



# The First Light of the Dawn

## Dawn-Breakers Chapter 3

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

## Prologue

The first wave of seekers in search of the Promised One had only their inner spiritual compass to guide them. It is this compass that made them eventually converge on to the city of Shíráz, located in the province of Fárs. They did not know why they were led there or what awaited them. They would soon find out.

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## Section One: The Quest Begins

### ***I'tikáf at the Mosque in Kúfa***

The Shaykh's had a spiritual retreat practice called *i'tikáf* ﴿﴾<sup>1</sup>. It involved seclusion in a mosque, usually for forty days, during which participants prayed, meditated and fasted from sunrise to sunset, as well as observing nightly prayer vigils. Someone in an *i'tikáf* would be secluded from everyone else. *I'tikáfs* were regarded as a means of searching for truth by abstinence from physical desires as well as purification through prayer. For the Shaykh's, a condition for an *i'tikáf* was that it be held in one of four holy mosques. The ruined mosque at Kúfa where Imám 'Alí was killed was one of these holy mosques. In fact, traditions linked the appearance of the *Qá'im* with that location and so it made perfect sense for these particular seekers to hold their *i'tikáf* at the mosque in Kúfa.

It is February 1844, Mullá Husayn, his brother and his young nephew, become the first of the initial wave of seekers of the *Qá'im* to arrive in Kúfa. Mullá Husayn and his brother began their *i'tikáf* as soon as they arrive. The young nephew provided their meals and took care of their daily needs, while also fasting and praying.<sup>2</sup>

Soon thereafter, Mullá 'Alí-i-Bastámí ﴿﴾ and his twelve companions arrived and began their forty-day *i'tikáf* at the mosque in Kúfa.

### **To Shíráz, like moths to a Flame**

Mullá Husayn and his companions left the mosque the same night they completed their *i'tikáf*. Guided solely by Mullá Husayn's intuition, they went to the port city of Búshihr ﴿﴾ on the Persian Gulf. Mullá Husayn's intuition was correct in sensing that the *Qá'im* had spent much time in that city, but He was no longer there.

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<sup>1</sup> Arabic, means to adhere or commit to something.

<sup>2</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p50



Persia/Iran in the 1800s [certain towns/areas of interest highlighted] <sup>1</sup>

Mullá Husayn and his companions' stay in Búshihir was brief. As if drawn by an irresistible magnet towards the north, he and his companions set out for Shíráz, in the province of Fárs. They arrived on 22 May 1844. The events that transpired for Mullá Husayn that night in Shíráz will change history forever.

A few days later, Mullá 'Alí-y-i-Bastámí and his twelve companions also arrive in Shíráz. They too will be part of what unfolds in Shíráz.

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

One of Mullá 'Alí-i-Bastámí's companions, is Muhammad 'Alí of Qazvín. He was Táhirih's cousin and married to her sister [Marzíyeh]<sup>1</sup> and like Táhirih had become a Shaykhí. Táhirih had arrived in Karbalá just after Siyyid Kázim's death. Táhirih didn't go with Mullá 'Alí-i-Bastámí's group to Kúfa for an *í'tikáf*, but through her prayers and meditations, she had a dream in which she recognized the *Qá'im*. She then wrote a letter to the *Qá'im*, sealed it and gave it to her cousin/brother-in-law Muhammad 'Alí, just as he was departing for Kúfa with Mullá 'Alí-i-Bastámí. She assured him that he would meet the *Qá'im*, and that when he did, he was to give Him her letter, with these words:

Say to Him, from me: 'The effulgence of Thy face flashed forth, and the rays of Thy visage arose on high. Then speak the word, "Am I not your Lord?"<sup>2</sup> and "Thou art, Thou art!" we will all reply.'<sup>3</sup>

So, although Táhirih herself does not make it to Shíráz, her letter to the *Qá'im* does.

And last, but not least, it is Quddús, who also as soon as he hears about Siyyid Kázim's death, following his spiritual intuition, sets out from Bárfurúsh in northern Irán for Shíráz.

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<sup>1</sup> Marziyeh, upon hearing of the Message of the Báb later becomes a believer [Dawn-Breakers Chapter 3, p81, footnote 1].

<sup>2</sup> *Alastu-bi-rabbikum*  [Am I not your Lord?]

<sup>3</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p81-82

When Táhirih used this phrase, she was referring to what is known as the Primordial or Eternal Covenant, a foundational concept in Islamic messianic theology. This concept is that man [every human soul] is created by God to know and acknowledge God, and this is done by recognizing and acknowledging the Messenger of God, and in particular, the Promised One on the Judgement Day. It is usually summarized in the question: *Alastu-bi-rabbikum*  [Am I not your Lord?]; and answer: *bala* [Yea]. This is derived from Qur'án 7:172 which says:

*When thy Lord drew forth from the Children of Adam - from their loins -  
Their descendants, and made them testify concerning themselves [saying]:  
"Am I not your Lord?"  
They said: "Yea! We do testify!"  
[This] lest ye should say on the Day of Judgement:  
"Of this we were never mindful".*

This phrasing of the Eternal/Primordial Covenant regarding the Day of Judgement was so established among this group of seekers, that the period of the appearance of the *Qá'im*, would sometimes be called the *Yawm-i-alast* [the Day of "Am I not"]. When the word *bala* [Yea] appears in tablets of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, as the response of the individual, it is usually referencing this concept of the Eternal/Primordial Covenant that God will send His Messengers and man's duty is to respond with recognition and submission symbolized by this word "Yea".

The implication of the above is also that God has given every soul the capacity to recognize and acknowledge God through the Promised One on the Judgement Day. No one can say that I don't have the capacity. It is baked into every soul's fabric, primordially. Its expression and development however is contingent on our free will.



View of Shíráz. Archival photo.<sup>1</sup>

One after another, like moths to a flame, these seekers converge on Shíráz.

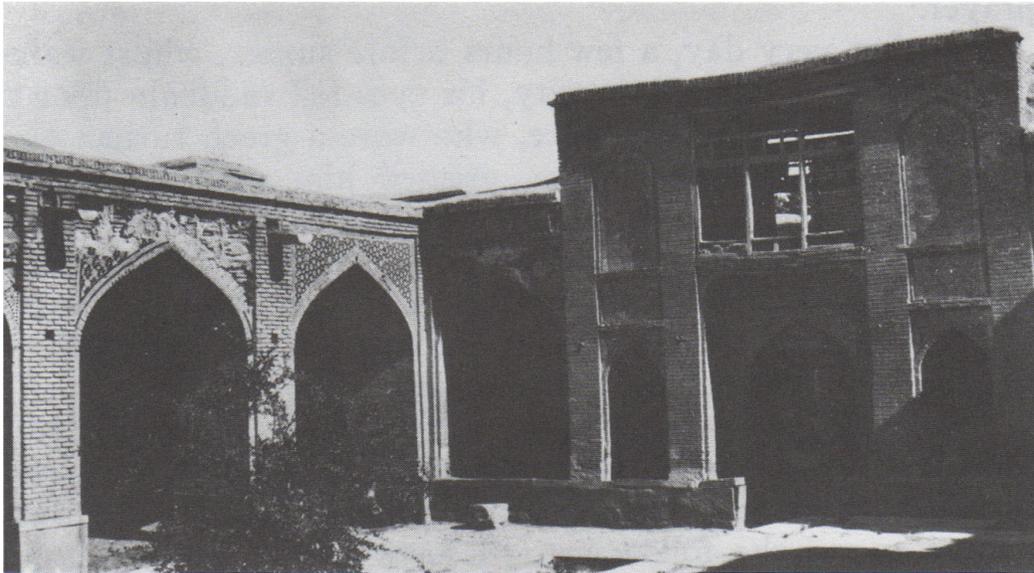
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<sup>1</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p52

## Section Two: The *Qá'im* Reveals Himself

It is 22 May 1844. Mullá Husayn, his brother and his nephew have arrived at the gate of the city of Shíráz. After a journey of several days from Búshihr they are travel-weary and exhausted. Mullá Husayn instructs his brother and nephew to go to the mosque known as Masjid-i-Ílkhání <sup>1</sup> in the city. He promises to join them in time for evening prayers.



Views of the Masjid-i-Ílkhání in Shíráz. Archival photos.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *masjid* is the Farsí word for mosque

<sup>2</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p51

### **The radiant Youth with the green turban**

A few hours before sunset, Mullá Husayn is walking outside the gate of the city, when his eyes suddenly fall upon a Youth of radiant countenance. He is wearing a green turban and advances towards Mullá Husayn with a smile of loving welcome. He embraces Mullá Husayn with tender affection as though he had been his intimate and lifelong friend. At first, Mullá Husayn thinks He is one of Siyyid Kázim's disciples who, on being informed of his approach to Shíráz, had come out to welcome him.

Here, as recorded by Nabíl, are Mullá Husayn's own words relating what happened next that historic evening in Shíráz:

The Youth who met me outside the gate of Shíráz overwhelmed me with expressions of affection and loving-kindness. He extended to me a warm invitation to visit His home, and there refresh myself after the fatigues of my journey. I prayed to be excused, pleading that my two companions had already arranged for my stay in that city, and were now awaiting my return. "Commit them to the care of God," was His reply; "He will surely protect and watch over them." Having spoken these words, He bade me follow Him. I was profoundly impressed by the gentle yet compelling manner in which that strange Youth spoke to me.

As I followed Him, His gait, the charm of His voice, the dignity of His bearing, served to enhance my first impressions of this unexpected meeting. We soon found ourselves standing at the gate of a house of modest appearance.<sup>1</sup>

### **"Enter therein in peace, secure"**

He knocked at the door, which was soon opened by an Ethiopian servant. "Enter therein in peace, secure"<sup>2</sup> were His words as He crossed the threshold and motioned me to follow Him. His invitation, uttered with power and majesty, penetrated my soul. I thought it a good augury<sup>3</sup> to be addressed in such words, standing as I did on the threshold of the first house I was entering in Shíráz, a city the very atmosphere of which had produced already an indescribable impression upon me. Might not my visit to this house, I thought to myself, enable me to draw nearer to the Object of my quest?

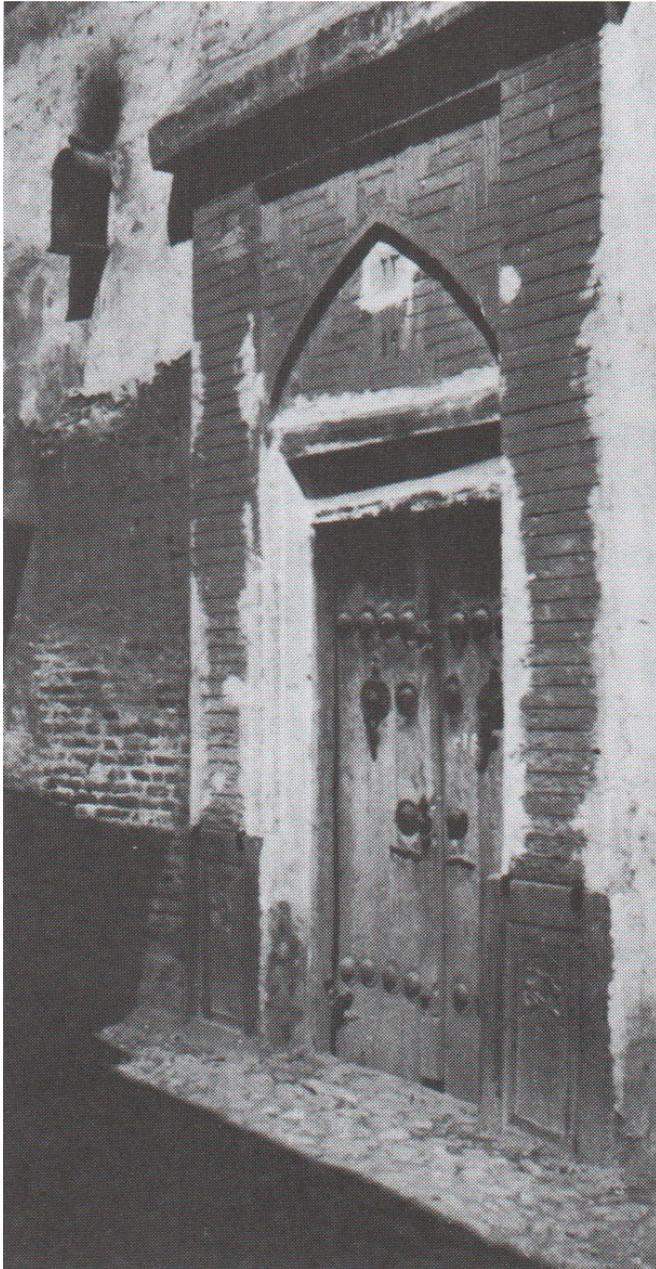
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<sup>1</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p52-53

<sup>2</sup> *Qur'án* 15:46

<sup>3</sup> means sign or omen

Might it not hasten the termination of a period of intense longing, of strenuous search, of increasing anxiety, which such a quest involves?



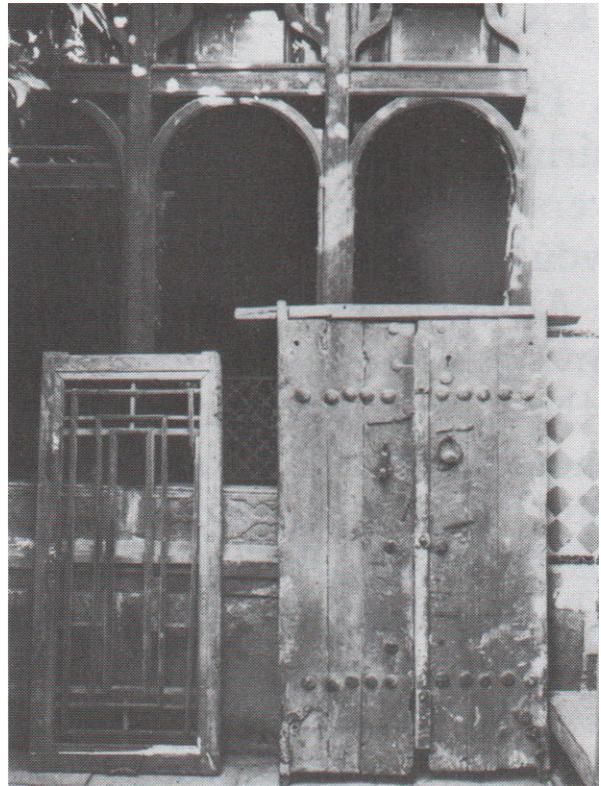
View of the entrance to the House of the Báb in Shiráz. Archival photo.<sup>1</sup>

As I entered the house and followed my Host to His chamber, a feeling of unutterable joy invaded my being. Immediately we were seated, He ordered a ewer of water to be brought, and bade me wash away from my hands and feet the stains of travel. I pleaded permission to retire from His presence and

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<sup>1</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p64

perform my ablutions in an adjoining room. He refused to grant my request, and proceeded to pour the water over my hands.



