



The Crimson Rain – Nayríz

Dawn-Breakers Chapter 22

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

Prologue

“Guidance hath ever been given by words,
and now it is given by deeds.
Everyone must show forth deeds that are pure and holy,
for words are the property of all alike,
whereas such deeds as these belong only to Our loved ones.
Strive then with heart and soul to distinguish yourselves by your deeds.”¹

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¹ Bahá'u'lláh *Hidden Words* Persian #76. Spacing added.

Section One: Key Events in Vahíd's Life leading to *Naw-Rúz* of 1850

Vahíd's Background

Vahíd was considered to be one of the most learned, wise and impartial of the religious scholars of the land at that time. He was generally known during his lifetime as Siyyid Yahyáy-i-Dárábí ¹, although history will know him as Vahíd [meaning unique or peerless], the title given to him by the Báb.² He was the son of Siyyid Ja'far, surnamed Kashfí ³, who in his time had been considered as one of the greatest and most celebrated *'ulama* of that period. Here was a celebrated son of a celebrated father. In 1846, the Sháh [Muhammad Sháh] had selected Vahíd from amongst all the *'ulama* to go meet the Báb, assess His claims and report back to the Sháh. It was after three meetings with the Báb in Shíráz that Vahíd recognized the station of the Báb. We have already described what happened at Vahíd's meetings with the Báb in detail in [DB 8-9, Section 4](#). Some years later, when Vahíd was being attacked by the very populace that had once bowed before him, and his horse was brought to him so he could get away from the mob, he remarked reflecting on how it all started:

This very steed, the late Muhammad Sháh gave me, that with it I might undertake the mission with which he entrusted me, of conducting an impartial investigation into the nature of the Faith proclaimed by the Siyyid-i-Báb. He asked me to report personally to him the results of my enquiry, inasmuch as I was the only one among the ecclesiastical leaders of Tihrán in whom he could repose implicit confidence. I undertook that mission with the firm resolution of confuting the arguments of that Siyyid, of inducing Him to abandon His ideas and to acknowledge my leadership, and of conducting Him with me to Tihrán as a witness to the triumph I was to achieve. When I came into His presence, however, and heard His words, the opposite of that which I had imagined took place. In the course of my first audience with Him, I was utterly abashed and confounded; by the end of the second, I felt as

¹ Siyyid Yahyáy-i-Dárábí translated literally is: descendant of the Prophet (*Siyyid*), John (*Yahyá*), from (-i-) Dáráb (*Dárábí*)

² In historical records he is commonly referred to as Siyyid Yahyáy-i-Dárábí. The Báb gave him the title of *Vahíd-i-Akbar* [the Greatest Vahíd], although in Bahá'í literature he is generally referred to simply as Vahíd. Vahíd means unique or peerless. For a summary of life of Vahíd see [Bahaiopedia article on Vahíd](#).

³ means "the discloser" because of his skill in interpretation of the Qur'án and the visions he claimed to have [*Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 9, p171 footnote #2, p177 footnote #2].

helpless and ignorant as a child; the third found me as lowly as the dust beneath His feet. He had indeed ceased to be the contemptible Siyyid I had previously imagined. To me, He was the manifestation of God Himself, the living embodiment of the Divine Spirit. Ever since that day, I have yearned to lay down my life for His sake. I rejoice that the day I have longed to witness is fast approaching.”¹

Vahíd's family and main base

Vahíd had two families which included four sons², and three large homes. He had a large residence in Yazd, where he had settled in 1830s and married his first wife. In 1840, he had taken a second wife [very customary in that period] in Nayríz ^(۱). His second wife was the daughter of the pre-eminent religious scholar of Nayríz, and Vahíd had an opulent home in Nayríz, which was the residence of his second family. He also had a home in Dáráb ^(۱), which was where his ancestors came from. Vahíd also had several brothers, but none could match him. Openly proclaiming the Faith of the Báb, Vahíd's erudition and eloquence were such that few dared to openly oppose him, and none could be found who could beat him in religious discussions. The local populace, even the non-believers, respected him greatly, and he had a strong base of followers especially in Yazd and Nayríz.³

Vahíd's travels

After his meeting with the Báb and his conversion, Vahíd did not return to the capital to report back to the Sháh. He just sent the Sháh a written message describing his assessment and unreserved acceptance of the claims of the Báb. Vahíd returned to his family homes and began a series of travels to various parts of the land teaching the Faith of the Báb. In 1849, Vahíd was busy travel-teaching in the provinces of Kurdistán and Lurestán. He was in Burújird in 1849, when he heard about the events at Fort Shaykh Tabarsí. He set out right away for Tihrán, to get things in order before heading out to Fort Shaykh Tabarsí in Mazindarán.

While Vahíd was in Tihrán, Bahá'u'lláh arrived from Mazindarán, and informed him that all the roads to Fort Shaykh Tabarsí were being controlled, and he would not make it to the Fort. Vahíd was greatly saddened, but he remained in Tihrán for a

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p469

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p466

³ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p466. For a summary of life of Vahíd see [Bahaipedia article on Vahíd](#).

while in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. He was still there when Sayyáh came having completed his pilgrimage to Fort Shaykh Tabarsí on behalf of the Báb [DB 21, Section 2]. Soon after that meeting, Vahíd left Tihrán and began, what was to be his final travel-teaching trip. He went to Qazvín, Qum, Káshán, Isfáhán, Ardistán, Ardikán and eventually to his home in Yazd. At each of these stops, Vahíd met with his fellow-disciples and reinforced their efforts to teach the Cause of the Báb. It is recorded that he was able to win over a considerable number of able supporters to the Cause of the Báb at each stop.¹ He arrived in Yazd five days before *Naw-Rúz* ² of 1850.



Vahíd's travels in the latter half of 1849 and early 1850. He was teaching in Kurdistán, Burújird, and Tihrán, followed by Qazvín, Qum, Káshán, Isfáhán, Ardistán, Ardikán and eventually Yazd, where he arrived five days before *Naw-Rúz* of 1850. Route shown is an approximation as details are not known. Also highlighted on the map are the locations of Vahíd's three residences: Yazd, Nayríz and

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p465-466

² Fársí, means New Day. It is the Persian New Year and is the day of the Spring Equinox in the Northern hemisphere. It therefore always falls sometime between March 19 – 22.

Dáráb. Note that only certain provinces are identified on this map. The town of Yazd is in the province with the same name [Yazd], while Nayríz and Dáráb, like Shíráz, are in the province of Fárs.¹

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¹ Map from Balyuzi *Eminent Bahá'ís In the Time of Bahá'u'lláh*, prologue p5. Map has been modified with route, compass and highlighting added.

