Baha'u'llah's Incarceration in the Barrack Prison of 'Akká

1868 - 1870
Table of Contents

The Verdict 3
Arrival to the Barracks 3
First Days of Incarceration 4
Life in the Barracks 7
  Solitude of the Prisoners 7
  Daily Life in the Barracks 8
Believers Residing in the Holy Land 9
Some Early Pilgrims 11
  Trustees of God 11
  Nabil-i-Azam 11
  Aqa Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Qa'ini 12
  'Abdu'r-Rahim 13
  The Mufti of Akka 14
Tablets Revealed in the Barracks 15
  Lawh-i-Salman II 15
  Lawh-i-Rais 15
  Lawh-i-Fu'ad 17
  Other Tablets 17
Events in the Barracks 17
  Shaykh Mahmud 17
  Ahmad-i-Jarrah and his brother 19
  Miraculous Recovery 20
  Badi 20
  The Purest Branch 22
Leaving the Barracks Prison 25
References 26
The Verdict

Explicit orders had been issued by the Sultan and his ministers to subject the exiles, who were accused of having grievously erred and led others far astray, to the strictest confinement. Hopes were confidently expressed that the sentence of life-long imprisonment pronounced against them would lead to their eventual extermination. The farman of Sultan 'Abdu'l-'Aziz, dated the fifth of Rabi'u'th-Thani 1285 AH (July 26, 1868), not only condemned them to perpetual banishment, but stipulated their strict incarceration, and forbade them to associate either with each other or with the local inhabitants. The text of the farman itself was read publicly, soon after the arrival of the exiles, in the principal mosque of the city as a warning to the population. [1]

We were described as enemies of God, and as the worst kind of criminals. The people were exhorted to shun these vile malefactors; this naturally caused the attitude of intense hatred and bitter antagonism with which we were regarded. [2]

Arrival to the Barracks

'Akká, itself, flanked by the "glory of Lebanon," and lying in full view of the "splendor of Carmel," at the foot of the hills which enclose the home of Jesus Christ Himself, had been described by David as "the Strong City," designated by Hosea as "a door of hope," and alluded to by Ezekiel as "the gate that looketh towards the East," whereunto "the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the East," His voice "like a noise of many waters." To it the Arabian Prophet had referred as "a city in Syria to which God hath shown His special mercy," situated "betwixt two mountains ... in the middle of a meadow," "by the shore of the sea ... suspended beneath the Throne," "white, whose whiteness is pleasing unto God." "Blessed the man," He, moreover, as confirmed by Bahá'u'lláh, had declared, "that hath visited 'Akká, and blessed he that hath visited the visitor of 'Akká." Furthermore, "He that raiseth therein the call to prayer, his voice will be lifted up unto Paradise." And again: "The poor of 'Akká are the kings of Paradise and the princes thereof. A month in 'Akká is better than a thousand years elsewhere." Moreover, in a remarkable tradition, which is contained in Shaykh Ilnu'l-'Arabi's work, entitled "Futúhát-i-Makkíyyih," and which is recognized as an authentic utterance of Muhammad, and is quoted by Mírzá Abu'l-Fadl in his "Fará'íd," this significant prediction has been made: "All of them (the companions of the Qá'im) shall be slain except One Who shall reach the plain of 'Akká, the Banquet-Hall of God." [1]

The prison barracks, also known as "citadel of Akko," is now called "the underground prisoners museum". It was build during the Ottoman rule upon a crusader fortress dating back
to the 12th century. During the Ottoman period, the citadel was used as a government building, barracks for the troops of Jazzaar Pasha and as a prison (when Bahá'u'lláh arrived to Akka). The barracks were "built in the days of Jazzaar Pasha for troops. It is very high and spacious, with a pool of water in the middle, and palms and fig-trees. To the north-west, the upper floor, well-built, contained four or five good rooms with an {ayvan} and there was also a {biruni}: one large room with veranda and other rooms. ... The Blessed Perfection and His family occupied that section." [3]

Bahá'u'lláh was placed in a filthy room completely bare and devoid of any furniture. Later He was moved into a room on the upper floor of the barracks; this room, ..., was in the days of Bahá'u'lláh unfit for habitation. He Himself has recounted in a Tablet that its floor was covered with earth, and what plaster remained on the ceiling was falling. Bahá'u'lláh's followers were huddled into another room, the floor of which was covered with mud. Ten soldiers were posted at the gate to guard the prisoners. [4]

'Abdu'l-Bahá occupied "the damp and gloomy room, formerly a morgue" [4]

Aqa Mirza Muhammad-Quli and his family lodged on the lower floor. To the north, there were rooms on three floors. Haji 'Ali-'Askar, Amir and Aqa Muhammad-Javad occupied these rooms. In the north-west corner, there were rooms in which we lodged, ... to the west, there was a very good bath. And to the south and east, there was a set of good spacious rooms. One of them was occupied by Jinab-i-Kalim; in another, others of the companions were housed, and most of them remained empty. Siyyid Muhammad and Kaj-Kulah [Aqa-Jan Big] resided here for two or three days, and then asked the government to move them. They were given a room over the second city gate [of "Akká"]. [3]

**First Days of Incarceration**

Bahá'u'lláh's followers were huddled into another room, the floor of which was covered with mud. Ten soldiers were posted at the gate to guard the prisoners. The foul air and the stench in the prison, coupled with the sultry heat of the summer, were so offensive that Bahá'íyyih Khanum, the daughter of Bahá'u'lláh entitled the 'Greatest Holy Leaf', was overcome and fainted on arrival. [4]
The Greatest Holy Leaf recounts that "We were taken to the old fortress of `Akká, where we were crowded together. There was no air; a small quantity of very bad coarse bread was provided; we were unable to get fresh water to drink; our sufferings were not diminished. Then an epidemic of typhoid broke out. Nearly all became ill. [2]

There was no water for drinking except that in a small pool which had already been used for washing. The water in this pool was so filthy that the mere thought of drinking it would make one sick. [4]

We wanted to go out and procure fresh water, but they would not permit us. From the house of 'Abdu'l-Hadi Pasha, the Mutasarrif of 'Akka, they brought some cooked rice, but it was not enough. [3]

That first night, water was withheld from the prisoners. Everyone was thirsty in those hot surroundings and some of the women and children were overcome by thirst. Mothers with suckling babes were unable to feed them, and for hours the children were crying for food and water. 'Abdu'l-Baha made several appeals to the guards to show mercy to the children and even sent a message to the Governor of 'Akka, but all was without avail. At last in the morning some water was given to the prisoners and three loaves of bread to each as a daily ration: the bread was unfit to eat .... [4]

The next day, officials came to see what was happening to us. They went into the presence of the Blessed Perfection, and to them He spoke such words of knowledge and wisdom that, in that very first meeting, they realized that here were people endowed with erudition, wisdom and rare understanding. One of them had said, there and then, that never before had such pure and sanctified souls set foot in 'Akka. [3]

Life was indeed hard and onerous in the barracks of 'Akka, and particularly so when the exiles fell victim to maladies, such as malaria and dysentery, that the autumn brought in its wake. Aqa Rida says that they had never known such fevers as afflicted them, and states that the Most Great Branch, being very careful of what He ate or drank, did 'not go down' like the lest, but was always up and about, tending the sick and nursing them. Aqay-i-Kalim and Aqa Rida himself were able to help with the nursing. But three of the exiles died. Aqa Abü'l-Qasim-i-Sultanabadi was the first to go, and then Ustad Baqir and his brother Ustad Isma'il, who died the same night, in the words of Baha'u'llah, 'locked in each other's arms'. [3]

In these circumstances three people died. The first victim was a certain Abü'l-Qasim-i-Sultan Abadi. Then two brothers, Ustad Muhammad-Baqir and Ustad Muhammad-Isma'il, both tailors by profession, died one evening within a few hours of each other. They were locked in each other's arms as they lay on the floor. Baha'u'llah particularly expressed His grief at this tragic death, and stated that never before had two brothers passed away from this dark world and entered the realms of glory in such unity. He, as stated in a Tablet, praised them, showered His bounties upon them, and blessed their parents. [4]

