyes of my Beloved,’ he said as he embraced me, ‘had beheld this face. And these eyes have gazed upon His countenance.’ ‘Let me,’ he added, ‘tell you the secret of my happiness. After the Báb had been taken back to Chiriq, one day as I lay confined in my cell, I turned my heart to Him and besought Him in these words “Thou beholdest O my Best Beloved, my captivity and helplessness and knowest how eagerly I yearn to look upon Thy face. Dispel the gloom that oppresses my heart with the light of Thy countenance.” What tears of agonizing pain I shed that hour. I was so overcome with emotion that I seemed to have lost consciousness. Suddenly I heard the voice of the 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.” I was entranced by the beauty of that vision. When I recovered, I found myself in an ocean of joy. A joy the radiance of which all the sorrows of the world could never obscure. That voice keeps ringing in my ears. That vision haunts me in the daytime and the night season. The memory of that ineffable smile has dissipated the loneliness of my confinement. I am firmly convinced that the hour at which His pledge is to be fulfilled can no longer be delayed.’

“I exhorted him to be patient and to conceal his emotions. He promised me not to divulge that secret and undertook to exercise the utmost forbearance towards Siyyid Ali. I hastened to assure the father of his determination and succeeded in obtaining his release from his confinement. That youth continued until the day of his martyrdom to associate in a state of complete serenity and joy with his parents and his kinsmen. Such was his behavior towards his friends and relatives that on the day he lay down his life for his Beloved, the people of Tabriz all wept and bewailed him.”

*Nabil-i-A'zam – The Dawnbreakers, p307-8*

As previously mentioned, from His confinement in the castle of Chiriq, the Báb by order of the prime minister, had been brought to Tabriz for interrogation before the governor and the ecclesiastical dignitaries of that city. It is noteworthy to mention that the sole purpose for the Báb's two consecutive incarcerations on the summit of the mountains within the castles of Maku and Chiriq had been to sever every tie that bound Him to the body of His disciples throughout the country.

Two notorious prime ministers, Haji Mirza Aqasi and Mirza Taqi Khan, the Amir Kabir, had deliberately contrived to banish the Báb to this remote, this inhospitable and dangerously situated territory of the Shah, imagining this forced seclusion from the pursuit of His followers would gradually tend to stifle the movement at its very birth and would lead to its final extinction. But they had gravely mistaken the nature of the Báb's revelation and the force of its influence. This was proven to them when, by the order of the prime minister, the Báb was brought back to Tabriz for interrogation. The news of His impending arrival to their city kindled such fervor and excitement among its inhabitants that the authorities decided to house the Báb in a place outside the gates of the city. But every measure of precaution and restriction imposed by the authorities only served to aggravate the situation. A wave of unprecedented enthusiasm swept rapidly over the entire city. An order was issued for the immediate convocation of a gathering by the ecclesiastical

dignitaries in the official residence of the governor for the purpose of arraigning the Báb and of seeking the most effective means for the extinction of His influence.

The Báb was summoned before the most eminent mujtahids of the region. And chief among them, the Nizamu'l-'Ulama', convened the meeting. The seventeen-year-old crown prince, Nasiri'd-Din Mirza, inexperienced and conceited, was also in attendance, as newly appointed governor of Azerbaijan. Nizamu'l-'Ulama', who was also the prince's tutor, presided over that assembly.

A multitude of people had besieged the entrance of the hall, hoping to get a glimpse of the Báb's face. Within the hall, every seat was occupied except the one reserved for the crown prince. Observing this, the Báb greeted the assembly and without the slightest hesitation proceeded to occupy the vacant seat. This expression of overpowering majesty and confidence shining from His whole being, crushed the soul out of the body of those who had assembled. No one dared to break the mysterious silence which fell upon them. At last, it was the voice of the president which broke the silence and dared to ask the Báb, "Whom do you claim to be? And what is the message which you have brought?"

