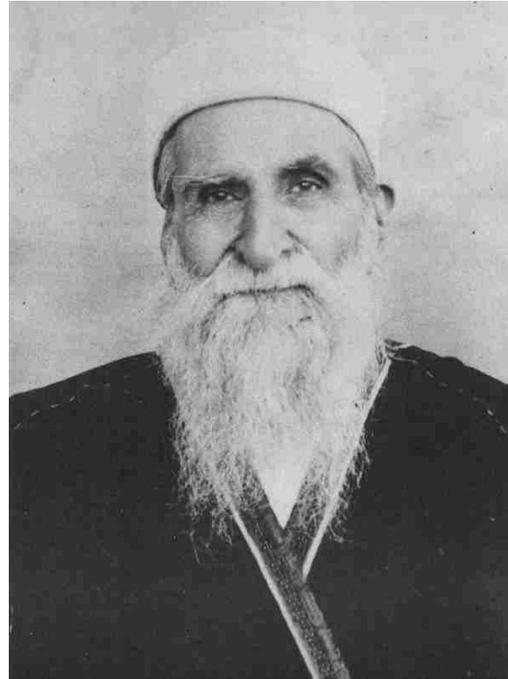


The Story of Zaynu'l-Muqarrabín

Introduction

Mulla Zaynu'l-'Abadin, given the title Zaynu'l-Muqarrabín (“Ornament of Them that Are Nigh unto God”), also called Jináb-i-Zayn, was one of the foremost early believers and one of the “Apostles of Bahá’u’lláh”. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá described him as “*one of the greatest of all Bab's companions and all the loved ones of Baha'u'llah.*” In one of His Tablets, Bahá’u’lláh revealed the following (provisional translation).

O Zaynu'l-Muqarrabín, the names of those who are mentioned in your letters have been mentioned by the Pen on High (Qalam-i-Ala), and this is out of the bounty I have for you. For instance, if the worst kind of human would today, ask you to intercede on his behalf, he will be forgiven and his name mentioned even if he is unaware of it.



Zaynu'l-Muqarrabín

The fascinating life of Jináb-i-Zayn is recorded in Persian but unfortunately little has been written in English. To remedy this here follows an attempt to share the story of the life of this eminent Baha’i, for while this is not a comprehensive account, it deserves to be told. The main source of this account is the fifth volume of *Masabih-i-Hidayat* by ‘Azizu’llah Sulaymani (in Persian). The complementary materials used from English sources come from *Memorials of the Faithful* by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Baha’u’llah – King of Glory* and *Eminent Bahá’ís at the time of Baha’u’llah* by H.M. Balyuzi, *The Revelation of Baha’u’llah* by A. Taherzadeh, *Stories from the Delight of the Hearts* by Mirza Haydar-Ali and *Nine Years in ‘Akká* by Y. Afroukhteh.

Becoming convinced of the truth of the Quran

Jináb-i-Zayn was born in May 1818 in one of the villages situated on the outskirts of Najafabad in the province of Isfahan. He was born to a religious family with his father being a Shia Mullah and the leader of a local Mosque.

As with all children in those days, Jináb-i-Zayn believed in anything that he was taught and told by the religious leaders. Something, however, changed just before turned 15 years old. He began to feel that the instructions given by religious authorities were simply not satisfactory. In fact, he embarked on a journey to rationally discover his faith. After reading the Quran several times and reflecting on its meaning, he came to an epiphany. He realized that a person's faith in a religion must be the result of inner insight and certitude and not by following a certain person and accepting everything others say. This was a unique insight as for the standard in those days, even in these days, was to blindly follow the faith, teachings, and dogmas of their forefathers.

He argued to himself that if following another person is sufficient for one's faith, then God would not punish someone who was not a believer. The non-believer had probably followed some person. If following another is a valid proof of faith, then how could he be punished for not believing? Jináb-i-Zayn understood that this line of reasoning is faulty because the Quran clearly states that if a person claims he did not believe because he followed his father, it is not accepted in the sight of God.