The guards would not allow the exiles to see to the funeral of their dead. Baha'u'llah had to give a carpet on which He Himself slept, to be sold to defray the expenses demanded by the guards. However, the guards pocketed the money, and had the corpses interred in their clothes-unwashed, unshrouded and without coffins. Baha'u'llah has attested that the money given to the guards was twice the amount normally required for a decent burial. Recounting His
sufferings in this period, He has written regarding Himself: 'He hath, during the greater part of His life, been sore-tried in the clutches of His enemies. His sufferings have now reached their culmination in this afflictive Prison, into which His oppressors have so unjustly thrown Him.'[3]

As they were not allowed to be buried inside the Muslim Cemetery they were laid to rest outside it. Some years later 'Abdu'l-Baha arranged for one of the believers to build their graves, which are joined together.[4]

Aqa Rida and Aqa Husayn have both put on record a short prayer, revealed by Baha'u'llah subsequent to the death of the three companions, which the exiles recited for their protection. Here is its text:

_In the Name of God, the Forgiver! Although this evil state in which I am, O my God, maketh me deserving of Thy wrath and punishment, Thy good-pleasure and Thy bounties demand Thy forgiveness to encompass Thy servants and Thy good favour to reach them. I ask Thee by Thy Name which Thou hast made the King of all names to protect me by Thy power and Thine Omnipotence from all calamity and all that is repugnant to Thee and all that is contrary to Thy Will. Thou art Supreme over all things._ [3]

Although illness was still rife, there were no more fatalities. Aqa Rida states that for four months a huge cauldron of broth was prepared for the sick, and at night plain rice, which the Most Great Branch doled out personally for each, according to his needs. And then, Aqa Rida says, the Most Great Branch Himself fell sick, and so ill was He that the companions were greatly concerned and perturbed. But that passed too, and gradually all were restored to health.

The ration for each person, according to Aqa Rida and Aqa Husayn-i-Ashchi, was three loaves of black bread, salty and inedible. [3]

Soon after the arrival of the prisoners the Governor visited the barracks for inspection. 'Abdu'l-Baha, accompanied by a few believers, went to see him. But the Governor was discourteous and spoke to them in a provocative manner. He threatened to cut the supply of bread if one of the prisoners went missing and then ordered them back to their room. [3]

So revolting was this ration [of bread] that Aqa Husayn, young and headstrong as he was, made rude and insulting remarks about it in Turkish, directed to the Mutasarrif [Governor]. This earned him a sharp slap in the face from the Most Great Branch. But it also caused the Mutasarrif, Aqa Husayn says, to take note of the situation. Soon the officials discontinued this ration; instead they gave the exiles a sum of money each day, which was shared by all the companions. [3]

Husayn-i-Ashchi, who has recorded this incident in his memoirs, and who prided himself on being chastised by the Master on that occasion, recalls that because of this action the Governor's attitude towards 'Abdu'l-Baha changed. He realized that, contrary to the wild rumours circulating in 'Akka at the time, 'Abdu'l-Baha and His family were from a noble background, and not criminals as he had been led to believe. The Governor therefore began to act in a more humane way towards the prisoners. He eventually agreed to substitute the allotted ration of bread with a sum of money and allowed a small party of the prisoners, escorted by guards, to visit the markets of 'Akka daily to buy their provisions. [4]
Life in the Barracks

Solitude of the Prisoners

Three days after the arrival of Baha'u'llah and His companions, the edict of the Sultan condemning Him to life imprisonment was read out in the Mosque. The prisoners were introduced as criminals who had corrupted the morals of the people. It was stated that they were to be confined in prison and were not allowed to associate with anyone. [4]

In the course of a talk to the friends in Haifa, 'Abdu'l-Baha has described His being summoned by the Governor of 'Akka to hear the contents of the edict. When it was read out to Him that they were to remain in prison for ever, (in Arabic the term used for life imprisonment is often 'prisoner for ever') 'Abdu'l-Baha responded by saying that the contents of the edict were meaningless and without foundation. Upon hearing this remark, the Governor became angry and retorted that the edict was from the Sultan, and he wanted to know how it could be described as meaningless. 'Abdu'l-Baha reiterated His comment and explained that it made no sense to describe their imprisonment as lasting for ever, for man lives in this world only for a short period, and that sooner or later the captives would leave this prison either dead or alive. The Governor and his officers were impressed by the vision of 'Abdu'l-Baha and felt easier in His presence. [4]

The Persian Ambassador, accredited to the Sublime Porte, had thus assured his government, in a letter, written a little over a year after their [the Baha'is] banishment to 'Akka: 'I have issued telegraphic and written instructions, forbidding that He (Baha'u'llah) associate with any one except His wives and children, or leave under any circumstances, the house wherein He is imprisoned. 'Abbas-Quli Khan, the Consul-General in Damascus... I have, three days ago, sent back, instructing him to proceed direct to 'Akka ... confer with its governor regarding all necessary measures for the strict maintenance of their imprisonment ... and appoint, before his return to Damascus, a representative on the spot to insure that the orders issued by the Sublime Porte will, in no wise, be disobeyed. I have, likewise, instructed him that once every three months he should proceed from Damascus to 'Akka, and personally watch over them, and submit his report to the Legation.' Such was the isolation imposed upon them that the Baha'is of Persia, perturbed by the rumors set afloat by the Azalis of Isfahan that Baha'u'llah had been drowned, induced the British Telegraph Office in Julfa to ascertain on their behalf the truth of the matter. [1]

In a Tablet addressed to Aqa Mirza Aqay-i-Afnan, Nuri'd-Din, over the signature of Khadim (Mirza Aqa Jan, the amanuensis), Baha'u'llah recounts that such was the surveillance exercised by the authorities that even when a barber or bath-attendant was required, he was brought to the citadel accompanied by a member of the police force, who stood by all the time. For that reason Baha'u'llah did not use the bath for a while. [3]

As there were no baths in houses in those days, practically everyone had to go to a public bath. These were similar to what is known in the west as Turkish baths--warm with a steamy atmosphere. People would be partly-clad in a cotton towel, as nudity was considered immoral. People often spent hours washing and relaxing in public baths. Certain days of the week were allocated to men and certain days to women. The gathering of people in one place created a social atmosphere, and it was possible to meet one's friends and acquaintances there. [4]
So closely were we watched that we had been in `Akka six or seven months without being able to get into touch with Mirza `Abdu’l-Ahmad, a devoted Babi disciple, who had been sent by `Abdu’l-Bahá to `Akka some time before our arrival and had opened a shop. So great would his danger have been, had his connexion with the Bahá’ís been suspected, that the strictest caution was absolutely necessary. [2]

Only three times had we been permitted to go out, for even an hour, from the prison barracks during the whole of that first two years. How tired we were of those three little rooms! [2]

However, despite this high-handed action on the part of the Persian ambassador, more than a year after the arrival of the exiles in `Akka which was tantamount to unabashed interference with the internal administration of the Turkish realm, and despite the fact that nothing had been changed by a jot or tittle in the original edict of Sultan `Abdu'l-'Aziz, the Ottoman officials on the spot, ... found themselves more and more disinclined, even unable, to resort to harsh measures in their treatment of the prisoners; and the townspeople, exceedingly hostile at the start, had been slowly and gradually won over to respect and reverence towards the inmates of the citadel. It was chiefly the mien and the bearing of Baha'u'llah's eldest Son that wrought his amazing transformation. [3]

**Daily Life in the Barracks**

When the exiles were residing in the barracks, he [`Uthman Effendi] had a grocery shop in town. He used to supply Baha'u'llah’s daily provisions and was paid on a monthly basis. He was attracted to the Faith by the good deeds and honest dealings of the believers. He embraced the Faith and attained the presence of Baha'u'llah who promised him that he would become a wealthy and influential man. Soon `Uthman Effendi acquired considerable wealth. He owned half the village of Kasra which is one of the Druze villages. He also became a man of considerable influence well respected in government circles in `Akka. [4]