Section Two: *Naw-Rúz* of 1850 in Yazd and its Aftermath

An important tradition of *Naw-Rúz* is that people visit each other's residences and offer salutations on the New Year. Visits are prioritized based on rank and importance, so the elders are visited first. Among the officials and people of power, the hierarchy of visits and celebrations are of great importance. Because of his high rank and status, the leading *ulamá* and notables of Yazd came to Vahíd's residence on the day of *Naw-Rúz* of 1850 to offer their best wishes. Vahíd had prepared a sumptuous feast for them. It so happened that year, that the anniversary of the Báb's Declaration fell on the same day as *Naw-Rúz*.¹

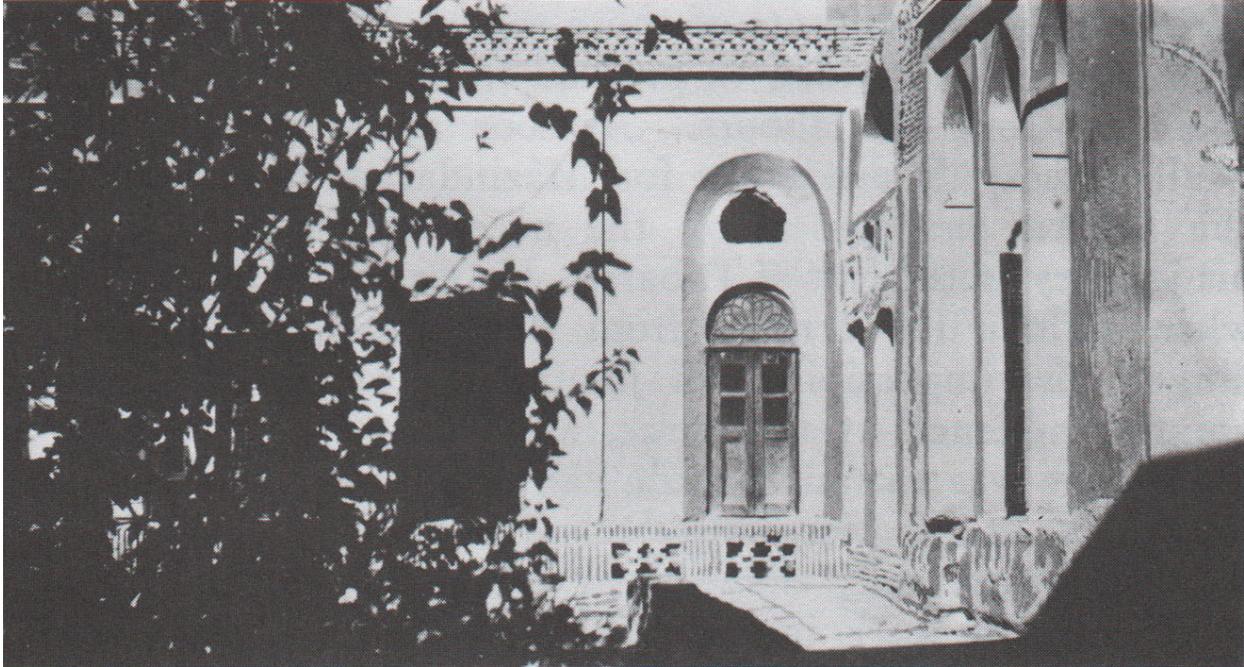
The *Naw-Rúz* Gathering at Vahíd's home in Yazd

The visitors who came to Vahíd's home in Yazd on that *Naw-Rúz* included several *ulamá* who were envious of Vahíd and strongly opposed the Cause of the Báb. Leading this pack was Navváb-i-Radaví , who was exceptionally malicious and conniving. He wanted to somehow bring down Vahíd in front of everyone by hinting at his being a Bábí. He said in front of everyone:

The Sháh's imperial banquet can scarcely hope to rival the sumptuous repast you have spread before us. I suspect that in addition to this national festival which today we are celebrating, you commemorate another one besides it.

Vahíd responded with a bold and sarcastic response, which provoked the laughter of all present and some even applauded. Vahíd then took this opportunity to proclaim the Cause of the Báb and to demonstrate the validity of its claims. His knowledge and eloquence were such that not one of the opposers in the gathering dared say anything.

¹ *Naw-Rúz*, the Persian New Year is the day of the Spring Equinox in the Northern Hemisphere which always falls on a day March 19 to 22 based on the solar calendar. The calendar of the land, which everyone used was the Islamic Hijrî calendar, which is a lunar calendar. A lunar year is shorter than a solar year. If an event is based on the lunar calendar, it will move each year by about 11 days relative to the solar calendar. The anniversary of the Báb's Declaration (which occurred on the eve of May 22 1844 CE) was celebrated based on the Hijrî calendar therefore moved every year relative to *Naw-Rúz*. That year the two fell on the same day.



Vahíd's house in Yazd [archival photo]¹

The gathering ended, but it was a turning point for those who opposed Vahíd and the Cause of the Báb. Led by Navváb-i-Radáví, who felt he had been humiliated in front of everyone, this group began to rile up the local population in Yazd against the Bábís in general and Vahíd in particular. Their message as always fed the roots of prejudice, ignorance and fear. To the local populace, they claimed the Cause of the Báb was seeking to corrupt and destroy Islám, and people needed to arise to defend their precious faith and way of life. To the other *'ulamá* and government officials they appealed to their desire for power and greed, and positioned the spread of the Cause of the Báb as a major threat to their power.

Opposition leads to bad and good

The propaganda directed against Vahíd and the Cause of the Báb spread rapidly throughout the town of Yazd and beyond to the neighboring towns and villages. On the one hand, it attracted support from the ignorant local population. On the other, it also attracted those with spiritual eyes and ears to investigate the Cause of the Báb. It kindled the flame of bitter hatred in the hearts of many, but also the flame of search in others. Those who were seekers came in droves to Vahíd's house in Yazd. He would stand at the window of the upper floor of his home, and from there speak with the crowd that would gather daily below, teaching them about the

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p466

principles of the Cause of the Báb and answering their questions. This continued for forty days, until Navváb-i-Radáví convinced the governor of the city, who was young and inexperienced, to send his troops to blockade Vahíd's home. Together with the troops, came a mob of locals who had been brain-washed with hatred of the Bábis.¹

Vahíd's house is besieged

The friends gathered at Vahíd's home were distressed at seeing a whole regiment together with an angry mob surrounding the property. Vahíd exhorted them to be calm and patient, and that the Almighty would soon send an avenger. No sooner had he uttered these words, than they saw in the distance a small band of armed Bábis led by a Muhammad-'Abdu'lláh ﷺ. Raising the cry of "Yá Sáhibu'z-Zamán" they flung themselves upon the regiment, and in a swoop dispersed them. The regiment together with the governor sought refuge in the neighbouring fort of Nárín ﷺ.²

Muhammad-'Abdu'lláh does not follow Vahíd's advice

Once the troops were dispersed, Muhammad-'Abdu'lláh came to Vahíd. Vahíd told him that although he had averted the danger to the group that day, the actions of the day would now lead to expansion of the hostility against the Bábis and change the course of events. What was just a religious disturbance was now expanded to a civil disturbance. Vahíd advised him to leave the city right away with his men and commit Vahíd and his group to the care and protection of the Almighty.

Muhammad-'Abdu'lláh however thought he was doing the right thing and did not follow Vahíd's advice. He was heard to remark:

It would be cowardly of me to abandon my friends to the mercy of an irate and murderous adversary. What would be difference between me and them who forsook the *Siyyidu'sh-Shuhadá* ﷺ³ on the day of *Áshúrá* ﷺ⁴ and left him companionless on the field of Karbilá?⁵

