



The Storm Gathers Momentum

Dawn-Breakers Chapters 17-18

Prologue

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Glimmerings notes are a companion to study of the Dawn-Breakers

Prologue

The stormy clouds of the Báb's imprisonment, first in Máh-Kú and then in Chihríq had gathered – now these clouds will only darken.

The thunderclap of the first Bábí execution on Persian soil and the massacre in Qazvín had sounded – now this is going to be repeated with increasing intensity elsewhere.

The lightning flash of the Conference of Badasht had blinded some but shown the new Day to others. This was only the first sign of a great storm in the making.

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Section One: Chihríq

The Grievous Mountain

The castle of Chihríq (چهریق), was the prison the Báb entitled *Jabal-i-Shadíd* (جبل شادید) [the Grievous Mountain]¹. It was approaching twenty days after *Naw-Rúz*² of 1848 [10 April 1848]³ when the Báb was transferred from the prison of Máh-Kú to Chihríq.

The warden of the prison castle of Chihríq was Yahyá Khán-i-Kurd (یحییٰ خان کرد), whose sister was one of the wives of the king, Muhammad Sháh. The warden, like most of the other inhabitants of the area, was a Kurd and belonged to the Sunní branch of Islam.⁴ Nabíl records that:

Strict and explicit instructions had been given by the Grand Vazír [Hájí Mírzá Áqásí (حاجی میرزا آقاسی)] to Yahyá Khán, enjoining him not to allow anyone to enter the presence of his Prisoner. He was particularly warned not to follow the example of 'Alí Khán-i-Máh-Kúí (علی خان ماه کوی), who had gradually been led to disregard the orders he had received.⁵

Nabíl then adds:

Despite the emphatic character of that injunction, and in the face of the unyielding opposition of the all-powerful Hájí Mírzá Áqásí, Yahyá Khán found himself powerless to abide by those instructions. He, too, soon came to feel the fascination of his Prisoner; he, too, forgot, as soon as he came into contact with His spirit, the duty he was expected to perform. At the very outset, the love of the Báb penetrated his heart and claimed his entire being. The Kurds who lived in Chihríq, and whose fanaticism and hatred of the Shí'a exceeded the aversion which the inhabitants of Máh-Kú entertained for that people, were likewise subjected to the transforming influence of the Bab.

¹ The Abjad numerical value of the word *shadíd* is 318 and the same as that of the word Chihríq. *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 17, p302 footnote 1.

² Fársí means New Day. It is the Persian New Year believed to be celebrated since the days of the ancient Persian civilization. It marks the day of the Spring Equinox [therefore falls during March 19 – 22].

³ *God Passes By*, Chapter 2, p19

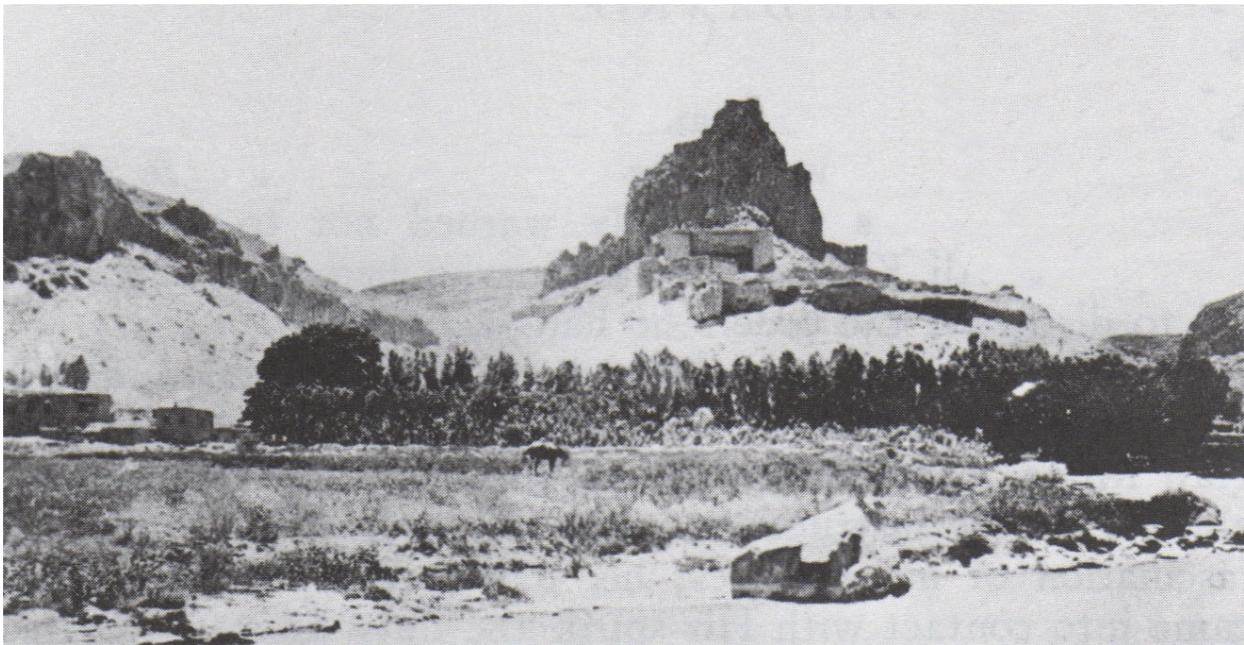
⁴ *God Passes By*, Chapter 2, p20

⁵ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 17, p301-302

Like the inhabitants of Máh-Kú, the villagers of Chihríq were seen every morning, before they started their daily work, to approach the fortress, prostrate themselves before it, invoke the Báb's name and beseech His blessings.