The Báb exclaimed three times "I am, I am, I am the Promised One. I am the One whose name you have for a thousand years invoked. At whose mention you have risen, whose advent you have longed to witness, and the hour of whose revelation you have prayed God to hasten. Verily I say, it is incumbent upon the peoples of both the East and the West to obey My word and to pledge allegiance to My person." Everyone's head was dropped in silent confusion. Finally, it was the voice of that renegade Mulla Muhammad Ali Mamaqani, the one-eyed and white-bearded leader of the Shaykhi movement and the unfaithful disciple of its leader Siyyid Kazim, which broke the silence. He insolently reprimanded the Báb, calling Him a perverse and contemptible follower of Satan. The Báb again maintained what He had already declared.

A series of questions were asked of Him, to which He responded with firmness and dignity. But when some irrelevant and flippant remarks were thrown at Him, He dismissed the proceedings by immediately rising and leaving the room. As a result, that assemblage was dispersed and its members confused and humiliated in failing to achieve their purpose. As a consequence of their misguided and foolish act, the supreme opportunity of publicly proclaiming His mission had now been afforded to the Báb.

After considerable discussions and arguments, it was decided that the Báb should be brought to the prayer house to be chastised and the governor's bodyguard should inflict the bastinado on Him. The guard refused to accede to this request. The heartless Shaykhu'l-Islam applied the bastinado eleven times with his own hands. The rods striking the Báb's raised feet and one time hitting His face, inflicting him with a deep wound. That

same year, this cruel and contemptuous tyrant was struck with paralysis and endured the most excruciating pain before he died a miserable death.

The prime minister, bewildered by the outcome of his schemes was forced to order the Báb to be taken back to Chiriq. It was some time after the Báb's return to His confinement in the castle of Chiriq when Muhammad Ali had his astounding experience of beholding the countenance of his Beloved Báb appearing before him, calling him to arise.

The brief period that followed his vision, while he awaited the fulfilment of his Master's promise, was the happiest time of his life. He was no longer agitated nor bemoaning his fate. He was jubilant and his heart was at peace. He carried a secret in his heart which he could not divulge to anyone, especially his family, for they could not bear to hear it. Naturally, he had a tremendous love and affection for his parents, his siblings, his wife, and his two little children. But no earthly power could succeed in quenching the flame of faith which both his Master's words and promise had set ablaze in his heart.

As the last year of the Báb's captivity in the remote corner of Azerbaijan drew to a close, notable events demonstrating great heroism on the part of His followers and fierce hostility on the part of His enemies took place. This period is regarded as the most turbulent and bloodiest ever witnessed since the beginning of His ministry. The Báb's public declaration before the powerful and distinguished ecclesiastical figures in Tabriz established His authority as the promised Qa'im. This, along with the ceaseless outpouring of His Pen, further raised His followers' zeal to defend their Faith against their hostile enemies. This resulted in their fierce persecution. During which many of the Báb' prominent supporters lost their lives in a most tragic and barbaric fashion and culminated in His own martyrdom.

When Mirza Taqi Khan, the Grand Vizier of Nasiri'd-Din Shah decided to have the Báb executed, he sent orders to Hamsa Mirza, the governor general of Azerbaijan, to bring the Báb from Chiriq to Tabriz. The Báb's arrival in that city took place on the fifth of Sha'ban 1266, June 15th 1850. The governor, believing that the prime minister's intention was to free the prisoner, ordered that the utmost respect be accorded to the Báb, both during His journey and after He was settled in a designated house. But three days later, the Grand Vizier's own brother arrived, bringing further orders for the immediate execution of the Báb. The governor refused to be associated in any way with such a cowardly and brutal act, the slaying of an innocent descendant of the prophet Muhammad. Therefore, the prime minister left it to his brother Mirza Hasan Khan, the Vizier-Nizam, to carry out the order. Although attempts were made to expedite all communications and correspondence between Tehran and Tabriz, it never the less took some 23 days before the Báb's execution was able to take place.