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p468

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p469-470

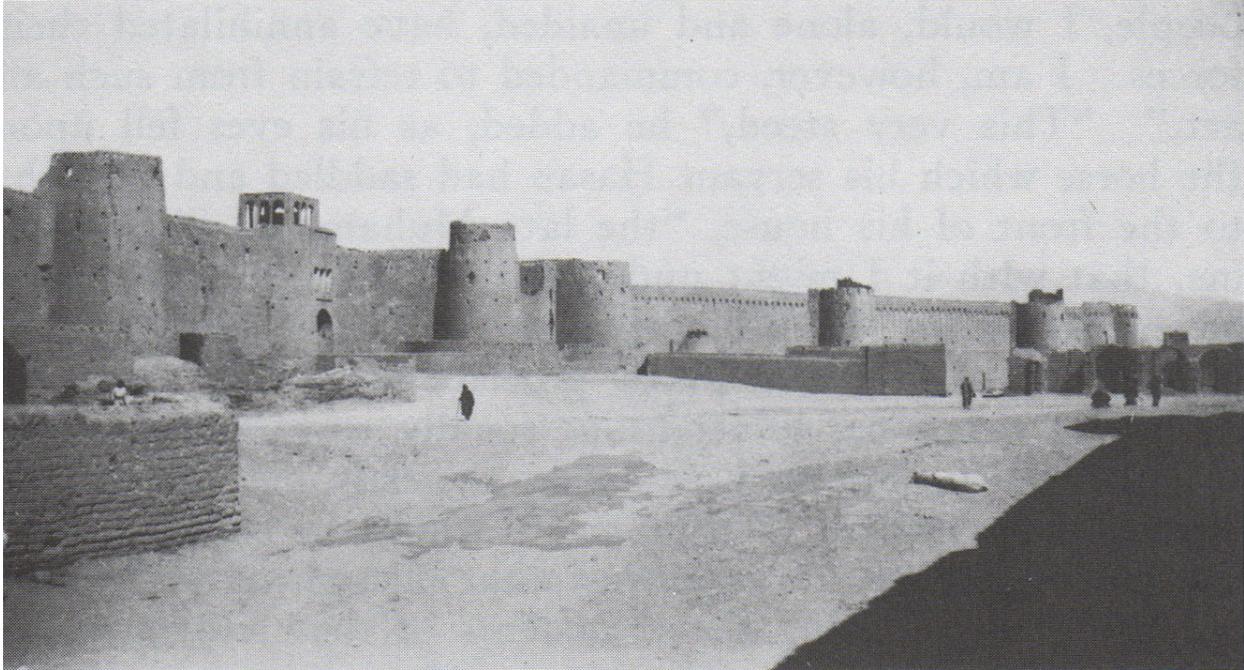
³ Means Prince of Martyrs, title given to Imám Husayn by the *Shí'a*.

⁴ *Áshúrá* is the tenth day of the month of Muharram, the day when the Imám Husayn was martyred on the plains of Karbalá'.

⁵ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p471. Imám Husayn was abandoned by many who claimed to be his supporters which eventually led to his martyrdom in Karbalá' on *Áshúrá* (the tenth day of the month of Muharram).

With these words, Muhammad-'Abdu'lláh and his small group of men set out to the fort of Nárín, and compelled the regiment and the governor to seek refuge inside the fort.

Soon the actions of Muhammad-'Abdu'lláh will snow-ball into the outcome predicted by Vahíd.



Fort of Nárín, Yazd. Archival photo.¹

Situation in Yazd worsens

Naváb-i-Radáví was not giving up. He got his mob to try and attack Vahíd's home again. Vahíd sent out a messenger to the mob, to make a loud announcement on his behalf that he disclaimed any intention of waging holy war, but if they persisted to besiege his house, then he would be forced in self-defense to take up the sword against them.² The delivery of the message made the mob back-down.

Seeing this, the Naváb-i-Radáví made the mob leave Vahíd's place and instead head to fort Nárín and attack Muhammad-'Abdu'lláh and his small band there. At Nárín, the attack by the regiment from one side and by the mob on the other

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p470

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p472

defeated the Bábís. Muhammad-'Abdu'lláh was injured, and he was brought to Vahíd's house. The mob followed, and this time tried to attack Vahíd's home. Vahíd sent out a band of seven companions. The lead was Muhammad-Ridáy-i-Manshádí (محمّد ریذای منشدی), who had been one of the leading *'ulamá* of Manshád, and after becoming a Bábí discarded his turban, and was now serving as doorkeeper at Vahíd's house. This band of seven rode out with the cry of "*Alláh-u-Akbar*" and dispersed the soldiers and the mob. That day was 10 May 1850.

Vahíd leaves Yazd

As soon as night fell, Vahíd bade his companions to disperse right away. He had his wife leave for her father's home with younger two of their four sons; the older two sons remained behind with Vahíd.¹ He told his wife to leave everything behind, saying:

This palatial residence I have built with the sole intention that it should be eventually demolished in the path of the Cause ... then will friend and foe alike realise that ... an earthly mansion, however sumptuously adorned and magnificently equipped, had no worth in his [Vahíd's] eyes, that It had sunk, in his estimation to the state of a heap of bones to which only the dogs of the earth could feel attracted.²

Vahíd then gathered all the writings of the Báb that were in his possession, and together with copies of all his own treatises, entrusted them to his close servant Hasan. He ordered Hasan to leave right away, and to take a particular path to a place outside the city gates and await Vahíd there. He warned Hasan that if he did not follow his instructions fully, they would not meet again.

In midst of the dark night, Vahíd himself left together with his two older sons, and two other companions, who were Bábís of Yazd. He followed the same route he had told Hasan to follow.

Aftermath in Yazd

Unfortunately, Vahíd's servant Hasan, did not follow his master's instructions. As he rode out on the path Vahíd had instructed him to take, he heard the cries of

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p474: "Leaving his two sons, Siyyid Ismá'íl and Siyyid 'Alí-Muḥammad, in the care of their mother, he left, accompanied by his two other sons, Siyyid Aḥmad and Siyyid Mihdí,..."

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p473-474

sentinels from the nearby fort. This made him fear that he might be caught and lose the sacred Writings he was carrying. So, he took another path. However, he had not gone far, when soldiers intercepted him, and he was caught.

The next day, the enemies of Vahíd were enraged that he had got away. However, the governor breathed a sigh of relief, to be rid of the rebel. He decided it was not worth pursuing the fugitives far as that would put his soldiers at risk. He only sent out a small party who returned soon without giving much chase.¹ Instead, the governor arrested whoever could be identified as a Bábí, ordered their execution, and if they were wealthy, had their property confiscated.²

Vahíd's trusted servant Hasan was one of the ones executed. He was blown from the mouth of a canon. It is recorded that:

When they would have bound him [Hasan] with his back towards the gun, he said: "Bind me, I pray you, with my face towards the gun, that I may see it fired." The gunners and those who stood by looking on were all astonished at his composure and cheerfulness, and indeed one who can be cheerful in such a plight must needs have great faith and fortitude.³

Alongside the executions, the mob and soldiers plundered Vahíd's house, and the residences of all the other Bábís who had any kind of wealth.