The influence of the Báb was such that the prison warden, Yahyá Khán, contrary to the emphatic orders of the Grand Vazir, would not refuse admittance to anyone to the castle to hear the Báb. A European eye-witness records:

So great was the confluence of the people, that with the courtyard not being large enough to contain His hearers, the majority remained in the street and listened with rapt attention to the verses of the new *Qur'án*.¹



Castle of Chihríq. Archival photo.²

Continued spreading of the Báb's Message alarms the Grand Vazír

Indeed, the turmoil raised in Chihríq eclipsed the scenes which Máh-Kú had witnessed. Siyyids of distinguished merit, eminent '*ulamá*, and even government officials were boldly and rapidly espousing the Cause of the Prisoner.³

¹ *God Passes By* Chapter 2, p20

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 17, p301

³ *God Passes By* Chapter 2, p20

The turmoil arose because these highly respected and influential learned men were actively proclaiming their Faith to the populace. This was particularly prominent in the major town of Khuy ﴿﴾, and it reached a climax with the conversion of the high ranking official Mírzá Asadu'lláh ﴿﴾, who was also highly acclaimed for his literary learning. Mírzá Asadu'lláh's father was an intimate friend of the Grand Vazír himself. What made the conversion of Mírzá Asadu'lláh so dramatic was that he was widely known to vehemently denounce the Báb and His Message. The events that led to his conversion were as follows:

One-night Mírzá Asadu'lláh had a dream which was based on two verses of the *Qur'án*. When he awoke, he would not tell anyone about his dream. Instead, he wrote a request to the Báb:

I have conceived three definite things in my mind. I request you to reveal to me their nature.¹

This written request was taken to the Báb by one of the other leading '*ulamá*' of Khuy, who had already met the Báb in Chihríq and become a believer.

A few days later, Mírzá Asadu'lláh received a reply penned by the Báb Himself. In it the Báb describes in detail the dream and reveals the exact verses of the *Qur'án* that Mírzá Asadu'lláh had dreamt about. Nabíl records:

The accuracy of that reply brought about a sudden conversion. Though unused to walking, Mírzá Asadu'lláh hastened on foot along that steep and stony path which led from Khuy to the castle. His friends tried to induce him to proceed on horseback to Chihríq, but he refused their offer. His meeting with the Báb confirmed him in his belief and excited that fiery ardour which he continued to manifest to the end of his life.

That same year the Báb had expressed His desire that forty of His companions should each undertake to compose a treatise and seek, by the aid of verses and traditions, to establish the validity of His Mission. His wishes were instantly obeyed, and the result of their labours was duly submitted to His presence. Mírzá Asadu'lláh's treatise won the unqualified admiration of the Bab and ranked highest in His estimation. He bestowed on him the name Dayyán ﴿﴾ and revealed in his honour the *Lawh-i-Hurúfát* ﴿﴾ [Tablet of the Letters] ...²

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 17, p303

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 17, p304

Mírzá Asadu'lláh rose with untiring zeal to promote the Cause of the Báb, undeterred by anything that stood in his path. His father sent a report to the Grand Vazír describing this and the other conversions that had transpired in Khuy and the neighboring areas. What added more fuel to this fire, was the coming of seekers from other faraway areas to meet the Báb. One among these was a *navváb* [viceroys/governor] from India. While in India, one night, he had a vision of the Báb, which he described like this:

In the days when I occupied the exalted position of a *navváb* in India, the Báb appeared to me in a vision. He gazed at me and won my heart completely. I arose, and had started to follow Him, when He looked at me intently and said: "Divest yourself of your gorgeous attire, depart from your native land, and hasten on foot to meet Me in Ádhirbayján. In Chihríq you will attain your heart's desire." I followed His directions and have now reached my goal.¹

This high-born Indian *navváb* had left behind all his wealth, and taking on the life of a dervish who has no possessions, had walked all the way from India to this extreme northwestern corner of Persia, to Chihríq. As soon as he met the Báb, he recognized Him and believed. The Báb gave him the title *Qahru'lláh*.² All who met this Indian dervish were enamoured by his charm and power of faith that shone through him. His arrival and teaching activities were causing a stir amongst the Kurdish leaders in Chihríq.

When all this news reached the capital, the Grand Vazír, was very alarmed. He decided that the Báb should be transferred to Tabríz, in the hopes of allaying the effects the Báb's stay in Chihríq was causing.

It was now July 1848. The incident at Niyálá, following the Conference of Badasht had occurred in the middle of July 1848 in the eastern end of the province of Mázindarán. And now, towards the end of this same month, at this far northwestern end of the land, the Báb was brought to Tabríz from Chihríq.³

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 17, p305

² See [Portrait of Qahru'lláh](#)

³ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 17, p301



Iran in the nineteenth century. Areas of particular interest related to the Báb in the province of Azarbaijan [Ádhirbáyján] are highlighted.¹

¹ Map from *Amanat Resurrection and Renewal*, opposite title page. Highlighting of certain locations added.

Section Two: To Urúmíyyih and Tabríz

Tabríz ﴿﴾ was the capital of the province of Ádhirbáyján ﴿﴾, and its governor was the prince Násiri'd-Din Mírzá ﴿﴾. Although young [seventeen years old], he carried a lot of authority as he was also the heir to the throne [the *Valí-'Ahd* ﴿﴾].¹ The Grand Vazír's plan was to bring the Báb face-to-face with the leading '*ulamá* in that region and the *Valí-'Ahd*, and in that meeting, publicly reprimand Him. The Grand Vazír mistakenly thought that this would subdue and silence the Báb.

He knew what lay ahead

The future was known to the Báb. Even before the order to have Him brought to Tabríz was received in Chihríq, the Báb dispersed all the believers who had come there to see Him. He also asked one of them to go to the town of Urúmíyyih ﴿﴾ and wait for Him there. He further directed one of them, 'Azím² [the close friend of Vahíd who had arranged Vahíd's first meetings with the Báb], to go to Tabríz and inform one of the believers there [Siyyid Ibráhím-i-Khalíl ﴿﴾] to prepare for the Báb's arrival. And knowing what was to befall Him, as soon as 'Azim had left, the Báb instructed His amanuensis Shaykh Hasan-i-Zunúzi³ to collect all the Tablets He had revealed in Máh-Kú and Chihríq, and to take them right away to the same Siyyid Ibráhím-i-Khalíl in Tabríz, telling him to conceal and preserve them.

