



The Seven that Walk in Front of the *Qá'im*

Dawn-Breakers Chapter 21

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

Prologue

In a *hadith* it is written that on the Day of Judgement, seven goats shall walk in front of the promised *Qá'im*. They shall symbolize by their life the noblest spirit of heroism, and by their death shall manifest true acquiescence to His will.

These seven goats were the seven Martyrs of Tíhrán.¹

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¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p463. Also see *God Passes By* Chapter 3, p48.

Section One: Sorrow of Tabarsí

The Báb's Grief

The news of the tragic fate which had befallen the heroes of Tabarsí brought immeasurable sorrow to the heart of the Báb, as He lay imprisoned in the castle of Chihríq. His amanuensis, Siyyid Husayn of Yazd, whose own father and younger brother were among the martyrs of Tabarsí,¹ related:

The Báb was heart-broken at the receipt of this unexpected intelligence. He was crushed with grief, a grief that stilled His voice and silenced His pen. For nine days He refused to meet any of His friends. I myself, though His close and constant attendant, was refused admittance. Whatever meat or drink we offered Him, He was disinclined to touch. Tears rained continually from His eyes, and expressions of anguish dropped unceasingly from His lips. I could hear Him, from behind the curtain, give vent to His feelings of sadness as He communed, in the privacy of His cell, with His Beloved. I attempted to jot down the effusions of His sorrow as they poured forth from His wounded heart. Suspecting that I was attempting to preserve the lamentations He uttered, He bade me destroy whatever I had recorded. Nothing remains of the moans and cries with which that heavy-laden heart sought to relieve itself of the pangs that had seized it. For a period of five months He languished, immersed in an ocean of despondency and sorrow.²

The Báb's Eulogies for the Martyrs of Tabarsí

It was mid-November 1849, when the Báb, began to write again. The first page He wrote was dedicated to the memory of Mullá Husayn. For a whole week, the Báb continued to write eulogies in praise of Quddús, of Mullá Husayn, and of the other companions who had sacrificed their lives at Tabarsí.³

¹ The father was Siyyid Ahmad [martyr #138] and the youngest brother was Mírzá Muhammad-'Alí [martyr #139]. See [DB 19-20 Part B, Section 3](#). Siyyid Husayn-i-Yazdí himself will also eventually be martyred in Tihrán [[DB 25-26 Part B, Section 1](#)].

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p430

³ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p431

The Báb sends Sayyáh to Tabarsí

On 26 November 1849, the Báb summoned Mullá Ádí-Guzal ¹, who had been acting as His attendant instead of Siyyid Hasan [the brother of Siyyid Husayn of Yazd].² The Báb gave Mullá Ádí-Guzal the name Sayyáh ³, and asked him to go to Tabarsí and perform a pilgrimage on His behalf at that spot.⁴ Sayyáh had already been acting as the Báb's courier.⁵ The Báb had revealed Tablets of Visitation for the Tabarsí martyrs, which He instructed Sayyáh to read on His behalf at the sites where they were buried:

Arise, and with complete detachment proceed, in the guise of a traveller, to Mázindarán, and there visit, on My behalf, the spot which enshrines the bodies of those immortals who, with their blood, have sealed their faith in My Cause. As you approach the precincts of that hallowed ground, put off your shoes and, bowing your head in reverence to their memory, invoke their names and prayerfully make the circuit of their shrine. Bring back to Me, as a remembrance of your visit, a handful of that holy earth which covers the remains of My beloved ones, Quddús and Mullá Husayn. Strive to be back ere the day of *Naw-Rúz*, that you may celebrate with Me that festival, the only one I probably shall ever see again.⁶

Sayyáh set out from Chihríq for his pilgrimage to Tabarsí. He got to his destination on 15 January 1850 and completed his pilgrimage to all the sites by 23 January

¹ Mullá Ádí-Guzal was from Marághih, a town in Ádhirbáyján. He was a devoted follower of the Báb and acted as his courier often travelling long distances on foot.

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p431

³ means traveller or wanderer

⁴ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p431

⁵ Balyuzi *The Báb* Chapter 12, p148-149 states: "Once again, within the confines of Chihríq, the Báb had uninterrupted communication with His followers. Mullá Ádí Guzal, a native of Marághih [Ádhirbáyján], acted as a courier, often traversing long distances on foot. ... One of this courier's journeys took him to Quddús, with the gift of a valuable pen-case and a silk turban sent by the Báb. And when Quddús and Mullá Husayn and their companions died as martyrs in Mázindarán, the Báb chose this same faithful courier to go on pilgrimage in His stead to the land drenched with their blood. ... He was also, for two months, the Báb's personal attendant in the castle of Chihríq." And footnote 1 on p149 states: "In later years he became known as Mírzá 'Alí-i-Sayyah [Traveller], married a daughter of Shaykh Hasan-i-Zunúzí and made his home in Karbilá. He was one of the four Bahá'ís sent with Subh-i-Azal to Cyprus, by the Ottoman Government. He died there on August 4th 1871."

⁶ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p431-432

1850, the first anniversary of the martyrdom of Mullá Husayn according to the Islamic lunar calendar.¹

News of Tabarsí tragedy reaches the Bábís throughout the land

The news of the massacre of the Bábí defenders of Tabarsí through trickery spread in the months that followed. Nabíl records:

We were preparing ourselves to leave for Mázindarán, when the news reached us that the defenders of the fort of Tabarsí had been treacherously slaughtered and that the fort itself had been levelled with the ground. We were filled with distress at the receipt of the appalling news and mourned the tragic fate of those who had so heroically defended their beloved Cause.²

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¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p432. Note: The Islamic Hijrí calendar is a lunar calendar. A lunar year is shorter than the solar year by about 10 days. According to the solar Gregorian calendar, Mullá Husayn was martyred on 2 February 1849.