Aqa Husayn-i-Ashchi gives more detail of the care and supervision which the Most Great Branch exercised in attending to the welfare and health of the companions. Every day He would stand by the gates of the citadel, awaiting the return of those who had gone into the town, accompanied by guards, to make necessary purchases, and would inspect all they had bought and even their pockets, to see that nothing injurious to the health of the inmates was brought in. Whatever He considered unsuitable for their consumption He would throw away. [3]
As time went on the companions of Baha'u'llah were allotted rooms in different parts of the barracks. Some of them took on essential duties such as cooking, cleaning, water delivery or shopping and some were able to spend their free time in other useful work. At one stage 'Abdu'l-Baha engaged a certain Egyptian by the name of Haji 'Aliy-i-Misri to come to the barracks and teach the prisoners the art of making rush mats. As the restrictions were somewhat relaxed the companions were able to communicate with Baha'u'llah and even attain His presence. [4]

Although the barracks was a depressing place to live in, soon the companions of Baha'u'llah, mainly through 'Abdu'l-Baha's leadership and guidance, organized their daily lives in such a way as to create the best possible conditions for the whole community. Their greatest source of joy was nearness to their Lord, and sometimes Baha'u'llah visited them in their quarters where they entertained Him with what meagre food or refreshments they could provide. [4]

In this Tablet Baha'u'llah describes how on that day He was invited by one of the believers in the prison to honour his room with His presence and attend the celebration of that great Festival. His companions on that day were truly intoxicated with the wine of His presence. The believer who had invited Baha'u'llah entertained Him with the best food he could provide. Baha'u'llah refers to this and states that other believers had invited Him to their rooms during the Ridvan period also. Each according to his capacity had provided some food and some had nothing to entertain Him with except a cup of tea. [4]

Having heard a rumour that the Beloved Ones had been sent to 'Akka, a friend, Abu'l-Qasim Khan, and his wife, made that long and dangerous journey from Persia in order to find out the truth. Arrived in 'Akka they met Mirza 'Abdu'l-Ahad. He, fearing lest his secret should be disclosed, hurriedly hid the pair behind stacks of boxes at the back of his shop. The news of their arrival was, with much difficulty, conveyed to Bahá'u'lláh. He sent them back to Persia, after a stay of only three days, so grave was the risk. These friends accordingly left 'Akka. They had not even seen Bahá'u'lláh, but they were able to carry the news back to Persia that the Beloved Ones were really imprisoned in this desolate place. The first Persian friends to telegraph to 'Akka were the "King of the Martyred" and his brother, "The Beloved of the Martyred." The help they succeeded in sending was much needed, as we were past the end of our resources. Little by little the news of our whereabouts filtered through to the other friends in Persia. [2]

Believers Residing in the Holy Land

Baha'u'llah revealed the Tablet of Ridvan, probably on the ninth day of Ridvan in 1869. In this Tablet, several believers who lived in Akka and Haifa are mentioned.

When the Tablet was revealed there were two Persian believers living in 'Akka itself, there were some who were trying to come in, and some who were staying at Haifa; Baha'u'llah refers to them all in this Tablet. The two in 'Akka were Muhammad Ja'far-i-Tabrizi, entitled Mansur, and Mirza Hadi entitled 'Abdu'l-Ahad. The latter was the first to arrive in 'Akka. He had been sent there by 'Abdu'l-Baha some time before Baha'u'llah's exile to that city, thus establishing a valuable contact. No one suspected him of being a Baha'i. Helped by the Persian political agent in that city he had managed to open a shop but did not try to contact Baha'u'llah and His companions in the barracks when they arrived. However, the few Baha'i prisoners who went to
the market every day to purchase provisions met him and knew that he was a Baha'i. Through him, and by other means, the news of Baha'u'llah's whereabouts soon reached the believers in Persia and a few of His followers travelled to 'Akka. 'Abdu'l-Ahäd very discreetly helped some of the visitors who had managed to enter the city to approach the barracks. Sometimes he even had to hide the visitors in the back of his shop. [4]

Among those living at Haifa was Mirza Ibrahim-i-Kashani, a copper-smith by profession, whom Baha'u'llah refers to as Khalil in the forementioned Tablet of Ridvan. He was a devoted believer, on fire with the love of Baha'u'llah, and had been among the Baha'i prisoners sent from Baghdad to Mosul. Accompanied by some relatives he had managed to leave Mosul and settle in Haifa. In those days, entering 'Akka was very difficult for the believers, but he managed to enter frequently by taking some of his copper implements for sale. He thus became an important channel of communication between the believers and Baha'u'llah. [4]

Another believer mentioned in the Ridvan Tablet, and one in whose heart the fire of love for Baha'u'llah burnt very brightly, was an old man, Ustad Isma'il. He was a master builder of wide experience who had worked for the government officials in Persia. When he became known as a Babi, he had to leave his work. He then went to Baghdad where he was given the honour of carrying out construction work on the house of Baha'u'llah. And when the believers in that city were exiled to Mosul, he managed to travel to 'Akka. In spite of old age he walked all the way until he came and stood in front of the Most Great Prison eagerly waiting to behold the face of his Beloved from across the moat. But alas, because of his old age and the feebleness of his eyesight he failed to see the hand of Baha'u'llah waving from one of the windows of the barracks. This was a pitiful scene. He broke into tears which brought tears also to the eyes of the Holy Family and a few others who were watching the sad plight of that devoted believer.

Ustad Isma'il eventually succeeded in entering the prison where he stayed for a short while and attained the presence of His Lord. His usual place of residence in the Holy Land was a cave on Mount Carmel. He earned his living as a peddler, carrying around a small tray on which he set out some needles, thimbles and other trifling articles for sale. He lived in poverty, but in the utmost happiness, his heart filled with the joy of nearness to His Lord. As he wandered about with his shabby little tray, his heart was in communion with Baha'u'llah. Sometimes he would walk around the barracks in order to feel close to his Beloved. On one occasion Baha'u'llah was watching him from the prison window. He called His cook Husayn-i-Ashchi, who was a nephew of Ustad Isma'il, and asked him if he had ever seen the tray that his uncle carried around. When he replied that he had not, Baha'u'llah in an amusing tone told him that if he were to put on a pair of glasses he might see him in the distance carrying a few rusted needles placed on one side of the tray and a few rusted thimbles on the other! Baha'u'llah often praised him for his detachment from this world and his thankfulness to his Lord. [4]
Some Early Pilgrims

Trustees of God

Among all those who attained the presence of Baha'u'llah while He was in the barracks, the first two were Haji Shah-Muhammad-i-Manshadi, entitled Amin'u'l-Bayan (Trusted of the Bayan), and Haji Abu'l-Hasan-i-Ardikani, entitled Amin-i-Illahi (Trusted of God). [4]

In the early days of the Faith Haji Shah-Muhammad embraced the Cause and became an ardent believer. He first attained the presence of Baha'u'llah in Baghdad. As a result of this he became a new creation on fire with the love of Baha'u'llah, a love that sustained him throughout his life and enabled him to render notable services to His Cause. Haji Shah-Muhammad used to travel frequently from Persia to attain the presence of Baha'u'llah and receive His instructions. He would then set out to carry them out on his return. As the years went by he discovered in Haji Abu'l-Hasan-i-Ardikani (Amin-i-Illahi) a zealous and devoted co-worker. So, as he became older, he took Haji Abu'l-Hasan with him on his journeys as an assistant.

It was soon after Baha'u'llah's arrival in the Most Great Prison, around the same time that Nabil-i-A'zam was denied admittance to 'Akka by the authorities, that Haji Shah-Muhammad, accompanied by Haji Abu'l-Hasan, entered the city. The two had bought a few camels on the way and disguised themselves as Arabs seeking to sell their merchandise which was carried on the camels. This was a common scene in those days. They were not suspected of being followers of Baha'u'llah and were admitted.