Urúmíyyih

The road that was usually taken from Chihríq to Tabríz was via the town of Khuy, which lies slightly northeast of Chihríq. However, when the order to bring the Báb to Tabríz was received, the armed escort decided that it was best to avoid Khuy, given the large number of the Báb's supporters there. Instead, they took the longer

¹ The Báb's stay in Tabríz was August 1848. Muhammad Sháh died a month later in September 1848, and Násiri'd-Din Mírzá became king and then called Násiri'd-Din Sháh. Násiri'd-Din Sháh was born July 17, 1831, and hence in August of 1848 was barely seventeen years old. He began to reign September 1848; and died in 1896. *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 17, p314 footnote 1.

² Mullá Shaykh 'Alí of Khurásán, surnamed 'Azím by the Báb. He was taught by Mullá Husayn on his first trip to Khurásán after the Declaration of the Báb [DB 4-7, Section 2]. He was the close friend of Vahíd who arranged Vahíd's first meetings with the Báb [DB 8-9, Section 4]. *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 17, page 306; Balyuzí *The Báb*, Chapter 11, p137.

³ Zunúz [now called Zonuz] is a town about 100 km [about 60 miles] northwest of Tabríz.

southern route via the town of Urúmíyyih ¹, which is close to a big lake¹. Urúmíyyih was governed by prince Malik Qásim Mírzá ². It was also the hometown of one of the Letters of the Living, Mullá Jalíl-i-Urúmí ³.



Some relics of the Báb. The large book is a copy of the *Bayán*, transcribed by the Báb's secretary at Chihríq. Small book is the Báb's pocket *Qur'án*, first and second pages illuminated. Small article at right is the Báb's ring. Bahá'í Archives.²

“Fear not. Do as you have been bidden, and commit Us to the care of the Almighty.”

When the Báb arrived in Urúmíyyih, prince Malik Qásim Mírzá ceremoniously received Him and accorded Him the warmest hospitality. But the prince was curious to test the powers of his Guest. So, on a certain Friday, when the Báb was going to

¹ Urúmíyyih [now called Urmia] is the capital of West Azerbaijan province, and about 120 km [about 75 miles] south of Chihríq [now called Chahriq-e-Olya].

² *Bahá'í News* Issue 267, p2; source [Bahaimedia](#)

the public bath, the prince ordered his groom to offer the Báb one of his wildest horses to ride to the bath. This horse had thrown off the most skillful and bravest of all the horsemen who had tried to ride him. Apprehensive that the Báb might get hurt, the attendant secretly approached the Báb and tried to induce Him to refuse to mount the horse. The Báb, calmly replied:

Fear not. Do as you have been bidden, and commit Us to the care of the Almighty.¹

Nabíl records what happened:

The inhabitants of Urúmíyyih, who had been informed of the intention of the prince, had filled the public square, eager to witness what might befall the Báb. As soon as the horse was brought to Him, He quietly approached it and, taking hold of the bridle which the groom had offered Him, gently caressed it and placed His foot in the stirrup. The horse stood still and motionless beside Him as if conscious of the power which was dominating it.

The multitude that watched this most unusual spectacle marvelled at the behaviour of the animal. To their simple minds this extraordinary incident appeared little short of a miracle. They hastened in their enthusiasm to kiss the stirrups of the Báb, but were prevented by the attendants of the prince, who feared lest so great an onrush of people might harm Him. The prince himself, who had accompanied his Guest on foot as far as the vicinity of the bath, was bidden by Him, ere they reached its entrance, to return to his residence. All the way, the prince's footmen were endeavouring to restrain the people who, from every side, were pressing forward to catch a glimpse of the Báb.²

Think men that when they say "We believe" they shall be let alone and not be put to the proof?

Nabíl then adds:

On His return from the bath, He again mounted the same horse and was acclaimed by the same multitude. The prince came on foot to meet Him, and escorted Him back to his residence.

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 18, p309

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 18, p309-311

No sooner had the Báb left the bath than the people of Urúmíyyih rushed to take away, to the last drop, the water which had served for His ablutions. Great excitement prevailed on that day. ... When He was subsequently informed how the overwhelming majority of the people had spontaneously arisen to proclaim their undivided allegiance to His Cause, He calmly observed: 'Think men that when they say, "We believe," they shall be let alone and not be put to the proof?' ¹ This comment was fully justified by the attitude which that same people assumed towards Him when the news of the dreadful treatment meted out to Him in Tabríz reached them. Hardly a handful among those who had so ostentatiously professed their faith in Him persevered, in the hour of trial, in their allegiance to His Cause.^{2,3}



Ruins of the bath in Urúmíyyih visited by the Báb. Archival photo.⁴

¹ *Qur'án* 29:2 [*Súra* of the Spider]

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 18, p311

³ The conduct of the people in Urúmíyyih in relation to the Báb parallels the conduct of the people in Jerusalem in relation to Jesus. When Jesus first arrived in Jerusalem and people saw the miracles, the multitudes lined the streets and shouted "Hosanna [praise and adoration to God] to the Son of David" [*Bible*, Matthew Chapter 21, verse 1-17], but when Jesus was arrested, all these same people turned away.

⁴ *Bahá'í World* vol 6, p551; source [Bahaimedia](#).

Portrait of the Báb

It was during the His stay in Urúmíyyih at the Governor's residence, that the portrait of the Báb, the only one ever drawn of Him, was made by Áqá-Bálá , the Chief Painter of the Governor.¹

Tabríz: The Báb's arrival

The news of the impending arrival of the Báb to Tabríz had inflamed the imagination of its inhabitants and had kindled the fiercest animosity in the hearts of its religious leaders. Such was the fervour among the populace that the authorities decided to house the Báb in a place outside the gates of the city and restrict who met with Him. Nabíl records that on the second night after His arrival, the Báb said to one of His companions²:

To-morrow I shall, in the presence of the *Valí-'Ahd* [heir to the throne]³, and in the midst of the assembled *'ulamá* and notables of the city, proclaim My Mission. Whoso may feel inclined to require from Me any other testimony besides the verses which I have revealed, let him seek satisfaction from the *Qá'im* of his idle fancy.⁴