With this conclusion, Jináb-i-Zayn had another difficult question. What is the explanation or reason for the Quran being the truth, the Word of God? Again, he read the Quran several times and finally came across a verse stating that those who are in doubt about the validity of the Quran, let them bring forth another Surah like it. The meaning of this verse is that no one except a Manifestation of God can produce verses of such a kind. Reflecting on this verse, Jináb-i-Zayn understood that if anyone claims to be from God, they must be able to reveal texts of the same quality as that of the Quran. He also concluded that since no one has been able to do so for the past 1260 years, it is evident that the Quran must be truth. As a result of this reflection, he became convinced of the truth of the Quran as the Holy Word of God. He also realized that if anyone was fair in their judgment, they would readily accept the Quran as the Word of God.

Jináb-i-Zayn also decided that he would not to follow the general sentiments and the preaching of various religious persons. Rather he would investigate all matters and find the truth by himself. Although he had made this commitment to himself, he was still influenced by the mainstream Shia doctrines and interpretations such as the concepts and interpretations of the Day of Judgment and Resurrection.

First contact with Bábis

In 1253 his father went on pilgrimage but passed away before he reached his destination. Jináb-i-Zayn took over the role of being the Mullah of his father's mosque, as was customary. Some years after in 1260, Jináb-i-Zayn traveled Karbala and Najaf on pilgrimage. On his way, he met a certain Mullah Momen who was one of Siyyid Kazmi's disciples. Mullah Momen wished Jináb-i-Zayn good fortune and he also expressed his desire that Jinab-i-Zayn would have the honor of meeting the Exalted Siyyid (referring to the Báb) in Karbala. At that

time, some of the Bábis awaited the opportunity to meet the Báb in Karbala on His way back from the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina. However, the Báb returned to Iran by another route.

Jináb-i-Zayn met with some of these friends in Karbala. However, they did not disclose to him that the Báb had declared His Mission nor did they teach anything about the new religion. Not knowing much about this Exalted Siyyid, when he returned to his hometown he asked a Mullah about what had happened with the Báb. At this time, he was only aware that someone had claimed to be the Qaim but did not know who it was, what He had said nor seen any proofs. He only knew that the claim of the Báb had been examined by the Ulama but rejected as false. Jináb-i-Zayn did not give the matter much thought nor did he discuss it further with anyone.

In 1267 he heard that a visiting youth (Mullah Mohammad) gave sermons that were contrary to what was usually preached at the mosques. In one instance, he gave a sermon until one of the attendants told him to come down so their regular Mullah could give his traditional sermon on ablution, fasting, and similar topics. This youth told the attendant; "Pity you that you in your fifties you have still not learned how to perform your ablutions. What then about more important matters?"

Jináb-i-Zayn had as the policy of allowing visiting Mullahs to give sermons at his mosque. Accordingly, when this youth asked to give a sermon, Jinab-i-Zayn agreed. He expected the youth to give a traditional sermon of Shaykhi topics. However, the sermon was about a tradition (hadith) on the development of our inner selves. Jináb-i-Zayn found the sermon to be very sweet and listened attentively. After the evening prayer, the youth gave another sermon but this time on the topic of knowing God. Again, Jináb-i-Zayn enjoyed it very much. After the sermon, Jináb-i-Zayn had a conversation with the youth and as they were about to end their conversation, Jináb-i-Zayn asked the youth to pray for him (as was customary in those days).

This youth, Mullah Muhammad, responded with "the best prayer is to inform you of a big event that you are unaware of." Jináb-i-Zayn said, please go ahead. Mullah Muhammad continued: "That person whom I know to be good, you do not know." Jináb-i-Zayn responded: "I have no issues with anyone. Any matter that I hear, I will put it to my consideration. If I deem it to be true, I will accept it. If not, I will reject it without protesting."

Mullah Muhammad then told Jináb-i-Zayn that the One Whose advent all are waiting for has come. At that moment Jináb-i-Zayn became shocked as if he had been shaken to the core of his being. He became confused as if he had lost his mental balance and his mind overflowed with superstitious thoughts from traditional Shia doctrine.