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p439

Section Two: Tensions mount in Tihrán

Sayyáh returns to Chihríq via Tihrán

Having completed his pilgrimage to Fort Shaykh Tabarsí on behalf of the Báb, Sayyáh headed back to Chihríq but via Tihrán, where he stayed in Bahá'u'lláh's home for a few days. Áqáy-i-Kalím ﴿﴾ [Mírzá Músá ﴿﴾, Bahá'u'lláh's brother] who received Sayyáh at the entrance of Bahá'u'lláh's home relates:

It was the depth of winter when Sayyáh, returning from his pilgrimage, came to visit Bahá'u'lláh. Despite the cold and snow of a rigorous winter, he appeared attired in the garb of a dervish, poorly clad, barefooted, and dishevelled. His heart was set afire with the flame that pilgrimage had kindled. No sooner had Siyyid Yahyáy-i-Dárábí ﴿﴾, surnamed Vahíd ﴿﴾¹, who was then a guest in the home of Bahá'u'lláh, been informed of the return of Sayyáh from the fort of Tabarsí, than he, oblivious of the pomp and circumstance to which a man of his position had been accustomed, rushed forward and flung himself at the feet of the pilgrim. Holding his legs, which had been covered with mud to the knees, in his arms, he kissed them devoutly. I was amazed that day at the many evidences of loving solicitude which Bahá'u'lláh evinced towards Vahíd. He showed him such favours as I had never seen Him extend to anyone. The manner of His conversation left no doubt in me that this same Vahíd would ere long distinguish himself by deeds no less remarkable than those which had immortalised the defenders of the fort of Tabarsí.²

Sayyáh himself describes his arrival and reception in Tihrán in these words:

Bahá'u'lláh overwhelmed me with His kindness. As to Vahíd, notwithstanding the eminence of his position, he invariably gave me preference over himself whenever in the presence of his Host. On the day of my arrival from Mázindarán, he went so far as to kiss my feet. I was amazed at the reception accorded me in that home.^{3,4}

¹ See **DB 8-9, Section 4**

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p432

³ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p432-433

⁴ Sayyáh did not recognise the station of Bahá'u'lláh until later. He later recounted: "Though immersed in an ocean of bounty, I failed, in those days, to appreciate the position then occupied by Bahá'u'lláh, nor was I able to suspect, however dimly, the nature of the Mission He was destined to perform." *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p433

Nabíl notes:

Sayyáh tarried a few days in that home. He was, however, unable to perceive, as did Vahíd, the nature of that power which lay latent in his Host [Bahá'u'lláh]. Though himself the recipient of the utmost favour from Bahá'u'lláh, he failed to apprehend the significance of the blessings that were being showered upon him.¹

In later years, Sayyáh did recognise the station of Bahá'u'lláh. But for now, his focus was the Báb. After a few days, he left Tihrán together with a letter from Bahá'u'lláh to the Báb.² It was February 1850, and Sayyáh did make it in time to spend *Naw-Rúz*³ with the Báb in Chihríq.

Aftermath of Tabarsí felt throughout the land

As news of the amazing resistance of this small band of Bábís against the large army arrayed against them spread, it caused apprehension throughout the land among the power-seeking and corrupt *'ulama* and government officials who did not want to see any change in the order of things. The tension against the Bábís was mounting throughout the land, but especially in the capital city, Tihrán.

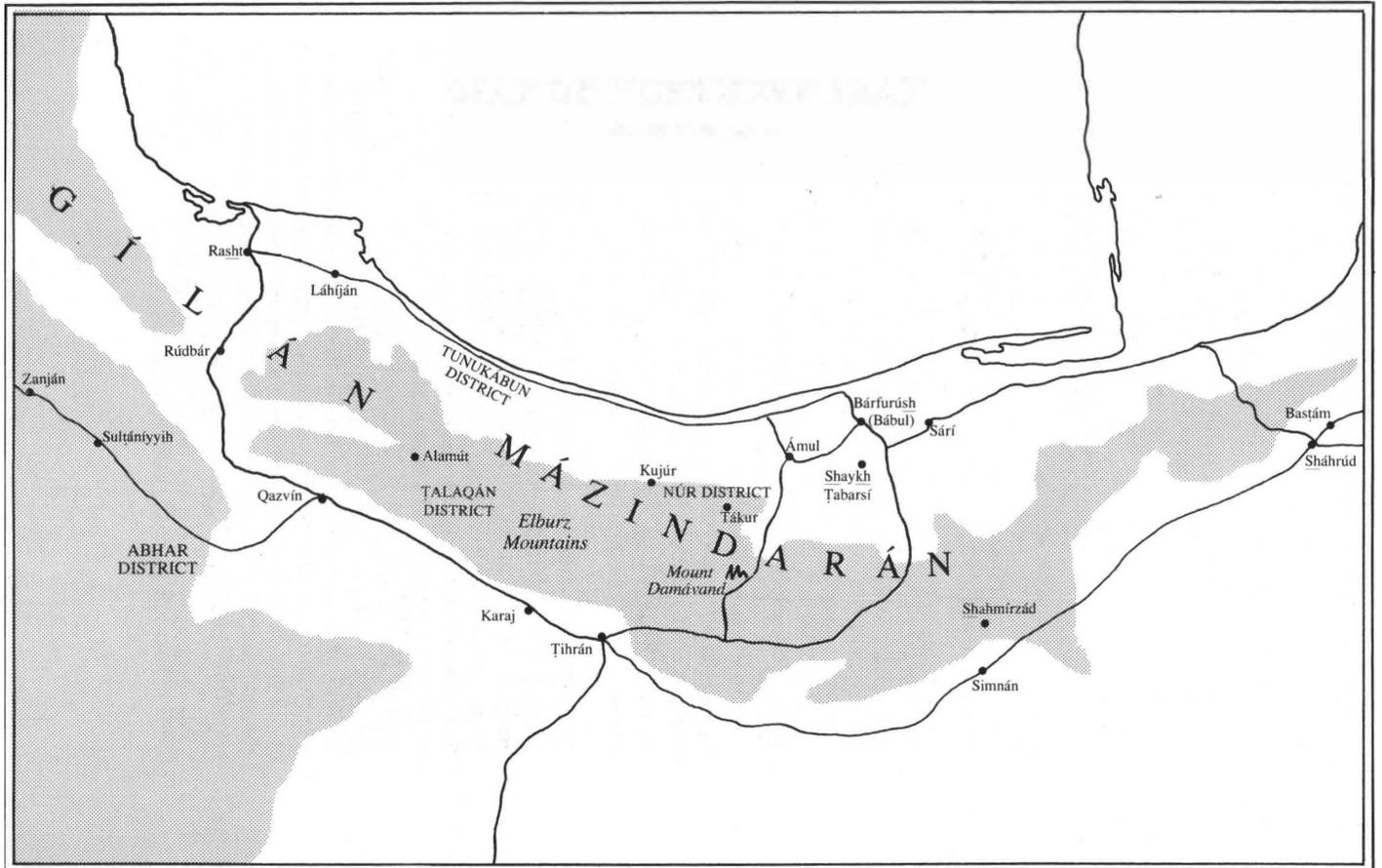
Táhirih is brought to Tihrán [January 1850]

After the Conference of Badasht, and the incident at Níyálá [mid-July 1848], Táhirih had through the help of Bahá'u'lláh been able to find refuge in various locations in the Núr region [Bahá'u'lláh's ancestral home region in the province of Mázindarán], and later in areas around the town of Ámul. This lasted about a year.