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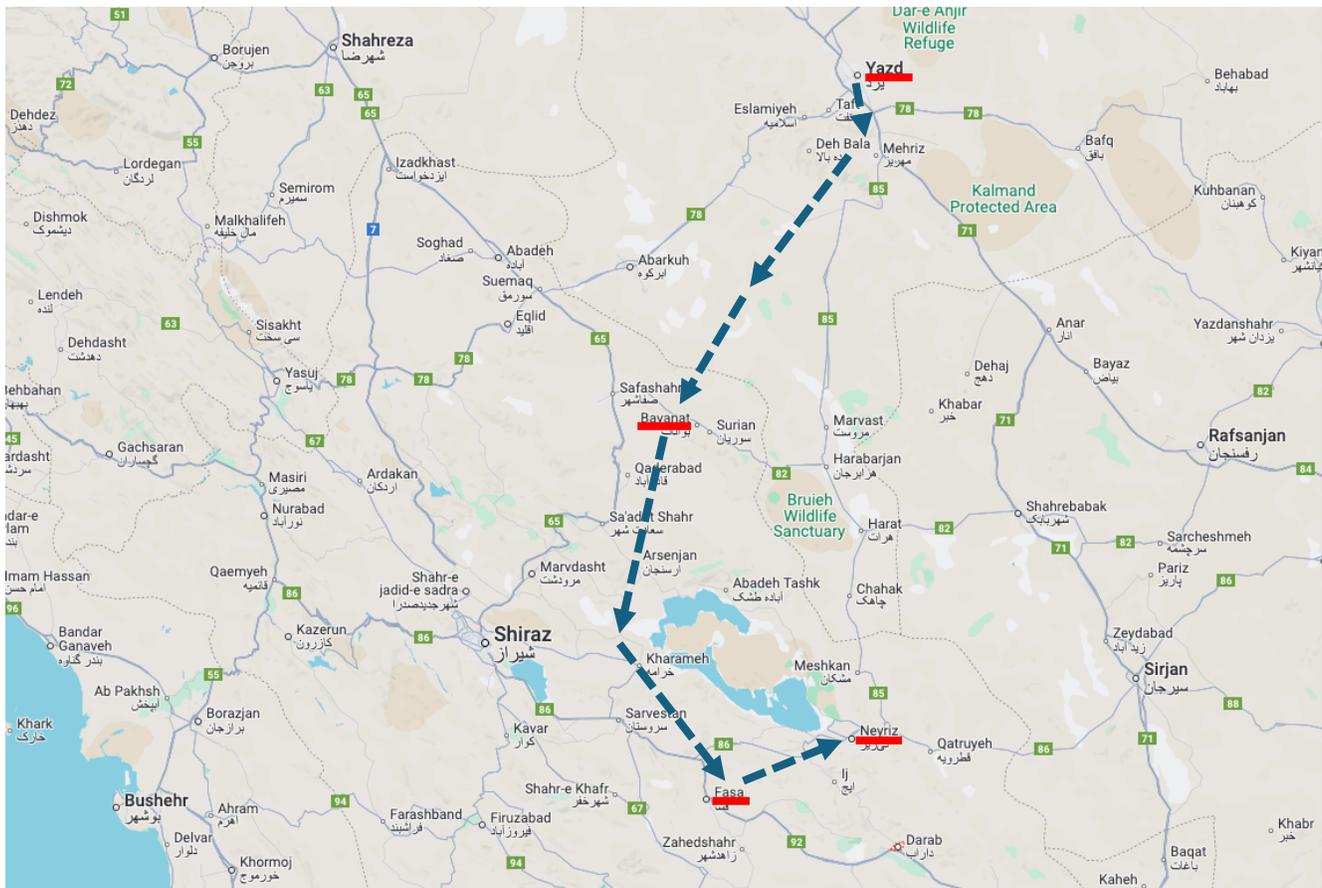
¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p475

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p475, footnote 2 quoting ALM Nicholas' *Siyid 'Alí-Muhammad dit le Báb* p 391.

³ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p475, footnote 1 quoting *Tárikh-i-Jadíd* p 117.

Section Three: Vahíd Goes to Nayríz

When his servant Hasan failed to show up at the appointed place outside the city gate of Yazd, Vahíd knew that, sadly, Hasan had been caught. Vahíd and his four companions [two adult Bábís and Vahíd's two sons] had no choice but to leave on foot. That very night, although unaccustomed to walking, Vahíd walked a formidable distance together with his companions. His two sons were too young to walk that distance and were carried in part by the two adult Bábí companions. The next day they took refuge in the recesses of a neighbouring mountain and continued their journey. Once they were far enough away from Yazd, they began to travel in the open. They headed to Nayríz, Vahíd's second home.¹



Vahíd's travel from Yazd to Nayríz in May 1850. Route shown is an approximation, as not all the stops are known. The route shown is about 500 km / 310 miles.²

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p474-475

² Route is based on description in *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p475-478. Map is from Google Maps [2025] with route and highlighting added.

Vahíd's Route to Nayríz

All along the route to Nayríz, at whichever village or town they stopped, Vahíd's first step was to go the closest *masjid* [mosque]. Utterly oblivious to the fatigues of travel, he would ascend the pulpit and fearlessly summon the congregation to the Cause of the Báb. If he succeeded in awakening souls in a locality, he would spend the night there, to further teach them so they could propagate the Cause of the Báb when he left. If he did not perceive any seeking souls in a particular area, he would not even spend the night there, but right away depart for the next village.¹

The reception given to Vahíd was always respectful, as he was already well known throughout the region. However, in some areas he found high spiritual receptivity and in others not. In the district of Bavánát ﴿﴾ a large number of people embraced the Cause of the Báb; whereas in the district of Fasá ﴿﴾, he found very little receptivity. This pattern was repeated in many places.

Vahíd's journey from Yazd to Nayríz took a little over two weeks. He arrived in Nayríz on 27 May 1850.

Nayríz prepares to receive Vahíd

Nayríz was where Vahíd had his second family and an incredibly fine residence. It was through his teaching work on his many past visits to Nayríz that many had already accepted the Cause of the Báb. They came from all walks of life, from the learned to notables to workers to students to families. Nayríz is divided into several quarters. These individuals came from the different quarters throughout the town, but in particular from the Chinár-Súkhtih ﴿﴾ quarter where Vahíd had his residence.

The last stop for Vahíd before Nayríz, was the village of Rúnúz ﴿﴾ which is nearby Nayríz. The news of Vahíd journeying to Nayríz had already reached his many admirers and supporters in Nayríz. A large contingent of these supporters decided to go out to Rúnúz and welcome Vahíd. This group included Vahíd's father-in-law,² who was a judge of recognized standing in the entire region, other notables such as relatives of the governor, *imáms* [Friday prayer leaders] and *kad-khudás* ﴿﴾ [chief of village or an area in a town], as well as workers and students. From the Chinár-

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p476

² Hájí Shaykh 'Abdu'l-'Alí. *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p476

Súkhtih quarter alone, the quarter where Vahíd had his residence, over one hundred headed out to Rúnúz.¹

The governor of Nayríz was Zayn'ul-'Ábidín Khán. He was very aware of the influence Vahíd wielded in Nayríz and had already made it clear to all in Nayríz that he was not in support of the Cause of the Báb, nor was he in favour of their support of Vahíd. Knowing this antagonistic attitude of the governor, most of the large group that had set out to meet Vahíd at Rúnúz, did so in the middle of the night. As soon as the news of this reached Zayn'ul-'Ábidín, he sent a special messenger to overtake them. The message he delivered was that unless they turned back right away, he would capture their wives, confiscate their property and eventually execute whoever went out to meet Vahíd. However, to Zayn'ul-'Ábidín's dismay, the large group disdainfully ignored his message and continued their journey. Seeing this Zayn'ul-'Ábidín got so concerned he transferred his residence to another location outside Nayríz in fear of a Bábí uprising.

Vahíd's arrival in Nayríz

Vahíd arrived in Nayríz before noon on 27 May 1850. The first thing he did, when he got to the Chinár-Súkhtih quarter, before even going to his residence, was to go to the *masjid* [mosque]. Still wearing his dust-laden clothes, he ascended the pulpit and summoned the large congregation gathered there to embrace the Message of the Báb. He spoke with such eloquence that the huge congregation was electrified by his appeal. That day over a thousand who were natives of Chinár-Súkhtih quarter and more than five hundred from other quarters of Nayríz, all arose and accepted the Message of the Báb. Nabíl records that the jubilant multitude shouted: "We have heard, and we obey!".²

Vahíd then said to them:

My sole purpose in coming to Nayríz is to proclaim the Cause of God. I thank and glorify Him for having enabled me to touch your hearts with His Message. No need for me to tarry any longer in your midst, for if I prolong my stay, I fear that the governor will ill-treat you because of me.³

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p476-477

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p479

³ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p479

But the crowd pressed him to stay for some time, and with that conducted him triumphantly to his residence with wild cheering.