During this time, Muhammad Ali attained the presence of the Báb and became His devoted attendant. The Báb favored him to be His intermediary for conveying His messages to various individuals. One of His messages was addressed to a certain mulla, and contained a severe warning. Upon reading the message, the mullah became agitated crying out abusive and idle remarks. Muhammad Ali and his two companions tried to calm him down and keep him quiet. As soon as the news of such bold and daring actions on the part of Muhammad Ali reached his stepfather, once again his family and relatives became frightened and knew he was in grave danger. His father, who was on the one hand worried about his own reputation and on the other hand was apprehensive about his son losing his life, took up the pen and wrote him the following letter:

“O degenerate and misguided son! Although by your behavior, you have disgraced and shamed me in the eyes of the ulama of this city, but now that you are facing great danger, out of concern for your safety and well-being, I want to give you some fatherly advice. Do not be scared of the rumor which has been spread about you having joined the Cause of Siyyid-i-Báb. Human beings are capable of committing errors. You have made a mistake and now you must repent. Your dignity and honor will not diminish and I will save you.”

How different was the content of that letter when compared with Muhammad Ali's thoughts and pre-occupation. He feared that his Beloved would at the last moment decide not to fulfil His promise. While at the same time, his stepfather was asking him not to be fearful of what would be the result of his repentance and was reassuring him of his pardon and forgiveness. He therefore responded by reminding him of a verse from a famous poet Hafiz, “I am a rogue and in love. Then repent? God forbid. God forbid.”, which he wrote at the bottom of that letter and returned it to his step-father.

Aqa Siyyid Ali was utterly shaken by that response and once again was plunged in deep sorrow. What's more, he was facing Muhammad Ali's inconsolable mother who constantly begged him to come to her son's rescue. So, he called on the older brother, Haji Mirza Abdullah, to seek his advice. His immediate action was to write to his younger brother a very moving letter filled with advice and exhortation and to impress on him the gravity of the situation. He tried to describe the heart rending sighs of his mother, sister and wife, their weeping and lamentation. He implored his brother to conceal his belief for their sake, follow a safe and secure path taking care of his possessions, his property and his little children.

Muhammad Ali, having read that letter, took up the pen and responded to his brother. Since he is addressing a brother who was several years his senior, he adopted a very respectful tone in his letter. That letter is the only impression which remains from him and

is a testimony to the writer's true circumstance and desire. Perhaps this is the only instance in religious history when a young man, soon to be executed for his belief alongside the Messenger of God Himself, has written a letter for the sole purpose of consoling his loved ones.

"O my Qiblih! Praise be to God! I am content with my circumstances and to every hardship, rest succeeds. As to what you have written, that this matter hath no end, what matter then hath an end? We at least have no discontent therein and, indeed, unable to sufficiently express our gratitude for this blessing. At most, we can but be slain for God's sake, and oh what happiness were this! The Lord's will must be accomplished through His servants; neither can prudence avert predestined fate. What God wills comes to pass! There is no strength save in God.

"O my Qiblih! The end of this life is death. Every soul shall taste of death. If the appointed destiny which the Lord, mighty and glorious is He, hath decreed shall overtake me, then God is the guardian of my family and thou art my trustee. Act in such wise as accords with God's good pleasure. Forgive any failure in the respect or duty owed to an elder brother of which I may have been guilty. Seek on my behalf, pardon and forgiveness from all those of my household and commit me to God. God is my portion and how good is He as a guardian."

This letter, which was written only a few days before Muhammad Ali's execution, is the story of the faith, courage and constancy displayed not only by this youth but also by some twenty thousand martyrs who sacrificed their lives for their beloved Faith in the most tragic and barbarous ways.

Further orders from the Grand Vizier were sent to his brother, the Vizier-Nizam, instructing him to carry them out under his own authority. They were to the effect that the Báb should be immediately executed by a firing squad in full public view. Vizier-Nizam had already ordered the removal of the Báb from the house where the governor had initially placed Him. At this house He was kept under strict surveillance and no one except His personal attendant and His amanuensis were allowed to be with Him. This meant that none of His disciples, especially Muhammad Ali, who had openly demonstrated his devotion and readiness to sacrifice his life for Him, were permitted to see Him.