Jináb-i-Zayn asked "HOW?" The youth answered, "there is no how He has appeared." Jináb-i-Zayn then said that the advent has numerous signs. The youth asked, what signs do you want? Jináb-i-Zayn said that the antichrist has to surface first. The youth replied, "This is true, he has surfaced and it is Haji Mirza Aqasi (the *Sadr-i Aazam* or prime minister of Iran) who sees himself as a Sufi leader and a guide but in reality, manipulates both the king and the people."

Jináb-i-Zayn said that the antichrist has only one seeing eye. The youth explained that Haji Mirza Aqasi was just like that. He had no truth seeing eye as he did not see the truth but his eye of falsehood was wide open. Jináb-i-Zayn continued saying that the antichrist will bring both heaven and hell (the tradition states that those who follow the antichrist will go to hell-fire and those who reject him will be rewarded with heaven). The youth said that Haji Mirza Aqasi had both; the heaven was all the villages and water sources he owned and the hell-fire were all the fiery cannons he produced. It is related that Haji Mirza Aqasi had a great love for cannons and was in the business of manufacturing many cannons.

In the midst of this conversation, Jináb-i-Zayn became upset and raised his objection “what are these words you are saying?” The youth, responded back quite agitated and exclaimed, “how long will you be blinded by the veil? Forty Mujtahids have sacrificed their lives in the path of the Báb and you have not awakened still.”

Jináb-i-Zayn was bewildered, confused and a thousand thoughts swirled in his mind. He started to reflect deeply on what he had heard. He realized that the antichrist must have a symbolic meaning and not be taken literally. The Shia doctrine says that the antichrist has one blind eye and a seeing eye in the middle of his forehead, that he would be riding on a donkey so large that the distance between its ears is mile long, and that every hair of the body of the donkey plays a different tune when moved by the breezes of the wind.

He was thinking, who in their right mind would name their son antichrist (Dajjal). Second, if the antichrist appears with all the characteristics that have been ascribed to him, everyone will readily identify him as the antichrist and reject him. This did not make sense to Jináb-i-Zayn because, as he understood, the purpose of the antichrist is to fool the people. So, if the antichrist was as described, then who would be fooled or tested? Despite this realization, Jináb-i-Zayn was still confused. On one hand, he still had lingering superstitious beliefs that stopped him from accepting the news he just had heard. On the other hand, he had heard sound and reasonable evidence but no proofs had been put forward.

Before the youth left for the evening, he asked his hosts to inform him if he hears anyone speaking about him as a Bábí. Not long after a friend of Jináb-i-Zayn, by the name of Mirza Ashraf-i-Shahid, who later became a believer and a martyr in Isfahan, told Jináb-i-Zayn that he overheard someone at the public bath referring to the youth (Mullah Muhammad) as a Bábí. On hearing this, Mullah Muhammad quickly left the village.

Dream of the Báb

Jináb-i-Zayn was perplexed. He had questions but did not know where to find the answers. In those days, as Bábís were constantly persecuted and martyred, few deemed it wise to proclaim their Faith. Jináb-i-Zayn did not know of anyone who was a Bábí, neither could he ask anyone if they knew of any Bábí.

Jináb-i-Zayn himself explained the following. "In this perplexing situation, with all the doors being closed and my wish [to know the truth] not granted, I sat in a dark room. I started to pray to God saying the following. 'God, you know I am looking for the truth but do not know where to go or from whom to ask. Open a door and show me the way. Turn my anxiety to tranquillity and my doubt to certitude because I have abandoned two things. One is to look at the peoples and what they say. If there are a hundred Mujtahids who unanimously deny, I cannot follow them, and if they unanimously accept, I cannot follow them either because I know my personal responsibility. I will be questioned in the end, not them. Another thing is that if I hear that the rules and ordinances of Islam have changed or been renewed, I see no reason to deny it. If He is right, then change is right and if he is not from you [God], then we will not follow him, even if he says what the Quran says.'"