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p432

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p433: "Ere the departure of Sayyáh from Tihrán, Bahá'u'lláh entrusted him with an epistle, the text of which He had dictated to Mírzá Yahyá, and sent it in his name. Shortly after, a reply, penned in the Báb's own handwriting, in which He commits Mírzá Yahyá to the care of Bahá'u'lláh and urges that attention be paid to his education and training, was received. That communication the people of the Bayán have misconstrued as an evidence of the exaggerated claims which they have advanced in favour of their leader. Although the text of that reply is absolutely devoid of such pretensions, and does not, beyond the praise it bestows upon Bahá'u'lláh and the request it makes for the upbringing of Mírzá Yahyá, contain any reference to his alleged position, yet his followers have idly imagined that that letter constitutes an assertion of the authority with which they have invested him."

³ *Naw-Rúz* [Fársí, means New Day] is the Persian New Year. It marks the day of the Spring Equinox and therefore always falls between March 19 – 22. It is also the Bábí/Bahá'í New Year.



Map of mid-northern part of Iran with focus on Mázindarán province.¹

Táhirih was hoping to ultimately join the Bábís in Tabarsí, but with the fall of Tabarsí, she was arrested on charges of collaboration in the assassination of her uncle in Qazvín.² Reportedly she had also been listed by the central government as a wanted Bábí rebel. She was brought to Tíhrán in January 1850,

Upon her arrival in Tíhrán, Táhirih was interviewed by the Grand Vazír, the *Amí-Kabír* [Mírzá Taqí *Khán*]. She also had a brief audience with the young monarch, Násiri'd-Dín *Sháh*, who is reported to have said: "I like her look, leave her, and let her be."³ She was then sentenced to imprisonment in the upper chamber of the house of Tíhrán's chief of police, Mahmúd *Khán-i-Kalántar*.⁴ She will now be held in

¹ From Balyuzi, *Eminent Bahá'ís in the time of Bahá'u'lláh*, Chapter 22, p289

² DB 13-16, Section 3

³ *Amanat Resurrection & Renewal* Chapter 7, p329

⁴ *Amanat Resurrection & Renewal* Chapter 7, p329; *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p622

this house imprisonment, at this location, until her eventual martyrdom in two years time, in 1852.

Hájí Mírzá Siyyid 'Alí – the Most Great Uncle

Of the three maternal uncles of the Báb, Hájí Mírzá Siyyid 'Alí ﴿﴾ was the second in age [hence our reference to him previously in this study guide as the Middle Uncle], but the title by which he is known is *Khál-i-A'zam* ﴿﴾ [the Most Great Uncle].¹ This uncle was the one who had taken care of the Báb, after the Báb's father's passing and the first amongst the three uncles to become a believer. He went to see the Báb, as prophesied, in the mountains of Adhírbáyján in Chihríq.² From that visit, he eventually came to Tihrán in early 1850. Nabíl describes meeting him in Tihrán at that time:

One day Mírzá Ahmad³ invited me to meet Hájí Mírzá Siyyid 'Alí, the Báb's maternal uncle, who had recently returned from Chihríq and was staying in the home of Muhammad Big-i-Chapárchí ﴿﴾, in the neighbourhood of the gate of Shimírán. I was struck, when I gazed at his face, with the nobility of his features and the serenity of his countenance. My subsequent visits to him served to heighten my admiration for the sweetness of his temper, his mystical piety and strength of character. I well remember how on one occasion Áqáy-i-Kalím ﴿﴾ urged him, at a certain gathering, to leave Tihrán, which was then in a state of great ferment, and escape its dangerous atmosphere. "Why fear for my safety?" he confidently replied. "Would that I

¹ For details on the Báb's family see [DB 3, Section 4](#)

² When the Báb was leaving Shíráz in 1848, He entrusted His wife and Mother to this uncle's care and also prophesied to him: "I will again meet you amid the mountains of Adhírbáyján, from whence I will send you forth to obtain the crown of martyrdom. I Myself will follow you, together with one of My loyal disciples, and will join you in the realm of eternity." *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 9, p198. See [DB 10-12, Section 1](#).

³ This is Mullá 'Abdu'l-Karím-i-Qazviní. Bahá'u'lláh had named him Mírzá Ahmad. He served as one of the three amanuenses of the Báb and was a radiant soul. The back-story of this time period [early 1850] for Nabíl is quite personal and his meeting Mullá 'Abdu'l-Karím, which began a life-long friendship, is part of that. Nabíl had just been taught the Faith by Siyyid Ismá'il-i-Zavá'rí, who will be entitled *Dhabíh* [sacrifice] and will lay down his life for Bahá'u'lláh later in Baghdád. Siyyid Ismá'il was not in Tihrán when Nabíl comes this time. Nabíl describes what happened: "I took up my residence in the same madrisih where I had been accommodated on my previous visit, and there met a certain Mullá 'Abdu'l-Karím, whom, I subsequently learned, Bahá'u'lláh had named Mírzá Ahmad. He affectionately received me and told me that Siyyid Ismá'il had entrusted me to his care and wished me to remain in his company until the former's return to Tihrán. The days of my companionship with Mírzá Ahmad will never be forgotten. I found him the very incarnation of love and kindness. The words with which he inspired me and animated my faith are indelibly graven upon my heart." *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p439-440.

too could share in the banquet which the hand of Providence is spreading for His chosen ones!"¹