They succeeded in sending a message to Baha'u'llah informing Him of their arrival and expressing their eagerness to attain His presence. Baha'u'llah allowed them to see Him in the public bath, but they were advised to show no sign of recognition. On the appointed day the two men entered the public bath. But no sooner did Haji Abu'l-Hasan behold the majestic person of Baha'u'llah than he was seized by such emotion that his body shook, and he stumbled and fell to the ground. The floor being made of stones, he injured his head very badly and had to be carried out with blood pouring on his face and body. [4]

Nabil-i-A'zam

Nabil-i-A'zam, whom we last met in an Egyptian prison, was freed and banished to Anatolia, not long after the ship which carried Baha'u'llah left Alexandria for Haifa. Thence he went to Cyprus, learnt what was happening to the Baha'is there, and then made his way to 'Akka, but due to the machinations of the Azalis he was deprived of gaining admittance to the presence of Baha'u'llah. Aqa Husayn recounts that the first time Nabil made his way into 'Akka he was spotted, intercepted and hauled before the authorities, who wanted to know what he was doing there. He said that he had come to buy provisions. But the officials forbade him to make any purchases and expelled him from the city. [3]
According to a letter written by Nabil from 'Akka to the Baha'is of Darakhsh in the province of Khurasan, he made the first attempt to enter the city around the end of October 1868. He succeeded in entering and stayed for three days but could not attain the presence of Baha'u'llah before being expelled. He retreated to the caves of Mount Carmel and roamed the countryside for about four months. But he could not endure separation from His Lord. The ardour of his love was increasing day by day until he found it impossible to remain away from the city of his Beloved. [4]

However, outside the citadel, around the district of 'Izzi'd-Din, to the north of 'Akka, he stood one day gazing at the fortress. Baha'u'llah appeared at the window, behind the bars and with the movement of His hands recognized Nabil's presence there. The same day, a prayer was revealed by the Supreme Pen in his honour. Nabil, thereafter, spent his days roaming over Mount Carmel and the Galilee, alternating his residence between Haifa and Nazareth. [3]

In about the middle of February 1869 he made his second attempt to enter the city. This time he succeeded in remaining for a longer period. He met Mirza Aqa Jan and a few other believers who had come out of the barracks to purchase provisions. But in his letter Nabil mentions that at last he achieved his heart’s desire of seeing Baha'u'llah on the 18th of Muharram 1286 (1 May 1869). [4]

The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith mentions that he also lived for a while in Hebron. Then he was summoned to 'Akka and stayed eighty-one days in the citadel. [3]

**Aqa Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Qa'ini**

Another eminent Baha'i who came to 'Akka but was recognized and expelled from the city was Mulla Muhammad-'Ali, surnamed Nabil-i-Qa'ini by Baha'u'llah. [4]

He was at one time a confidant of the Amir of Qa'inat in the province of Khurasan and frequently visited the capital. There he met Baha'u'llah in early days and they became friends. As soon as he heard of the claim of Baha'u'llah, he, without any hesitation, gave Him his allegiance, and became instrumental in leading a number of prominent people to the Faith which he himself had zealously and ardently embraced. Having become well known as a Babi he was forced to leave his native land and set out for the prison-city. Arriving there he succeeded in gaining admittance to the presence of Baha'u'llah. [3]

At first he was driven out of the city. But he made other attempts and eventually plans were made for him to enter the barracks. This he did successfully and was ushered into the presence of Baha'u'llah. The glory and majesty emanating from His person so overwhelmed Nabil-i-Qa'ini that as soon as his eyes beheld Him he fainted and fell upon the ground.

This great man, who had lived many years of his life in luxury and honour and had been held in high esteem by the people of his native town, was now living in such poverty that like Ustad Isma'il he too had to sell needles and thimbles as a peddler to the people of Nazareth. He earned his living in this way for about two years, selling to the women of Nazareth needles at the rate of three for an egg! During this time he succeeded in converting a number of her Christian citizens to the Faith. [4]
'Abdu'r-Rahim

A devoted follower of Baha'u'llah who found his way into the prison in an extraordinary fashion in the early days of Baha'u'llah's incarceration in the barracks was a certain 'Abdu'r-Rahim ... His original name was Ja'far, but when he attained the presence of Baha'u'llah he was given the name Rahim (Compassionate). Before his conversion to the Faith, 'Abdu'r-Rahim had been a fanatical Muslim. Having noticed the growth of the Faith, he once sought guidance from a local clergyman as to his attitude towards the Baha'is. 'To fight them', the clergyman said, 'is as meritorious as taking part in the Jihad (holy war), to kill them is praiseworthy in the sight of God, and to be killed is a privilege which bestows upon the individual Muslim the reward of martyrdom and entrance into the highest paradise.'

These words provoked in 'Abdu'r-Rahim a strong urge to kill some Baha'is. Armed with a weapon, he one day confronted an old believer by the name of Haji Baba, and told him in no uncertain terms that he had come to take his life because he had strayed from the path of truth and had embraced the Faith of the Baha'is.

Faced with the threat of death, Haji Baba displayed unruffled calm and spoke with tenderness such words that the heart of 'Abdu'r-Rahim was touched. Soon his mood changed. Instead of being an enemy intent upon killing, he now wanted to investigate the truth.

Haji Baba conducted 'Abdu'r-Rahim to the home of the sister of Mulla Husayn where the friends often held their meetings for teaching the Cause. That meeting with 'Abdu'r-Rahim lasted one day and one night, during which time he was most assiduously involved in discussion. At the end of that marathon meeting he recognized the truth of the Cause and became filled with such a new spirit of faith and enthusiasm that he could not rest in his native town any longer. Knowing that the Supreme Manifestation of God was on this earth he could not resist the urge to go and see Him face to face. So he set off on the long journey to attain His presence.

For six months 'Abdu'r-Rahim travelled on foot until he reached the abode of his Beloved--the prison city of 'Akka. He arrived in the early days of Baha'u'llah's incarceration in the barracks when no visitor suspected of being a Baha'i was permitted even to approach the vicinity of the prison. His arrival coincided with the period when Nabil-i-A'zam was attempting in vain to get a glimpse of his Lord. Nabil poured out his heart to 'Abdu'r-Rahim and lamented over his own inability to achieve his purpose. But 'Abdu'r-Rahim, undismayed, proceeded to attempt to circumambulate the prison.

Before undertaking such a holy mission, he decided that he must wash his clothes which were unclean, as they had been worn
throughout the journey. He washed them in the sea and waited until they were dry. When he put them on, however, he looked very odd and shabby as the clothes had shrunk and were torn.

With the utmost devotion and a heart overflowing with the love of Baha'u'llah, 'Abdu'r-Rahim approached the prison and began to circumambulate it. Then to his surprise he noticed that a hand from a window of the prison was beckoning him to come inside. He knew it was the hand of Baha'u'llah summoning him to His presence. He rushed to the gate of the prison which was guarded by soldiers. But the soldiers seemed to him to be motionless and without life; they appeared not to see him. They did not even move an eyelid as he went through the gate.

Soon 'Abdu'r-Rahim found himself in the presence of His Lord, overwhelmed by emotion and carried away into the world of the Spirit, communing with the One who was the object of his adoration and love. Baha'u'llah told him that through the hands of power and might He had temporarily blinded the eyes of the guards so that he might attain His presence as a bounty on His part. [4]

The Mufti of Akka

Another person of note was Shaykh 'Aliy-i-Miri, the Mufti of 'Akka. He was a somewhat fanatical man. But later he changed as a result of his association with 'Abdu'l-Baha. For he discovered that his own knowledge and learning was as a drop when compared with the ocean of 'Abdu'l-Baha's innate knowledge. He therefore showed signs of humility and gradually became friendly.