"Then I fell asleep. I dreamt I was sitting in a room and a lamp was lit on the right side. Suddenly His eminence the Báb entered the room and sat near the lamp. I was seated a few steps from Him. Reza [someone Jináb-i-Zayn knew from his village] sat very humbly behind me. I asked meekly about the claim that was put forth. What was the proof of that claim? I did not see or understand. With His blessed finger, He pointed to the lamp and said; "This light being light, what reason should it present except its effulgence? This same light is its proof."

From these words Jináb-i-Zayn understood that nobody expected someone with a commercial background, as the Báb had, to appear with such depth of knowledge. Rather they had expected someone from an Islamic school to appear. Furthermore, Jináb-i-Zayn understood that the books and verses of the Báb are the proof of His claim. Jináb-i-Zayn continued his description of that dream.

"I said that our Imam has signs, referring to the tradition stating that the Promised One would have a birthmark on His cheek. He quickly put His finger towards His birthmark and said: "this is the birthmark". After that, He took off His turban, and a white line in the shape of a little less than a half circle was visible. I had not heard nor seen anything in any tradition of such a sign to be on the Promised One. However, I said, "our Imam was the son of someone." This refers to the expectation of the physical appearance of the son of the eleventh Imam and the Báb not being that son. He continues; "In what way has this appeared? He said; elements of the air went to the air, and dust to dust, and water to water, fire to fire. Now I am."

Jináb-i-Zayn asked what had happened to the meaning of the tradition that states, "God would enrich everybody out of His bounty." Jináb-i-Zayn had understood an interpretation of the tradition that when the Qaim appears, He would impart so much knowledge and understanding to the believers that they would not need to ask any questions. The Bab smiled and said, "nobody except one person has asked this question, and now you ask it!" The Bab then rose and pointed in the direction of Shiraz and said that a banner had been raised and a group of people has gathered to assist Him and He is joining them there.

Jináb-i-Zayn woke up feeling like had been awake the whole time. He was thinking about the white line and the meaning of the reference to the four elements (air, dust, water and fire).

As Jináb-i-Zayn believed, according to the current understanding of his time, the body of the holy Imams would never disintegrate or decompose and he had not considered the two stations of the Imams (physical and spiritual).

The meetings

Jináb-i-Zayn was in deep thought and confused about what he had experienced. His state of confusion was visible to others. Through a friend, he was informed that there is a person who has more information about this new faith. Jináb-i-Zayn was interested and together with a trusted friend, they secretly went on foot to meet this person.

The conversations they had were about knowing God and various interpretations of different traditions but not directly about proofs of the new faith. However, their host said something that agreed with Jináb-i-Zayn very much.

He said that if a person meditates and reflects with fair judgment on two matters, he would easily understand them. One is the reason for believing in the proof of the truth of religion. If one sees the same reasons, signs and proofs in the next Manifestation, he must accept the new religion. The second concerns why people deny a new Faith. Every Prophet has informed their own people of the coming of another Manifestation and has given them signs, but still, they have not believed. They have not only denied the new Manifestation but also persecuted Him. If one reflects on this matter with a fair mind, one will readily see that the reason for rejection has been the lack of understanding of the meaning of the Words of the Prophets of God regarding the next Manifestation. These people have not understood and the religious leaders have interpreted the Word of God in accordance with their own wishes, needs, and interest. It is, therefore, a limitation of those who interpret rather than lack of a proofs being fulfilled. If one does not understand the signs, one has to humbly ask the source, the Manifestation of God so that by His explanations, matters become clear.

Accepting the Truth

The next day, Jináb-i-Zayn went to another meeting with Bábis. When they were there, a young man wearing clothes common for a public servant entered. After a while, he asked Jináb-i-Zayn what he was seeking. Jináb-i-Zayn responded “the truth”. The meeting continued with general discussions until it was over. Upon leaving, Jináb-i-Zayn and his friend were invited to come back again. The next day they found the same youth, named Mirza Sulayman, sitting at the head of the room. As time passed, Jináb-i-Zayn told his friend that these people are Bábis but we are not. We still have to honor our own obligations (referring to the Muslim evening obligatory prayer). Jináb-i-Zayn had a “muhr” (a piece of clay used to put your forehead on when praying during the obligatory prayer) in his pocket that he reached for. His friend said that there is still time to midnight and that they can pray later.