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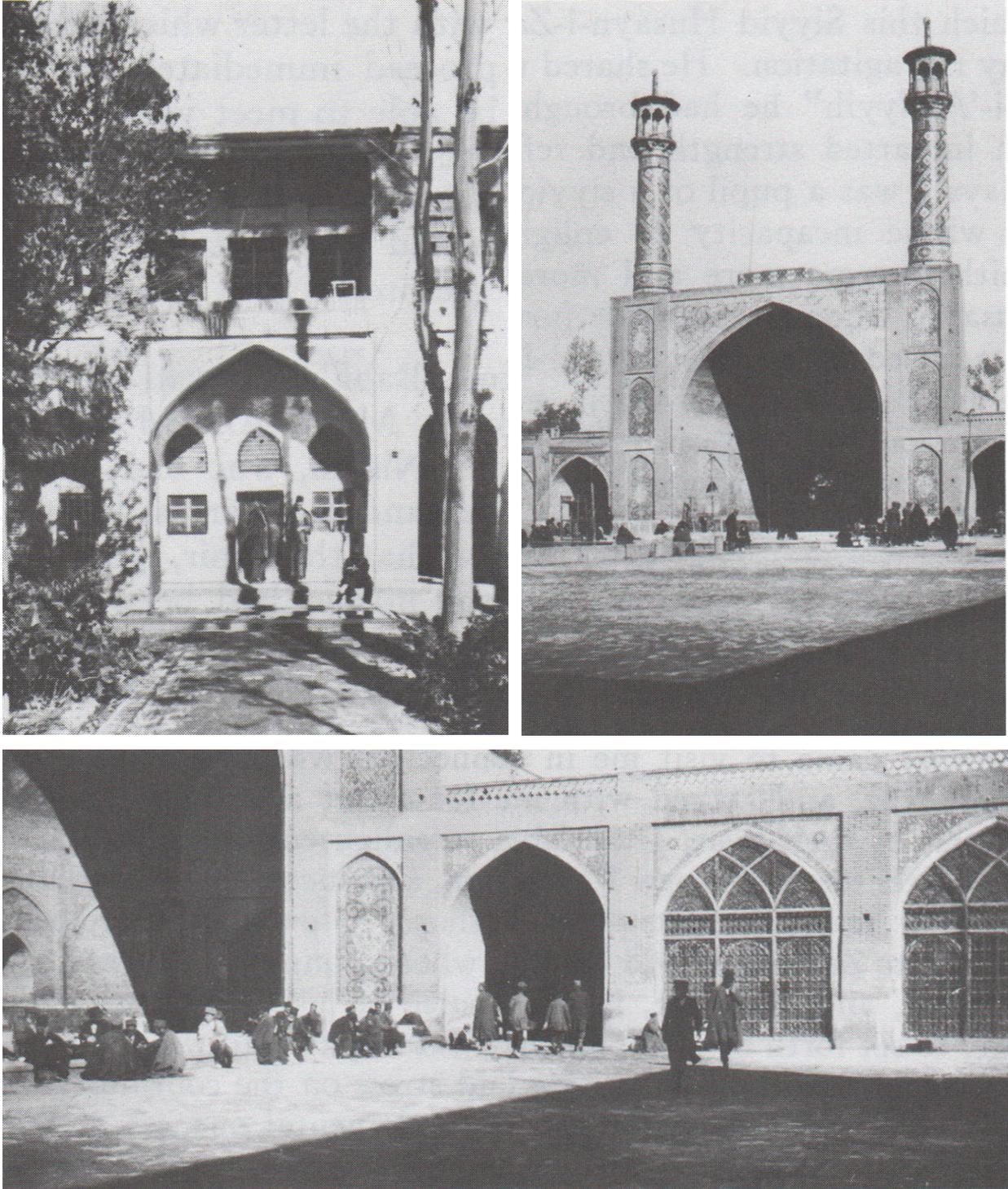
¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p441-442

Section Three: Treachery, Torture and Some Recant

The opposition to the Bábís was mounting in the capital city, Tihrán, and would reach a climax very soon. The trigger would come from a treacherous siyyid from Káshán, who pretended to have become a Bábí.

The Treachery of the Káshání Siyyid

A siyyid from Káshán pretended to have been converted and become a Bábí but he was a spy. He came to the religious school, madrisiy-i-Dáru'sh-Shafá' which is attached to the Masjid-i-Sháh in Tihrán, where many of the Bábís were staying. There he befriended a Bábí, Siyyid Muhammad, who began teaching him the Faith. At least one other senior Bábí, who was also a lecturer at the same school, saw through this Káshání siyyid, and told Siyyid Muhammad this man was unreliable and should not be given access to the gathering of the believers. But Siyyid Muhammad thought otherwise and continued his close association with this Káshání siyyid.



The madrasah of Dáru'sh-Shafá [top left] which is adjacent to the Masjid-i-Sháh of Tíhrán [top right and bottom]. Archival photos.¹

¹ Dawn-Breakers Chapter 21, p438 and p443

It was early February 1850¹ that the Káshání siyyid went to one of the 'ulamá of Káshán and gave him a list of names and addresses of about fifty of the Bábís in Tihrán. This list was soon submitted to Tihrán's Chief of Police, Mahmúd Khán-i-Kalántar , who ordered them all to be arrested.²

Fourteen are arrested and tortured

Fourteen Bábís were arrested based on the list of the Káshání siyyid. They were brought to and imprisoned in the house of the Chief of Police. Táhirih was being held in the upper levels at that same location, although her fate would not be affected by this turbulence. She would remain imprisoned at this location for another two years before her martyrdom.³

Nabíl himself was in Tihrán the day the arrests are made, but he was visiting his brother and uncle, who had come from Zarand and were staying at a caravanserai outside the gate of Naw.⁴ When he returned the next day to the madrisiy-i-Dáru'sh-Shafá' in the city, he found a letter from his Bábí companion, Mírzá Ahmad, telling him about the treachery of the Káshání siyyid, and a package of the Báb's Writings that Mírzá Ahmad had transcribed, with instructions to leave as soon as possible and get the Writings to safety. Nabíl immediately did what was requested.⁵

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p445 states the arrested were held in the Kalantar's residence from 14 February – 8 March 1850, and implies the executions to have been after that. However other records indicate the martyrdoms occurred on either 19 or 20 February 1850. See Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions*, Chapter 4, p104 footnote.

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p442-443

³ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p445

⁴ At this point in the narrative, Nabíl also describes his own life and how he became a Bábí and taught his own family members, and other events in his life leading up to this point, *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p434-440.

⁵ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p443-444



Gate of Naw, Tíhrán. Archival photo.¹

The fourteen² who were arrested, were now tortured to give the information the police wanted and eventually to recant their faith. Nabíl records:

Every kind of ill treatment was inflicted upon them. Their persecutors sought, by every device, to induce them to supply the information they required, but failed to obtain a satisfactory answer. Among the captives was a certain Muhammad-Husayn-i-Marághíí ﴿﴾, who obstinately refused to utter a single word despite the severe pressure that was brought to bear upon him. They tortured him, they resorted to every possible measure in order to extort from him any hint that could serve their purpose, but failed to achieve their end. Such was his unswerving obstinacy that his oppressors thought him to be dumb. They asked Hájí Mullá Ismá'íl ﴿﴾, who had converted him to his Faith, whether or not he could talk. ... He replied that "he is fluent of speech and is free from any impediment." He had no sooner called him by his name than the victim answered, assuring him of his readiness to abide by his will.³

We will see the two Bábí prisoners described above by Nabíl become two of the Seven Martyrs of Tíhrán.

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p457. Note: This picture is printed in *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21 p457 where it has the legend "Gate of Naw, Tíhrán". However, based on other sources, this picture does not seem to be the Gate of Naw but that of the Gate of Sháh 'Abdu'l-'Azím. For example, see [Gates of Teheran article](#).

² Some accounts say twenty were arrested. See Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions, 1844-1944, Some Contemporary Western Accounts*, Chapter 4, p104.

³ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p445-446

The case is brought to the *Amír-Kabír*

Realizing that they could not break these individuals, the chief of police, Mahmúd *Khán-i-Kalántar* (☞), submitted the case to the Grand Vazír, the *Amír-Kabír* (☞). The *Amír-Kabír* had risen through the ranks working with the military and firmly believed in the use of force to control and direct power. The prisoners were now brought in front of the *Amír-Kabír*. He tried at first by promise of freedom and threat of death to convince the prisoners to recant. However, he soon found that in spite of his being the all-powerful *Amir-Kabir*, pressuring these prisoners in this manner was not working. Getting angry, he stopped the proceedings with an order that whoever among the Bábí prisoners recanted their faith, they would be released, and if they were unwilling to recant, they would be executed right away.

And then there were seven

Seven of the fourteen broke under the pressure brought onto them. They were immediately released.

The remaining seven constitute the Seven Martyrs of Tihrán. They were:

1. Hájí Mírzá Siyyid 'Alí (☞), the middle uncle [of the Báb's three maternal uncles], entitled *Khál-i-A'zam* [the Most Great Uncle];
2. Mírzá Qurbán-'Alí (☞), a learned Súfí¹ dervish²;
3. Hájí Mullá Ismá'íl-i-Qumí (☞), a learned divine;
4. Siyyid Husayn-i-Turshízí (☞), a *mujtahid*;
5. Hájí Muhammad-Taqíy-i-Kirmání (☞), a merchant of Kirmán;
6. Siyyid Murtadá (☞), a merchant of Zanján; and
7. Muhammad-Husayn-i-Marághí'í (☞), a government official.³

¹ Súfism is a mystical branch of Islam focused on the inward search for God and spiritual purification. It emphasizes direct, personal experience of the divine through practices like meditation, chanting, and introspection. The practitioners of Súfism are called súfis. Súfis typically belong to particular "orders" known as *tariqa*, with each order following a particular grand *walí* (saint). Most Súfí orders are Sunni but some are *Shía'*. The best known súfí poet in the West is Rúmí. For general description of [Súfism see Wikipedia article](#).

² Derived from the Persian word *darvish*, a dervish is a member of a Súfí order (*tariqah*), and most have taken a vow of poverty to be detached from material things.

³ Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions, 1844-1944, Some Contemporary Western Accounts*, Chapter 4, p100

Nabíl records the tale of the martyrdom of each of these seven,¹ which we shall now briefly recount.

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¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p446-458

Section Four: The First of Seven

Hájí Mírzá Siyyid 'Alí

Of the three maternal uncles of the Báb, he was the middle in age [hence we referred to him previously as the middle uncle], but the title by which he is known is *Khál-i-A'zam* [the Most Great Uncle].¹

He was recognized as one of the leading merchants of Shíráz, and highly respected. His own only child, named Javád, died in infancy. He was the uncle who took care of the Báb, after the Báb's father died, and the first of the three uncles to accept the station of the Báb. When the Báb returned from His pilgrimage to Hijáz and was arrested by Husayn Khán, he was the one who stood as His guarantor. In the period that followed, he constantly and with utter devotion took care of the Báb and His family's needs. During this period, he also acted as the intermediary between the Báb and the many followers who flocked to Shíráz, and was often the host, with the Báb staying at his place. When the Báb left Shíráz to go to Isfahán, the Báb knowing He would not be seeing His wife and mother again, assigned their care to this beloved uncle.² And it was to this beloved uncle, the Báb, as He bade him farewell in Shíráz, said:

I will again meet you amid the mountains of Adhírbáyján ﴿﴾, from whence I will send you forth to obtain the crown of martyrdom. I Myself will follow you, together with one of My loyal disciples, and will join you in the realm of eternity.³

He had come to Tihrán after visiting the Báb in Chíhríq, in the mountains of Adhírbáyján. Though his friends had repeatedly appealed to him to leave and escape the turmoil that was fast approaching, he had refused. Upon his arrest, a considerable number of the affluent merchants who were his friends offered to pay a ransom for his release, but he refused these offers. When he was finally brought to the *Amír-Kabír* for his judgement, the *Amír-Kabír* referring to his noble lineage [the Báb's family were all siyyids, that is descendants of the Prophet Muhammad] said to him:

[I am] loth to inflict the slightest injury upon the Prophet's descendants. Eminent merchants of Shíráz and Tihrán are willing, nay eager, to pay your

¹ For details on the Báb's family see [DB 3, Section 4](#)

² See [DB 10-12, Section 1](#)

³ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 9, p198

ransom. The *Maliku't-Tujjár* ﴿﴾ [Head of merchants] has interceded on your behalf. A word of recantation from you is sufficient to set you free and ensure your return, with honours to your native city. I pledge my word that, should you be willing to acquiesce, the remaining days of your life will be spent in honour and dignity under the sheltering shadow of your sovereign.¹

Hájí Mírzá Siyyid 'Alí, replied:

Your Excellency, if others before me, who quaffed joyously the cup of martyrdom, have chosen to reject an appeal such as the one you now make to me, know of a certainty that I am no less eager to decline such a request. My repudiation of the truths enshrined in this Revelation would be tantamount to a rejection of all the Revelations that have preceded it. ... God knows that whatever I have heard and read concerning the sayings and doings of those Messengers, I have been privileged to witness the same from this Youth, this beloved Kinsman of mine, from His earliest boyhood to this, the thirtieth year of His life. ... I only request of you that you allow me to be the first to lay down my life in the path of my beloved Kinsman.²

The *Amír-Kabír* was stupefied by this answer. Without uttering a word, he motioned that Hájí Mírzá Siyyid 'Alí should be taken out and beheaded.