Vahíd's house in Nayríz [archival photo]¹

All this only served to heighten the fear and animosity of the governor, Zayn'ul-Ábidín. The stage was set for the upcoming upheaval in Nayríz.

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p479

Section Four: The First Attack on the Bábís in Nayríz

Vahíd's activities in Nayríz

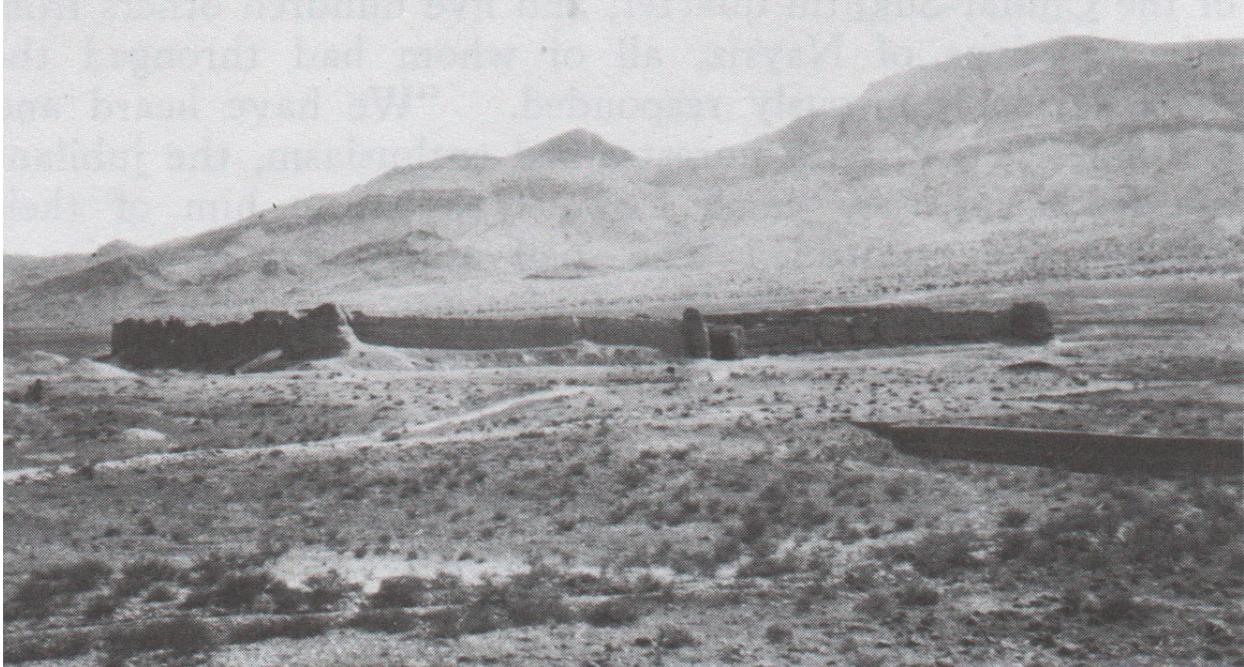
Having decided to remain a few days in Nayríz, Vahíd spent most of that time at the *masjid*, where he openly and with great eloquence proclaimed the Message of the Báb, presented proofs of its claims, and explained its principles. Every day witnessed an increase in the number of the audience. As for those who embraced the Cause of the Báb, Vahíd deepened their understanding of the Message and principles of the Cause. The Báb had previously addressed a general tablet to the Bábís in Nayríz who had newly embraced His Cause. Vahíd used this time to explain to the newly declared Bábís about the significance and principles of this and other Writings of the Báb.

The Governor Plans an Attack

The governor Zayn'ul-'Ábidín now decided that the most expedient path was to launch a sudden attack on the Bábís, with the goal to eventually capture Vahíd. He assembled a regiment of a thousand men, consisting of both cavalry and infantry.

As soon as Vahíd learned about the governor's plans, he asked a group of twenty Bábís¹ to go to the mud fort of *Khájih* , situated close to the *Chínár-Súkhtih* quarter, and establish a base in it. He instructed them to fortify the fort's gates, turrets and walls. He himself remained behind at his own residence to see what move the governor would undertake next.

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p481



Fort of Khájih, Nayríz. Archival photo.¹

The First Attack on the Bábís in Nayríz

The governor's men began their assault on the Bábís in the Bázár quarter of town, because that is where the governor had his own residence and where he wielded influence. The first to be hit during this first assault was Mullá 'Abdu'l-Husayn, a venerable man of eighty, who was highly esteemed by all for his piety and learning. He was offering his prayers on the roof-top of his own house when the bullet struck him.² Mullá 'Abdu'l-Husayn had been one of those devoted Bábís, who, in spite of his age, had gone from Nayríz to Rúnúz that night to welcome Vahíd.

Some are tested

The metaphoric Bridge of Sirát has many crossings, and they are not easy to cross. If they were easy to cross, then it would not be the Bridge of Sirát. Nabíl records:

The suddenness of the attack dismayed a number of the companions who had hastily embraced the Message and had failed to appreciate its full meaning. Their faith was so severely shaken that a few were induced, in the

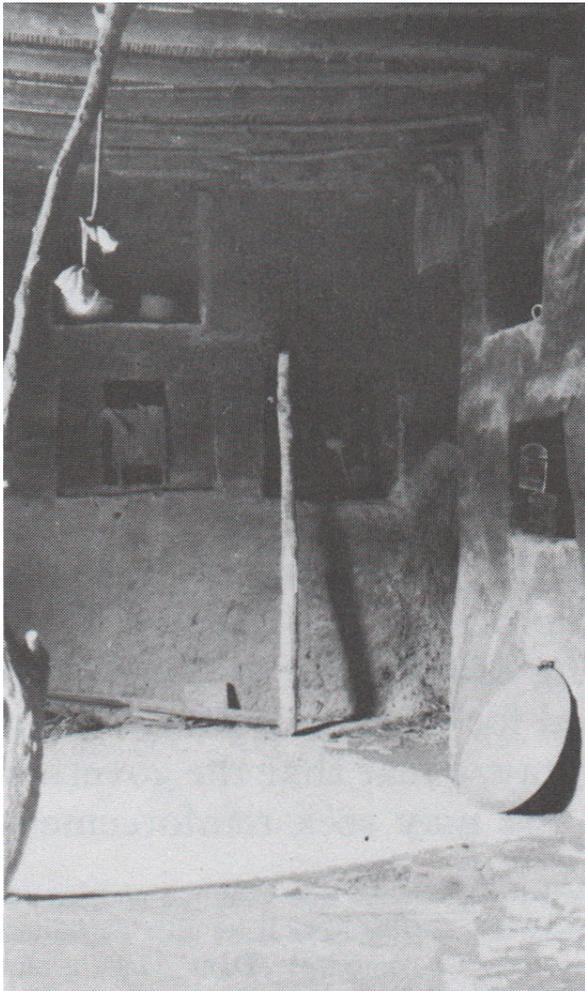
¹ Dawn-Breakers Chapter 22, p481-482

² Dawn-Breakers Chapter 22, p481

dead of night, to separate themselves from their companions and join forces with the enemy.¹

Vahíd moves to Fort Khájih

As soon as Vahíd was informed of what had transpired, he arose at dawn and bade his home farewell. Mounting his steed and accompanied by a number of his supporters, he rode out to the fort of Khájih. This fort would now be Vahíd's residence.