Meanwhile, the owner of the house brought out a piece of paper and handed it to Mirza Sulayman who took it and started to read. As he finished reading the first verse and started to read the second, Jináb-i-Zayn put the “muhr” back in his pocket.

Jináb-i-Zayn thought to himself that he had believed in Islam because of the verses of Quran being the proof of its validity. He said to himself that the verse he just heard was from the same source as that of the Quran. If this verse is not a holy verse, then he would have to deny the Quran. If this is the case, then Islam itself is false and then, what would be the meaning of saying the obligatory prayer? But if this verse is proof, then we have to follow this new Messenger of God and what He says. Before we know what that is, we are not obliged to say the obligatory prayer. Naturally, He has come with new laws and ordinances as it is stated in the Quran. Logic dictates this as well. If the old laws and ordinances would not be changed, then the new faith is without power and therefore, what would be the point of a new Manifestation? Jináb-i-Zayn was convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt, of the truth of the Quran. No one had been able to produce anything like it for the past 1200 years. Now someone has. Jináb-i-Zayn was thinking that, if he rejects this, then he has to reject the Quran. If he accepts the Quran, he has to accept this. He found himself having no recourse except accepting this new faith. He realized that all his beliefs regarding the signs of the coming of the Qaim were superstitious and that he had not grasped their real meaning.

Jináb-i-Zayn told the youth, Mirza Sulayman, about his dream of the Báb. Mirza Sulayman confirmed that the dream was true. He explained that the late Shaykh Ahmad talked about a tradition from Imam Sadiq, which he interpreted to mean the Promised One would have a line on the head. Mirza Sulayman then continued to recount that once, he had the honor of being in the presence of the Báb when He was incarcerated in Mah-Ku. He said: “I saw things that would make me wonder but I restrained myself. For instance, someone came to visit the Báb and the Báb would ask of his name. I said to myself, how come the Promised One does not know the name of the person and is asking for it? Then after some hours the Báb would ask, “what did you say your name was?” I was shocked as forgetfulness is not a sign of a Manifestation. As I was in thought, I saw that He put down His pen. He then removed His turban. I saw a line on that blessed head. As I had seen that tradition and the interpretation of Shaykh Ahmad but not the head of the Báb before, I was ashamed of my thoughts. I left the room but He called me back and told me to sit down. He then repeated the same tradition and explained that the tradition refers to the same line. I was even more ashamed.”

Jináb-i-Zayn left the village and on his way back, they stayed at the friend’s home. He saw someone busy with transcribing a book. He asked about the book and was told that it was about the signs of the Qaim by Shaykh Ahmad. Jináb-i-Zayn became very glad, as he was curious about what Shaykh Ahmad had said about this topic. Jináb-i-Zayn had not been a Shaykhi and therefore, was not acquainted with the work of Shaykh Ahmad. Jináb-i-Zayn

looked at the book and as he was reading, he came across the same tradition and interpretation about a line on the head of the Qaim.

Jináb-i-Zayn also looked for commentaries in the traditions about the Qaim being the son of the eleventh Imam, which was referred to his dream of the Báb. The Báb had given him the explanation that *"elements of the air went to the air, and dust to dust, and water to water, fire to fire. Now I am"*. However, Jináb-i-Zayn had not understood what that meant. In this book, Jináb-i-Zayn read about the dual station of Manifestations, about the true or real station of Manifestations of God and the station of the body or the physical. The explanation clarified that the physical body will decompose after its death and all its elements return to their original state, which is from dust to dust. The explanation continued to clarify the issue with the example of a tradition ascribed to Imam Jafar Sadiq (the sixth Imam). Imam Jafar Sadiq had received a question about what would be found if they had opened the casket of Imam Ali. The reply was that if it had been opened shortly after his death, they would find the body of Imam Ali but if it would be opened today, they would not find his body in it. Shaykh Ahmad had interpreted this to mean that there are two stations, one original and one physical. With death, the original or essence remains but the physical body will decompose. As Jináb-i-Zayn was reading these explanations, he understood the explanation he had received in his dream and everything became clear.