¹ How this portrait was made and how it eventually, years later, got to the Bahá'í World Centre is described in Balyuzí *The Báb*, Chapter 11, p138-139 as follows: "From now on the Governor's residence was thronged daily by people who wished to meet the Báb or just to catch a glimpse of Him. During this time, Áqá-Bálá Big, the *Naqqásh-Báshí* [Chief Painter] made a portrait of the Báb ... Áqá-Bálá Big was a native of *Shíshván*, a village on the banks of Lake Urúmíyyih. Like scores of others, he was attracted to Government House to see the Báb. Years later he related his experience to Varqá, the Bahá'í martyr-poet. He had noticed that as soon as the Báb's eyes alighted on him, He arranged His 'abá neatly and looked at him intently. This happened again the next day, and Áqá-Bálá Big realized that the Báb was giving him a sign that he might draw His portrait. The painter made a rough sketch there and then. Later, he composed the portrait in black and white. When Varqá informed Bahá'u'lláh of this, he was instructed to ask the painter to make two copies of the portrait in water colour, one to be sent to the Holy Land and one to be kept by Varqá himself. The copy taken to the Holy Land is in the International Archives of the Bahá'í Faith. The copy which the martyr-poet held was among his possessions, looted at the time of his arrest. The original black and white portrait was discovered years later by Siyyid Asadu'llah-i-Qumí, who conveyed it to the Holy Land and presented it to 'Abdu'l-Bahá."

² This statement was made by the Báb to 'Azím, who seems to have been hesitant to accept the Báb's claim to be the *Qá'im*. *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 18, p313 states: ' On the second night after His arrival, the Báb summoned 'Azím to His presence and, in the course of His conversation with him, asserted emphatically His claim to be none other than the promised *Qá'im*. He found him, however, reluctant to acknowledge this claim unreservedly. Perceiving his inner agitation, He said: "Tomorrow I shall, in the presence of the Valí-'Ahd, and in the midst of the assembled *'ulamás* and notables of the city, proclaim My Mission. Whoso may feel inclined to require from Me any other testimony besides the verses which I have revealed, let him seek satisfaction from the *Qá'im* of his idle fancy."'

³ Násiri'd-Din Mírzá

⁴ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 18, p313

The Interrogation in Tabríz

The Grand Vazír had issued an order for the highest-level officials [religious and civil] of the region to form a panel and interrogate the Báb about His claims.¹ The goal was that this elite powerful group of individuals should pressure the Báb into subservience and silence Him for good. The meeting was held at the *Valí-'Ahd's* official residence, and the *Valí-'Ahd* himself [Násiri'd-Din Mírzá] would be present. The group of questioners included the *Nizamu'l-'Ulamá*  [head of the 'ulamá] who was also the tutor of the *Valí-'Ahd*.

When the proceedings were ready to start, the *Nizamu'l-'Ulamá* asked for the Báb to be brought in. A multitude of people had meanwhile besieged the entrance of the hall and were impatiently awaiting the time when they could catch a glimpse of the Báb's face. They were pressing forward in such large numbers that a passage had to be forced for Him through the crowd that had collected before the gate.

Nabíl records what happened next:

Upon His arrival, the Báb observed that every seat in that hall was occupied except one which had been reserved for the *Valí-'Ahd*. He greeted the assembly and, without the slightest hesitation, proceeded to occupy that vacant seat. The majesty of His gait, the expression of overpowering confidence which sat upon His brow - above all, the spirit of power which shone from His whole being, appeared to have for a moment crushed the soul out of the body of those whom He had greeted. A deep, a mysterious silence, suddenly fell upon them. Not one soul in that distinguished assembly dared breathe a single word.²

Another seat had to be brought for the *Valí-'Ahd*, such that the *Nizamu'l-'Ulamá* was seated on the left-hand of the *Valí-'Ahd* and the Báb was seated between them.³

¹ *God Passes By* Chapter 2, p21: "The circumstances attending the examination of the Báb, as a result of so precipitate an act, may well rank as one of the chief landmarks of His dramatic career. The avowed purpose of that convocation was to arraign the Prisoner, and deliberate on the steps to be taken for the extirpation of His so-called heresy. It instead afforded Him the supreme opportunity of His mission to assert in public, formally and without any reservation, the claims inherent in His Revelation."

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 18, p315

³ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 18, p316

“I am, I am, I am, the promised One!”

When everyone was seated, the stillness was broken by the *Nizamu’l-Ulamá*, who got to the point right away. He asked the Báb:

Whom do you claim to be, and what is the message which you have brought?¹

Without hesitation, with unparalleled majesty, the Báb exclaimed:

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.²

A feeling of awe seized all those who were present. They dropped their heads in silent confusion. No one ventured to say anything, except for one person, the Shaykhí leader Mullá Muhammad-i-Mámáqání ³.

A note on Mullá Muhammad-i-Mámáqání

As can be deduced from his name, Mullá Muhammad-i-Mámáqání came from the village of Mámáqán which is very close to Tabríz [about 50 km / 30 miles southwest of Tabríz]. He had become the leader of the Shaykhí’s in that region, which is why he was there for the interrogation of the Báb. And like all the other Shaykhí’s who had not followed Siyyid Kázim’s explicit instructions to arise with a pure heart and search for the promised One, he was spiritually blind and doomed. When Mullá Husayn had come to Tabríz, he had attempted to open Mullá Muhammad-i-Mámáqání’s eyes, but it was useless. The depth of his blindness can be surmised from the ridiculous reasoning he gave for not accepting the Báb. He is reported to have said:

I take God as my witness! Had this claim which the Siyyid-i-Báb has made been advanced by this same Mullá Husayn I would, in view of his remarkable traits of character and breadth of knowledge, have been the first to champion his cause and to proclaim it to all people. As he, however, has

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 18, p315

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 18, p315

³ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 18, p316

chosen to subordinate himself to another person, I have ceased to have any confidence in his words and have refused to respond to his appeal.¹

The path that Mullá Muhammad-i-Mámáqání would follow because of his spiritual blindness was foreseen by Siyyid Kázim. Nabíl records an earlier incident related by the Báb's amanuensis, Shaykh Hasan-i-Zunúzí, who had been a disciple of Siyyid Kázim, and very favoured by Siyyid Kázim [DB 1-2, Section 2]. Shaykh Hasan recalled how Siyyid Kázim had confidentially and "tearfully" deplored the unfaithfulness, insincerity and perversity of Mullá Muhammad-i-Mámáqání's nature. Shaykh Hasan had been a bit surprised at the harsh words of Siyyid Kázim about this soul, and wondered at that time what would be the eventual steps that this soul would take. Shaykh Hasan was present in the crowd watching these proceedings in Tabríz. He told Nabíl, referring to Mullá Muhammad-i-Mámáqání :

Not until I discovered his attitude that day towards the Báb, did I realise the extent of his arrogance and blindness.²

And this blindness of soul of Mullá Muhammad-i-Mámáqání will become even more apparent two years hence in Tabríz, when he without any hesitation affirms the death warrant that leads to the Báb's Martyrdom.