Vahíd's room in Fort Khájih. Archival photo.²

¹ Dawn-Breakers Chapter 22, p482

² Dawn-Breakers Chapter 22, p480

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Section Five: The Siege of Fort Khájih

With Vahíd's arrival at the Fort Khájih, the number of companions at the fort was seventy-two.¹ They now awaited the governor's next move.

The First Attack on the Fort

The governor Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán dispatched his own elder brother to head the regiment and to surround and lay siege to the fort. The regiment consisted of a thousand men, both infantry and cavalry, all of whom were well-trained in the art of warfare and the regiment was equipped with an ample store of munitions.

Shortly after the siege had begun, Vahíd ordered a small group of the companions to ride out of the fort and disperse the besiegers. To the surprise of all the trained men in the regiment, this small band with extraordinary rapidity broke up their formation forcing their dispersal. Only three of the companions were killed in that encounter, but the besiegers fled.

The news of the events at Nayríz and this defeat reached Shíráz and its governor, Prince Fírúz Mírzá. Shíráz and Nayríz are both in the province of Fárs and about 200 km /125 miles apart, although Shíráz is significantly larger and more important being the capital of the province. Its governor, Prince Fírúz Mírzá therefore held a higher rank and had much more power and resources than the governor of Nayríz. The Prince was concerned about a potential spread of the Bábí uprising, but for now he just sent his messengers to the Nayríz governor ordering him to just exterminate the Bábí occupants of the fort as soon as possible. On receiving these orders, the governor decided an easier path would be to have Vahíd and the other Bábís just leave the area. The governor sent one of the Prince's attendants to Vahíd, urging him to depart from Nayríz together with his companions. Vahid responded to him:

Tell him that my two children, together with their two attendants, are all the company I have with me. If my presence in this town will cause mischief, I am willing to depart. Why is it that, instead of according us the welcome which

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p482. Note: Symbolic significance of seventy-two, especially for those of Shí'a background, is that Imám Husayn was martyred with seventy-two companions in Karbalá'.

befits a descendant of the Prophet¹, he has deprived us of water and has incited his men to besiege and attack us? If he persists in denying us the necessities of life, I warn him that seven of my companions ... will inflict upon his combined forces a humiliating defeat.²

The governor was upset at this bold answer from Vahíd and decided to just continue the siege. Nabíl records what happened next:

Vahíd ordered his companions to emerge from the fort and punish their assailants. With admirable courage and confidence, they succeeded, though extremely young in years, and utterly inexperienced in the use of arms, in demoralising a trained and organised army. 'Alí-Asghar Khán [the governor's elder brother leading the regiment] himself perished, and two of his sons were captured. Zaynu'l-Ábidín Khán [the governor] disgracefully retreated, with what still remained of his scattered forces.³

The Companions and Life in the Fort

Fort Khájih was a relatively large fort, but it was a mud fort. As time went on, other Bábís from various quarters in Nayríz joined the fort, supplementing the number of occupants. Seeing that the enemy was bent on their extermination, Vahíd gave orders for the defences of the fort to be strengthened. A water cistern was constructed within its enclosure and its walls further strengthened. The companions were assigned to specific functions and duties such as guarding the gate, in charge of the turret, in charge of prisoners, in charge of the barricades, and so forth.

The Prince sends a large army

The governor Zaynu'l-Ábidín Khán, now appealed with increasing vehemence to the Prince in Shíráz for reinforcements of cavalry, infantry and heavy artillery. He showcased Vahíd and the Bábís as the biggest threat to the security in the Prince's province. He also dispatched several of his trusted men with gifts for the Prince,

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p482-483. Vahíd was a Siyyid meaning "descendant of the Prophet"; and "deprived us of water" is a reference to Imám Husayn and his companions who were surrounded by their enemies and deprived even of water in the desert of Karbalá' before their martyrdom.

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p482-483. Note: Vahíd was a Siyyid meaning "descendant of the Prophet"; and "deprived us of water" is a reference to Imám Husayn and his companions who were surrounded by their enemies and deprived even of water in the desert of Karbalá' before their martyrdom.

³ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p483

hoping to induce him to act. To reinforce his efforts, the governor also sent several appeals to the leading *'ulamá* in Shíráz, in which he gravely misrepresented Vahíd as a subversive and an enemy of Islám, and urged them to intercede on his behalf with the Prince.

The Prince on receiving all this readily granted the request. A huge force of infantry and cavalry with heavy artillery was assembled and sent to Nayríz.

The Siege Intensifies

With the arrival of the large army of the Prince, the siege of Fort Khájih intensified. The new reinforcements dug trenches around the fort and set up barricades. As soon as this work was completed, they began firing onto the fort.

By the second night, Vahíd summoned Ghulám-Ridáy-i-Yazdí and asked him to go out with a party of fourteen of the companions and disperse the enemy encampment outside the fort. Nabíl records:

Those who were called upon to perform that task were for the most part men of advanced age, whom no one would have thought capable of bearing the brunt of so fierce a struggle. Among them was a shoemaker who, though more than ninety years of age, showed such enthusiasm and vigour as no youth could hope to exceed. The rest of the fourteen were mere lads, as yet wholly unprepared to face the perils and endure the strain which such a sally entailed. Age, however, to those heroes, whom a dauntless will and an immovable confidence in the high destiny of their Cause had wholly transformed, mattered but little. They were instructed by their leader to divide immediately after they left the cover of the fort and, raising simultaneously the cry of "*Alláh-u-Akbar*" to spring into the midst of the enemy.

No sooner had the signal been given than they arose and, hurrying to their steeds and rifles, marched out of the gate of the fort. Undaunted by the fire which spouted from the mouths of the cannons and by the bullets which rained upon their heads, they plunged headlong into the midst of their adversaries. This sudden encounter lasted for no less than eight hours, during which that fearless band was able to demonstrate such skill and bravery as amazed the veterans in the ranks of the enemy.¹

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p486

The Bábís are reinforced and the enemy flee

As the small party of fourteen Bábís from the fort were combatting the army, suddenly other Bábís from outside the fort arrived to aid them. They came not just from the town of Nayríz but also from the neighboring villages. To the reinforcement of the Bábí men in battle was added an uprising from the roof-tops of the Bábí houses in Nayríz. This was the voices of the Bábí women of Nayríz who now rushed to their roof-tops and screamed out the cry of "*Alláh-u-Akbar*" and cheered their young and old men in the field of battle. The uproar caused by the Bábí women of Nayríz was such that it filled the hearts of the encamped soldiers with fear.¹

The scene at the camp of the enemy was chaotic. Abandoning their positions, the soldiers fled. The enemy encampment in front of the Fort was now desolate and forsaken.