First Burst of Oppression

Jináb-i-Zayn had returned home after these life-changing events. 'Abdu'l-Bahá explains, *"He rid himself of all impending veils; his doubts dispelled, he began to extol and glorify the Beauty promised from of old. In his own home, and at Isfahan, he became notorious for declaring far and wide that the advent of the long-desired One had come to pass."*

Shortly after, Mirza Sulayman came to visit Najafabad. As was customary in those days, Mullahs, businessmen, and others from the village come together to meet and converse with educated visitors. Those present all agreed that Mirza Sulayman was a wise and knowledgeable person. Some understood the message he so subtly delivered and become believers. However, others complained to the mayor who ordered the arrest of Mirza Sulayman. As he had already left the village, Jináb-i-Zayn and some of the newly converted friends were arrested but released after paying a fine.

'Abdu'l-Bahá writes further, *"By the hypocrites, he was mocked, cursed and tormented. As for the people, "the mass, as a snake in the grass," who had worshiped him before, now rose up to do him harm. Every day brought on a fresh cruelty, a new torment from his oppressors. He endured it all and went on teaching with great eloquence. He remained staunch, unmoved, as their wrath increased. In his hands he held out a full cup of Divine glad tidings, offering to all who came that heady draught of the knowledge of God. He was utter without fear, knew nothing of danger, and swiftly followed the holy path of the Lord."*

Seeking the Successor of The Báb

Jináb-i-Zayn asked some of the Bábis about the successor of the Báb. He was simply informed that Azal had been appointed as successor but was not given any further explanations as to why. Therefore, Jináb-i-Zayn wished to meet Azal. Rumours were that Azal was somewhere in the Baghdad area but did not grant anyone permission to visit him. Nevertheless, Jináb-i-Zayn traveled to Baghdad in hope of being granted a visit. Upon arriving, he could not find Azal (this was at the time the Blessed Beauty had retreated to the mountains of Kurdistan). Having failed to find him, Jináb-i-Zayn left for Karbala where he met Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani. Jináb-i-Zayn notes that Siyyid Muhammad considered himself a follower of Azal and considered his own station to be above other Bábis.

Turmoil in Isfahan and Najafabad

While Jináb-i-Zayn was in Iraq, some troublesome events took place in his home village. The Mujtahid together with some Siyyids and other village people had gone to Jináb-i-Zayn's home in search of proof of him being a Bábí (to find Writings of the Báb). They did not find any evidence but plundered his home and destroyed his house. Some of the Bábis were taken as prisoners and sent to Isfahan.

The Mujtahid of Najafabad requested the mayor, Cheraq Ali Khan, to approve the execution of the Bábis on the grounds that they were followers of Jináb-i-Zayn. The mayor asked for Jináb-i-Zayn but was told that he had left for Baghdad. The Mujtahid proposed that they bring back Jináb-i-Zayn. However, the mayor did not agree and said, *"I am very surprised by your suggestion. You want us to send someone to Baghdad, a place where they can openly say they are Bábis without being bothered, to bring back Jináb-i-Zayn without even knowing if he is a Bábí or not?"*

The Mujtahid failed to achieve his objectives but had to resolve the matter of the Bábis under his arrest. As the mayor did not help him, he sought the aid of the Mullah of Isfahan. The Mullah was convinced to issue a "fatwa" that decreed the execution of the Bábis or rather "the followers of Jináb-i-Zayn" as they saw them. It happened, however, that at about the same time the "fatwa" was issued, the mayor (Cheraq Ali Khan) had been relieved of his duties and replaced by a certain Hamza Mirza. The Mujtahid, therefore, went to the new mayor, seeking the fatwa to be carried out. This new mayor was not immediately forthcoming with a decision and wanted to hear both sides of the argument. Two of the Bábis were brought for questioning but no proof or even signs of disrespect or infidelity were found. After another round of questioning, the mayor revoked the fatwa and ordered the release of the Bábis.