One day he conveyed to 'Abdu'l-Baha his desire to meet Baha'u'llah as he had some questions and wished to be enlightened. But in those days Baha'u'llah did not grant interviews to people, mainly because He did not wish to act against the orders of the Government. However, because of 'Abdu'l-Baha's pleading, Baha'u'llah gave permission and the Mufti of 'Akka attained His presence in the barracks. He was shown to his seat while 'Abdu'l-Baha stood by the door. The kitchen in which I was working happened to be opposite the room of Baha'u'llah. I could see and hear Him. The Mufti asked some questions and then the Tongue of Grandeur began to speak. At one stage when the utterances of Baha'u'llah were still continuing, the Mufti was moved to say something. 'Abdu'l-Baha gave him an emphatic and commanding signal with his hand that he should not interrupt the words of Baha'u'llah. He complied but his pride was hurt.

When the interview was over he left, 'Abdu'l-Baha accompanying him to the prison gate, but he was annoyed because of the incident, for he was well respected by the inhabitants of the town and as he walked in the bazaars people showed their respect to him and kissed his hands. At that stage he was not aware of the truth of the Cause and the greatness of its Author, therefore he was displeased with the way 'Abdu'l-Baha had bidden him be silent. But it did not take very long before he realized that in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Baha he was as utter nothingness. He used to visit the Master and partake of His knowledge and wisdom. He therefore changed his attitude. In the streets and bazaars, whenever he accompanied 'Abdu'l-Baha he always walked a few steps behind Him and was never found to be walking in front (in the East it is considered disrespectful to walk in front of an eminent person when accompanying him). [Memoirs of Ashchi from 4]
Tablets Revealed in the Barracks

Lawh-i-Salman II

This is a significant Tablet revealed in honour of Shaykh Salman ... He is the one who travelled every year between Persia and the places of Baha'u'llah's exile, carrying His Tablets for the friends to Persia and bringing their letters and messages back to Him. Salman has several Tablets in his honour, two of which are known as Lawh-i-Salman I and II. ... This Tablet was revealed in 'Akka during the early part of Baha'u'llah's imprisonment in the barracks, for in it He refers to the believers exiled to Mosul from Baghdad. This happened in the summer of 1868.

In this Tablet Baha'u'llah counsels Salman to be resigned to the decrees of God and with acquiescence accept tests and trials in His path. He describes His own sufferings, states that although every door is closed to His face and the enemies are at all times at work trying to extinguish His light, yet it shines as brilliant as the sun, shedding light upon all who are in heaven and on earth. He urges Salman to follow His example and never complain when afflicted by abasement or misery in this life, rather he should focus his attention upon God, and seek no one but Him. In one of His Tablets, Baha'u'llah cites His own celebrated utterance: 'He doeth what He pleaseth and ordaineth what He willeth.' He states that anyone who fully believes these words will remain steadfast in His Cause and will find himself possessed of such confidence and certitude that nothing in the world will make him falter or fill him with fear and dismay.

Baha'u'llah reminds Salman that those who look for glory in this world and are proud of their position in it have grievously erred, for soon the messenger of death will bring an end to all earthly attachments. [4]

Lawh-i-Rais

In the early stages of His imprisonment in the barracks and soon after the death of three of His followers, Baha'u'llah revealed the momentous Tablet of Ra'is in Persian, addressed to 'Ali Pasha, the Grand Vizir of Turkey, who was His great adversary and the one who had brought about His exile to 'Akka.

Already, a few months earlier, on His way to Gallipoli, Baha'u'llah had addressed to 'Ali Pasha a Tablet in Arabic known as the Suriy-i-Ra'is. In it He had forcefully condemned the actions of the Grand Vizir as the main instigator of His exile to the prison city.

Now, in the Lawh-i-Ra'is, the second Tablet to 'Ali Pasha, written from within the walls of the Most Great Prison, Baha'u'llah rebukes him further for his acts of cruelty and inhuman treatment.

The tone of this Tablet is at once moving and tender. In it Baha'u'llah refers to 'Ali Pasha as one who considers himself to be the most exalted among men and Baha'u'llah, the supreme Manifestation of God, as the lowest of all servants. He identifies 'Ali Pasha with those who had opposed the Manifestations of the past and had wrongly regarded them to be the cause of discord and dissension in older dispensations. He admonishes him for his ignorance and immaturity, and reveals for him his true status as a person ruled by the most abject of all created things--namely self and passion.

Baha'u'llah in that Tablet rebukes 'Ali Pasha for his cruelties in committing a number of innocent people including women and young children to the harsh life of a grim prison, expatiates on His own sufferings and those of His companions in that fortress, recounts the inhuman treatment meted out to everyone on the first night of their arrival in the barracks
when the guards had refused to give them food or water, thereby causing unbearable hardship especially to mothers and their suckling babes, relates the tragic story of those two of His disciples who as a result of the prison's loathsome conditions were found dead locked in each other's arms, extols the spirit of love and devotion which two of His followers had manifested when they were prevented by the authorities from accompanying Baha'u'llah, describes other cruelties and deprivations to which the prisoners were subjected without any justification, and asserts that no measure of persecution will ever affect the believers, for they long to offer up their lives in the path of their Lord.

Baha'u'llah informs 'Ali Pasha that if he were to become vivified by the breezes of holiness which were being wafted from the glorious court of His presence, he would become so transformed as to renounce the world and long to dwell in one of the ruined quarters of the Most Great Prison. He narrates for him a story of His childhood, portraying in a dramatic way the instability and futility of this earthly life, counsels him not to rely on his pomp and glory as they will soon be coming to an end, reveals to him the greatness of His Revelation, points out the Pasha's impotence to quench the fire of the Cause of God, denounces him for the iniquities he has perpetrated, states that because of his cruelties, the Spirit of God has lamented, the pillars of His Throne have trembled and the hearts of His loved ones been shaken. He emphatically warns him that God's chastisement will assail him from every direction and confusion overtake his peoples and government, and affirms that the wrath of God has so surrounded him that he will never be able to repent for his wrongdoings or make amends.

On this last point, Mirza Aqa Jan, Baha'u'llah's amanuensis, asked Him what would happen if, after all, 'Ali Pasha changed his attitude and truly repented. Baha'u'llah's emphatic response was that whatever had been stated in the Lawh-i-Ra'is would inevitably be fulfilled, and if all the peoples of the world were to join together in order to change one word of that Tablet, they would be impotent to do so.

Baha'u'llah in the Lawh-i-Ra'is also states that at Gallipoli He sent a verbal message to the Sultan of Turkey through the Turkish officer in charge, who had promised to convey the message. He asked the Sultan to meet Him face to face for a few minutes in order that He might demonstrate to him the authenticity of His Mission. Baha'u'llah affirmed His readiness to produce anything that the Sultan considered to be a criterion for the truth of His Revelation. Should he fulfil this criterion through the power of God, then the Sultan should free all the innocent prisoners.

Baha'u'llah explains that the only reason for this proposition was that a number of women and children were among the prisoners and had become the victims of tyranny and were afflicted with great hardship and suffering. He reiterates the basic principle that it is not befitting God to justify Himself to any man. For all the peoples of the world have been created to worship and obey Him. However, Baha'u'llah had consented in this case to allow the Sultan to seek from Him the truth of His Cause, so that the innocent might not suffer. But neither did the Sultan respond to this challenge nor did the above-mentioned officer send a report to Baha'u'llah. [4]
**Lawh-i-Fu'ad**

Another Tablet of great significance, the Tablet to Fu'ad, was revealed in 1869, soon after the premature death in Nice, France, of Fu’ad Pasha, the foreign minister of the Sultan and a faithful accomplice of the Prime Minister in bringing about the exile of Baha'u'llah to 'Akka. It was revealed in honour of one of Baha'u'llah’s most devoted apostles, Shaykh Kazim Samandar (father of the late Hand of the Cause of God Tarazu'lllah Samandari). The following passage from it contains the clear prediction of the downfall of 'Ali Pasha and the Sultan himself: "Soon will We dismiss the one who was like unto him (i.e. 'Ali Pasha), and will lay hold on their Chief (i.e. the Sultan) who ruleth the land, and I, verily, am the Almighty, the All-Compelling." Soon after the revelation of the Tablet, 'Ali Pasha was dismissed from his post, and two years later he died.