The City of the Blind

Even as the noontide sun
Hath the True One brightly shined,
But alas that He hath come
To the city of the blind³

The Báb's proclamation had stunned the gathering in Tabríz in the presence of the *Valí-'Ahd*. Nabíl records⁴ that no one ventured to say anything, except Mullá Muhammad-i-Mámáqání, who raised his voice saying:

You wretched and immature lad of Shíráz! You have already convulsed and subverted 'Iráq; do you now wish to arouse a like turmoil in Ádhirbáyján?

The Báb politely responded:

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 14, p266

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 18, p316

³ Attributed to Rumí. Quoted by Bahá'u'lláh in *The Seven Valleys* paragraph 83 [in *Call of the Divine Beloved*]

⁴ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 18, p316-319

Your Honour, I have not come hither of My own accord. I have been summoned to this place.

Mulla Muhammad furiously retorted:

Hold your peace, you perverse and contemptible follower of Satan!

The Bab politely answered:

Your Honour, I maintain what I have already declared.

The *Nizamu'l-'Ulamá* then stepped in, and asked the Báb:

The claim which you have advanced is a stupendous one; it must needs be supported by the most incontrovertible evidence.

The Báb replied:

The mightiest, the most convincing evidence of the truth of the Mission of the Prophet of God, is admittedly His own Word. He Himself testifies to this truth: "Is it not enough for them that We have sent down to Thee the Book?"¹ The power to produce such evidence has been given to Me by God. Within the space of two days and two nights, I declare Myself able to reveal verses of such number as will equal the whole of the *Qur'án*.

The *Nizamu'l-'Ulamá* then asked:

Describe orally, if you speak the truth, the proceedings of this gathering in language that will resemble the phraseology of the verses of the *Qur'án* so that the *Valí-'Ahd* and the assembled divines may bear witness to the truth of your claim.

The Báb accepted and began to speak; but no sooner had He uttered the words, "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate, praise be to Him who has created the heaven and the earth", than Mullá Muhammad-i-Mámáqání interrupted Him. Mocking with scorn, he said:

This self-appointed *Qa'im* of ours, has at the very start of his address betrayed his ignorance of the most rudimentary rules of grammar!

The Báb responded to him:

The *Qur'án* itself, does in no wise accord with the rules and conventions current amongst men. The Word of God can never be subject to the limitations of His creatures. Nay, the rules and canons which men have adopted have been deduced from the text of the Word of God and are based upon it. These men have, in the very texts of that holy Book, discovered no less than three hundred instances of grammatical error, such as the one you now criticise. Inasmuch as it was the Word of God, they had no other alternative except to resign themselves to His will.

¹ *Qur'án* 29:51

The Báb's answers did not matter to these supposedly learned ones who were present that day. The blind do not see, no matter how strong the light. Another person now put this question to the Báb:

To which tense does the word *ishtartanna* belong?

At this point, the Báb only responded with this verse from the *Qur'án*:

Far be the glory of thy Lord, the Lord of all greatness, from what they impute to Him, and peace be upon His Apostles! And praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds.

Immediately after, He arose and, without asking for permission, left the gathering.¹