Views of courtyard of the House of the Báb in Shiráz: Orange tree planted by the Báb in the courtyard (left); original window sash and door (right). Archival photos.<sup>1</sup>

He then gave me to drink of a refreshing beverage, after which He asked for the samovar [a tea-urn] and Himself prepared the tea which He offered me.<sup>2</sup>

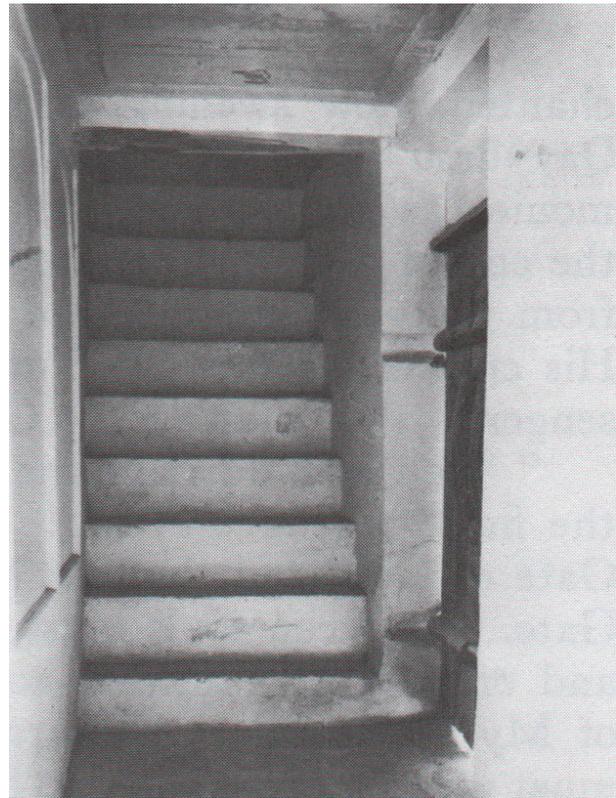
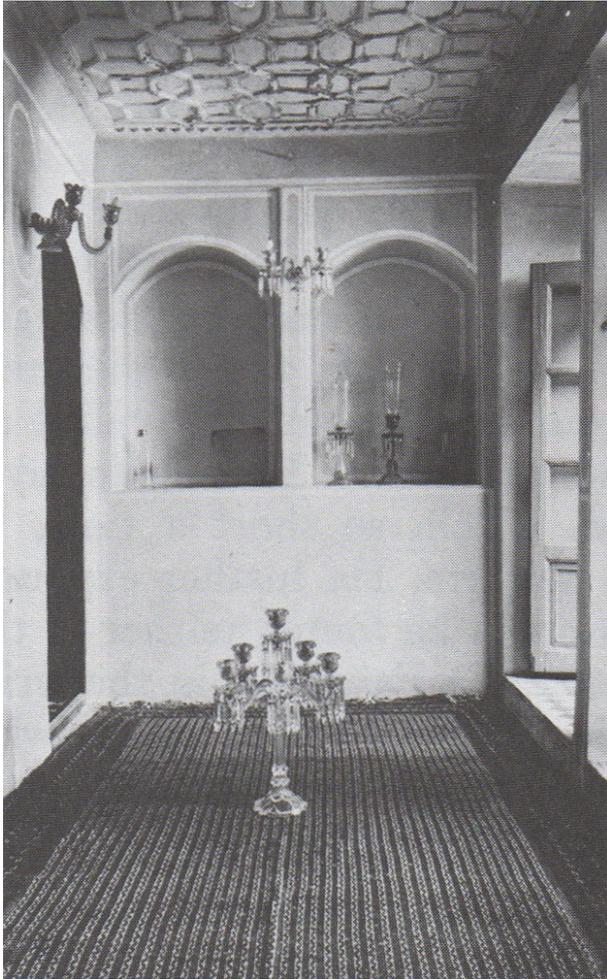
### **Time of the evening prayer**

Overwhelmed with His acts of extreme kindness, I arose to depart. “The time for evening prayer is approaching,” I ventured to observe. “I have promised my friends to join them at that hour in the Masjid-i-Ílkhání.” With extreme

<sup>1</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p64

<sup>2</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p53-55

courtesy and calm He replied: "You must surely have made the hour of your return conditional upon the will and pleasure of God. It seems that His will has decreed otherwise. You need have no fear of having broken your pledge." His dignity and self-assurance silenced me. I renewed my ablutions and prepared for prayer. He, too, stood beside

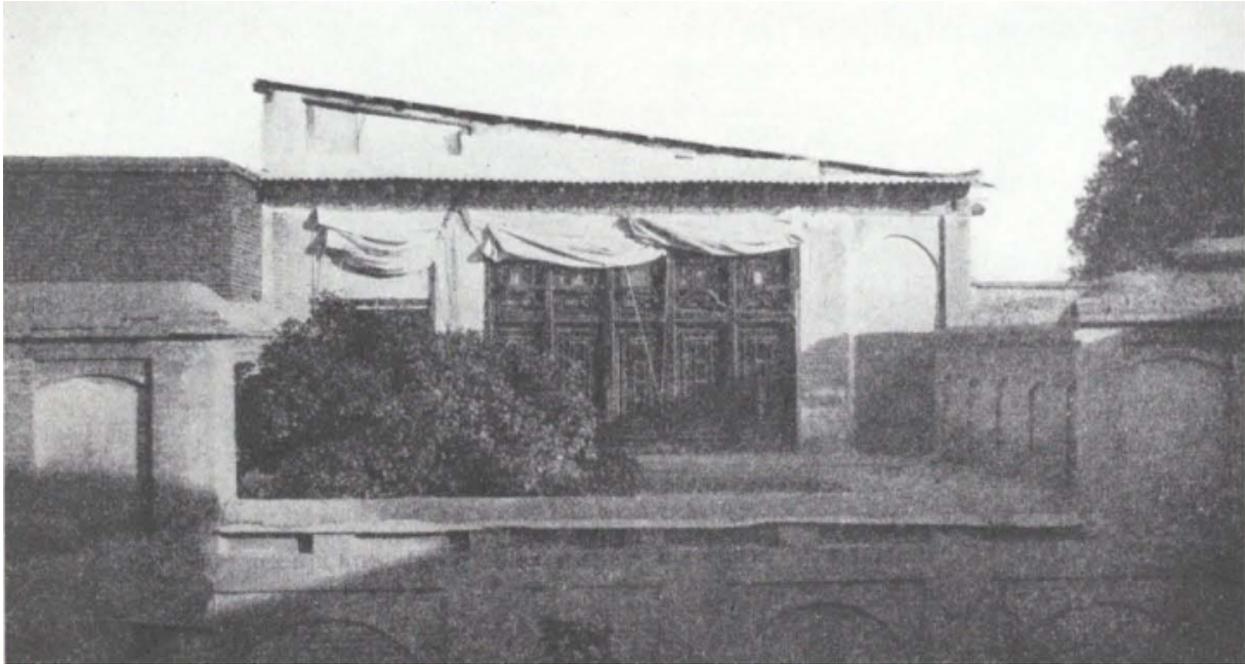


Views of ground floor of the House of the Báb in *Shiráz*: Sitting room (left); steps leading to the upper floor room where the Báb declared His Mission (right). Archival photos. <sup>1</sup>

me and prayed. Whilst praying, I unburdened my soul, which was much oppressed, both by the mystery of this interview and the strain and stress of my search. I breathed this prayer: "I have striven with all my soul, O my God, and until now have failed to find Thy promised Messenger. I testify that Thy word faileth not, and that Thy promise is sure." <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p60 & p64

<sup>2</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p55-56



Outside views of the upper floor room of the House of the Báb in Shíráz where He declared His Mission. Archival photos.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Top photo: *Bahá'í World* vol 4, p31 [taken in 1930s]; Bottom photo: *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p58 [date not indicated]

**“Behold, all these signs are manifest in Me!”**

It was about an hour after sunset when my youthful Host began to converse with me.

“Whom, after Siyyid Kázim,” He asked me, “do you regard as his successor and your leader?”

“At the hour of his death,” I replied, “our departed teacher insistently exhorted us to forsake our homes, to scatter far and wide, in quest of the promised Beloved. I have, accordingly, journeyed to Persia, have arisen to accomplish his will, and am still engaged in my quest.”

“Has your teacher,” He further enquired, “given you any detailed indications as to the distinguishing features of the promised One?”

“Yes,” I replied, “He is of a pure lineage, is of illustrious descent, and of the seed of Fátimih<sup>1</sup>. As to His age, He is more than twenty and less than thirty. He is endowed with innate knowledge. He is of medium height, abstains from smoking, and is free from bodily deficiency.”

He paused for a while and then with a vibrant voice declared: “Behold, all these signs are manifest in Me!”<sup>2</sup>

**Mullá Husayn’s doubts**

He then considered each of the above-mentioned signs separately, and conclusively demonstrated that each and all were applicable to His person. I was greatly surprised, and politely observed: ‘ He whose advent we await is a Man of unsurpassed holiness, and the Cause He is to reveal, a Cause of tremendous power. Many and diverse are the requirements which He who claims to be its visible embodiment must needs fulfil. How often has Siyyid Kázim referred to the vastness of the knowledge of the promised One! How often did he say: “My own knowledge is but a drop compared with that with which He has been endowed. All my attainments are but a speck of dust in the face of the immensity of His knowledge. Nay, immeasurable is the difference!” ‘

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<sup>1</sup> i.e. He will be a Siyyid [a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad]

<sup>2</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p57

No sooner had those words dropped from my lips than I found myself seized with fear and remorse, such as I could neither conceal nor explain. I bitterly reproved myself, and resolved at that very moment to alter my attitude and to soften my tone. I vowed to God that should my Host again refer to the subject, I would, with the utmost humility, answer and say: "If you be willing to substantiate your claim, you will most assuredly deliver me from the anxiety and suspense which so heavily oppress my soul. I shall truly be indebted to you for such deliverance." When I first started upon my quest, I determined to regard the two following standards as those whereby I could ascertain the truth of whosoever might claim to be the promised *Qá'im*. The first was a treatise which I had myself composed, bearing upon the abstruse and hidden teachings propounded by *Shaykh* Ahmad and Siyyid Kázim. Whoever seemed to me capable of unravelling the mysterious allusions made in that treatise, to him I would next submit my second request, and would ask him to reveal, without the least hesitation or reflection, a commentary on the *Súrih*<sup>1</sup> of Joseph<sup>2</sup>, in a style and language entirely different from the prevailing standards of the time. I had previously requested Siyyid Kázim, in private, to write a commentary on that same *súrih*, which he refused, saying: "This is, verily, beyond me. He, that great One, who comes after me will, unasked, reveal it for you. That commentary will constitute one of the weightiest testimonies of His truth, and one of the clearest evidences of the loftiness of His position."<sup>3, 4</sup>

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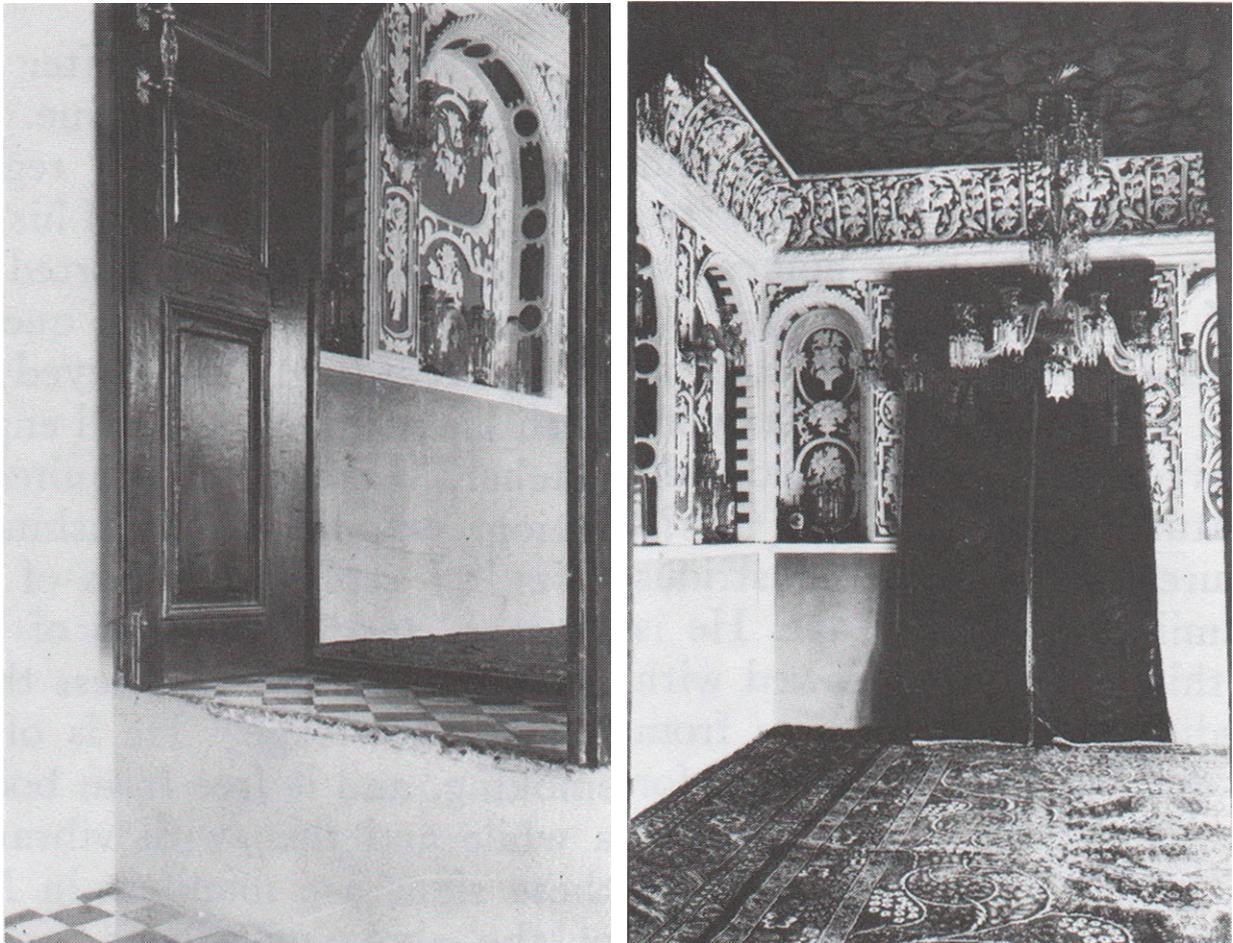
<sup>1</sup> *súra* is the Arabic transliteration and *súrih* is the Farsí transliteration of the same originally Arabic word meaning chapter. In the *Dawn-Breakers*, the Farsí transliteration is used. Nowadays, the Arabic transliteration *súra* is used almost universally. The *Qur'án* is divided into 116 chapters or *súwar* [the Arabic plural for *súra*].