In those days the believers in Persia often referred to Baha'u'llah's newly revealed Tablets to the kings and rulers of the world, and many non-Bahais made their acceptance of the Faith conditional upon the fulfilment of the warnings they contained. [8]

**Other Tablets**

There is a Tablet revealed by Baha'u'llah in the barracks on the ninth day of the Festival of Ridvan [1].

It was probably revealed during Ridvan 1869, the first of the two Ridvan Festivals that He celebrated in the prison, for in it He mentions the names of several believers who had tried to enter 'Akka and been stopped by the authorities. [4]

It is not clear how many days 'Abdu'r-Rahim remained in the prison. However, Baha'u'llah revealed a Tablet for him while he was there. In that Tablet He confirms that He had closed the eyes of the guards so that 'Abdu'r-Rahim could enter His presence and witness the glory of His countenance. He calls him by the new name Rahim (Compassionate), showers His blessings upon him, and urges him to recount the experience of his pilgrimage to the friends on his return home. [4]

Though captive in the hands of His enemies and cut off from the outside world, the Supreme Pen wrote many more Tablets in the prison of 'Akka. In the year 1869 two important Tablets were revealed and delivered; one addressed to Napoleon III, in which B Baha'u'llah explicitly foretells his extinction; the other to Pope Pius IX. Within almost a year's time Napoleon, the most powerful monarch of his time in Europe, was driven into exile and suffered an ignominious death, while in the same year the supreme Pontiff's temporal powers which had existed for many centuries, were seized from him and his vast dominion was reduced to the tiny Vatican State. [8]

**Events in the Barracks**

**Shaykh Mahmud**
An example of those who had spiritual perceptiveness to recognize the station of Baha'u'llah without being taught or approached by the Baha'is was Shaykh Mahmud-i-'Arrabi, a native of 'Akka. Shaykh Mahmud was one of the religious leaders of 'Akka when Baha'u'llah was exiled to that city. He was born into a family of devout Muslims. When he was about ten years of age, an old Shaykh, a religious man revered by Mahmud's father, had a vision of the coming of the Person of the 'Promised One' to 'Akka. He intimated this to Mahmud in the presence of his father and told him that his father and himself were old men and would not live to see that day. But he assured Mahmud that he would then be a grown-up person and bade him watch out for the coming of the Lord. He even indicated to Mahmud that He would speak in the Persian tongue and reside in an upper room at the top of a long flight of stairs.

Some years passed and the young boy grew up into a strong man, learned and pious, well respected by the community and known as Shaykh Mahmud. But he seldom thought of the vision, and when Baha'u'llah came to 'Akka it never occurred to him that He might be the One foretold by the old Shaykh. On the contrary, he deeply resented the action of the Government in sending Baha'u'llah, whom the authorities had described as an evil man and the 'God of the Persians', to the city of 'Akka. For some time he was in a state of agitation, wanting to do something to rid the city of such a person. It must be remembered that soon after the imprisonment of Baha'u'llah in the barracks, the prison authorities relaxed some of the restrictions which had at first been imposed and strictly adhered to. For instance, they agreed to allow a small party of Baha'i prisoners to visit the city daily for shopping. At times 'Abdu'l-Baha went out with them and this is how the people of 'Akka came into contact with His magnetic personality and began to unbend towards the company of exiles.

Shaykh Mahmud was very perturbed one day to see 'Abdu'l-Baha in the Mosque. He is reported to have grabbed 'Abdu'l-Baha by the hand and exclaimed, 'Are you the son of God?' The Master with His characteristic charm pointed out that it was he who was saying it, and not 'Abdu'l-Baha. He then reminded him of the injunction of Islam as stated in one of the Traditions: 'Be charitable toward the guest even though he be an infidel.'

The impact of these words and the loving personality of the Master affected Shaykh Mahmud and he changed his attitude of aggressiveness towards Him. But being a religious leader, he could not remain indifferent to the presence of the group of exiles whom he considered ungodly. He therefore decided to put an end to all this by himself. One day he hid a weapon under his cloak and went straight to the barracks with the intention of assassinating Baha'u'llah. He informed the guards at the prison gate that he wished to see Baha'u'llah. Since he was an influential personality in 'Akka, the guards complied with his request and went to inform Baha'u'llah of the identity of the visitor. 'Tell him', Baha'u'llah is reported to have said, 'to cast away the weapon and then he may come in' (these are not the exact words of Baha'u'llah, but convey the message he is reported to have given). On hearing this Shaykh Mahmud was astounded, for he was sure that no one had seen the weapon under his cloak. In a state of utter confusion he returned home, but his agitated mind could not be at rest. He continued in this state for some time until he decided to go to the barracks again, but without any weapons this time. Being a strong man he knew he could take Baha'u'llah's life by the mere strength of his hands.
So he went again to the prison gate and made the same request to visit Baha'u'llah. On being informed of Shaykh Mahmud's desire to meet Him, Baha'u'llah is reported to have said: 'Tell him to purify his heart first and then he may come in.' Perplexed and confused at these utterances, Shaykh Mahmud could not bring himself to visit Baha'u'llah that day. Later he had a dream in which his father and the old Shaykh appeared to him and reminded him of their vision regarding the coming of the Lord. After this dream Shaykh Mahmud went to the barracks again and attained the presence of 'Abdu'l-Baha. The words of the Master penetrated his heart and he was ushered into the presence of Baha'u'llah. The majesty and glory of His countenance overwhelmed the Shaykh and he witnessed the fulfilment of the prophecy of the coming of the Lord to 'Akka. He prostrated himself at His feet and became an ardent believer.

After recognizing the station of Baha'u'llah, he arose to serve Him and His Cause. He played a significant part in assisting the believers to enter the city and then harbouring them until they were able to attain the presence of Baha'u'llah. On some occasions he even ordered ropes to be lowered so that the Baha'i visitors might be pulled up the walls which surrounded the city. Another method he sometimes employed was to leave the city and return at night accompanied by one of the believers who would be posing as a servant carrying a lantern in front of his master (in the old days there was no public lighting and therefore it was necessary to carry a lantern at night. Important people always had servants who performed this service for them.) After the believer had attained the presence of Baha'u'llah, Shaykh Mahmud would enable him to leave the city in the same manner that he had entered it. [4]

Ahmad-i-Jarrah and his brother

[A] resident of 'Akka who independently recognized the station of Baha'u'llah was Ahmad-i-Jarrah, an officer in the Turkish Army. He witnessed the majesty of Baha'u'llah in the barracks, but it was some years later that his heart was touched, when Baha'u'llah (Who was then residing in the house of 'Abbud) was taken to the Governor's house and kept in custody for about three days... [T]his humiliating treatment resulted from the murder of three Azalis in 'Akka. Ahmad-i-Jarrah was one of the officers present in the case and it was then that the majesty and glory of Baha'u'llah made a deep impression upon his soul. The mighty and powerful words He uttered on that occasion enabled Jarrah to realize that the Prisoner in his custody was not an ordinary man but One endowed with divine authority. After reading some of the Writings and becoming fully conscious of the station of Baha'u'llah, he entered the rank of the believers. [4]

Amin Effendi, a brother of Jarrah and the head of the municipality of 'Akka, also recognized the truth of the Faith and became a believer. An interesting incident happened which confirmed their faith. One day, Amin and Ahmad sought permission to attain the presence of Baha'u'llah. Permission was granted and they came. They wanted particularly to complain and seek advice about a certain superior officer by the name of Aqasi who was a bitter enemy of theirs. Before they were able to utter a word, Baha'u'llah turned to them and said, 'Praise be to God who has rescued you from the evil doings of Aqasi!' The two brothers were surprised to hear this. Only
two days later, the officer was dismissed by the order of the Sultan. A third brother of Ahmad was Khalid. He was a physician, attained the presence of Bahá’u’lláh, and was attracted to Him and to His Cause. He showed much love to the believers and attended them when they were sick. [4]