Now, in order for the execution to take place, the Báb was transferred from that house and placed in a room in the barracks situated in the center of the city. Furthermore, Sam Khan, the colonel of the Christian regiment of Urumiyyih, was directed to dispatch ten of his soldiers to guard the entrance of the room in which the Báb was confined. The Báb divested of His green turban and sash which indicated His noble lineage, together with Siyyid Husayn, His amanuensis, were taken on foot to the barracks.

On that day, Tabriz was in a state of commotion and turmoil, the like of which that city had never witnessed before. Crowds of people had filled the entire area. Some of them, under the influence of the ulama's evil propaganda, shouted out abusive and vile language. While others were in shock and horrified as they watched that scene. Present amongst them were a small number of the Báb's devoted followers, who silently wept while they resigned themselves to God's will. As the Báb approached the courtyard of the citadel, a youth, barefoot, disheveled and breathless broke through the crowd and the line of soldiers, threw himself at the feet of the Báb, seized the hem of His garment, and beseeched Him "Send me not from Thee, O Master! Wherever Thou goest, suffer me to follow Thee."

The Báb smiled at him, stretched out His hands and said, "Muhammad Ali, ARISE! and rest assured that you will be with Me. Tomorrow you shall witness what God has decreed." At that moment, two other companions who were watching the scene could not contain themselves and rushed forward to express their loyalty to Him. All three were seized and put in the same room where the Báb and Siyyid Husayn were confined, while some forty soldiers were dispatched to the roof top and the areas surrounding His cell.

The Báb spent that entire night with His four companions. According to Siyyid Husayn's own account, that night, the Báb was so happy, and His face was aglow with joy, a joy such as had never shown from His countenance. The sorrows that had weighed so heavily upon Him seemed to have completely vanished.

He told His faithful disciples, "Tomorrow will be the day of My martyrdom. Would that one of you might now arise and with his own hands, end My life. I prefer to be slain by the hands of a friend rather than by that of the enemy." And invited them to fulfil His wish.

Even at that last moment, He was testing the strength of their faith and devotion. Among the disciples who so dearly loved Him, no one dared to undertake such a fearsome task. Instead, they were shocked and began to weep except Mulla Muhammad Ali, who stood up saying, "I am ready to obey your wishes my Lord." But his companions tried to restrain him, forcing him to abandon that thought. The Báb smiled at him as He declared "This same youth who has risen to comply with My wish, will together with Me suffer martyrdom. Him will I choose to share with Me its crown." He then added "Verily, Muhammad Ali will be with Us in paradise."

In the early morning, the Vizier-Nizam ordered the farrash-bashi, his head prison guard, to conduct the Báb and His other companions to the houses of the four leading divines of Tabriz to secure the necessary authorization for their execution. When Siyyid Husayn, the Báb's amanuensis, asked Him what he should do, the Báb advised him, "Confess not your faith, thereby you will be enabled, when the hour comes, to convey to those who are

destined to hear you, the things to which you alone are aware.” To the other two disciples who also sought His guidance, He replied, “Your execution will not result in My release.”

Two highly significant incidents occurred surrounding the Báb’s martyrdom. One was the following:

The Báb was engaged in a confidential conversation with Siyyid Husayn in one of the rooms of the barracks when the farrash-bashi suddenly interrupted. He drew the latter aside and severely rebuked him. At that moment, the farrash-bashi was thus addressed by the Báb, “Not until I have said to him all those things that I wish to say can any earthly power silence Me. Though all the world be armed against Me, yet shall it be powerless to deter Me from fulfilling, to the last word, My intention.” The farrash-bashi was amazed by the Báb’s bold assertion. He made, however, no reply and ordered them to arise and follow him.