Hájí Mírzá Siyyid 'Alí was led out to the *Sabzih Maydán* ﴿﴾ [green square/field] market which adjoined the imperial palace, for his beheading.³ Turning to the crowd that pressed forward to witness the execution, he said:

Hear me, O people, I have offered myself up as a willing sacrifice in the path of the Cause of God. ... For over a thousand years, you have prayed and prayed again that the promised Qá'im be made manifest. At the mention of His name, how often have you cried, from the depths of your hearts ... And now that He is come, you have driven Him to a hopeless exile in a remote and sequestered corner of *Ádhirbáyján* and have risen to exterminate His companions. Were I to invoke the malediction of God upon you, I am certain that His avenging wrath would grievously afflict you. Such is not, however, my prayer. With my last breath, I pray that the Almighty may wipe away the

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p447

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p447-448

³ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p462; *Amanat, Resurrection and Renewal* Chapter 8, p355

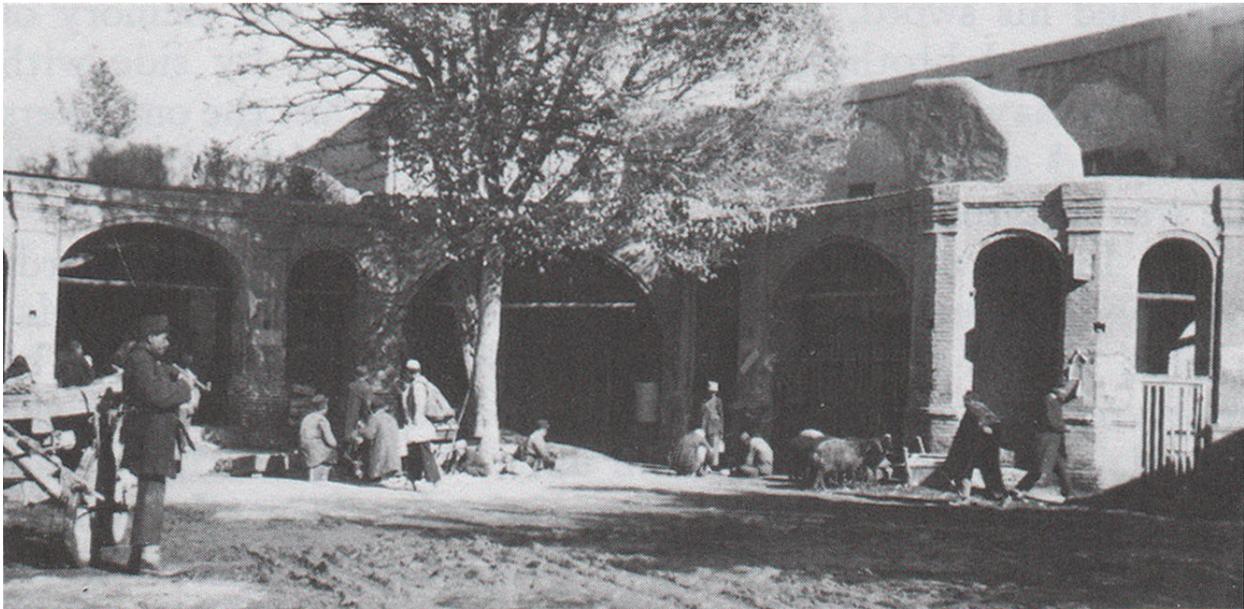
stain of your guilt and enable you to awaken from the sleep of heedlessness.¹

These words stirred his executioner to his very depths. Pretending that the sword he had been holding in readiness in his hands required to be resharpened, the executioner hastily went away, determined never to return again.² But that did not hold back the execution.

As he was being led out to his execution, Hájí Mírzá Siyyid 'Alí was heard repeating this verse of the poet, Háfiz:

Great is my gratitude to Thee, O my God,
For having granted so bountifully all I have asked of Thee.³

Hájí Mírzá Siyyid 'Alí's wish to be the first to be martyred that day was fulfilled, and he became the first of the seven Martyrs of Tihrán. His beheaded body would soon be embraced by the second in line, Mírzá Qurbán-'Alí .



The Sabzih-Maydán of Tihrán. Archival photo.⁴

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p448

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p448

³ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p448

⁴ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p457

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Section Five: The Second of Seven

Mírzá Qurbán-'Alí – the learned Súfí dervish

Mírzá Qurbán-'Alí (میرزا قربان‌علی), a native of Bárfurúsh [the same city from which Quddús came] was an outstanding figure from the Ni'matu'lláhí Súfí order¹. The Súfí orders have a particular lifestyle focused on renunciation of worldly possessions and drawing closer to God through prayer and meditative practices. Súfís, often called dervishes, have a spiritual master or guide whom they follow. Mírzá Qurbán-'Alí was considered to be one such master. His immense learning as well as spiritual station was well recognized in the Súfí orders, such that he had many followers who looked to him as their spiritual guide and master. He himself, however, really disliked attention and did not want leadership or power. Mírzá Qurbán-'Alí usually wore a simple white tunic, with a coarsely woven cloak and the simple head-dress of the people of 'Iráq. His attire was that of a poor dervish, and although highly respected, he led a life detached from the things of this world.

When Mullá Husayn was on his travels through different parts of the land, he met Mírzá Qurbán-'Alí and taught him about the Báb. Mírzá Qurbán-'Alí was on fire with the love of the Báb. He had taken ill during the period of Tabarsí and could not travel to go there. He deeply deplored that. Nabíl records that he often heard Mírzá Qurbán-'Alí say:

How greatly I grieve, to have been deprived of my share of the cup which Mullá Husayn and his companions have quaffed! I long to join Vahíd and enrol myself under his banner and strive to make amends for my previous failure.²

He was preparing to leave Tihrán, when he was suddenly arrested. His arrest caused a great commotion in Tihrán, as he was well-known with a large following, which included the Sháh's mother. She is reported to have said the Sháh: "He is no Bábí but has been falsely accused."³

When he was brought in front of the *Amír-Kabír*, the *Amír* said to him:

Since last night, I have been besieged by all classes of State officials who have vigorously interceded in your behalf. From what I learn of the position you

¹ See Wikipedia Ni'matu'lláhí Súfism: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ni%27matull%C4%81h%C4%AB>

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p450

³ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p450 footnote 2, quoting *Tárikh-i-Jadíd* p254.

occupy and the influence your words exercise, you are not much inferior to the Siyyid-i-Báb Himself. Had you claimed for yourself the position of leadership, better would it have been than to declare your allegiance to one who is certainly inferior to you in knowledge.¹

To this, Mírzá Qurbán-'Alí boldly replied:

The knowledge which I have acquired, has led me to bow down in allegiance before Him whom I have recognised to be my Lord and Leader. Ever since I attained the age of manhood, I have regarded justice and fairness as the ruling motives of my life. I have judged Him fairly, and have reached the conclusion that should this Youth, to whose transcendent power friend and foe alike testify, be false, every Prophet of God, from time immemorial down to the present day, should be denounced as the very embodiment of falsehood!

And he added:

I am assured of the unquestioning devotion of over a thousand admirers, and yet I am powerless to change the heart of the least among them. This Youth, however, has proved Himself capable of transmuting, through the elixir of His love, the souls of the most degraded among His fellow men. Upon a thousand like me He has, unaided and alone, exerted such influence that, without even attaining His presence, they have flung aside their own desires and have clung passionately to His will.

On hearing this, the *Amír* remarked: "I am loth, whether your words be of God or not, to pronounce the sentence of death against the possessor of so exalted a station."