<sup>2</sup> *Qur'án Súra* 12, usually entitled as *Súrih-i-Yúsuf*.

<sup>3</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p57-59

<sup>4</sup> In verse 3 of *Súrih-i-Yúsuf*, it says: "We relate unto thee the best of stories ....". In the original Arabic, the phrase for "best of stories" is *Ahsanu'l-Qisas*, and so this *súra* is also sometimes known by this term. For example, see *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 2, p31, where the Báb years later, when He has revealed other Writings, asks His amanuensis: "Which do you prefer, this commentary which I have revealed, or the *Ahsanu'l-Qisas*, My previous commentary on the *Súrih* of Joseph?". The amanuensis replies: "To me, the *Ahsanu'l-Qisas* seems to be endowed with greater power and charm." The Báb apparently smiled and said: "You are as yet unfamiliar with the tone and tenor of this later commentary. The truths enshrined in this will more speedily and effectively enable the seeker to attain the object of his quest."

*Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p59 footnote 1 quoting *Tárikh-i-Jadíd* p39 states: 'Mullá Husayn is reported to have said the following: "One day, when I was alone with the late Siyyid [Kázim] in his library, I enquired the reason why the *Súriy-i-Yúsuf* was entitled in the *Qur'án* `the Best of Stories,' to which he replied that it was not then the proper occasion for explaining the reason. This incident remained concealed in my mind, neither had I mentioned it to anyone."'



Inside views of the upper floor room of the House of the Báb in Shiráz where He declared His Mission. Archival photos.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Báb's Response to Mullá Husayn's doubts**

I was revolving these things in my mind, when my distinguished Host again remarked: "Observe attentively. Might not the Person intended by Siyyid Kázim be none other than I?"

I thereupon felt impelled to present to Him a copy of the treatise which I had with me. "Will you," I asked Him, "read this book of mine and look at its pages with indulgent eyes? I pray you to overlook my weaknesses and failings."

He graciously complied with my wish. He opened the book, glanced at certain passages, closed it, and began to address me. Within a few minutes He had, with characteristic vigour and charm, unravelled all its mysteries and resolved all its problems. Having to my entire satisfaction accomplished,

<sup>1</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p58

within so short a time, the task I had expected Him to perform, He further expounded to me certain truths which could be found neither in the reported sayings of the Imáms of the Faith nor in the writings of Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kázim. These truths, which I had never heard before, seemed to be endowed with refreshing vividness and power.

“Had you not been My guest,” He afterwards observed, “your position would indeed have been a grievous one. The all-encompassing grace of God has saved you. It is for God to test His servants, and not for His servants to judge Him in accordance with their deficient standards. Were I to fail to resolve your perplexities, could the Reality that shines within Me be regarded as powerless, or My knowledge be accused as faulty? Nay, by the righteousness of God! it behooves, in this day, the peoples and nations of both the East and the West to hasten to this threshold, and here seek to obtain the reviving grace of the Merciful. Whoso hesitates will indeed be in grievous loss. Do not the peoples of the earth testify that the fundamental purpose of their creation is the knowledge and adoration of God? It behooves them to arise, as earnestly and spontaneously as you have arisen, and to seek with determination and constancy their promised Beloved.”<sup>1</sup>

### **Two hours and eleven minutes after sunset, 22 May 1844**

He then proceeded to say: “Now is the time to reveal the commentary on the *Súrih* of Joseph.” He took up His pen and with incredible rapidity revealed the entire *Súrih* of *Mulk*, the first chapter of His commentary on the *Súrih* of Joseph. The overpowering effect of the manner in which He wrote was heightened by the gentle intonation of His voice which accompanied His writing. Not for one moment did He interrupt the flow of the verses which streamed from His pen. Not once did He pause till the *Súrih* of *Mulk* was finished. I sat enraptured by the magic of His voice and the sweeping force of His revelation.

At last, I reluctantly arose from my seat and begged leave to depart. He smilingly bade me be seated, and said: ‘If you leave in such a state, whoever sees you will assuredly say: “This poor youth has lost his mind.”’ At that moment the clock registered two hours and eleven minutes after sunset.

That night was the eve of the fifth day of *Jamádíyu'l-Awwal* ﴿﴾, in the year 1260

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<sup>1</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p59-61

AH<sup>1</sup>. "This night," He declared, "this very hour will, in the days to come, be celebrated as one of the greatest and most significant of all festivals. Render thanks to God for having graciously assisted you to attain your heart's desire, and for having quaffed from the sealed wine of His utterance. 'Well is it with them that attain thereunto.'"<sup>2</sup>

### The night passes – Revelation continues

At the third hour after sunset, my Host ordered the dinner to be served. That same Ethiopian servant appeared again and spread before us the choicest food. That holy repast refreshed alike my body and soul. In the presence of my Host, at that hour, I felt as though I were feeding upon the fruits of Paradise. I could not but marvel at the manners and the devoted attentions of that Ethiopian servant whose very life seemed to have been transformed by the regenerating influence of his Master. I then, for the first time, recognized the significance of this well-known



The Báb's brazier and samovar. Archival photo.<sup>3</sup>

traditional utterance ascribed to Muhammad: "I have prepared for the godly and righteous among My servants what eye hath seen not, ear heard not,

<sup>1</sup> *Jamádíyu'l-Avval* is a month in the Islamic calendar. AH refers to the Islamic calendar year After Hijrá. The equivalent day in the Gregorian calendar for this date (eve of the fifth day of *Jamádíyu'l-Avval* 1260 AH) is the eve of 22 May 1844 CE (where CE means Common Era).

<sup>2</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p61-62

<sup>3</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p55

nor human heart conceived." Had my youthful Host no other claim to greatness, this were sufficient---that He received me with that quality of hospitality and loving-kindness which I was convinced no other human being could possibly reveal.

I sat spellbound by His utterance, oblivious of time and of those who awaited me. Suddenly the call of the *muadhhdhin* <sup>1</sup>, summoning the faithful to their morning prayer, awakened me from the state of ecstasy into which I seemed to have fallen. All the delights, all the ineffable glories, which the Almighty has recounted in His Book as the priceless possessions of the people of Paradise - these I seemed to be experiencing that night. Methinks I was in a place of which it could be truly said: 'Therein no toil shall reach us, and therein no weariness shall touch us; No vain discourse shall they hear therein, nor any falsehood, but only the cry, "Peace! Peace!"; "Their cry therein shall be, `Glory be to Thee, O God!' and their salutation therein, `Peace!' And the close of their cry, `Praise be to God, Lord of all creatures!'"<sup>2</sup>

Sleep had departed from me that night. I was enthralled by the music of that voice which rose and fell as He chanted; now swelling forth as He revealed

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<sup>1</sup> Pronounced muezzin ; refers to the one who raises the call to prayer. Muslims are called to prayer five times a day. The call to prayer is called *adhán*, [Arabic word meaning to listen]. The *adhán* is raised at these times: [in Arabic] *Fajr* [dawn], *Dhuhr* [noon], *Asr* [afternoon], *Maghrib* [sunset], and *Isha* [evening]. This is described further in

<sup>2</sup> Quotes from the *Qur'án*

verses of the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* <sup>1,2,3,4</sup> again acquiring ethereal, subtle harmonies as He uttered the prayers He was revealing. At the end of each invocation, He would repeat this verse: "Far from the glory of thy Lord, the All-Glorious, be that which His creatures affirm of Him! And peace be upon His Messengers! And praise be to God, the Lord of all beings!"<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* (literal translation: the Self-Subsisting of the [Divine] Names) is the title commonly used for this work of the Báb. As it is framed as a commentary on the Quran's twelfth *súra* [chapter], the *Súra* of *Yúsuf* [Joseph], it is sometimes also called *Tafsír-i-súrih-i-Yúsuf* [commentary on the *Súra* of Joseph]. It consists of 111 chapters, and the first chapter called the *Súra* of Mulk was revealed in its entirety on this first evening. The remainder of the work was revealed over the next forty days. The entire work is in Arabic. It was one of the main texts that the Bábís eventually used in their teaching work. Bahá'u'lláh in the *Kitáb-i-Íqán* calls it "the first, the greatest and mightiest of all books".

<sup>2</sup> Shoghi Effendi in *God Passes By* Chapter 2, p23 states: 'Already in Shíráz, at the earliest stage of His ministry, He had revealed what Bahá'u'lláh has characterized as "the first, the greatest, and mightiest of all books" in the Bábí Dispensation, the celebrated commentary on the súrih of Joseph, entitled the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'*, whose fundamental purpose was to forecast what the true Joseph (Bahá'u'lláh) would, in a succeeding Dispensation, endure at the hands of one who was at once His arch-enemy and blood brother. This work, comprising above nine thousand three hundred verses, and divided into one hundred and eleven chapters, each chapter a commentary on one verse of the above-mentioned súrih, opens with the Báb's clarion-call and dire warnings addressed to the "concourse of kings and of the sons of kings;" forecasts the doom of Muhammad Sháh; commands his Grand Vizir, Hájí Mírzá Áqásí, to abdicate his authority; admonishes the entire Muslim ecclesiastical order; cautions more specifically the members of the Shí'ah community; extols the virtues, and anticipates the coming, of Bahá'u'lláh, the "Remnant of God," the "Most Great Master;" and proclaims, in unequivocal language, the independence and universality of the Bábí Revelation, unveils its import, and affirms the inevitable triumph of its Author. It, moreover, directs the "people of the West" to "issue forth from your cities and aid the Cause of God;" warns the peoples of the earth of the "terrible, the most grievous vengeance of God;" threatens the whole Islamic world with "the Most Great Fire" were they to turn aside from the newly-revealed Law; foreshadows the Author's martyrdom; eulogizes the high station ordained for the people of Bahá, the "Companions of the crimson-colored ruby Ark;" prophesies the fading out and utter obliteration of some of the greatest luminaries in the firmament of the Bábí Dispensation; and even predicts "afflictive torment," in both the "Day of Our Return" and in "the world which is to come," for the usurpers of the Imamate, who "waged war against Husayn (Imám Husayn) in the Land of the Euphrates."'

<sup>3</sup> For an analysis of structure and certain interpretations of the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* see Saiedi *Gate of the Heart*, chapters 4-5, p11-159.

<sup>4</sup> Shoghi Effendi in *God Passes By* Chapter 2, p23 states: "It was this Book which the Bábís universally regarded, during almost the entire ministry of the Báb, as the Qur'án of the people of the Bayán; whose first and most challenging chapter was revealed in the presence of Mullá Husayn, on the night of its Author's Declaration; some of whose pages were borne, by that same disciple, to Bahá'u'lláh, as the first fruits of a Revelation which instantly won His enthusiastic allegiance; whose entire text was translated into Persian by the brilliant and gifted Táhirih; whose passages inflamed the hostility of Husayn Khán and precipitated the initial outbreak of persecution in Shíráz; a single page of which had captured the imagination and entranced the soul of Hujjat; and whose contents had set afire the intrepid defenders of the Fort of Shaykh Tabarsí and the heroes of Nayríz and Zanján."

<sup>5</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p62-63

### **“I am the Báb, the Gate of God!”**

He then addressed me in these words: “O thou who art the first to believe in Me! Verily I say, I am the Báb<sup>1</sup>, the Gate of God, and thou art the Bábu'l-Báb <sup>2</sup>, the gate of that Gate. Eighteen souls must, in the beginning, spontaneously and of their own accord, accept Me and recognize the truth of My Revelation. Unwarned and uninvited, each of these must seek independently to find Me. And when their number is complete, one of them must needs be chosen to accompany Me on My pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina. There I shall deliver the Message of God to the Sharíf of Mecca. I then shall return to Kufih, where again, in the Masjid of that holy city, I shall manifest His Cause. It is incumbent upon you not to divulge, either to your companions or to any other soul, that which you have seen and heard. Be engaged in the Masjid-i-Íkhání in prayer and in teaching. I, too, will there join you in congregational prayer. Beware lest your attitude towards Me betray the secret of your faith. You should continue in this occupation and maintain this attitude until our departure for Hijáz. Ere we depart, we shall appoint unto each of the eighteen souls his special mission, and shall send them forth to accomplish their task. We shall instruct them to teach the Word of God and to quicken the souls of men.”

Having spoken these words to me, He dismissed me from His presence. Accompanying me to the door of the house, He committed me to the care of God.<sup>3</sup>

### **“In such a state I left His house”**

This Revelation, so suddenly and impetuously thrust upon me, came as a thunderbolt which, for a time, seemed to have benumbed my faculties. I was blinded by its dazzling splendour and overwhelmed by its crushing force. Excitement, joy, awe, and wonder stirred the depths of my soul. Predominant among these emotions was a sense of gladness and strength which seemed to have transfigured me. How feeble and impotent, how dejected and timid, I had felt previously! Then I could neither write nor walk, so tremulous were my hands and feet. Now, however, the knowledge of His Revelation had galvanised my being. I felt possessed of such courage and power that were the world, all its peoples and its potentates, to rise against me, I would, alone

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<sup>1</sup> Arabic, means the Gate

<sup>2</sup> Arabic, means Gate to the Gate

<sup>3</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p63-64

and undaunted, withstand their onslaught. The universe seemed but a handful of dust in my grasp. I seemed to be the Voice of Gabriel personified, calling unto all mankind: "Awake, for lo! the morning Light has broken. Arise, for His Cause is made manifest. The portal of His grace is open wide; enter therein, O peoples of the world! For He who is your Promised One is come!"