Miraculous Recovery

There was one more case of very severe illness, then miraculous recovery. Mirza Ja’far-i-Yazdi was almost given up for dead. A Christian physician, named Butrus (Peter), was called in. On feeling the pulse of the patient, he rose up angrily, protesting that he had been brought to attend a dead man. 'I am not Christ’, he said and departed. [3]

Mírzá Áqá Ján ran to Bahá’u’lláh, with word of the death. Not only had the patient ceased to breathe, but his body was already going limp. His family were gathered about him, mourning him, shedding bitter tears. The Blessed Beauty said, "Go; chant the prayer of Yá Sháfi—O Thou, the Healer—and Mírzá Ja'far will come alive. Very rapidly, he will be as well as ever.” I reached his bedside. His body was cold and all the signs of death were present. Slowly, he began to stir; soon he could move his limbs, and before an hour had passed he lifted his head, sat up, and proceeded to laugh and tell jokes. [9]

As Aqa Rida puts it, a new life was breathed into Mirza Ja'far, and he recovered. Hence Bahá’u’lláh called him Bádí’u’l-Hayat (Wondrous Life). [3]

Badi

He [Bádí’] arrived there early in 1869. ... Bádí’ seems to have entered the city without much difficulty. The watchful eyes of Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani and his accomplice Aqa Jan, who were housed above the gate of the city so that they might report to the authorities the arrival of any person they suspected of being a Bahá’í, failed to recognize the youth carrying his water skins and wearing a long cloak of coarse cotton of the type worn among the Arabs. [4]
Once inside the city, however, he was at a loss, for he had no idea how to contact his fellow believers and could not risk betraying himself by making enquiries. Uncertain as to the course he should follow, he repaired to a mosque in order to pray. Towards evening, a group of Persians entered the mosque and, to his delight, Badi’ recognized 'Abdu'l-Bahá among them. [3]

He waited till the prayer was finished and then approached the Master with great reverence and handed him a note containing two lines of a poem he had hurriedly composed on the spot. In it he had, without introducing himself, declared his loyalty to the Master and his faith in Bahá'u'lláh in moving and tender language. 'Abdu'l-Bahá warmly welcomed Badi’ and managed to take him to the barracks. [4]

In one of the Tablets written by Mirza Aqa Jan, it is stated that Badi’ was ushered into the Presence of Bahá'u'lláh alone on two occasions. No one knew what was happening in these audiences except that Bahá'u'lláh had said that God was about to create a new creation and Badi’ himself was unaware of it. In another Tablet, Bahá'u'lláh states that He created him anew with the hands of power and might and sent him out as a ball of fire. It was in the course of these two meetings that Bahá'u'lláh gave him the name Badi’ -- Wonderful. [4]

In yet another Tablet Bahá'u'lláh has testified that He took a handful of dust, mixed it with the waters of might and power and breathed into it a new spirit from His presence, adorned it with the ornament of a name (Badi’) in the Kingdom of Creation and sent it out to the King with a Book revealed by God. [4]

In a Tablets to the father of Badi’, Bahá'u'lláh recounts in moving language the exciting events which took place when his son had attained His presence. He indicates that when He desired to create a new creation He summoned Badi’ to come to His room and uttered ‘one word’ to him, a word which caused his whole being to tremble. He affirms that had it not been for the divine protection vouchsafed to him at that moment, Badi’ would have swooned away. Then the Hand of Omnipotence, according to Bahá'u'lláh’s description, began to create him anew and breathed into him the spirit of might and power. So great was the infusion of this might, as attested by Bahá'u'lláh, that single and alone he could have conquered the world through the power of God, had he been ordered to do so. [4]

Bahá'u'lláh states that when this new creation came into being he smiled in His presence and manifested such steadfastness that the Concourse on High were deeply moved and exhilarated and the voice of God was heard calling aloud: 'Hallowed and glorified be Baha for having fashioned a new and wonderful creation.' Bahá'u'lláh testifies that He disclosed to his eyes the 'Kingdom of Revelation', and as a result his whole being was filled with an ecstasy that rid him of all attachments to this world and made him arise to assist his Lord and bring victory to His Cause. [4]

That Bahá'u'lláh had enabled Badi’, while in His presence, to see the Kingdom of Revelation is a unique bounty of which we can have no understanding. The only thing we can deduce from observing this illustrious youth is that whatever had happened to him in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh, he was entirely a different person when he left. Before, he was only 'a handful of dust', but after his two audiences with Bahá'u'lláh he became a new creation into which 'the spirit of might and power' had been breathed. [4]
That Badi’ had been carried away into a world of joy and eternal ecstasy as a result of meeting Bahá’u’lláh is not in itself a unique experience. Every one of His followers with a pure heart was deeply moved and exhilarated when they came in contact with Him, like a piece of iron which becomes magnetized when in contact with a magnet. But the case of Badi was a special one. Haji Mirza Haydar-’Ali, ... has explained some of his experiences in the presence of Bahá’u’lláh in ‘Akká and made a comment about Badi’. Haji Mirza Haydar-’Ali describes the effect of being in the presence of Bahá’u’lláh when He chanted a Tablet He had revealed for him. This is the translation of some of his words:

This Tablet... was chanted by the Beauty of the All-Bountiful. What an effect it had on me! To what a world did I ascend! To what a paradise did I enter! What did I see! In what way did I hear that voice and that melody! ... These I cannot tell. I entered that Paradise which no eye had seen, and no ear had heard, nor any heart had felt. I saw the Kingdom of grandeur and majesty, and felt the might, the transcendent power, the glory, and the sovereignty of the ever-living, the ever-abiding, the incomparable God. But to speak of it, write about it, give an image or likeness of it, exalt and sanctify it, allude to it, extol and Praise it, or describe and narrate it, all these are impossible for this humble servant or anyone else in the world. We have only access to words and terms, whereas that experience and condition are exalted above all things. They cannot be put into words or described by talks. No one can interpret the inner feelings of one's conscience... But this condition remains only for a single moment. It is a fleeting experience. Its manifestation within the human being is due to a special bounty of God. Its duration, varying from the twinkling of an eye to a longer period, depends upon one's capacity to become the recipient of this bounty. The deeds and actions of the person demonstrate its existence. But it has never been heard that this condition lasted for three or four months in a person except in Badi’...[4]

The Purest Branch

On 22 June 1870, early in the evening, Bahá’u’lláh informed His son that he was not needed that day to write and that instead he could go up on the roof for prayer and meditation as was his custom [4].

Mírzá Mihdí was free, ... , to climb the stairs to the flat prison roof, a favourite place for the prisoners to go. How good it felt at the end of a hot summer's day to stand on the roof in the fresh evening air. [5]

There one gets a wonderful view of the pellucid blue of the Mediterranean, with the silhouette of Mount Carmel beyond the seascape; and to the other side lies stretched the plain of ‘Akka with the majestic peak of Mount Hermon in the background. [3]

Mírzá Mihdí loved to walk on the roof, chanting his prayers or quitely meditating. The vast evening sky sprinkled with a few early stars made the prison seem farther away and God that much closer. Mírzá Mihdí always walked carefully around the unguarded skylight—a large hole in the roof that opened above the kitchen. This evening, like so many others, Mírzá Mihdí paced back and forth on the roof’s familiar space. Feelings of joy filled his soul as he wrapped himself deeply in prayer, and as his thoughts centered on the world within, his eyes closed to the world outside. [5]
... on that fateful evening as he chanted the verses of the Qasídiy-i-Varqá’íyyih, one of Bahá’u’lláh’s most moving poems revealed in Kurdistan, he was carried away in a state of utter detachment and joy. Mirza Mihdi, pacing up and down that roof-top engrossed with his thoughts and meditations, did not notice an open skylight and plunged through it to the floor below, falling upon a crate which pierced his chest. [3]

[Skylight and the Spot where the Purest Branch fell.]