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¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p487

Section Six: Deception and Treachery

The Governor Plans Deceit

The Governor was now convinced of the futility of their efforts to compel, in an open contest, the submission of the Bábís in Fort Khájih. They seemed to be reinforced by a supernatural power even though they were only “a handful of immature lads and decrepit old men”.¹

The Governor decided to do what the besiegers of Fort Shaykh Tabarsí had done before him. He resorted to deceit. He ordered the troops to cease all manner of hostility against the fort. After the passage of a few days, he sent a written appeal to the fort to Vahíd, which in essence said:

Hitherto, as we were ignorant of the true character of your Faith, we have allowed the mischief-makers to induce us to believe that every one of you has violated the sacred precepts of Islám. Therefore did we arise against you, and have endeavoured to extirpate your Faith. During the last few days, we have been made aware of the fact that your activities are untinged by any political motive, that none of you cherish any inclination to subvert the foundations of the State. ... All that you seem to uphold is the claim that a man has appeared whose words are inspired and whose testimony is certain, and whom all the followers of Islám must recognise and support. We can in no wise be convinced of the validity of this claim unless you consent to repose the utmost confidence in our sincerity, and accept our request to allow certain of your representatives to emerge from the fort and meet us in this camp, where we can, within the space of a few days, ascertain the character of your belief. If you prove yourselves able to demonstrate the true claims of your Faith, we too will readily embrace it, for we are not the enemies Truth, and none of us wish to deny it. Your leader we have always recognised as one of the ablest champions of Islám, and we regard him as our example and guide. This *Qur'án*, to which we affix our seals, is the witness to the integrity of our purpose. Let that holy Book decide whether the claim you advance is true or false. The malediction of God and His Prophet rest upon us if we should attempt to deceive you.²

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p491

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p488-489

Vahíd knows of their deception but honours the Holy Book

Vahíd received the *Qur'án* with great reverence and kissed it devoutly. Turning to his companions, he said:

Though I am well aware of their designs, I feel it my duty to accept their call and take the opportunity to attempt once again to unfold the verities of my beloved Faith.¹

He then bade the companions to continue to maintain their positions in the fort and place no reliance on what their adversaries might say. He, however, ordered them to suspend all manner of hostilities until further notice from him. He added:

Our appointed hour has struck. Our acceptance of their invitation will surely make them feel the baseness of their treachery.²

With these words, Vahíd bade farewell to the companions in the fort and accompanied by five companions set out for the camp of the enemy. Sadly, one of these five companions turns out to be a traitor.

The Governor closes the trap

The Governor and the group of officers he had assembled received Vahíd and his companions in the Governor's tent. They showed great respect to Vahíd, who appealed to them and presented proofs for the Cause of the Báb.³ Vahíd said to them:

I am come to you armed with the testimony with which my Lord has entrusted me. Am I not a descendant of the Prophet of God? Wherefore should you have risen to slay me? For what reason have you pronounced my death-sentence, and refused to recognise the undoubted rights with which my lineage has invested me?⁴

But these words fell on deaf ears, even though for three days they lavishly entertained Vahíd and followed him in their congregational prayers and listened to his discourses. Vahíd was so eloquent, that the Governor got concerned Vahíd would convince the other officers, whom the Governor had worked hard to brain-

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p489

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p489

³ Referring to power and significance of Vahíd's appeal on this occasion, *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p490 adds: "Bahá'u'lláh, in the *Súriy-Şabr* has immortalised that noble appeal and revealed the full measure of its significance".

⁴ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p490

wash against the Cause of the Báb. So, on the third day, the Governor requested Vahíd to address in his own handwriting a message to his companions in the fort that they had reached an amicable settlement, and that the companions should disarm, leave the Fort and go home. No harm would befall them.

Vahíd knew this was not true but was eventually pressured to submit and write the letter. The letter bearer to the Fort was one of the companions, a Hájí Siyyid 'Ábid . In secret, Vahíd wrote a second letter, in which he informed the companions in the fort of the evil designs of the enemy and warned them not to be deceived. He gave the second letter also to Hájí Siyyid 'Ábid, with instructions that he should destroy the first letter and only give the second secret letter to the companions in the Fort.

Treachery

Hájí Siyyid 'Ábid turned out to be a lost soul, who falls off the Bridge of Sirát. The Governor induced him with promises of reward and wealth to share Vahíd's plans with him. Hájí Siyyid 'Ábid took both letters to the Governor and they destroyed Vahíd's secret second letter, and only the first letter was the one that was delivered to the fort. The treacherous Hájí Siyyid 'Ábid assured the companions in the fort that Vahíd succeeded in winning over the officers of the entire army and that in view of this conversion, it was now safe for them to leave the fort and return home.

The Companions leave the Fort and are massacred

Although the companions in the fort were bewildered by the message they got, they did not wish to disobey the wishes of Vahíd. They reluctantly left the fort. As they dispersed, many discarded their arms. They started walking towards the town of Nayríz, but as soon as they reached the town, they were intercepted and encompassed by a massive force of armed men sent by the Governor. The Bábís stood little chance of self-defence, many fighting only with sticks and stones because they had already disarmed themselves.

And so began the massacre of the Bábís of Nayríz.

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Section Seven: Martyrdom of Vahíd

The Governor had only one aim and that was to execute Vahíd. It appears the Governor had a twinge of conscience about breaking his oath to Vahíd made on the Holy Qur'án. But this was overcome with a scheme. Among the officers were those who had not been present when the oath had been taken, and so they could claim not to be bound by it. One of these, 'Abbás-Qulí Khán , who was known for his ruthlessness and cruelty, said: "I can arrest at any time and put to death whomever I deem guilty of having violated the laws of the land."¹ With this, he summoned three men whose relatives had been killed during the attack by the Bábís, and ordered them to execute Vahíd.

The three immediately left and found Vahíd. They took the turban, the sign of Vahíd's noble lineage,² from his head, wound it round his neck, and binding him to a horse, dragged him through the streets. A local mob gathered round Vahíd, pressing from every side around his body. With the accompaniment of drums and cymbals, led by the shrill shouts of the women of Nayríz, the mob gave vent to their hatred. They danced merrily around, as Vahíd uttered his last words:

Thou knowest, O my Beloved, that I have abandoned the world for Thy sake, and have placed my trust in Thee alone. I am impatient to hasten to Thee, for the beauty of Thy countenance has been unveiled to my eyes.³

One Western historian records:

He [Mullá Ridá] took hold of the green belt of Yahyá [Vahíd], symbol of his holy ancestry, tied it in a knot about his neck and began to drag him on the ground. Then came Safar whose brother Sha'bán had fallen during the war, then Áqá Ján, son of 'Alí-Asghar Khán, brother of Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán, and the Muhammadans, aroused by the scene, stoned and beat to death the unfortunate man. They then severed the head, tore off the skin, stuffed it with straw and sent that trophy to Shíráz!⁴

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p494

² Vahíd was a Siyyid, a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad.

³ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p495

⁴ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p494 footnote 1 quoting ALM Nicolas' *Siyyid 'Alí-Muhammad dit le Báb* p406

Thus, was ended a noble and heroic life. Distinguished by his vast learning, dauntless courage, and a rare spirit of self-sacrifice, Vahíd was without equal, a “unique and peerless figure of his age”.¹

The day of Vahíd’s martyrdom was 29 June 1850. Ten days later the Báb is martyred in Tabríz.²

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¹ Bahá’u’lláh *Kitáb-i-Íqán* paragraph 248; and *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p495 footnote 2.