In such a state I left His house! <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p65

## Section Three: They Became the Letters of the Living

Since the birth of recorded human civilization till May 1844, the fastest long-distance method of communication was the carrier pigeon. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of May 1844, Samuel Morse revolutionized communication by sending the first telegram between Baltimore and Washington. The words that were telegraphed were from the Bible: “What hath God wrought” [What has God made!]. What most did not realize was that the true meaning of this verse had just been made manifest in Shíráz on the eve of the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May 1844. A spiritual revolution had been begun.

### **Mullá Husayn - the First Letter of the Living:**

Mullá Husayn, the first to discover and recognize the Báb, now returned to the Masjid-i-Ílkhání to his companions. His mind and soul were soaring. In his own words:

The knowledge of His Revelation had galvanised my being. I felt possessed of such courage and power that were the world, all its peoples and its potentates, to rise against me, I would, alone and undaunted, withstand their onslaught. The universe seemed but a handful of dust in my grasp.<sup>1</sup>

But Mullá Husayn had to remain silent, because the Báb’s instructions to him were: Eighteen souls must, in the beginning, spontaneously and of their own accord, accept Me and recognise the truth of My Revelation. Unwarned and uninvited, each of these must seek independently to find Me. ... It is incumbent upon you not to divulge, either to your companions or to any other soul, that which you have seen and heard. Be engaged in the Masjid-i-Ílkhání in prayer and in teaching. I, too, will there join you in congregational prayer. Beware lest your attitude towards Me betray the secret of your faith.<sup>2</sup>

Mullá Husayn was the first of these special eighteen souls who of their own accord come to recognize the Báb. They will be declared by the Báb to be the Letters of the

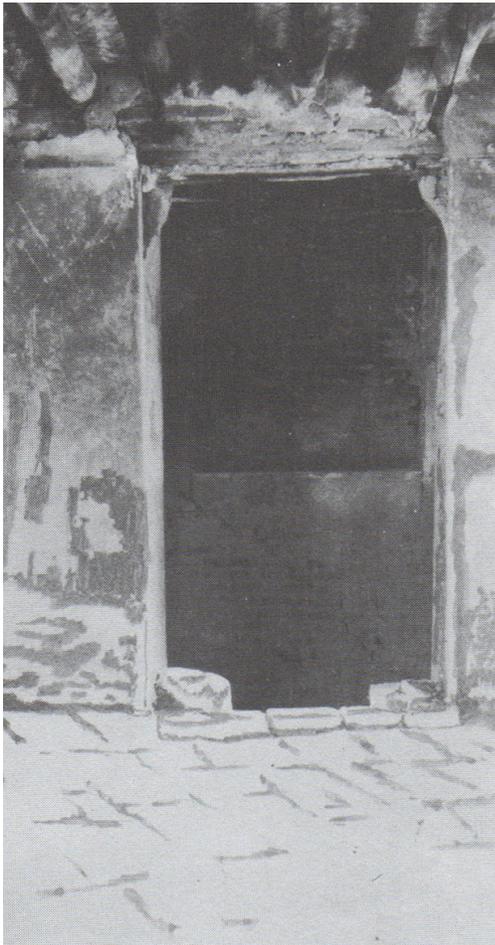
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<sup>1</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p65

<sup>2</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p63

Living (*hurúf-i-hayy* ﴿ه۱﴾<sup>1</sup>).

Upon his return to his companions Mullá Husayn remained silent and pretended not to have attained the object of his quest. As instructed by the Báb, he set up classes at the mosque and continued his usual prayer practices. Soon many of Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kázim's followers who had heard about Mullá Husayn's arrival started attending his classes. Some other Shí'a clergy and city officials also joined the classes. All marveled at the spirit and knowledge of this youth but remained unaware of the source of his inspiration and knowledge.



Room in the Masjid-i-Ílkhání in Shíráz in which the Báb met Mullá Husayn. Archival photo.<sup>2</sup>

During this period, Mullá Husayn and the Báb met regularly in secret, which Mullá Husayn describes in these words:

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<sup>1</sup> *hurúf* means "letters" [as in letters of the alphabet] and *hayy* means "the living", hence Letters of the Living. The Abjad numerical value of the word *hayy* is 18.

<sup>2</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p53

During those days I was, on several occasions, summoned by the Bab to visit Him. He would send at night-time that same Ethiopian servant to the masjid, bearing to me His most loving message of welcome. Every time I visited Him, I spent the entire night in His presence. Wakeful until the dawn, I sat at His feet fascinated by the charm of His utterance and oblivious of the world and its cares and pursuits. How rapidly those precious hours flew by! At daybreak I reluctantly withdrew from His presence. How eagerly in those days I looked forward to the approach of the evening hour! With what feelings of sadness and regret I beheld the dawning of day!

In the course of one of these nightly visits, my Host addressed me in these words: "Tomorrow thirteen of your companions will arrive. To each of them extend the utmost loving-kindness. Leave them not to themselves, for they have dedicated their lives to the quest of their Beloved. Pray to God that He may graciously enable them to walk securely in that path which is finer than a hair and keener than a sword. Certain ones among them will be accounted, in the sight of God, as His chosen and favoured disciples. As to others, they will tread the middle way. The fate of the rest will remain undeclared until the hour when all that is hidden shall be made manifest."<sup>1</sup>

### **Mullá Alí-y-i-Bastámí and his Twelve Companions**

Mullá Husayn continues his story:

That same morning, at sunrise, soon after my return from the home of the Báb, Mullá 'Alí-y-i-Bastámí (☞), accompanied by the same number of companions as indicated to me, arrived at the Masjid-i-Ilkhani (☞). I immediately set about to provide the means for their comfort. One night, a few days after their arrival, Mullá Ali, as the spokesman of his companions, gave vent to feelings which he could no longer repress. "You know well," he said, "how great is our confidence in you. We bear you such loyalty that if you should claim to be the promised *Qa'im* we would all unhesitatingly submit. Obedient to your summons, we have forsaken our homes and have gone forth in search of our promised Beloved. You were the first to set us all this noble example. We have followed in your footsteps. We have determined not to relax in our efforts until we find the Object of our quest. We have followed you to this place, ready to acknowledge whomsoever you accept, in the hope of seeking the shelter of His protection and of passing successfully through the tumult and agitation that must needs signalise the last Hour. How is it

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<sup>1</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p65-66

that we now see you teaching the people and conducting their prayers and devotions with the utmost tranquillity? Those evidences of agitation and expectancy seem to have vanished from your countenance. Tell us, we beseech you, the reason, that we too may be delivered from our present state of suspense and doubt."

"Your companions," I gently observed, "may naturally attribute my peace and composure to the ascendancy which I seem to have acquired in this city. The truth is far from that. The world, I assure you, with all its pomp and seductions, can never lure away this Husayn of Bushrúyih from his Beloved.. ... I yearn not for the things of this world. I crave only the good pleasure of my Beloved. Not until I shed my blood for His name will the fire that glows within me be quenched. Please God you may live to witness that day. Might not your companions have thought that, because of the intensity of his longing and the constancy of his endeavours, God has, in His infinite mercy, graciously deigned to unlock before the face of Mullá Husayn the Gate of His grace, and, wishing, according to His inscrutable wisdom, to conceal this fact, has bidden him engage in such pursuits?"

These words stirred the soul of Mullá Ali. He at once perceived their meaning. With tearful eyes he entreated me to disclose the identity of Him who had turned my agitation into peace and converted my anxiety into certitude. "I adjure you," he pleaded, "to bestow upon me a portion of that holy draught which the Hand of mercy has given you to drink, for it will assuredly allay my thirst, and ease the pain of longing in my heart."

"Beseech me not," I replied, "to grant you this favour. Let your trust be in Him, for He will surely guide your steps, and appease the tumult of your heart."<sup>1</sup>

### **Mullá 'Alí-i-Bastámí – the Second Letter of the Living**

Mullá 'Alí hastened to his companions and acquainted them with the nature of his conversation with Mullá Husayn. Ablaze with the fire which the account of that conversation had kindled in their hearts, they immediately dispersed, and, seeking the seclusion of their cells, besought, through fasting and prayer, the early removal of the veil that intervened between them and the recognition of their Beloved.

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<sup>1</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p66-69

On the third night of his retirement, whilst wrapt in prayer, Mullá 'Alí-i-Bastámí had a vision. There appeared a light, which he followed and which led him in the vision to his Beloved. Mullá 'Alí was exultant and rushed to Mullá Husayn in the middle of the night and threw himself into the arms of his revered companion. Mullá Husayn most lovingly embraced him and said: "Praise be to God who hath guided us hither! We had not been guided had not God guided us!"<sup>1</sup>

Nabíl recounts what transpired next:

That very morning, at break of day, Mullá Husayn, followed by Mullá Ali, hastened to the residence of the Báb. At the entrance of His house they met the faithful Ethiopian servant, who immediately recognised them and greeted them in these words: ' Ere break of day, I was summoned to the presence of my Master, who instructed me to open the door of the house and to stand expectant at its threshold. "Two guests," He said, "are to arrive early this morning. Extend to them in My name a warm welcome. Say to them from Me: Enter therein in the name of God."

The first meeting of Mullá 'Alí with the Bab, which was analogous to the meeting with Mullá Husayn, differed only in this respect, that whereas at the previous meeting the proofs and testimonies of the Bab's mission had been critically scrutinized and expounded [upon], at this meeting, all argument had been set aside and nothing but the spirit of intense adoration and of close and ardent fellowship prevailed. The entire chamber seemed to have been vitalised by that celestial potency which emanated from His inspired utterance. Everything in that room seemed to be vibrating with this testimony: "Verily, verily, the dawn of a new Day has broken. The promised One is enthroned in the hearts of men. In His hand He holds the mystic cup, the chalice of immortality. Blessed are they who drink therefrom!"<sup>2</sup>

Mullá 'Alí-i-Bastámí's recognition of the Báb occurred forty days after that of Mullá Husayn.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p68

<sup>2</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p68-69

<sup>3</sup> "Understand in the same way the beginning of the manifestation of the Bayán: during forty days no one but the letter Sín believed in B." From the Persian *Bayán* quoted in *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3 p66 footnote 1. Also, *God Passes By*, Chapter 1, p7, notes: "Not until forty days had elapsed, however, did the enrollment of the seventeen remaining Letters of the Living commence."

### The next Fourteen Letters of the Living

After Mullá 'Alí's recognition of the Báb, his twelve companions and Mullá Husayn's two companions (his brother and nephew), each in his turn, and by his own unaided efforts, sought and found his Beloved. Some in sleep, others in waking, a few while in prayer, and still others in moments of contemplation. All experienced the light of Divine Revelation and were led to recognise the power of its glory. After the manner of Mullá 'Alí, Mullá Husayn accompanied each one of them to the presence of the Bab, and each declared by Him to be a "Letter of the Living".<sup>1</sup>

### Táhirih – the 17<sup>th</sup> Letter of the Living

One of Mulla Ali's companions was Táhirih's cousin/brother-in-law, Mírzá Muhammad-'Alí-i-Qazvíní . He was the one to whom she had entrusted her sealed letter and asked that he present it to the *Qá'im* on her behalf when he found Him.<sup>2</sup> Upon recognizing the Báb, Mírzá Muhammad-'Alí-i-Qazvíní fulfilled his trust and delivered Táhirih's letter to Him. The Báb accepted the letter and immediately declared her to be one of the Letters of the Living.

Note: What had prompted Táhirih's letter to the Báb was a dream she had upon arriving in Karbalá' after the passing of Siyyid Kázim. In that dream, a Youth, a Siyyid, wearing a black cloak and a green turban, appeared to her in the heavens. He had upraised hands and was reciting certain verses, one of which she wrote down when she awakened. Later, when she received a copy of the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* , she discovered that it contained the same verse she had heard the Báb chanting in her dream.<sup>3</sup>

### Quddús – the 18<sup>th</sup> Letter of the Living

As to the arrival of the last of the Letters of the Living, Nabíl relates the following:

One night, in the course of His conversation with Mullá Husayn, the Báb spoke these words: "Seventeen Letters have thus far enlisted under the standard of the Faith of God. There remains one more to complete the number. These Letters of the Living shall arise to proclaim My Cause and to

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<sup>1</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p69

<sup>2</sup> See DB 3, Section 1

<sup>3</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p81-82 and p81 footnote 2

establish My Faith. To-morrow night the remaining Letter will arrive and will complete the number of My chosen disciples.”<sup>1</sup>

The next day, in the evening hour, as the Báb, followed by Mullá Husayn, was returning to His home, there appeared a disheveled and travel-stained youth. He approached Mullá Husayn, embraced him, and asked him whether he had attained his goal. Mullá Husayn knew him as one of the young followers of Siyyid Kázim from Bárfurúsh . Nabíl recounts what happened next:

Mullá Husayn tried at first to calm the young man’s agitation and advised him to rest for the moment, promising that he would subsequently enlighten him. That youth, however, refused to heed his advice. Fixing his gaze upon the Báb Who was walking ahead of them, he said to Mullá Husayn: “Why seek you to hide Him from me? I can recognise Him by His gait<sup>2</sup>. I confidently testify that none besides Him, whether in the East or in the West, can claim to be the Truth. None other can manifest the power and majesty that radiate from His holy person.”<sup>3</sup>

Mullá Husayn marveled at his words. He pleaded to be excused, however, and induced him to restrain his feelings until such time as he would be able to acquaint him with the truth. Leaving him, he hastened to join the Báb, and informed Him of his conversation with that youth. “Marvel not,” observed the Báb, “at his strange behaviour. We have in the world of the spirit been communing with that youth. We know him already. We indeed awaited his coming. Go to him and summon him forthwith to Our presence.” Mullá Husayn was instantly reminded by these words of the Báb of the following traditional utterance: ‘On the last Day, the Men of the Unseen shall, on the wings of the spirit, traverse the immensity of the earth, shall attain the presence of the promised *Qa'im*, ...’<sup>4</sup>

And so it was that the last of the Letters of the Living, who will be entitled Quddús , found his Lord.

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<sup>1</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p69

<sup>2</sup> means manner of walking

<sup>3</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p70

<sup>4</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p70

### The Letters of the Living

“Eighteen souls must, in the beginning, spontaneously and of their own accord, accept Me and recognise the truth of My Revelation. Unwarned and uninvited, each of these must seek independently to find Me.”