Mírzá Qurbán-'Alí immediately responded:

Why hesitate? Are you not aware that all names descend from Heaven? He whose name is 'Alí [reference to the Báb²] in whose path I am laying down my life, has from time immemorial inscribed my name, Qurbán-'Alí in the scroll of His chosen martyrs. [*Qurbán* means sacrifice, hence the name Qurbán-'Alí means sacrifice for 'Alí, that is the Báb]. This is indeed the day on which I celebrate the *Qurbán* festival, the day on which I shall seal with my life-blood my faith in His Cause. Be not, therefore, reluctant, and rest assured

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p450-451

² The Báb's name was 'Alí Muhammad

that I shall never blame you for your act. The sooner you strike off my head, the greater will be my gratitude to you.¹

The *Amír* getting agitated said: "Take him away from this place. Another moment and this dervish will have cast his spell on me."²

But Mírzá Qurbán-'Alí instantly retorted:

You are proof against that magic, that can captivate only the pure in heart. You and your like can never be made to realise the entrancing power of that Divine elixir which, swift as the twinkling of an eye, transmutes the souls of men.³

By now, the *Amír's* whole frame was shaking with anger. He yelled his command as he left the gathering:

Nothing but the edge of the sword can silence the voice of this deluded people! No need, to bring any more members of this hateful sect before me. Words are powerless to overcome their unswerving obstinacy. Whomever you are able to induce to recant his faith, release him; as for the rest, strike off their heads.⁴

And so Mírzá Qurbán-'Alí was led out to *Sabzih-Maydán*. As he walked, he turned to the crowd and shouted:

Hearken to my words, you who profess to be the followers of the Apostle of God. Muhammad, the Day-Star of Divine guidance, who in a former age arose above the horizon of Hijáz,⁵ has today, in the person of 'Alí-Muhammad, again risen from the Day-Spring of *Shíráz*, shedding the same radiance and imparting the same warmth. A rose is a rose in whichever garden, and at whatever time, it may bloom.⁶

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p451-452

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p452

³ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p452

⁴ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p452

⁵ Hijáz [Hejaz] is the name for the western region of Saudi Arabia and includes the holy cities of Mecca and Medina.

⁶ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p452

Seeing on every side how the people were deaf to his call, he cried aloud: "Oh, the perversity of this generation! How heedless of the fragrance which that imperishable Rose has shed!"¹

Arriving at the site of the execution and seeing Hájí Mírzá Siyyid 'Alí's beheaded body, he rushed to it. Holding the headless body in his arms, he cried out to the executioner: "Approach and strike your blow, for my faithful comrade is unwilling to release himself from my embrace, and calls me to hasten together with him to the court of the Well-Beloved."²

And as he bowed his head for the executioner's blow, the dervish's turban he wore rolled off his head, and he cried out this verse:

Happy is he whom love's intoxication
So hath overcome that scarce he knows,
Whether at the feet of the Beloved
It be head or turban which he throws!³

The executioner's sword then severed his head.

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¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p453

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p453

³ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p453 footnote 1 quoting *Tárikh-i-Jadíd* p254-255.

Section Six: The Third of Seven

Hájí Mullá Ismá'íl-i-Qumí – the learned divine

Hájí Mullá Ismá'íl-i-Qumí ﴿﴾, a native of Faráhán [which is between Qum and Hamedan]. He had been a student of Siyyid Kázim in Karbalá' and had after the Siyyid's passing eventually come to Shíráz, where he learnt about the Revelation of the Báb, and became a believer. He had been part of the group of believers at Badašht, where he was given the title of *Sirru'l-Vujúd* ﴿﴾ [mystery of existence] by Bahá'u'lláh¹ It is recorded: "In the exposition of the meaning of the verses of the Qur'án and the traditions of Islám, he displayed an insight which few could rival."²

Hájí Mullá Ismá'íl-i-Qumí had wanted to join the defenders of Shaykh Tabarsí, but sickness had prevented him from doing so. By the time he had recovered, the episode of Shaykh Tabarsí had ended. Hájí Mullá Ismá'íl-i-Qumí was deeply saddened that he could not have been part of that heroic band, and in response rose with fresh determination in teaching the Cause of the Báb. This is what had brought him to Tihrán and led to his arrest.

As he was brought to the execution square and saw the beheaded bodies of the two who had gone before him which lay entwined in each other's arms, Hájí Mullá Ismá'íl-i-Qumí cried out: "Well done, beloved companions! You have turned Tihrán into a paradise. Would that I had preceded you." He then drew from his pocket a coin, which he handed to his executioner and said: "Buy some sweets and sweeten your mouth. I have forgiven you your act; approach and deliver your blow" And turning his face to the heavens, he began to cry out: "Accept me, O my God, unworthy though I be. " The executioner's sword cut short his prayer.³

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¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p454

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p454

³ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p454-455

Section Seven: The Fourth of Seven

Siyyid Husayn-i-Turshízí – the newly converted *mujtahid*

The quality of faith is not dependent on time and space, as we will see with the life of Siyyid Husayn-i-Turshízí. Unlike the others arrested in Tihrán, Siyyid Husayn was a “young” Bábí, in that he only just learned about the Báb and become a Bábí. How did he land up in Tihrán, become a Bábí and get arrested?

Siyyid Husayn was a native of Turshíz [a village in the province of *Khurásán*; now called *Káshmar*], where he was highly esteemed for his piety and rectitude of conduct. He had gone to study with the leading *mujtahids* in Najaf and Karbalá' [in Iráq], where he had been authorized as a *mujtahid*.¹ His plan was to go back to the province of *Khurásán* and spread his Islamic learning there. In preparation for this return to his home province, Siyyid Husayn had gone to Kazimayn [outside of Baghdád]. There he met an old acquaintance, Hájí Muhammad-Taquí of Kirmán, who was going to Tihrán. Hájí Muhammad-Taquí invited Siyyid Husayn to join him, as Tihrán was on the way to *Khurásán*, and Siyyid Husayn decide to do so. Hájí Muhammad-Taquí was a well-known merchant and a very good friend of the Báb's middle uncle. When the Báb's middle uncle had come to Tihrán after *Chihríq*, he had written to Hájí Muhammad-Taquí inviting him to come to Tihrán for a visit. What Siyyid Husayn did not know at first was that Hájí Muhammad-Taquí had already been taught the Faith by the Báb's middle uncle and was a Bábí.² It was here in Tihrán that Hájí Muhammad-Taquí finally disclosed to Siyyid Husayn the Báb's teachings. Siyyid Husayn immediately became an ardent Bábí, and he was arrested together with his teacher Hájí Muhammad-Taquí and the Báb's middle uncle. These three were destined to be three of the seven Martyrs of Tihrán: The Báb's middle uncle being the first, Siyyid Husayn the fourth and Hájí Muhammad-Taquí the fifth of the seven martyrs.