Jináb-i-Zayn, having failed to attain his objective in Iraq, headed back to Iran. On his way from Karbala, he met a Bábí who informed him of the events that had recently taken place in Najafabad and Isfahan. Jináb-i-Zayn realized that his return would worsen the situation for himself and anyone associated with him. Realizing this, he returned to Iraq and resided near the Kazimain area of Baghdad (the Shrines of two Imams in Iraq).

By this time the Blessed Beauty had returned from His seclusion in the mountains. Jináb-i-Zayn was invited to meet with Him and be honored by being in His Presence for about two hours. This was the first time Jináb-i-Zayn saw the Blessed Beauty but he was not yet aware of the Station of Bahá'u'lláh. Jináb-i-Zayn was still looking for the successor of the Báb and therefore sought Bahá'u'lláh's advice. He asked that if someone is seeking Azal, should he persist in trying or wait and be patient. The Blessed Beauty suggested waiting and having patience.

Teaching in Najafabad and Isfahan

Not long after, Jináb-i-Zayn left Baghdad for Isfahan. In Isfahan, he met and became friends with Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani (who later became the Antichrist of the Bahá'í Revelation). Jináb-i-Zayn soon noticed that something was not right with Siyyid Muhammad. For instance, Siyyid Muhammad would say that sometimes Manifestations of God forget things and that they are incapable of performing miracles. Furthermore, he made it clear that he considered himself to be the highest leader second to Azal. It was also clear that he disliked Bahá'u'lláh. However, Siyyid Muhammad soon moved to Baghdad.

Not long after Siyyid Muhammad left Isfahan, Jináb-i-Zayn received a Tablet from Bahá'u'lláh. This Tablet moved Jináb-i-Zayn greatly and he wrote back with some questions. The Blessed Beauty responded to Jináb-i-Zayn's. Upon reading this Tablet, Jináb-i-Zayn understood the Station of the Blessed Beauty and as soon as he heard the news of the Declaration of the Baha'u'llah, he accepted His claim.

Mirza Haydar-Ali, a friend of Jináb-i-Zayn, tells the following story.

"In Isfahan, I spent most of my time in the presence of Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin. We used to go to distant and desolate places far from the tumult of the towns and villages, just to be together, study the Writings, chant prayers, and discuss the Cause of God. These moments of joy kept us alive, but we longed to teach and make His Name known in any way we could. We tried different methods of approach. We went to an Indian who claimed to have some medical knowledge, and Jináb-i-Zayn opened the discussion by saying,

"I feel a painful sensation in my heart. I know of no physician who can help me."

"What is the cause?" asked the physician.

Jináb-i-Zayn replied, "A few days ago, I was walking down the street when suddenly I beheld a strange sight. Some people, held captive and helpless in the hands of a savage mob, were being tortured and mercilessly persecuted. I was so disturbed and alarmed that, ever since then, I have felt this pain in my heart." Then Jináb-i-Zayn went on to tell the Indian doctor about the Revelation of the Bab, His tragic history, and His Writings."

Renewed Persecutions

The Plot to Arrest the Bábis

Not long after, Bahá'u'lláh in a Tablet addressed to His courier (Shaykh Salman) conveyed to Jináb-i-Zayn that he should not be afraid of the people but rather be patient. When Jináb-i-Zayn received this message the situation was very calm in Isfahan and the reason for the message not immediately apparent. It would not be long, however, before Jináb-i-Zayn understood.

As it happened, two persons in Najafabad had a dispute over a piece of land. They agreed to take the matter to Shaykh Muhammad-Baqir in Isfahan. Bahá'u'lláh later gave Shaykh Muhammad-Baqir the name "the wolf" and addressed His Tablet "The Epistle to the Son of the Wolf" to his son.