These had been the words of the Báb to Mullá Husayn on that night when he recognized the Báb, and became the first of the eighteen souls whose names would be immortalized as the Letters of the Living – the first to cross the Bridge of Sirát and recognize the Promised One. We know their names, but not the exact order in which each came to their Beloved. This is because each person had to find the Promised One “unwarned and uninvited”, so each kept their meeting a secret. What we know for certain is that Mullá Husayn was the first, Mullá ‘Alíy-i-Bastámí was the second and Quddús was the last (the eighteenth) of the Letters of the Living. It follows that we have a similar situation when it comes to the date of when the Letters of Living recognized the Báb. We know that Mullá Husayn recognized the Báb on the eve of 22 May 1844, and that it was forty days later that Mullá ‘Alíy-i-Bastámí recognized the Báb<sup>1</sup>, but we don’t know the exact dates of when the other Letters of the Living did so. We also know that while the eighteen Letters of the Living were special souls in that they of their own accord and intuition came to recognize the Báb, like all other souls they were tested and had to sacrifice to cross the many crossings of the metaphoric Bridge of Sirát.<sup>2</sup>

The names of the eighteen Letters of the Living are listed below. Most of the Letters of Living were martyred, indicated by \* in list below. Of these, those who were martyred at the upheaval at Fort Shaykh Tabarsí [see DB 19-20 Part B] are indicated by \*T in list below.

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<sup>1</sup> “Understand in the same way the beginning of the manifestation of the Bayán: during forty days no one but the letter Sín believed in B.” From the Persian *Bayán* quoted in *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3 p66 footnote 1. Also, *God Passes By*, Chapter 1, p7, notes: “Not until forty days had elapsed, however, did the enrollment of the seventeen remaining Letters of the Living commence.”

<sup>2</sup> For a summary of the background of each of the Letters of the Living and what happened to them, see [Afnan et al, 2009, Bahá’í Encyclopedia Letters of the Living](#).

Note: It seems that three of the Letters of the Living don’t make it through all the crossings of the Bridge:

#7 Mullá Hasan-i-Bajistání left the Faith, as he felt he was unworthy;

#8 Mírzá Hadí distanced himself from the Bábís, and later became a follower of Mírzá Yahyá; and

#15 Mullá Khudá-Bakhsh-i-Qúchání returned to Karbalá’ from Shíráz but did not actively participate in the Bábí community.

It is also noted that #12 Mírzá Muhammad Rawdih-Khán-i-Yazdí married into the family of the Shaykhí leader Muhammad Karím Khán-i-Kirmání, an arch-enemy of the Báb. It seems that because of the persecution of the Bábís, he chose not to reveal his beliefs, but it is recorded by Fádíl-i-Mázindarání that he remained faithful and continued to teach the Bábí Faith covertly to the end of his life.

1. Mullá Husayn-i-Bushrú'í (♫) (\*T)
2. Mullá 'Alí-i-Bastámí (♫) (\* martyred in Constantinople)
3. Muhammad Hasan (♫) (Mullá Husayn's brother) (\*T)
4. Muhammad-Báqir (♫) (Mullá Husayn's nephew) (\*T)
5. Mullá Jalíl-i-Urú'mí (♫) (\*T)
6. Mírzá Muhammad-'Alí-i-Qazvíní (♫) [Táhirih's cousin & brother-in-law] (\*T)
7. Mullá Hasan-i-Bajistání (♫)
8. Mírzá Hadí (♫) [brother of Mírzá Muhammad-'Alí-i-Qazvíní]
9. Mullá Ahmad-i-Ibdál-i-Marághí'í (♫) (\*T)
10. Mullá Mahmúd-i-Khu'í (♫) (\*T)
11. Siyyid-i-Husayn-i-Yazdí (♫) (\* martyred in Tihrán)
12. Mírzá Muhammad Rawdih-Khán-i-Yazdí (♫)
13. Mullá Báqir-i-Tabrízí (♫) <sup>1</sup>
14. Mullá Yúsif-i-Ardibílí (♫) (\*T)
15. Mullá Khudá-Bakhsh-i-Qúchání (♫) [later named Mullá 'Alí]
16. Sa'íd-i-Hindí (♫) <sup>2</sup>
17. Táhirih (♫) (\* martyred in Tihrán)
18. Quddús (♫) (\*T)

<sup>1</sup> Mullá Báqir-i-Tabrízí: Upon leaving Shíráz, he traveled to Karbalá' where he assisted Táhirih and then traveled to Írán with her when she returned. He was present at the Conference of Badasht. He visited the Báb in Chihríq prison in Ađhírbáyján and from there acted as an intermediary for the Báb's correspondence and other items that the Báb wished to be delivered to Bahá'u'lláh [*Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 23, p04]. He became a follower of Bahá'u'lláh after visiting Him in Baghdad; traveled twice to Akká to see Bahá'u'lláh; and with Bahá'u'lláh's permission spent his last days in Constantinople. He is believed to be the longest surviving firm Letter of the Living.

<sup>2</sup> Also called Shaykh Sa'íd-i-Hindí: He went to India and there are records of him teaching certain individuals before contact with him was lost. We don't know his fate. The only other mention of him in the *Dawn-Breakers* is in Chapter 25, p588. Here Nabíl is relating the story of a Qájár Prince, Ídirím Mírzá, who claims to have become a Bábí. Nabíl relates how Bahá'u'lláh foretells that this cannot be trusted and how this Ídirím Mírzá shows his true colours later by ordering the cruel torture of Siyyid Basír. In this context Nabíl describes the life of Siyyid Basír, who came from a very wealthy background in India, was highly learned but blind. It is in the context of this story that Shaykh Sa'íd is mentioned. Nabíl notes that: "Shaykh Sa'íd, in the course of his travels, visited the town of Mooltan, where he met this Siyyid Basír, who, though blind, was able to perceive immediately, with his inner eye, the significance of the message Shaykh Sa'íd had brought him." The rest of Nabíl's story is about Siyyid Basír: how his immense learning did not become a veil for him in accepting the message of the Báb, how he left behind all his wealth and his position and set out for Shíráz to meet his Beloved, his visit to Núr and meeting with Bahá'u'lláh, his many teaching activities and his eventual death due to the Qájár Prince Ídirím Mírzá [*Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 25, p588-590].

The Letters of the Living together with the Báb formed the first *váhid*<sup>1</sup> of the Bábí Dispensation. All except Táhirih met the Báb face to face. Most were young adults. In that fateful year of 1844, the Báb was twenty-five, Mullá Husayn was thirty-one, Táhirih was twenty-eight, and Quddús was twenty-two years old.

And so quietly, extremely quietly, the revolution of the soul of humanity began. It was destined to change history forever.

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<sup>1</sup> Arabic, means unity. The word has an Abjad numerical value of 19 and therefore used to represent that number. The eighteen Letters of the Living plus the Báb form the first *váhid* of the Bábí Dispensation. This is based on the instructions of the Báb as described in the *Dawn-Breakers*, Chapter 6, p123. For more information on the Abjad system, see these sources: F. Lewis 1999 [Overview of the Abjad Numerological System](#) and Wikipedia [Abjad Numerals](#).

## Section Four: The Báb – Birth to 1844

### Birth <sup>1</sup>

The Báb was born on 20 October 1819 <sup>2</sup> in the city of Shíráz. His given name was ‘Alí Muhammad. Both his parents were descendants of the Prophet Muhammad and therefore were known as Siyyids. Until His declaration on the eve of 22 May 1844, the Bab was generally known as Siyyid ‘Alí Muhammad-i-Shírází <sup>3</sup>.

Both parents came from well-respected families who were merchants by trade. Before the birth of the Báb, His parents had lost other children in infancy. The Báb was their only surviving child. <sup>4</sup>

His given name [‘Alí Muhammad] fulfilled the *hadíth* <sup>5</sup> concerning the Promised One’s name that said: “In His name, the name of the Guardian [‘Alí] precedeth that of the Prophet [Muhammad].” His date of birth also confirmed the truth of another *hadíth* attributed to the Imám ‘Alí: “I am two years younger than my Lord.” This would remain a mystery for some years to come until Bahá’u’lláh was recognized as the Greater One promised by the Báb. <sup>6</sup>

The Báb was twenty-five years, four months and five days old, on the eve of 22 May 1844, <sup>7</sup> when He declared His Mission to Mullá Husayn with these words: “I am the Báb, the Gate of God.” Henceforth, He became known as the Báb by those who recognized His Station.

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<sup>1</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 1, p14; Chapter 3 p72-75,

<sup>2</sup> On the 1<sup>st</sup> Muharram 1235 AH according to the Islamic Hijrī calendar.

<sup>3</sup> meaning the descendant of the Prophet (Siyyid), ‘Alí-Muhammad, who is from Shíráz (-i-Shírází). For further explanation of construction of Fársí names of this time period see [Resources: Fársí Names, Transliteration](#).

<sup>4</sup> *Ma’ani Leaves of the Twin Divine Trees* Chapter 1, p4.

<sup>5</sup> Also called Traditions, the *hadíth* are oral sayings attributed to the Prophet Mohammad and the Imáms and given very high importance – second only to the Qur’án. For more details on *hadíth* see [Resources: Brief Background on Shí’a Islam](#).

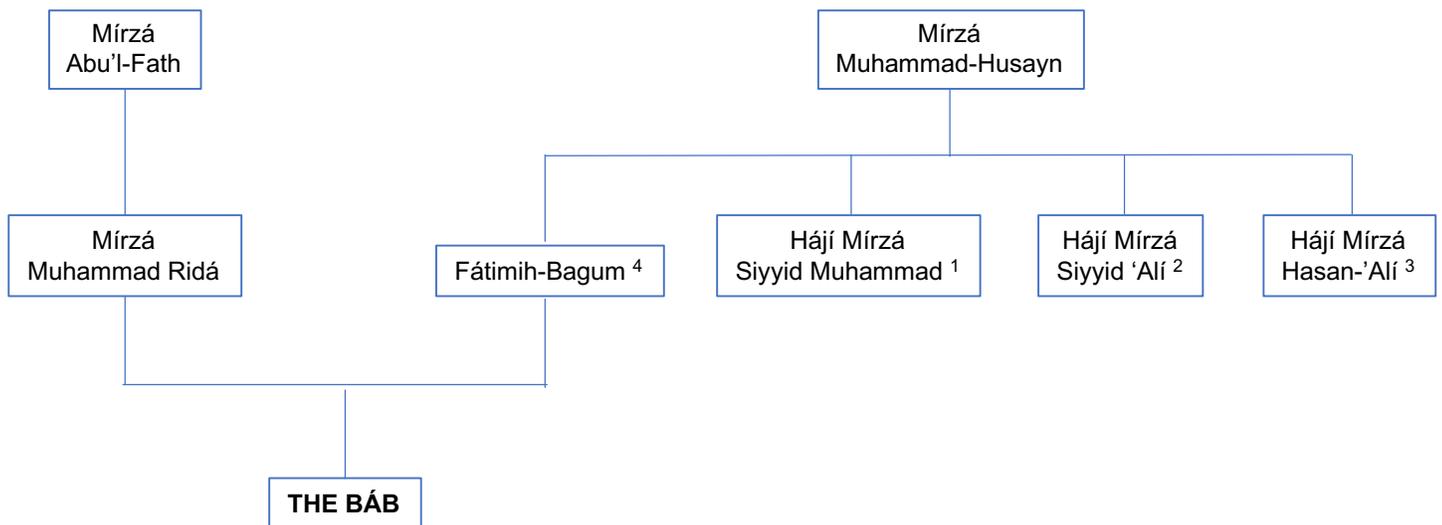
<sup>6</sup> Bahá’u’lláh was born two years earlier than the Báb on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1817, which is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Muharram 1233 AH. The Báb was born on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1819, which is the 1<sup>st</sup> Muharram 1235 AH. The Islamic Hijrī calendar is a lunar calendar, and each lunar year is about 11 days shorter than the solar year. When commemorating the two Births using the lunar calendar, they are a day after another [1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> of Muharram], although by the solar calendar reckoning, they are separated by 22 days. Bahá’ís commemorate these as Twin Holy Days [one day after the other] but based on the Bahá’í calendar, and as commanded in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*.

<sup>7</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3 p72.

## Childhood <sup>1</sup>

The Báb was still a child when His father died. His father had no siblings; but His mother had three brothers. To support the Báb's mother, her middle brother took over the Báb's care. The Báb's relatives are known as *Afnán* [means twigs].<sup>2</sup> See figure below about the Báb's immediate lineage.

### The Báb's Lineage



1. Eldest Uncle: Hájí Mírzá Siyyid Muhammad <sup>1</sup>, titled *Khál-i-Akbar* <sup>1</sup> [the Great Uncle]. Initially, he found it difficult to accept the claims of the Báb. In 1862, twelve years after the Báb's martyrdom, he visited Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdad. Bahá'u'lláh revealed the *Kitáb-i-Íqán* in answer to his questions. He became a firm believer in both the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh.
2. Middle Uncle: Hájí Mírzá Siyyid 'Alí <sup>2</sup>, titled *Khál-i-'Azam* <sup>2</sup> [the Most Great Uncle]. He raised the Báb, was the first believer in Shíráz after the Letters of the Living. Quddús taught him. He became one of the Seven Martyrs of Tihrán, laying down his life for the Bab.

<sup>1</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p75-76; *Resurrection & Renewal* Chapter 3, p110-115; *Khadijah Bagum* p1-2; *Leaves of the Twin Divine Trees* Chapter 2, p27.

<sup>2</sup> For more detailed outline of the Báb's immediate family see [Portraits: The Báb's Immediate Family](#). A detailed lineage chart of the Báb's family can be found as a fold-out genealogy chart just after the Introduction section in *the Dawn-Breakers*. Also see [The Afnán Family – Some Biographical Notes by Ahang Rabbani](#).

3. Youngest Uncle: Hájí Mírzá Hasan-'Alí (علیه السلام), titled *Khál-i-Asghar* (علیه السلام) [the Young Uncle]. Like the eldest uncle initially he found it difficult to accept the claims of the Báb but became a believer some years after the eldest uncle.
4. Mother: Fátimih-Bagum (علیه السلام). Through the efforts of teachers sent by Bahá'u'lláh the Báb's mother recognized the station of her Son some years after His Martyrdom.

Upon His father's passing, the Báb and His mother moved into His middle uncle's house. The Báb lived in that house until He left for Búshíhr as a youth to work.