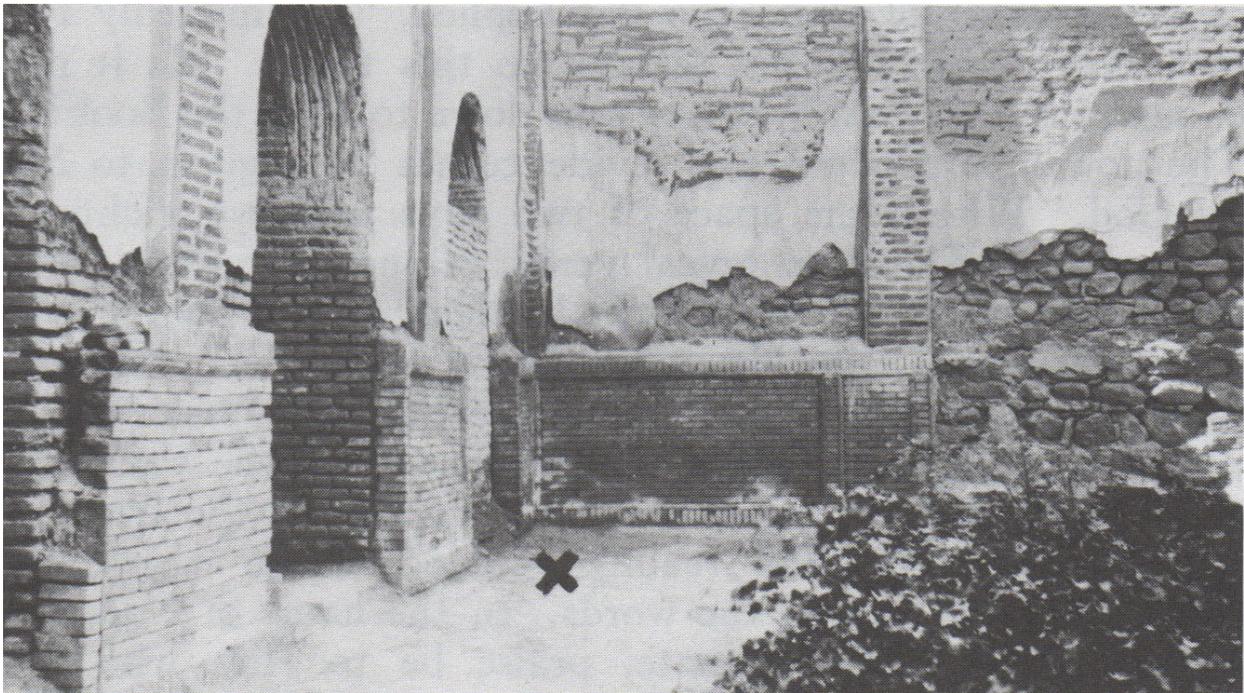
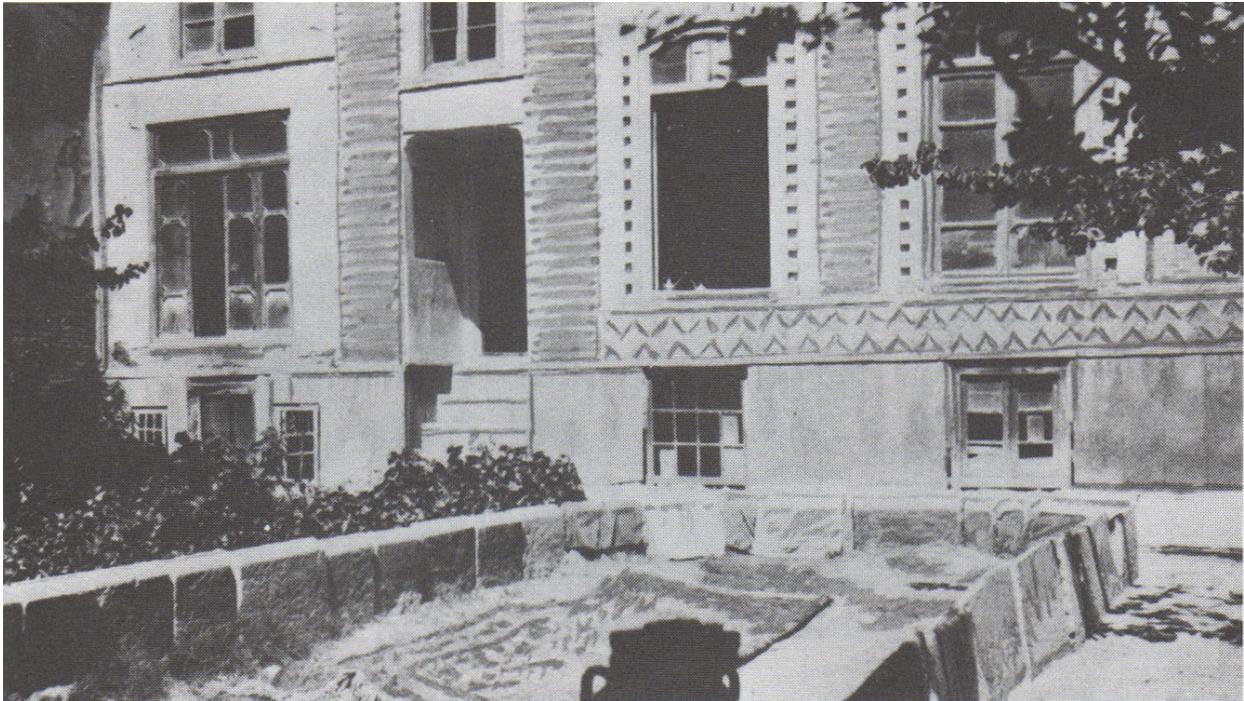
The Báb is punished with the bastinado

With the Báb's abrupt departure, the officials and *'ulamá* debated what to do. There were some who had some degree of basic decency and honour, and they voiced that the Báb was being treated badly and not listened to, and the line of questioning pursued was not important. However, the others, led by Mullá Muhammad-i-Mámáqání vehemently pushed the agenda of close-mindedness, warning that unless the Báb and His Message were controlled, all the officials and *'ulamá* would lose their power. Fear, greed and love of power won that day in those darkened hearts. It was agreed that the Báb should be brought to the house of the senior mullá of Tabríz, the *Shaykhu'l-Islám* . The person who held that position was Mírzá 'Alí-Asghar , who was notoriously cruel and sordid, and much feared and hated by the people of Tabríz. The Báb was brought to his house to be punished by the governor's guard. However, when the time came, the governor's guard refused to do so, saying that this was a religious case and not a civil case. So, the *Shaykhu'l-Islám* took it upon himself to personally with his own hands inflict the bastinado [whipping of soles of the feet] upon the Báb's feet eleven times.^{2, 3}

¹ From *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 18, p316-319

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 18, p320

³ Describing the end of this *Shaykhu'l-Islám* who personally inflicted the bastinado on the Báb, Nabíl writes: "That same year this insolent tyrant was struck with paralysis, and, after enduring the most excruciating pain, died a miserable death. His treacherous, avaricious, and self-seeking character was universally recognised by the people of Tabriz. Notoriously cruel and sordid, he was feared and despised by the people who groaned under his yoke and prayed for deliverance. The abject circumstances of his death reminded both his friends and his opponents of the punishment which must necessarily await those whom neither the fear of God nor the voice of conscience can deter from behaving with such perfidious cruelty towards their fellow men. After his death the functions of the *Shaykhu'l-Islám* were abolished in Tabriz. Such was his infamy that the very name of the institution with which he had been associated came to be abhorred by the people." *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 18, p321



The *Namáz-khānih* [Prayer-house] of the *Shaykhu'l-Islām* in Tabríz where the Báb was bastinadoed. Bottom photo shows the location in the courtyard [marked with X in the photo] where the bastinado took place. Archival photos.¹

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 18, p318

Impressions of an English Physician

Dr. William Cormick, a long-time resident of Tabríz, was a highly respected English physician. In one of his letters, he left this account of his meetings with the Báb in Tabríz; one meeting was before and the other meetings after the bastinado punishment:

You ask me for some particulars of my interview with the founder of the sect known as Bábís. Nothing of any importance transpired in this interview, as the Báb was aware of my having been sent with two other Persian doctors to see whether he was of sane mind or merely a madman, to decide the question whether to put him to death or not. With this knowledge he was loth to answer any questions put to him. To all enquiries he merely regarded us with a mild look, chanting in a low melodious voice some hymns, I suppose. Two other Siyyids, his intimate friends, were also present, who subsequently were put to death with him, besides a couple of government officials. He only once deigned to answer me, on my saying that I was not a *Mussulman* [Muslim] and was willing to know something about his religion, as I might perhaps be inclined to adopt it. He regarded me very intently on my saying this, and replied that he had no doubt of all Europeans coming over to his religion. Our report to the Sháh at that time was of a nature to spare his life. He was put to death some time after by the order of the Amír-Nizám Mírzá Taqí Khán. On our report he merely got the bastinado, in which operation a *farrásh* [attendant/guard], whether intentionally or not, struck him across the face with the stick destined for his feet, which produced a great wound and swelling of the face. On being asked whether a Persian surgeon should be brought to treat him, he expressed a desire that I should be sent for, and I accordingly treated him for a few days, but in the interviews consequent on this I could never get him to have a confidential chat with me, as some government people were always present, he being a prisoner. He was very thankful for my attentions to him. He was a very mild and delicate-looking man, rather small in stature and very fair for a Persian, with a melodious soft voice, which struck me much. Being a Siyyid, he was dressed in the habit of that sect, as were also his two companions. In fact his whole look and deportment went far to dispose one in his favour. Of his doctrine I heard nothing from his own lips, although the idea was that there existed in his religion a certain approach to Christianity. He was seen by some Armenian carpenters, who were sent to make some repairs to his prison, reading the Bible, and he took no pains to conceal it, but on the contrary told them of it. Most assuredly the *mussulman* [Muslim] fanaticism does not exist

in his religion, as applied to Christians, nor is there that restraint of females that now exists.¹

Note: The Bountiful Crop of Zunúz

Behold, a sower went out to sow.

And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them.

Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away.

And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear!²

Zunúz ﴿﴾ [nowadays written as Zonuz] is a town about 100 km [about 60 miles] northwest of Tabríz. The soil of the hearts of several from the village of Zunúz proved particularly fruitful.

Shaykh Hasan of Zunúz [known as Shaykh Hasan-i-Zunúzí ﴿﴾] was one of them. He became a devoted disciple of Siyyid Kázim; then became a firm believer and amanuensis of the Báb and travelled extensively with Him; and after the Báb's martyrdom recognized the station of Bahá'u'lláh even before Bahá'u'lláh's Declaration.³

Muhammad 'Alí of Zunúz [known as Muhammad 'Alí-i-Zunúzí ﴿﴾] was another good soil for the seed of the Divine Sower. He was surnamed Anís [genial or close companion]. Anís had come to believe in the Báb during the Báb's first visit to Tabríz, when He was *en route* to Máh-Kú⁴. Anís longed to visit the Báb and made

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 18, p321 footnote 1; quoted from E.G. Browne's *Materials for the Study of the Bábí Religion* p260-262.

² *Bible* Matthew, Chapter 13, verse 3-9

³ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 2, p29-33. Also see [DB 25-26 Part A, Section 1](#) and [Portrait of Shaykh Hasan-i-Zunúzí](#).

⁴ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 17, p306-307: "Muḥammad-'Alí-i-Zunúzí, surnamed Anís, was among those who heard of the message from the Báb in Tabríz, 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. Siyyid 'Alí-i-Zunúzí, his stepfather, a notable of Tabríz, strenuously objected to his leaving the city, and was at last induced

particular effort to do so when the Báb was moved to Chihríq. Anís was young and his stepfather was a well-known *mujtahid* of Tabríz. The stepfather was not a believer in the Báb and knew what would happen to Anís if he continued on this path. So, he asked Anís to conceal his beliefs and give up efforts to go to meet the Báb. Finding that Anís was not cooperating, his stepfather confined him in his house and set a strict watch over him. This confinement situation went on for a while. Shaykh Hasan-i-Zunúzí, who was related to the stepfather, would visit them occasionally. The stepfather asked Shaykh Hasan to talk to Anís, reason with him and have him hide his convictions. But Anís was on fire with love for the Báb. Shaykh Hasan recounts that every time he visited Anís, he “witnessed the tears that continually rained from his eyes.”¹ This continued until after the Báb’s second visit to Tabríz [described in this Section], when Shaykh Hasan recounts:

... one day as I went to see him [Anís], I was surprised to note the joy and gladness which had illumined his countenance. His handsome face was wreathed in smiles as he stepped forward to receive me. “The eyes of my Beloved,” he said, as he embraced me, “have beheld this face, and these eyes have gazed upon His countenance.”²

Anís then proceeded to tell Shaykh Hasan what had happened:

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.” ...

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.”

to confine him in his house and strictly watch over him. His son languished in his confinement until the time when his Beloved had reached Tabríz and had been taken back again to His prison in Chihríq.”

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 17, p307

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 17, p307

I was entranced by the beauty of that vision. When I recovered, I found myself immersed in an ocean of joy, a joy the radiance of which all the sorrows of the world could never obscure.¹

Shaykh Hasan then counselled Anís to be patient and to conceal his emotions and not tell others about his vision. He also made Anís promise that now that he knew what was going to happen, he should exercise the utmost forbearance towards his stepfather and the rest of the family. With this, Shaykh Hasan talked to Anís' stepfather, assuring him that Anís' behaviour would change and succeeded in obtaining Anís' release from his confinement.

Shaykh Hasan adds:

That youth continued until the day of his martyrdom to associate, in a state of complete serenity and joy, with his parents and kinsmen. Such was his behaviour towards his friends and relatives that, on the day he laid down his life for his Beloved, the people of Tabríz all wept and bewailed him.²

[For a portrait of Anís see [Bahai Library Online: The Story of Anis Zunuzi](#)]

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¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 17, p307-308

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 17, p309

Section Three: Changes in the Land

The Báb returns to Chihríq

With the bastinado punishment, the decision was made to send the Báb back to Chihríq. The Grand Vazír's goal for these proceedings had been to silence the Báb and His Message. Instead, it was like adding fuel to the fire.