As each of the disciples were ushered into the presence of the four leading mujtahids, Siyyid Husayn and his brother, at the instructions of the Báb Himself, recanted their faith, so they could take to the followers of the Báb, His last words and wishes. In the case of Muhammad Ali, in view of his stepfather’s position, he was repeatedly urged to recant his faith. But all their evil efforts to tempt him had no effect. Instead, he exclaimed “Never will I renounce my Master. He is the essence of my Faith and the object of my truest adoration. In Him I have found my paradise and in the observance of His law, I recognize the ark of my salvation.”

Mulla Muhammad-i-Mamaqani, before whom he appeared, upon hearing this, believed he could rescue him by declaring him insane. He shouted at Mulla Muhammad Ali saying “Hold your peace! Such words betray your madness. I can well excuse the words for which you are not responsible.”

“I am not mad.” said Muhammad Ali, “Such a charge should rather be brought against you, who have sentenced a man no less holy than the promised Qa’im. He is not a fool who has embraced His Faith and is longing to shed his blood in His path.”

At the completion of their interrogation, the authorities were still hoping that at the very last moment Muhammad Ali would deny his Faith in order to save himself. So, once the two death warrants were obtained, the guards were instructed to take all of them back to the barracks and to put Muhammad Ali in a room with Siyyid Husayn, thus separating him from the Báb. But he cried out beseeching the guards to take him to his Beloved.

Eventually, the farrash-bashi had no choice but to hand him over to Sam Khan. His stepfather now made a last attempt to save him. They had continually been inquiring about his condition, and now at that last minute tried to play a new trick on him. They tried

to resort to his feelings as a father. His sister, along with his wife, who was carrying their two-year old child in her arms, were brought before him. His sister threw herself at his feet, and after kissing them and weeping, she pleaded saying "O my brother! For God's sake, just pretend you are denying your faith and escape from death!"

He replied "My dear sister. For years I have been wishing for this moment. Thanks be to God that I have now reached my goal. Be patient and do not lament. Soon, God shall raise people who will praise us, pay tribute, and commemorate this event, unlike these wicked people who see us as criminals and deserve to be executed." He then bade them farewell and was taken away.

Sam Khan, the commander of the Armenian regiment who was ordered to carry out the execution, was ill at ease and was seized with fear. The Prisoner looked kind and compassionate, and he questioned the authorities' cruel treatment of Him. For what crime was He to be put to death? He was seized with fear less his act should provoke the wrath of God. He approached the Báb and said to Him, "I profess the Christian Faith and entertain no ill will against You. If Your Cause be the Cause of truth enable me to free myself from the obligation to shed Your blood."

To this, the Báb gave the following assurance, "Follow your instructions and if your intention be sincere, the Almighty is surely able to relieve you of your perplexity."

Sam Khan accordingly set out to discharge his duty. He ordered his men to drive a nail into a pillar which separated the room occupied by Siyyid Husayn and the adjoining room, which were both facing the square. Two ropes were fastened to that nail, from which the Báb and his youthful companion were to be separately suspended.

Muhammad Ali removed his qaba and put on a white tunic. Then holding onto farrash-bashi's cloak and kissing it, begged to be placed in such a manner that his own body would shield that of the Báb. Eventually, he was suspended in such a position that his head rested on the breast of the Báb.

Seven hundred and fifty soldiers were positioned in three files. Each file comprised of two hundred and fifty men, and each was ordered to open fire in its turn. The smoke from the seven hundred and fifty rifles was so dense that it turned the light of the noon day sun into darkness.

As soon as the smoke cleared away, the multitude of about ten thousand people, who had crowded on to the roofs of the barracks as well as the roof tops of the adjoining houses, beheld a scene which their eyes could scarcely believe. Before that stunned multitude, the Báb's disciple, alive and unscathed, stood in front of the wall on which they had been

suspended. His body not only had escaped the volleys, but even the white tunic he was wearing, despite the thickness of the smoke, had remained unsullied.