The Báb's middle uncle's [Hájí Mírzá Siyyid 'Alí's] house in Shíráz where the Báb lived after the passing of His father. Archival photo.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 9, p193

When He was about six or seven years old the Báb's uncle sent Him to a school run by Shaykh 'Abid ﴿﴾. The Báb was apparently not inclined to go to school but submitted to His uncle's wishes.



The ruins of the school of Shaykh 'Abid attended by the Báb as a child in Shiráz. The school was called *Qahvīyah-Awlíyá*. Archival photo.<sup>1</sup>

Shaykh 'Abid was a learned and pious man and a follower of Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kázim as well. He told this story about the young Child, the Báb:

One day, I asked the Báb to recite the opening words of the *Qur'án*:

*Bismi'lláhi'r-Rahmání'r-Rahím* ﴿﴾ [means In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful]. He hesitated, pleading that unless He were told what these words signified, He would not wish to pronounce them. I pretended not to know their meaning, to which He responded: "I know what these words signify, and by your leave, I will explain them." He then spoke with such knowledge and fluency that I was awe struck. He expounded the meaning of *Alláh* ﴿﴾ [God], of *Rahmán* ﴿﴾ [Compassionate] and *Rahím* ﴿﴾ [Merciful] in terms such as I had neither read or heard. I felt impelled to take Him back to His uncle and deliver back the Trust he had committed to my care. I found His uncle alone in his office. "I brought Him back to you", I said, "... He is not to be treated as a mere child, for in Him I can already discern evidences of that mysterious power which the revelation of the *Sáhibu'z-*

<sup>1</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p73

*Zamán* ﴿﴾ [the Lord of the Age; one of the titles of the *Qá'im*] alone can reveal ... Keep Him in your house, for He, verily stands in no need of teachers such as I." <sup>1</sup>

His uncle sternly rebuked the Báb: "Have You forgotten my instructions? Have I not already admonished You to follow the example of Your fellow-pupils, to observe silence, and to listen attentively ...?" Then the Báb promised His uncle that He would abide by his instructions and return to school.

Shaykh 'Abid continues:

The soul of that Child could not, however, be restrained by the stern admonitions of His uncle. No discipline could repress the flow of His intuitive knowledge. Day after day He continued to manifest such remarkable evidences of superhuman wisdom as I am powerless to recount. <sup>2</sup>

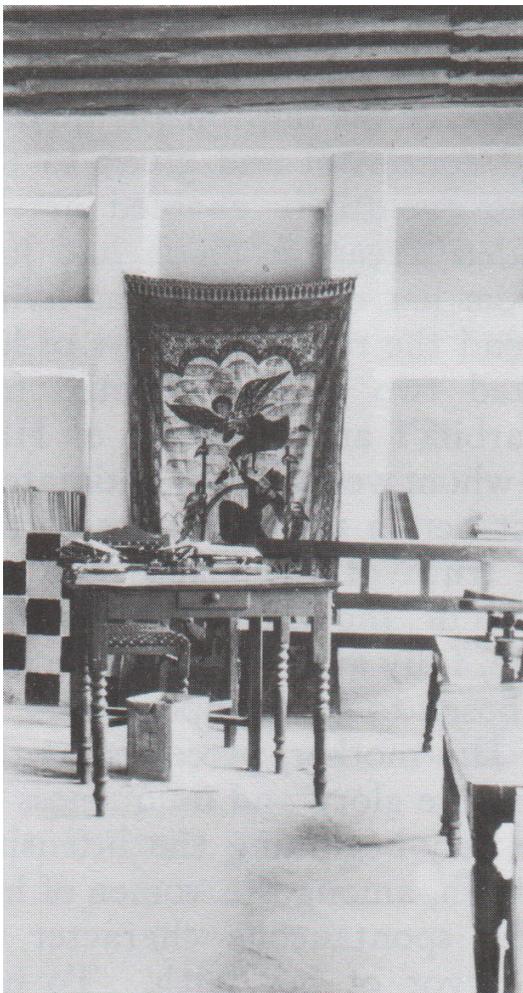


<sup>1</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p75-76

<sup>2</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p76

Views of the public bath in Shíráz where the Báb went as a child. Archival photo.<sup>1</sup>

One of his school friends recalled that while other students played, the Báb rarely joined in, preferring to spend His time praying. Khadíjih Bagum, three years younger than the Bab, was his next-door neighbour and future wife. She similarly recalls how He was always so kind and gentle, yet He rarely joined her and the other children in their games and always seemed occupied in prayers.<sup>2</sup> Another teacher reported that one day, when the Báb was late arriving at school, he questioned Him as to the reason He for his tardiness. The Báb replied that He had been delayed in the House of His Ancestor, meaning He was praying to the Prophet Muhammad. When the teacher told Him that daily prayer wasn't necessary for a child, the Báb responded: "I wish to be like my Ancestor."<sup>3</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p71

<sup>2</sup> Balyuzi *Khadijah Bagum*, p1-2

<sup>3</sup> *Amanat Resurrection & Renewal*, Chapter 3, p155

Interior of the Middle Uncle's House in Shíráz where the Báb lived as a child. Archival photo.<sup>1</sup>

Eventually His uncle had no choice but to take the Báb out of school, and to associate Him in the uncles' family merchant business. It was a trading business, which was based in Shíráz and Yazd, and traded between the Persian coastal cities of Búshihr and Bandar-'Abbás and other ports in the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Sea, India and North Africa. Records show that the trading involved agricultural and food exports in exchange for imports of fabrics, tea, sugar and spices.<sup>2</sup>

### Youth: Búshihr and the 'Atabát

Búshihr is a coastal city on the Persian Gulf. The Báb's uncles were highly respected merchants there. In 1835, when the Báb was sixteen, His uncle sent him to Búshihr to work in their business branch there. By then, the Báb already had several years' experience working with His uncles in their business in Shíráz.<sup>3</sup>

The years in Búshihr were quiet years for the Báb as He was engaged in the trading business for His uncles. After some years, the Báb is believed to have left his uncles' business and started his own. All of the Báb's close associates testified "to the purity of His character, to the charm of His manners, to His self-effacement, to His high integrity and to His extreme devotion to God."<sup>4</sup>

As to His high integrity in business dealings, here is one account:

A man had given the Báb an item with the request that it be sold at a certain market price. When the Báb sent him the money from the sale of that item, the man was surprised to find it was considerably higher than what he should have received (given the current market price). He asked the Báb to explain why. The Báb replied that there had been a time, a little while ago, when the market price for that item was higher and the Báb had failed to sell the item at that time. But He was giving the man the money as if the item had been sold at that time and not now. However much the Báb's client pleaded with Him to take back the excess money, the Báb refused.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 9, p192

<sup>2</sup> *Amanat Resurrection & Renewal* Chapter 3, p121-123

<sup>3</sup> *Amanat Resurrection & Renewal* Chapter 3, p121-123, 127-130

<sup>4</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p79

<sup>5</sup> Adapted from *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p79-80; *Amanat Resurrection & Renewal*, Chapter 3, p127-128

This principle of high integrity also meant that the Báb did not tolerate poor business practices that were considered quite acceptable in the marketplace. He applied this in all His dealings throughout His life, even when He was in prison later in His life. Nabíl recounts this story:

When the Báb was imprisoned in Chihríq, provisions required for Him had to be purchased in the old town and transported to His prison. One day the Bab asked that some honey be purchased for Him. The price at which it had been bought seemed to Him exorbitant. He refused it and said: "Honey of a superior quality could no doubt have been purchased at a lower price. I who am your example have been a merchant by profession. It behooves you in all your transactions to follow in My way. You must neither defraud your neighbour nor allow him to defraud you." He insisted that the attendant who had made that purchase should return and bring back to Him a honey superior in quality and cheaper in price.<sup>1</sup>

However, asking for fair business practice did not take away from the Báb's immense generosity and charity which were such that He, in His own words referring to Himself, would not "choose to act ungenerously towards the meanest and most helpless of creatures."<sup>2</sup>

As to His piety and devotion to God, the Báb spent so many hours in direct sunlight in the oppressive summer heat in Búshihr praying on the roof deck, that some neighbors thought He must be a sun-worshipper.<sup>3</sup>

The Báb lived in Búshihr for about five years before going to the 'Atabát. It was during His eleven month<sup>4</sup> stay in the 'Atabát that He met Siyyid Kázim<sup>5</sup>. Then, at the urging of His mother, the Báb returned to Shíráz towards the end of 1841 or early 1842. Soon thereafter He married Khadíjih Bagum.<sup>6</sup>

## Marriage<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 17, p303

<sup>2</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 17, p303

<sup>3</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p77-78, The summer temperatures in Búshihr are usually 40C/104F.

<sup>4</sup> *Amanat Resurrection & Renewal* Chapter 3, p136

<sup>5</sup> See DB 1-2, Section 2

<sup>6</sup> *Ma'ani Leaves of the Twin Divine Trees*, p28-29

<sup>7</sup> Balyuzi *Khadíjah Bagum* p1-14; *Ma'ani Leaves of the Twin Divine Trees*, p26-30

Khadíjih-Sultan Bagum  was born in 1822 in Shíráz and was therefore three years younger than the Báb. She was related to the Báb's family through the Báb's mother's side of the family.<sup>1</sup> Khadíjih Bagum's parents' house was next door to the Báb's middle uncle's house, where the Báb grew up after His father died. So as children, being so close in age, they were often playmates. Khadíjih Bagum always felt a special bond with the Báb. When He was working in Búshihr, Khadíjih Bagum, then about thirteen years old, had a dream in which she saw Him wearing a green cloak, around which were inscribed verses from the *Qur'án*. Light emanated from His Person. She realized then that the Báb was special, although in her own words: "... I never imagined He was the *Qa'im*."<sup>2</sup>

About five years later, Khadíjih Bagum had another dream. This time Fátima, the Prophet Muhammad's daughter, came to her house to discuss a marriage proposal. In Khadíjih Bagum's dream, as she and her two sisters entered the room to greet and welcome her, the blessed Fátima rose up and kissed Khadíjih Bagum on her forehead (a sign of her blessing and consent). The day after that dream, the Báb's mother paid a visit to Khadíjih Bagum's house to ask for the hand of one of the sisters to marry the Báb. As soon as Khadíjih Bagum and her two sisters walked into the room, the Báb's mother got up, went over to Khadíjih Bagum and kissed her on the forehead, exactly as in her dream.<sup>3</sup> Soon thereafter, in August 1842, the Khadíjih Bagum and the Báb were married. She was twenty and the Báb was twenty-three years old.

### **The House of the Báb in Shíráz**

Upon getting married, Khadíjih Bagum and the Báb moved into the Báb's modest house.<sup>4</sup> This house had two stories with a small inner courtyard. This courtyard had a small pond and a little garden with an orange tree (planted by the Báb Himself). The household consisted of the married couple (Khadíjih Bagum and the Báb), the Báb's mother, and two much-cherished servitors, both of African descent: Fiddih <sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For more detailed outline of the Báb's immediate family see [Portraits: The Báb's Immediate Family](#). A detailed lineage chart of the Báb's family can be found as a fold-out genealogy chart just after the Introduction section in *the Dawn-Breakers*. Also see [The Afán Family – Some Biographical Notes by Ahang Rabbani](#).

<sup>2</sup> Ma'ani *Leaves of the Twin Divine Trees*, p30 quoting *Munírih Khánum, Memoirs & Letters* p33

<sup>3</sup> Adapted from Balyuzi *Khadíjah Bagum* p3-5.

<sup>4</sup> Balyuzi *Khadíjah Bagum* p5.

<sup>5</sup> Fiddih stays with Khadíjih Bagum to the very end of her life. Khadíjih Bagum passes away on 15 September 1882 in Shíráz;; and Fiddih also passes away two hours after the death of her mistress in the same house. Both are buried close to each other in the same location (the Shrine of Sháh-Chirágh in Shíráz). Balyuzi *Khadíjah Bagum* p34-35.

and Mubárah<sup>1</sup>. It was in the upper chamber of this house that the Báb declared His mission to Mullá Husayn and it was in this House that the Letters of the Living came to meet the Báb in their search for the Promised One.

The House of the Báb in Shíráz has a unique place in Bábí-Bahá'í history. It is one of the two sites designated for pilgrimage by Bahá'u'lláh in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*<sup>2</sup>. The other site is the House of Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdád.

The House of the Báb was completely destroyed by the Islamic regime of Iran in 1979. However, all the details of the House have been meticulously documented, so that it can be rebuilt in the future.

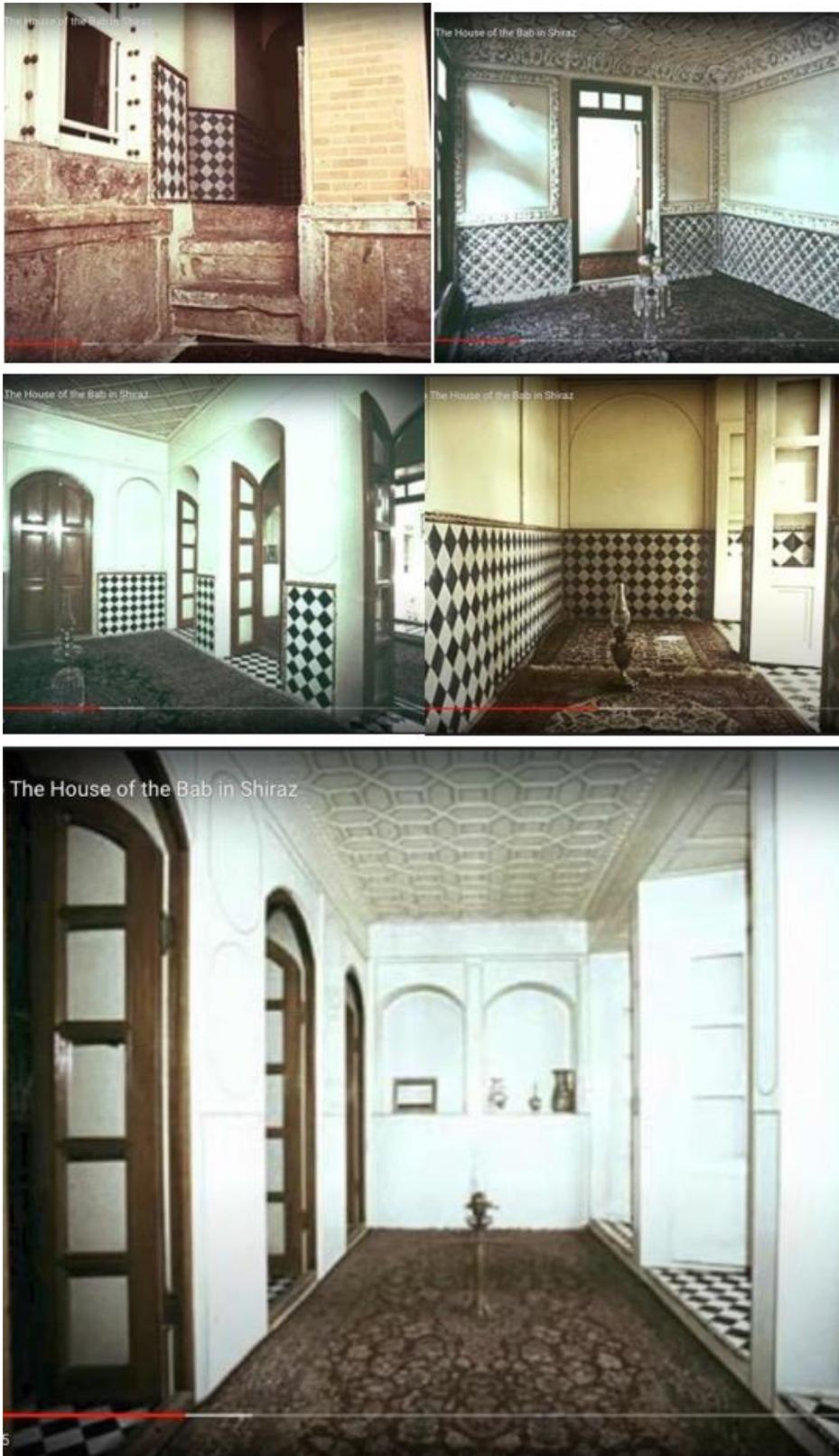
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<sup>1</sup> Mubárah's is the Ethiopian servant of the Báb noted in *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p53 and p66, and Chapter 7, p129.