Siyyid Husayn was among the Bábí prisoners who were not even brought in front of the *Amír-Kabír*. When Siyyid Husayn refused to recant, he was led out to the square

¹ *mujtahid* means someone who is learned in Islamic law. To become a *mujtahid*, one has to study Islamic law under other senior learned *mujtahids* [studies can take many years]. The person is eventually granted the status of a *mujtahid* allowing them to be an authority to practice Islamic law. A *mujtahid* can issue *fatwas* [authorized legal opinions]. They further can take on and train other students, preach in the mosques and head congregations.

² Hájí Muhammad-Taquí had become a Bábí through the Báb's middle uncle when he had been in *Shíráz* In 1847-48. *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p455 footnote 2

to be executed. Facing the multitude that had now gathered at the square, he cried out to them:

“Hear me, O followers of Islám! My name is Ḥusayn, and I am a descendant of the *Siyyidu'sh-Shuhadá*, who also bore that name¹. The *mujtahids* of the holy cities of Najaf and Karbilá have unanimously testified to my position as the authorised expounder of the law and teachings of their Faith. Not until recently had I heard the name of the Siyyid-i-Báb. The mastery I have obtained over the intricacies of the Islamic teachings has enabled me to appreciate the value of the Message which the Siyyid-i-Báb has brought. I am convinced that, were I to deny the Truth which He has revealed, I should, by this very act, have renounced my allegiance to every Revelation that has preceded it. I appeal to every one of you to call upon the *'ulamá* and *mujtahids* of this city and to convene a gathering, at which I will undertake in their presence to establish the truth of this Cause. Let them then judge whether I am able to demonstrate the validity of the claims advanced by the Báb. If they be satisfied with the proofs which I shall adduce in support of my argument, let them desist from shedding the blood of the innocent; and if I fail, let them inflict upon me the punishment I deserve.²

These words had scarcely dropped from his lips when an officer of the *Amír-Kabír* in charge of the prisoners shouted:

I carry with me your death-warrant signed and sealed by seven of the recognised *mujtahids* of Tihrán, who have in their own handwriting pronounced you an infidel. I will myself be answerable to God on the Day of Judgment for your blood and will lay the responsibility upon those leaders in whose judgment we have been asked to put our trust and to whose decisions we have been compelled to submit.³

With these words, the officer drew out his dagger and stabbed Siyyid Husayn with such force that he immediately fell dead at his feet.

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¹ Imám Husayn, the third Imám

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p456

³ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p456

Section Eight: The Fifth, Sixth and Seventh of Seven

Hájí Muhammad-Taquí of Kirmán, Siyyid Murtadá and Muhammad-Husayn of Marághí

As soon as Siyyid Husayn was executed, the remaining three Bábís listed for execution were led out to the square one after the other. The first to be led out was Hájí Muhammad-Taquí of Kirmán, followed by Siyyid Murtadá and finally Muhammad-Husayn of Marághí.

Hájí Muhammad-Taquí coming out, saw the ghastly sight of the decapitated bodies, which included his beloved friend and teacher, the middle uncle of the Báb, and his dear new spiritual brother, Siyyid Husayn, whom he had just taught the Faith of the Báb. Seeing this sight, he cried to the executioner to hasten so he could join his beloved friends.

No sooner had Hájí Muhammad-Taquí uttered these words, than Siyyid Murtadá arrived, and flinging himself ahead of Hájí Muhammad-Taquí, shouted to the executioner that because he was a siyyid, he should be given priority, and the executioner kill him first. Siyyid Murtadá was a well-known merchant of Zanján. His brother Siyyid Kázim, who had also been a well-known merchant, had already been martyred in Shaykh Tabarsí.¹ Now, he also pleaded with the executioner that his martyred brother was waiting impatiently for him to come.

While all this was going on, Muhammad-Husayn of Marághí arrived. Seeing the situation, and particularly the body of Hájí Mullá Ismá'íl-i-Qumí, with whom he had been very good friends, he jumped in front and cried out to the executioner to please execute him before the other two.

Nabíl records:

Their eagerness to precede one another in laying down their lives for their Faith astonished the multitude who wondered which of the three would be preferred to his companions. They pleaded with such fervour that eventually they were beheaded, all three, at one and the same moment.²

¹ DB 19-20 Part B, Section 4, Companions of Zanján, martyr #154

² Dawn-Breakers Chapter 21, p458

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Epilogue

A Western historian, reflecting on the social circumstances and status of these seven Martyrs of Tihrán and what made their martyrdom different, records:

They were men representing all the more important classes in Persia – divines [*ulamá*], dervishes, merchants, shop-keepers, and government officials; they were men who had enjoyed the respect and consideration of all; they died fearlessly, willingly, almost eagerly, declining to purchase life by that mere lip-denial, which, under the name of ... *takiya* [*taqiyya*],¹ is recognized by the Shi'ites as a perfectly justifiable subterfuge in case of peril; they were not driven to despair of mercy as were those who had died at Shaykh Tabarsí and Zanján; and they sealed their faith with their blood in the public square of the Persian capital wherein is the abode of the foreign ambassadors accredited to the court of the Sháh.²

Nabíl records:

The news of their martyrdom [the seven Martyrs of Tihrán] came as an added blow to the Báb, who was already plunged in sorrow at the fate that had befallen the heroes of Tabarsí. In the detailed Tablet He revealed in their honour, every word of which testified to the exalted position they occupied in His eyes, He referred to them as those very "Seven Goats" spoken of in the traditions of Islám, who on the Day of Judgment shall "walk in front of the promised *Qá'im*." They shall symbolise by their life the noblest spirit of heroism, and by their death shall manifest true acquiescence in His will. By preceding the *Qá'im*, the Báb explained, is meant that their martyrdom will precede that of the *Qá'im* Himself, who is their Shepherd. What the Báb had predicted came to be fulfilled. His own martyrdom occurred four months later in Tabríz.³

¹ *Taqiyya* traditionally means the dissimulation of belief for reasons of self-preservation. Particularly in Shi'a Islam, this practice of denying one's faith in threatening situations was considered lawful to be able to survive persecution. The term has other contextual meanings as well [see essay by Brown in Lawson and Ghaemmaghami *A Most Noble Pattern*, Chapter 6, p88-104. 2012, George Ronald, Oxford].

² Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions*, Chapter 4, p100 quoting EG Browne *A Traveller's Narrative* p216 [and referencing *Tárikh-i-Jadíd* p258-270].

³ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p463. Also see *God Passes By* Chapter 3, p48.

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End of "DB 21: The Seven that Walk in Front of the *Qá'im*"