No sooner had the Báb returned to Chihríq than He wrote in bold and moving language a denunciation of the character and action of the Grand Vazír [Hájí Mírzá Áqásí]. In the opening passage of that epistle, which was given the name of *Khutbiy-i-Qahríyyih* ﴿﴾ [Sermon of Wrath], the Báb addresses the Grand Vazír in these terms: "O thou who has disbelieved in God and hast turned thy face away from His signs!"

That lengthy epistle was forwarded to Hujjat who, in those days was confined in Tihrán. Hujjat was instructed to deliver it in person to the Grand Vazír, which he did.

Death of Muhammad Sháh

The interrogation and bastinado of the Báb in Tabríz had occurred at the end of July/early August of 1848. The Sháh [king] at that time was Muhammad Sháh and the *Valí-'Ahd* [heir to the throne] was Násiri'd-Din Mírzá ﴿﴾. Násiri'd-Din Mírzá was only seventeen and had just been made the governor of Ádhirbáyján, the province whose capital was Tabríz. This is why he was present for the interrogation of the Báb in Tabríz and the decision-making to have Him punished. About four weeks later [on 4 September 1848], Muhammad Sháh died, and the seventeen-year-old Násiri'd-Din Mírzá became the Sháh¹. He would henceforth be known as Násiri'd-Din Sháh ﴿﴾.

Hájí Mírzá Áqásí's plan to arrest Bahá'u'lláh derailed

The timing of the death of Muhammad Sháh derailed the other plans his Grand Vazír [Hájí Mírzá Áqásí] had made against the Bábí Cause,² which included targeting

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 19, p326 footnote 3: "Muhammad Sháh died on the eve of the sixth of Shawál [September 4, 1848 AD]. There was an interregnum of about two months. A provisional government was formed comprising four administrators under the presidency of the widow of the deceased Sháh. Finally, after much hesitation, the lawful heir, the young Prince Násiri'd-Din Mírzá, the governor of Ádhirbáyján was permitted to ascend the throne." [Journal Asiatique, 1866, tome 7, p 367]."

² Shoghí Effendí in *God Passes By* Chapter 10, p164 calls Hájí Mírzá Áqásí "the Antichrist of the Bábí Revelation"

Bahá'u'lláh. When the news of the activities at Badasht had reached the Grand Vazír, he had renewed his convincing of Muhammad Sháh to arrest Bahá'u'lláh, with the goal to have Him killed. An edict to arrest Bahá'u'lláh and bring Him to the capital was issued and sent to Núr. The post-Badasht incident at Niyála had occurred in mid-July, so by the time the edict had been issued, Bahá'u'lláh was in the Mázindarán Núr region. Nabíl recounts¹ that the edict was sent to a high-ranking officer in Núr, who sent it to his son to carry it out. This officer's son was a great admirer of Bahá'u'lláh and got the edict the day before a reception he had planned in honour of Bahá'u'lláh. He was very distressed and did not tell anyone about it, including Bahá'u'lláh. But Bahá'u'lláh perceived that he was very sad about something, but did not probe and instead advised him to put his trust in God to relieve him of his dilemma. The next day, as Bahá'u'lláh and the officer's son were going to his house for the reception, they encountered a horseman who was coming from the direction of Tihrán carrying the news "Muhammad Sháh is dead!". It was then that the officer's son showed Bahá'u'lláh the Sháh's edict calling for His arrest. The edict had now lost its validity. Bahá'u'lláh was free.

The fall of Hájí Mírzá Áqásí

With the death of Muhammad Sháh, his idolized tutor and Grand Vazír, Hájí Mírzá Áqásí, fell from his all-powerful position.

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 16, p299-300



Painting of the heir to the throne, Násiri'd-Din Mírzá as a child [centre]. The Qá'im-Maqám [the then Grand Vazír of Muhammad Sháh who was later murdered by order of Hájí Mírzá Áqásí] is right behind the child prince [larger set figure with full beard with round headdress]. Hájí Mírzá Áqásí [pointy beard and pointy hat] is to the immediate left of the child prince. The then governor of Isfáhán, Manúchíhr Khán, is on the extreme right of the child prince [marked with X, clean shaven with pointy hat and walking stick]. Archival photo of a painting.¹

Not long after Muhammad Sháh's death, Hájí Mírzá Áqásí lost all his power. He was stripped of the enormous wealth he had amassed, fell into disgrace, was expelled from the capital, and sought refuge in Karbalá', where he died an ignominious death. All of this happened in less than a year after Muhammad Sháh's death.

Násiri'd-Din Sháh & his new Grand Vazír

The young and inexperienced Násiri'd-Din Sháh made Mírzá Taqí Khán the new Grand Vazír. He is better known by the titles of *Amír-Kabír* 🗨️ [the Great Commander] or *Amír-Nizám* 🗨️ [Commander of Armed Forces]. The new Grand Vazier was no better than the previous one. While Hájí Mírzá Áqásí is described by

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 18, p314

Shoghí Effendí as “a vulgar, false-hearted and fickle-minded schemer”,¹ Mírzá Taqí Khán is described as “arbitrary, bloodthirsty, reckless”.² Mírzá Taqí Khán believed that his predecessor had been too soft on the Báb and the Bábís. We will soon see the storm he will unleash and the crimson rain that will be its downpour.



Násiri'd-Din Sháh [reign 1848-1896].³



Mírzá Taqí Khán, *Amír-Kabír*
[also known as *Amír-Nizám*] [in office 1848-1851].⁴

¹ Shoghí Effendí *God Passes By* Chapter 1, p4. Further, Shoghí Effendí calls Hájí Mírzá Áqásí “the Antichrist of the Bábí Revelation” [*God Passes By* Chapter 10, p164].

² Shoghí Effendí *God Passes By* Chapter 1, p4

³ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 18, p315

⁴ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 23, p500. Mírzá Taqí Khán was removed from his high office in November 1851 and executed in January 1852. He was replaced by Mírzá Áqá Khán-i-Nurí, who took the title of *Sadr-i-'Azam* [the Great President]..

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End of "DB 17-18: The Storm Gathers Momentum"