<sup>2</sup> *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* paragraph K52; Questions & Answers #29; Notes #54



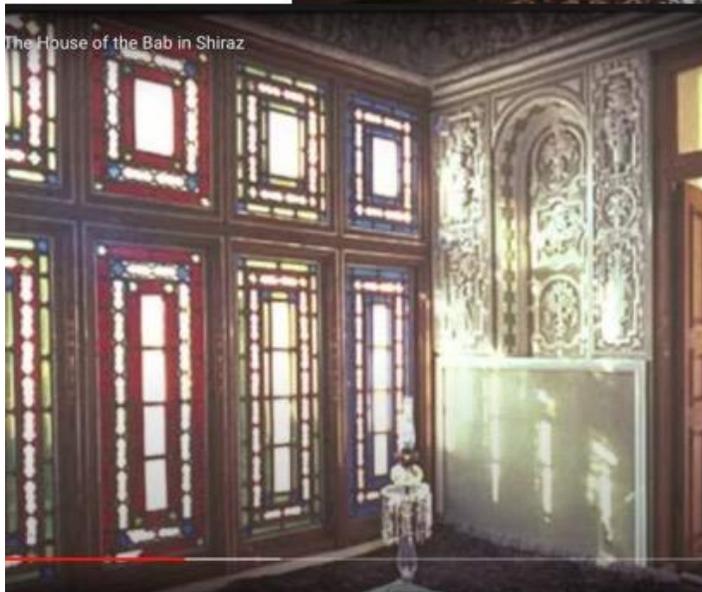
The House of the Báb in Shíráz: entrance and courtyard area. Pre-1979 photos.



The House of the Báb in Shíráz: ground (first) floor. Pre-1979 photos.



The House of the Báb in Shíráz: second floor. Pre-1979 photos.



The House of the Báb in Shíráz: second floor – Declaration Room. Pre-1979 photos.



The House of the Báb in Shíráz: second floor – Declaration Room. Pre-1979 photos.



Destruction of the House of the Báb in Shíráz in 1979 by the revolutionary guards of the Islamic Republic of Iran

### **Adversities lie ahead <sup>1</sup>**

One-night, not long after their wedding, Khadíjih Bagum dreamt that a fearsome lion was standing in the courtyard of their house. Her arms were around the lion's neck as it dragged her two and a half times around the entire perimeter of the courtyard. She woke up terrified and recounted her dream to the Báb. He explained: "You awoke too soon. The dream portends that our life together will not last more than two and a half years." Khadíjih Bagum was heartbroken, but the Báb comforted her by telling her that the dream was meant to help her prepare for the adversities she would encounter in the path of God.

### **A son named Ahmad**

Within a year of their marriage, in 1843, Khadíjih Bagum bore a son named Ahmad. Her labour was extremely difficult; sadly, the baby died in its infancy.<sup>2</sup> Khadíjih Bagum was devastated. According to Nabil, the Báb revealed the following invocation upon the death of His beloved son:

<sup>1</sup> Balyuzi *Khadíjah Bagum* p5-6; *Leaves of the Twin Divine Trees*, p31

<sup>2</sup> Balyuzi *The Báb* p46 referring to the Afán Hájí Mírzá Habíbu'lláh's memoirs, states that "the child was still-born".

“O my God, my only Desire! Grant that the sacrifice of My son, My only son, may be acceptable unto Thee. Grant that it be a prelude to the sacrifice of My own, My entire self, in the path of Thy good-pleasure.”<sup>1</sup>



Original burial location in Shíráz of the Báb's infant son, Ahmad. The site is the tomb of Bábí-Dukhtarán (left). Location of Ahmad's grave is marked by the cypress tree in the compound (right). Archival photos.<sup>2</sup> [In 1955, the remains were moved by the Bahá'ís and reinterred in the Bahá'í cemetery in Shíráz]<sup>3</sup>

The memoirs of one of the Afnán (term for relatives of the Báb), records this regarding the birth and death of the infant son of the Báb:

Before long it was realized Khadíjih Bagum was with child. And when the time came, her accouchement [meaning labour to give birth] was exceedingly difficult and fraught with danger. Her mother-in-law reported to

<sup>1</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p76-77.

<sup>2</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p74. In.

<sup>3</sup> *Ma'ani Leaves of the Twin Divine Trees* Chapter 2, p33.

Siyyid 'Alí-Muhammad [the Báb] that His wife was on the point of death. There was a mirror beside Him, on which He wrote a prayer, and instructed His mother to hold the mirror in front of His wife. That done, the child was safely delivered; but its life was short. Siyyid 'Alí-Muhammad's mother was both grieved and angry. She remonstrated with her Son that if He had such powers, why had He not made an attempt to preserve the life of the child, and spare His wife so much suffering? Siyyid 'Alí-Muhammad replied with a smile that He was not destined to leave any progeny, an answer which infuriated His mother; but to her approaches He said no more.<sup>1</sup>

### **She saw a Light**

In the time of the Prophet Muhammad, the first person to recognize the Divine Power that flowed through Him, was the Prophet's wife, whose name was Khadíjih. Thirteen centuries later, a similar process took place with another Khadíjih, the Bab's wife. She has related<sup>2</sup> :

One night, when the house was quiet and its occupants gone to sleep, He [the Báb] rose from His bed and left the room. At first I took no particular notice of His absence, but when it lengthened to an hour I felt some concern. Then I went out to look for Him, but He was nowhere to be found. Perhaps, for some reason, He had left the house, I thought; but trying the street door I found it locked from within, as usual. Then I walked to the western side of the house, looked up to the roof-top, and saw that the upper chamber was well lighted. ... So, with both astonishment and trepidation, I went up the steps ... There I saw Him standing in that chamber, His hands raised heavenwards, intoning a prayer in a most melodious voice, with tears streaming down His face. And His face was luminous; rays of light radiated from it. He looked so majestic and resplendent that fear seized me, and I stood transfixed where I was, trembling uncontrollably. I could neither enter the room nor retrace my steps. My will power was gone, and I was at the point of screaming, when He made a gesture with His blessed hands, telling me to go back. The movement of His hands gave me back my courage, and I returned to my room and my bed. ... Sleep was impossible that night ...

At sunrise Fiddih [the family's female servitor] took the samovar and tea-things to the room of my mother-in-law and, as usual, He went to His

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<sup>1</sup> Balyuzi *Khadíjah Bagum* p6-7.

<sup>2</sup> Balyuzi *Khadíjih Bagum* p 10-14. A similar account with slight variations can be found from memoirs of Khadíjih Bagum's great nephew quoted in *Ma'ání Leaves of the Twin Divine Trees* p 34-35

mother's room to take tea. I followed Him there, ... His mother had, at that moment, gone out of the room, and He was quietly drinking His tea. He raised His face to me, and received me with great kindness and affection, bidding me be seated. Then He passed to me what was left of the tea in His own cup, which I drank. His kindness restored my courage, and when He asked me what troubled me, I boldly replied ... "You are no longer the same person I knew in our childhood. We grew up together, and we have been married for two years, living in this house, and now I see a different person before me." ... He smiled and said that although He had not wished to be seen by me in the condition of the previous night, God had ordained otherwise. "It is the will of God," He said, "that you should have seen Me in the way you did last night, so that no shadow of doubt should ever cross your mind, and you should know with absolute certitude that I am that Manifestation of God Whose advent has been expected for a thousand years. This light radiates from My heart and from My being." As soon as I heard Him speak these words, I believed in Him. I prostrated myself before Him and my heart became calm and assured.<sup>1</sup>

### The year 1260 AH / 1844 CE

In a *hadīth* ascribed to Imám 'Alí, it is recorded: "In Ghars the Tree of Divine guidance shall be planted."<sup>2</sup> The Abjad numerical value of Ghars is 1260. The year 1260 AH of the Islamic calendar is the year 1844 of the Gregorian calendar. In another *hadīth*, it is recorded that when Imám Jafar (the sixth Imám) was asked about the year in which the *Qá'im* would appear, he replied: "Verily, in the year sixty, His Cause shall be revealed, and His name noised abroad."<sup>3</sup> The year sixty again refers to the year 1260 AH / 1844 CE. Many are the prophecies not just in Islam but also in the Bible that point to the year 1260 AH / 1844 CE as the year when the Promised One will be made manifest.

The Báb, like all other Manifestations of God, is a Manifestation of God from birth, Nabíl records how the Báb got the intimation of manifesting to us in this physical realm the outpourings of the Holy Spirit:

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<sup>1</sup> In one tablet revealed in Khadíjih Bagum's honour after her death, Bahá'u'lláh affirms that "before the creation of the world of being", she had "found the fragrance of the garment of the Merciful." [Ma'ani *Leaves of the Twin Divine Trees* p35]

<sup>2</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, 50

<sup>3</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p49 & Chapter 13, p248 footnote 3.

In one of His writings revealed in the year sixty [1260 AH], the Báb declares the following: "The spirit of prayer which animates My soul is the direct consequence of a dream which I had in the year before the declaration of My Mission. In My vision I saw the head of the Imám Husayn, the *Siyyidu'sh-Shuhadá* <sup>1</sup>, which was hanging upon a tree. Drops of blood dripped profusely from His lacerated throat. With feelings of unsurpassed delight, I approached that tree and, stretching forth My hands, gathered a few drops of that sacred blood, and drank them devoutly. When I awoke, I felt that the Spirit of God had permeated and taken possession of My soul. My heart was thrilled with the joy of His Divine presence, and the mysteries of His Revelation were unfolded before My eyes in all their glory."<sup>2</sup>

In several of His Writings the Báb affirms that the Holy Spirit summoned Him to manifest His Revelation in this physical realm early in 1260 AH/1844 CE. In the *Kitáb al-Haramayn* <sup>3</sup>, the Báb states: "In truth, the first day that the Spirit descended into the heart of this Slave, was the fifteenth of the month of *Rabí' al-Awwal* <sup>4</sup> [4 April 1844]."<sup>3</sup> And in a letter addressed to His family written while He was in the prison of Máh-Kú, the Báb wrote: "Nineteen days before the commencement of the revelation, he [i.e. Siyyid Kázim] joined the Heavenly Host and the beginning of 1260 was the time the secret [*bátin* <sup>5</sup>] was first revealed."<sup>4</sup>

We know this call of revelation to humanity reached fruition on the eve of 22 May 1844.

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<sup>1</sup> means Prince of Martyrs - title given to Imám Husayn

<sup>2</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 13, p253.

The Báb's dream of Imám Husayn's head is also described in *God Passes By*, Chapter 6, p93, in the context of the experience of Bahá'u'lláh in the prison of *Siyáh-Chál* getting the first intimation of His mission states: "The circumstances in which the Vehicle of this newborn Revelation, ..., received the first intimations of His sublime mission recall, and indeed surpass in poignancy the soul-shaking experience of Moses when confronted by the Burning Bush in the wilderness of Sinai; of Zoroaster when awakened to His mission by a succession of seven visions; of Jesus when coming out of the waters of the Jordan He saw the heavens opened and the Holy Ghost descend like a dove and light upon Him; of Muhammad when in the Cave of Hira, outside of the holy city of Mecca, the voice of Gabriel bade Him "*cry in the name of Thy Lord*"; and of the Báb when in a dream He approached the bleeding head of the Imám Husayn, and, quaffing the blood that dripped from his lacerated throat, awoke to find Himself the chosen recipient of the outpouring grace of the Almighty."

Also see *Amanat Resurrection & Renewal* Chapter 3, p131.

<sup>3</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p62, footnote 1; and *Amanat Resurrection & Renewal*, Chapter 4, p168.

<sup>4</sup> *Amanat Resurrection & Renewal*, Chapter 4, p168

**22 May 1844**

We have a record from one other witness of that momentous evening on 22 May 1844 when Mullá Husayn first visited the Báb's House – this is from the Báb's wife, Khadíjih Bagum. Many years after that event, she remembered it in these words:

What an extraordinary night that was! The Báb said to me: "Tonight we will entertain a dear guest." His whole being was ablaze. I was most eager to hear what He had to say, but He turned to me and told me: "It is better if you go and sleep." I did not wish to disobey Him, but remained awake all night and could hear His blessed voice until the morning, conversing with the Bábu'l-Báb, chanting verses, and presenting proofs and arguments.<sup>1</sup>

Khadíjih Bagum then recalls how as days went on, other unknown guests would come to the house and how the Báb engaged and conversed with them in the same way as with Mullá Husayn. Those guests in time became the other Letters of the Living.