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p495 and footnote 2

Section Eight: The Cry of the Bábís of Nayríz

Having slain Vahíd, the Nayríz governor Zaynu'l-Ábidín turned his attention on the Bábís of Nayríz. His goal was their extermination. He assigned five thousand of his men to that task.¹



Nayríz, archival photo.²

Massacre in Nayríz

Nabíl records what happened to the Bábís throughout Nayríz:

The men were seized, chained, ill-treated, and eventually slaughtered. The women and children were captured and subjected to brutalities which no pen dare describe. Their property was confiscated, and their houses were destroyed.³

Many of the Bábís were conducted in chains to Shíráz, and there, for the most part, suffered cruel deaths. Zaynu'l-Ábidín had kept back those prisoners whom he

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p495

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p478

³ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p495

believed were wealthy, for the purposes of personal benefit. These were then subjected to acts of unspeakable cruelty. Nabíl records:

They were paraded at first through the streets of Nayríz, after which they were subjected to atrocious treatment in the hope of extracting from them whatever material advantage their persecutors had hitherto been unable to obtain. These having satisfied their greed, each victim was made to suffer an agonising death. Every instrument of torture their executioners could devise was utilised to quench their thirst for revenge. They were branded, their nails were pulled out, their bodies were lashed, an incision was made in the nose through which a string was driven, nails were hammered into their hands and feet, and in that piteous state each of them was dragged through the streets, an object of contempt and derision to all the people.¹

Another historian records:

His [Zaynu'l-Ábidín's] hatred knew no bounds and it was to last as long as he lived ... Zaynu'l-Ábidín Khán had entrusted them to a guard who was ordered to walk them through the city beating them as they went. The people of Nayríz were greatly entertained that time. They hung the Bábís by four nails and everyone came to gloat over their anguish. They placed burning weeds under the nails of these unfortunate martyrs, they branded them with hot irons, they deprived them of bread and water, they cut holes through their noses, and running through them a cord they led them as one would a bear!²

The darkness of human ignorance versus the light of Divine love

From the many tales of inhuman persecution of the Bábís of Nayríz, what is most enlightening is how ignorance and selfishness can darken one set of hearts, while Divine love overcomes human frailties and brightens the hearts that are open to it. Whether a heart is darkened or lit is not related to what humans profess or norms of the day. It shows itself in times of tests and sacrifice, where we see individuals making the very difficult choices. This was perhaps most markedly exhibited in the cases of individuals that the people of Nayríz first greatly honoured and then turned against. These individuals who had the power and following of people, could easily have chosen the path of material and self-seeking welfare, but instead chose

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p496

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p495 footnote 2 quoting ALM Nicolas' *Sijyid 'Alí-Muhammad dit le Báb* p407

to give those up and channel the love of the Divine. Nabíl records in detail the story of the suffering of four such individuals:¹

- Vahíd's father-in-law [Shaykh 'Abdu'l-'Alí] who was regarded as one of the most reputable *mujtahids* [judges] of the area;
- Siyyid Ja'far-i-Yazdí², who was so highly respected and honoured for his learning and judgement that the governor Zaynu'l-'Ábidín gave him precedence over himself at gatherings when they first met;
- Hájí Muhammad Taqí³, a man of great wealth, who enjoyed such a reputation of honesty and justice, that his opinion was invariably regarded by judges as the determining word;
- Siyyid Husayn, one of the most highly regarded and respected notables of Nayríz.

These four were among the many who were cruelly tortured and overwhelmed with ridicule and abuse by the local populace. In fact, the locals were rewarded for debasing them. Historians record how these souls responded with utmost patience and radiance to the tortures they were subjected to.⁴

Their heads are brought to Shíráz

A Western historian records an eyewitness' account of the arrival of the caravan of Nayrízí Bábí prisoners in Shíráz:

This day was a fete day, so an eyewitness tells us. The inhabitants were scattered about through the countryside, bringing with them their food and many among them drinking, on the sly, whole bottles of wine. The air was filled with musical strains, the songs of musicians, ... The bazaars were adorned with flags joy was general. Suddenly there was absolute silence. They saw coming thirty-two camels, each carrying an unfortunate prisoner, a woman or a child, bound and thrown crosswise over the saddle like a bundle. All around them were soldiers carrying long lances and upon each lance was impaled the head of a Bábí who had been slain at Nayríz. The hideousness of the sight deeply affected the holiday population of Shíráz ... The horrible caravan passed through the bazaars and continued to the palace of the governor [Prince Fírúz Mírzá]. This personage was in his garden where he

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p496-499

² See Portrait Siyyid Ja'far and Hájí Muhammad-Taqí

³ See Portrait Siyyid Ja'far and Hájí Muhammad-Taqí

⁴ For an example see Portrait Siyyid Ja'far and Hájí Muhammad-Taqí

had gathered in his kiosk [called Kuláh-i-Farangí ﴿﴾] the rich, the eminent citizens of Shíráz. The music ceased, the dancing stopped and Muhammad-'Alí-Khán as well as Mírzá Na'ím, two small tribal chiefs who had taken part in the campaign, came to tell of their brave deeds [the overcoming of Vahíd and killing of the Bábís] ... ¹

So ended the first massacre of the Bábís of Nayríz. ²

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¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 22, p496 footnote 1 quoting ALM Nicolas' *Siyid 'Alí-Muhammad dit le Báb* p408

² The martyrdom of Vahíd occurred on 29 June 1850, ten days before the Martyrdom of the Báb [9 July 1850]. Over a decade later, the sacrifices of the Bábís of Nayríz will be immortalized by Bahá'u'lláh. It was the period of Bahá'u'lláh's Declaration in the Garden of Ridván [21 April – 2 May 1863]. The believers at that occasion were ecstatically joyful with the open Declaration by Bahá'u'lláh of His Station and Mission. But with the joyful Declaration, Bahá'u'lláh also turned His attention to the sacrificial events of a decade before in Nayríz. He revealed the tablet known as *Súriy-i-Sabr* [Súra of Patience; also known as *Lawh-i-Ayyúb*, Tablet of Job] in honour of Hájí Muhammad-Taquí, one of the survivors of 1850 upheaval in Nayríz. Bahá'u'lláh gave Hájí Muhammad-Taquí the title of *Ayyúb* [Job, one of the prophets of Israel whose life was filled with incredible suffering and who remained patient and steadfast throughout]. In this tablet, Bahá'u'lláh extols Vahíd and the heroism and sacrifices of the Bábís of Nayríz. The *Súriy-i-Sabr / Lawh-i-Ayyúb*, which is revealed in Arabic, is in size about one-quarter of the *Kitáb-i-Íqán* and touches on many principles including the quality of patience, the principle of continuity of Divine Revelation, the Seal of the Prophets, the blindness of the learned clergy of Islam, the greatness of that Day of Bahá'u'lláh's Declaration and His Revelation, and the future. [Sourced from Taherzadeh *Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh* Volume 1, Chapter 16, p263-273.]

Epilogue

The massacre of the Bábís of Nayríz in 1850, was just the first. About three years later [end of 1852-early 1853] the second massacre of the Bábís in Nayríz occurred, which in many ways was even more brutal than the first one (DB 25-26 Part A, Section 4). And this resurgence of persecution in Nayríz will arise time and again with varying intensity until the present day.¹

[For a detailed account of history of Vahíd and the events at Nayríz in 1850, 1853 and 1909 see [Ahdieh and Chapman, *Awakening – A History of the Bábí and Bahá'í Faiths in Nayríz*, 2013 Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette.](#)]

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End of “DB 22: The Crimson Rain – Nayríz”

¹ “It is interesting to note that Vahíd and his companions sacrificed their lives in His path just ten days before the Báb was publicly executed. Almost sixty years later, on *Naw-Rúz* 1909, when the remains of the Martyr-Prophet [the Báb] were laid to rest on Mount Carmel, eighteen believers were assassinated in Nayríz by the vicious assault of the bloodthirsty *Shaykh* Zakaríyyá. [He entered Nayríz with a number of armed men, occupied the town and, among other things, launched a brutal attack against the Bahá'ís. Not only did his men seek out the Bahá'ís to kill them, but he offered to pay one hundred *túmáns* for each decapitated head of a Bahá'í]. 'Abdu'l-Bahá has testified that the interment of so sacred a trust as the holy remains of the Báb called for a sacrifice, which was realized in the martyrdom of these believers; and He has paid warm tribute to the Bahá'ís of Nayríz for having won, by their sacrifice, a great honour.” From Taherzadeh *Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh* Volume 1, Chapter 16, p268.