The bewildered spectators cried out “the Siyyid-i-Báb has gone from our sight”. A frantic search immediately followed. The guards ran towards Muhammad Ali to ask him about the Báb’s whereabouts. He told them that once the bullets cut the ropes, they were dropped down, and his Master entered the adjoining room.

They found the Báb, unhurt, undisturbed, and serene, sitting in the room where he had been lodged the night before, engaged in completing His interrupted conversation with His amanuensis. His body had emerged unscathed from the shower of bullets which the regiment had directed against Him. He turned to the farrash-bashi saying, “I have finished my conversation with Siyyid Husayn, now you may proceed to fulfill your intention.”

The man was utterly shaken and stunned and recalling the bold assertion his Prisoner had previously made, he refused to accomplish his duty and at that moment left the scene and resigned his post. Sam Khan for his part, overwhelmed by the force of such tremendous revelation and the reassuring words addressed to him by the Báb, ordered his men to immediately leave the barracks. He swore as he left that courtyard, never again to repeat that act, even at the cost of his life. So, Aqa Jan Khan-i- Khamsih, colonel of the bodyguard, volunteered; and his Nasiri regiment replaced the Armenians.

On the same wall and in the same manner, the Báb and His companion were again suspended. While the new regiment formed a line preparing to fire the final volley. Now the Báb addressed the multitude gathered to see Him die,

“Had you believed in Me, O wayward generation, every one of you would have followed the example of this youth, who stood in rank above most of you and willingly would have sacrificed himself in My path. The day will come when you will have recognized Me. That day I shall have ceased to be with you.”

This time however, their breasts were riddled with bullets and their bodies completely shattered with the exception of their faces, which were untouched.

The very moment the shots were fired, a gale of exceptional violence arose and swept over the whole city. Tempestuous winds blew and dust darkened the skies. The skies remained dark until the darkness of the day merged into the darkness of the night. The whole city was thrown into turmoil and wrought havoc amongst the people.

When the night fell, they removed the mangled bodies from the courtyard of the barracks and threw them on the edge of the moat surrounding the city. Four companies, each consisting of ten sentinels, were ordered to keep watch in turn over them. The startling

circumstances attending the Báb's martyrdom could not fail to arouse the keen and widespread interest among the foreign officials, news agencies, diplomats, and others. On the morning following the day of martyrdom, the Russian consul in Tabriz, accompanied by an artist, visited that spot and ordered that a drawing be made of the remains as they lay beside the moat. According to that picture, no bullet had struck the Báb's forehead, His cheeks or His lips, and a smile seemed to linger among His countenance. The bodies however were severely mutilated. And yet, one could recognize Muhammad Ali's arms which seemed to be holding his Master in his embrace.

Haji Sulayman Khan, a fearless and loyal disciple of the Báb, had decided to dare everything that very night and carried the bodies away by a surprise attack on the soldiers guarding them on the edge of the moat. And he shared his idea with the kalantar, the mayor of Tabriz, with whom he had a long-standing friendship. The kalantar did not think the idea could be carried out safely and successfully. He told him about a certain Haji Allah-Yar, who was his confidante and was known for his bold and daring achievements. Instructed by the mayor, Haji Allah-Yar, using such means as he knew best, took the bodies away from under the eyes of the soldiers in the middle of the night and delivered the remains to Sulayman Khan. He, in turn, had them moved to a silk factory owned by one of the believers of Milan [in Persia]. There they were enshrouded and hidden under the bales of silk. The next day they were laid in a specially constructed wooden case and, under Haji Sulayman Khan's directions, were transferred to a place of safety.

Meanwhile, the soldiers tried to justify themselves by reporting that while they slept, wild beasts had devoured the remains. Their superiors decided to conceal the truth and make no report of that incident to the authorities. The whereabouts of all the places where the remains were transferred was kept secret until eventually, in pursuance of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's instructions, they were transferred to the Holy Land, and laid to rest permanently and ceremoniously by him in a specially erected mausoleum on the slopes of Mt. Carmel.