**Station of Khadíjih Bagum, the wife of the Báb**

Khadíjih Bagum's degree of faith and her rank is attested by Nabil:

The wife of the Báb ... perceived at the earliest dawn of His Revelation the glory and uniqueness of His Mission and felt from the very beginning the intensity of its force. No one except Táhirih, among the women of her generation, surpassed her in the spontaneous character of her devotion nor excelled the fervour of her faith.<sup>2</sup>

Both the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh extol Khadíjih Bagum's high station in several tablets and prayers.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ma'ani *Leaves of the Twin Divine Trees*, p36

<sup>2</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 9, p191.

<sup>3</sup> Some years before Khadíjih Bagum's passing, Nabil was sent by Bahá'u'lláh to Shíráz to tell the believers there that the Promised One of the Báb had come and that He was Bahá'u'lláh. During this visit, Khadíjih Bagum asked Nabil to visit her, and upon hearing the message immediately recognized and declared her faith in Bahá'u'lláh. Khadíjih Bagum died in Shíráz in 1882 [that is 32 years after the Martyrdom of the Báb]. Bahá'u'lláh wrote prayers of visitation for her after her passing in which He honoured her with the station of a martyr and gave her, together with the Báb's mother, the title of *Khayru'n-Nisá'* [the Most Virtuous among All Women]. [See *Ma'ani Leaves of the Twin Divine Trees* p35, p43, p55-60].

## Section Five: The First Wave is Sent Out

### **The Báb's Instructions to the Letters of the Living**

The Letters of the Living were now tasked by the Báb to travel to different regions and awaken other souls. In the words of Nabíl:

He [the Báb] directed them to refrain from specific references to His own name and person. He instructed them to raise the call that the Gate to the Promised One has been opened, that His proof is irrefutable, and that His testimony is complete. He bade them declare that whoever believes in Him has believed in all the prophets of God, and whoever denies Him has denied all His saints and His chosen ones.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Báb's Farewell Words to the Letters of the Living <sup>2</sup>**

He addressed to them these parting words:

O My beloved friends! You are the bearers of the name of God in this Day. You have been chosen as the repositories of His mystery. It behoves each one of you to manifest the attributes of God, and to exemplify by your deeds and words the signs of His righteousness, His power and glory. The very members of your body must bear witness to the loftiness of your purpose, the integrity of your life, the reality of your faith, and the exalted character of your devotion. For verily I say, this is the Day spoken of by God in His Book: "On that day will We set a seal upon their mouths yet shall their hands speak unto Us, and their feet shall bear witness to that which they shall have done."<sup>3</sup> Ponder the words of Jesus addressed to His disciples, as He sent them forth to propagate the Cause of God. In words such as these, He bade them arise and fulfil their mission: "Ye are even as the fire which in the darkness of the night has been kindled upon the mountain-top. Let your light shine before the eyes of men. Such must be the purity of your character and the degree of your renunciation, that the people of the earth may through you recognise and be drawn closer to the heavenly Father who is the Source of purity and grace. For none has seen the Father who is in heaven. You who are His spiritual children must by your deeds exemplify His virtues, and witness to His glory. You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt have lost its

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<sup>1</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p94

<sup>2</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p92-94

<sup>3</sup> *Qur'án* 36:65

savour, wherewith shall it be salted? Such must be the degree of your detachment, that into whatever city you enter to proclaim and teach the Cause of God, you should in no wise expect either meat or reward from its people. Nay, when you depart out of that city, you should shake the dust from off your feet. As you have entered it pure and undefiled, so must you depart from that city. For verily I say, the heavenly Father is ever with you and keeps watch over you. If you be faithful to Him, He will assuredly deliver into your hands all the treasures of the earth, and will exalt you above all the rulers and kings of the world."

O My Letters! Verily I say, immensely exalted is this Day above the days of the Apostles of old. Nay, immeasurable is the difference! You are the witnesses of the Dawn of the promised Day of God. You are the partakers of the mystic chalice of His Revelation. Gird up the loins of endeavour, and be mindful of the words of God as revealed in His Book: "Lo, the Lord thy God is come, and with Him is the company of His angels arrayed before Him! " Purge your hearts of worldly desires, and let angelic virtues be your adorning. Strive that by your deeds you may bear witness to the truth of these words of God, and beware lest, by "turning back," He may "change you for another people," who "shall not be your like," and who shall take from you the Kingdom of God. The days when idle worship was deemed sufficient are ended. The time is come when naught but the purest motive, supported by deeds of stainless purity, can ascend to the throne of the Most High and be acceptable unto Him. "The good word riseth up unto Him, and the righteous deed will cause it to be exalted before Him." You are the lowly, of whom God has thus spoken in His Book: "And We desire to show favour to those who were brought low in the land, and to make them spiritual leaders among men, and to make them Our heirs." You have been called to this station; you will attain to it, only if you arise to trample beneath your feet every earthly desire, and endeavour to become those "honoured servants of His who speak not till He hath spoken, and who do His bidding".



The series of twenty autograph tablets written by the Báb consisting of one tablet addressed to each of the eighteen Letters of the Living, the nineteenth tablet to the Báb Himself, and the twentieth to "Him Who Will be Made Manifest" (Bahá'u'lláh). Photos shown are the tablets to Mullá Husayn (top left); to Mullá 'Alí-y-Bastámí (top right); to Táhirih (bottom left) and to Quddús (bottom right).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Photos of the whole series [all twenty tablets] are in *The Dawn-Breakers* just before the Introduction.

You are the first Letters that have been generated from the Primal Point<sup>1</sup>, the first Springs that have welled out from the Source of this Revelation. Beseech the Lord your God to grant that no earthly entanglements, no worldly affections, no ephemeral pursuits, may tarnish the purity, or embitter the sweetness, of that grace which flows through you.

I am preparing you for the advent of a mighty Day. Exert your utmost endeavour that, in the world to come, I, who am now instructing you, may, before the mercy-seat of God, rejoice in your deeds and glory in your achievements. The secret of the Day that is to come is now concealed. It can neither be divulged nor estimated. The newly born babe of that Day excels the wisest and most venerable men of this time, and the lowliest and most unlearned of that period shall surpass in understanding the most erudite and accomplished divines of this age. Scatter throughout the length and breadth of this land, and, with steadfast feet and sanctified hearts, prepare the way for His coming. Heed not your weaknesses and frailty; fix your gaze upon the invincible power of the Lord, your God, the Almighty. Has He not, in past days, caused Abraham, in spite of His seeming helplessness, to triumph over the forces of Nimrod? Has He not enabled Moses, whose staff was His only companion, to vanquish Pharaoh and his hosts? Has He not established the ascendancy of Jesus, poor and lowly as He was in the eyes of men, over the combined forces of the Jewish people? Has He not subjected the barbarous and militant tribes of Arabia to the holy and transforming discipline of Muhammad, His Prophet? Arise in His name, put your trust wholly in Him, and be assured of ultimate victory.<sup>2</sup>

### **The First Wave Goes Out<sup>3</sup>**

And so, the Letters of the Living left Shíráz and spread out to different regions to raise the Call.

Mullá 'Alí-y-i-Bastámí  was the first to leave. The Báb instructed him to go to Najaf and Karbalá' warning him of the severe trials that would befall him and urging him to remain steadfast to the end. His words included these:

Your faith must be immovable as the rock, must weather every storm and survive every calamity. ... You are the first to leave the House of God, and to

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<sup>1</sup> One of the titles of the Báb

<sup>2</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p92-94

<sup>3</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p87-92 [Mullá 'Alí-y-i-Bastámí]; p94-96 [other Letters of the Living]

suffer for His sake. If you be slain in His path, remember that great will be your reward, and goodly the gift which will be bestowed upon you.<sup>1</sup>

As soon as these words were uttered, Mullá 'Alíy-i-Bastámí jumped on his feet, bade his farewell and set out on his mission. Just as the Bab had prophesied Mullá 'Alíy-i-Bastámí will become the first Bábí to suffer persecution for the Cause of God.<sup>2</sup> He will also become the first Bábí to be martyred; although his martyrdom will occur in Constantinople [Ottoman empire] and not on Persian soil.<sup>3</sup>

The other fourteen were assigned by the Báb to their own native province as the field of their work. At dawn the next day, they all left Shíráz, each resolved to carry out their sacred mission. Táhirih, who is in Karbalá', received her instructions in a letter delivered to her by Mírzá Muhammad-'Alíy-i-Qazvíní , her cousin/brother-in-law who was now also a Letter of the Living.<sup>4</sup>

The remaining two Letters of the Living, the first and the last, Mullá Husayn and Quddús, were directed to different paths. The Báb had previously indicated that He planned to go on pilgrimage to Mecca and Medína and that He would take one of the Letters of the Living with Him. Mullá Husayn had hoped it would be him but the Báb chose Quddús instead. He consoled Mullá Husayn with these words and instructions:

Grieve not that you have not been chosen to accompany Me on My pilgrimage to Hijáz. I shall, instead, direct your steps to that city which enshrines a Mystery of such transcendent holiness as neither Hijáz nor

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<sup>1</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p87

<sup>2</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p87. Mullá 'Alíy-i-Bástámí was the first to suffer in any way for the Cause of the Báb. Shortly after leaving Shíráz, he got his first beating just outside Shíráz. This was by 'Abdu'l-Vahháb-i-Shírází's father, and because the father found out that his young son had run off and joined Mullá 'Alíy-i-Bástámí [see [Resources: Portrait of Mullá 'Alíy-i-Bástámí](#) and [Portrait of 'Abdu'l-Vahháb-i-Shírází](#)]. Later when Mullá 'Alíy-i-Bástámí got to Najaf, in an assembly lead by the leading Shí'a mujtahid, Shaykh Muhammad-Hasan, he proclaimed the Cause of the Báb. It is here that he was denounced and thrown into prison and thus becomes the first to suffer for the Cause of the Báb [also see [DB 4-7](#), Section 1]. Because Najaf was in the Ottoman empire, this is not counted as "persecution" on Persian soil [*Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 8, p147]. So, while Mullá 'Alíy-i-Bástámí has the honour of being the first to be persecuted for the Cause of the Báb, the title of the first to be "persecuted on Persian soil" goes to Quddús, Mullá Sádiq and Mullá 'Alí-Akbar-i-Ardistání which happened later in Shíráz [*Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 8, p146 footnote 3 and p147].

<sup>3</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p91-92. Mullá 'Alíy-i-Bástámí has the title of being the first to be martyred for the Cause of the Báb. But this happened outside Persian soil – he died in prison in Constantinople, the capital of the Ottoman empire. The title of the first to be martyred for the Cause of the Báb on Persian soil goes to Shaykh Sálíh [see [DB 13-16, Section 4](#)].

<sup>4</sup> *Amanat Resurrection and Renewal* Chapter 7, p299

Shíráz can hope to rival.<sup>1</sup> My hope is that you may, by the aid of God, be enabled to remove the veils from the eyes of the wayward and to cleanse the minds of the malevolent. Visit, on your way, Isfáhán, Káshán, Tihrán, and Khurásán. Proceed thence to Iráq, and there await the summons of your Lord, who will keep watch over you and will direct you to whatsoever is His will and desire.<sup>2</sup>

The stage was set. The First Light of the Dawn had broken. The Letters of the Living had begun their mission to announce the coming of the *Qá'im* throughout the land – a message destined to spread like wildfire. It remains for us to see how.

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<sup>1</sup> Hijáz is the western region of Saudi Arabia along the Red Sea, and it encompasses the two holiest cities of Islam, Mecca and Medina. The phrase “Hijáz nor Shíráz” refers to the areas linked to the Prophet Muhammad and the Báb respectively. Mullá Husayn is sent to Tihrán, the birthplace of Bahá'u'lláh and where He resides.

<sup>2</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p96

## Epilogue

### **The Day of Resurrection: Coming of Twin Manifestations**

For the Shí'a, the Day of Resurrection is to be ushered in by the return of the twelfth Imám, the *Qá'im* ﴿﴾ followed by the return of Imám Husayn and his hosts. For the Sunní, the Day of Resurrection will see the coming of the *Mahdí* ﴿﴾ [One who is guided], and the return of Jesus Christ. For both Shí'a and Sunní, at that time, the mountains will crumble, stars will fall, the dead will arise [resurrection], judgement will be passed on all things, and all things will be renewed forever.<sup>1</sup>

Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kázim had taught that such prophecies had metaphoric and spiritual meanings rather than literal physical ones. They also confirmed that there would be two Manifestations. In fact, Siyyid Kázim told his disciples:

For soon after the first trumpet-blast which is to smite the earth with extermination and death, there will be sounded again yet, another call, at which all things will be quickened and revived. ... Verily I say, after the *Qá'im*, the *Qayyúm* ﴿﴾ [the Self-Subsisting] will be made manifest. For when the star of the Former has set, the sun of the beauty of Husayn will rise and illuminate the whole world.<sup>2</sup>

### **The First Trumpet Blast – the *Qá'im***

On the eve of 22 May 1844, the First Trumpet Blast was sounded – the *Qá'im* / the *Mahdí* arose. He claimed the title of “the Báb,” which means the Gate. He was the gate to a new Revelation. He was the gate that closed the cycle of prophecy and opened the cycle of fulfillment for all religions. But His main role was as the gate to the *Qayyúm*, the One Who was to arise after Him; the One greater than Himself. Together they inaugurated the age of maturation of the human race and brought teachings to build a new race of men and a global ever-advancing civilization, the like of which we can only dimly imagine.

It is this which has been described metaphorically in the Scriptures of old as the Day of Resurrection and Judgement. In this Day, the mountains of old beliefs will crumble; the stars of guidance [the leaders] will fall and mislead people instead of

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<sup>1</sup> There are two main branches in Islam: Sunní and Shí'a. Virtually all the protagonists in the *Dawn-Breakers* were from the Shí'a branch. For an overview of the basic tenets of Islam and the Shí'a, see [Resources: Brief Background on Shí'a Islam](#).

<sup>2</sup> *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p41-42; and *God Passes By* Chapter 6, p97.

guiding them; the spiritually dead will be awakened from the graves of ignorance and selfish desire; and all things will be recreated. At the same time, it will be the Day of Judgement, when each soul will choose to either be recreated and part of the new Day or remain imprisoned, whether by old beliefs or its own ego.

Eighteen souls were the first ones to break through and be recreated at the Dawn of this Day of Resurrection and Judgement. They were the Letters of the Living. They will now spread the light of this Dawn.

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**End of "DB 3: The First Light of the Dawn"**