The Greatest Holy Leaf recounts: The room into which he fell had a lofty ceiling; it was the living room of the family. No one was in the room at the time, but, hearing his cries, some of the family rushed in and found him lying in a heap on the floor with the blood pouring from his mouth. [6]

He was badly wounded, and bled profusely. He was so terribly injured that they had to remove his clothes by tearing them from him. [4]

Ashchi recounts: We carried his precious person to his room and called a doctor who was an Italian, but he could not help... In spite of much pain and agony, and being weak, he warmly greeted those who came to his bedside, showered an abundance of love and favours upon them and apologized to everyone, saying he was ashamed that while they were all sitting, he had to lie down in their presence... [4]

Members of the Holy Family and some of the companions gathered around him and all were so distressed and grief-stricken that ‘Abdu'l-Bahá with tearful eyes entered the presence of Bahá'u'lláh, prostrated Himself at His feet and begged for healing. Bahá'u'lláh is reported to have said 'O my Greatest Branch, leave him in the hands of his God.' He then proceeded to the bedside of his injured son, dismissed everyone from His presence and stayed beside him for some time. [4]

Bahá'u'lláh gently asked what had caused his fall. Mírzá Mihdí answered that he had been so carried away in prayer that he had forgotten about the hole in the roof as he walked and had accidently stepped through the skylight. [5]
At Mírzá Mihdí’s bedside, Bahá’u’lláh said that He wished to be alone with His son and dismissed everyone else from His presence. When the others had gone, father and son talked for some time. No one else knew what was said, except for one thing. Bahá’u’lláh promised Mírzá Mihdí that God could heal him completely. He had only to ask.

"What do you wish?" Bahá’u’lláh said gently to His son. "Tell Me."

Despite his own pain, Mírzá Mihdí thought of all the Bahá’ís who longed to see their Lord. As he looked into his father’s loving face, the pure-hearted Mírzá Mihdí did not ask for his own healing. "I wish the people of Bahá to be able to attain Your presence," replied Mírzá Mihdí. Bahá’u’lláh accepted His beloved son’s final request. "And so it shall be," He said, "God will grant your wish." [5]

Within twenty-two hours of his fall he breathed his last. "Mihdí! O Mihdí!" Bahá’u’lláh lamented. [5]

Thus ended the life of one of whom Bahá’u’lláh states that he ‘was created of the light of Baha’, whose birth had taken place during some of the darkest hours in the history of the Faith, whose infancy had been spent within the cradle of adversity, whose soul at an early age had been set aglow with the fire of ordeal and separation, whose days of joy had been spent in exile and within the walls of a prison, and whose tragic death had clothed him with the crimson vesture of sacrifice, shedding thereby an imperishable lustre upon the Cause of his glorious Father. [4]

When the Purest Branch passed away, Shaykh Mahmud begged the Master to allow him to have the honour of washing the body and not to let anyone from the city of ‘Akká perform this service. The Master gave permission. A tent was pitched in the middle of the barracks. We placed his blessed body upon a table in the middle of the tent and Shaykh Mahmud began the task of washing it. The loved ones of God were wailing and lamenting with tearful eyes and, like unto moths, were circling around that candle which the hands of God had lighted. I (Ashchi) brought water in and was involved in washing the body. [4]

Glorified art Thou, O Lord, my God! Thou seest me in the hands of Mine enemies, and My son bloodstained before Thy face, O Thou in Whose hands is the kingdom of all names. I have, O my Lord, offered up that which Thou hast given Me, that Thy servants may be quickened and all that dwell on earth be united.

The Most Great Branch, sorely stricken by the death of His dearly-loved brother, His grief, Ashchi remarks, imprinted on His visage, was during that period walking outside the tent with rapid paces, keeping watch. [3]

The Greatest Holy Leaf recounts: As we could not leave the barracks, we could not bury our dead; nor had we the consolation of feeling that we could provide for him through others the grateful final tribute of a proper and befitting burial, as we had no means wherewith even to purchase a coffin. After some consideration and consultation among ourselves, finding that we had nothing to dispose of, and at a loss how to proceed, we told our Lord of the sad situation. He replied that there was a rug in His room which we could sell. At first we demurred, for in taking His rug we took the only comfort he had; but He insisted and we sold it. A coffin was then procured, and the remains of my deceased brother placed in it. [6]

"The death of this youngest and favourite child of a very gentle and sweet disposition—nearly broke his mother's heart. We feared for her reason. When the Blessed Perfection was told of the
condition of His wife, He went to her and said: 'Your son has been taken by God that His people might be freed. His life was the ransom, and you should rejoice that you had a son so dear to give to the cause of God.' When our mother heard these words she seemed to rally, — knelt, and kissed the Blessed Perfection's hands, and thanked him for what He had said. After that she did not shed a tear. [6]

The casket was carried high on the shoulders of men out of the barracks with utmost serenity and majesty. It was laid to rest outside 'Akká in the graveyard of Nabi Salih ... At the time of returning to the barracks an earth tremor shook the area and we all knew that it was the effect of the interment of that holy being. [4]

Nabil-i-A'zam has said that he, Siyyid Mihdiy-i-Dahaji and Nabil-i-Qa'ini were in Nazareth when the earth tremor occurred. It lasted for about three minutes and people were frightened. Later when they heard the news of the death of the Purest Branch they realized that it coincided with the timing of his burial and then they knew the reason for it. Bahá'u'lláh, in one of His Tablets referring to the Purest Branch, confirms the cause of the earth tremor in these words: When thou wast laid to rest in the earth, the earth itself trembled in its longing to meet thee. [4]

In December 1939 Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Faith, in the face of great dangers and difficulties and in the company of a few friends, with great care and with his own hands, removed the remains of the Purest Branch, together with those of his illustrious mother, from two different cemeteries in 'Akká, and at a profoundly moving ceremony on Christmas Day in the presence of a few believers, carried the caskets on his own shoulders and buried those sacred remains on the slope of Mount Carmel, adjacent to the resting place of the Greatest Holy Leaf and in the vicinity of the Shrine of the Báb. [4]

### Leaving the Barracks Prison

At last came a day, four months after the death of the Purest Branch, when the movement of troops in the Ottoman domain compelled the authorities to have access to and make use of the barracks of 'Akka. The gates were flung open and the exiles were sent to other accommodation within the city walls.

Bahá'u'lláh and His family were moved to the house of Malik, in the Fakhurah quarter, in the western part of the prison-city. The majority of the companions were lodged in a caravanserai, called Khan-i-'Avamid, close to the sea-shore. But a number of them found separate homes. Aqay-i-Kalim and his family went to live in a house within the compound of the caravanserai. The Khan-i-'Avamid or Khan al-'Umdan was built by Ahmad al-Jazzar using pillars brought from Caesarea. Its clock tower is a more modern structure, having been built to commemorate the jubilee of Sultan 'Abdu'l-Hamid. It served as the first pilgrim house of the Holy Land and many eminent Bahá'ís, including Mishkin-Qalam, Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin and Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali, resided there. 'Abdu'l-Baha frequently entertained the pilgrims there and it is probable that Bahá'u'lláh also visited it.

Bahá'u'lláh's sojourn in the house of Malik lasted three months. Then He took residence in the house of Mansur Khavvam, which was situated opposite the previous house. Here too His stay was short. His next residence was the house of Rabi'ih. But after another four months He had to move once again, this time to the house of 'Udi Khammar, which in the words of the
Guardian of the Baha'i Faith 'was so insufficient to their needs that in one of its rooms no less than thirteen persons of both sexes had to accommodate themselves'.[3]

References
[1] God Passes By
[4] Tahezadeh, Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh
[8] Taherzadeh in Bahuai World News vol. XV (Essays and Reviews)
[9] Memorials of the Faithful