The Siyyid who was representing one of the parties in this conflict was an avid opponent of the Bábis and saw an opportunity to initiate fresh persecutions. Using the legal case at hand as the pretence, he gathered a number of Siyyids who were all ill-willed against the Bábis and they went together to Isfahan. While in Isfahan to discuss with Shaykh Muhammad-Baqir on legal matters, they raised the issue of the Bábis of Najafabad. They claimed that a group had under the leadership of Jináb-i-Zayn, betrayed Islam by becoming Bábis.

Shaykh Muhammad-Baqir did not require much convincing. He sent for the Mujtahid of Najafabad and together they went to Mullah Nasrullah who was the aid of the Governor in Isfahan (named Jalal al-Dawlih). They were granted a meeting with the Governor and demanded that all Bábis be executed and their properties confiscated. The Governor agreed. However, they had to first arrest the Bábis without giving them a chance to escape or flee the city so they devised a plan.

They decided to call a certain number of Najafabad inhabitants to Isfahan for tax related purposes. They then composed a list consisting of the names of all the Bábis living in Najafabad mixed with names of ordinary Muslims. This list was sent to Najafabad with the instructions to gather these persons and send them to Isfahan.

The chief of Najafabad received the list and asked those listed to be informed about the matter. However, the individual delivering the list insisted that they wait until the next day. Suspensions were raised and one of the persons present at this meeting informed Jináb-i-Zayn. They realized that they were in imminent danger and needed to hide in the mountains or travel to Isfahan.

Jináb-i-Zayn felt that Isfahan was the better choice. If something would happen to them while hiding in the mountains, no one might ever know. Therefore, it would be better to hide in the city. There they went and stayed at the home a friend. Some Bábis managed to escape while others were arrested and taken to Isfahan. In Isfahan, the names on the list were read. Every time the name of a Bábi came up, the wolf would curse them and they

were arrested. Someone present asked the wolf why he is cursing the person when nothing had been proven yet. The wolf responded that their infidelity was already proven to him.

The Torture of the Bábis

These Bábis met a very cruel fate. Some of them were put in prison. One of them was executed on the insistence of the wolf. Two of the Bábis had their ears cut off and two others were severely beaten by soldiers. One of the Bábis was hung upside down by his feet. He begged for someone to cut his head off and relieve him of the pain but no one intervened. As this torture of the Bábis was going on, news arrived that the Governor had been replaced. Before the Governor left his office, he divided the remaining Bábis into three groups. One group of Bábis was given to savage villagers who were told they were free to punish the prisoners as they saw fit. These villagers were extremely cruel. They took them back to Najafabad. Two of the prisoners had their ears cut off and were mounted on a donkey. One had his nose pierced and had a ring put in. These prisoners were then paraded in the village where people would throw stones at them and hurl verbal abuses.

The second group was sent to Tehran with extremely cruel soldiers. One of the prisoners died on the way to Tehran from repeated beatings and mistreatment. Another died in a prison in Tehran. The rest were released after some time and returned to Isfahan.

The third group of prisoners remained in the prison of Isfahan. Of this group three were later beheaded.

While these events took place, Jináb-i-Zayn and his friend were hiding in Isfahan. The officials tried to find Jináb-i-Zayn by conducting a house search in his home in Najafabad. They found a copy of the Book of Certitude, the Bayan and some prayers and Writings transcribed in the handwriting of Jináb-i-Zayn. All of these were taken to Isfahan. The wolf was very disappointed with the failure of finding Jináb-i-Zayn but was consoled by others who reassured him that they would find him once the new Governor was in office.

Leaving Iran

Rumours spread that they would conduct a house-to-house search in Isfahan to find Jináb-i-Zayn. The owner of the house in which Jináb-i-Zayn and his friend were hiding, became nervous and suggested that Jináb-i-Zayn and his friend find another place until the search had been completed. This situation forced Jináb-i-Zayn and his friend to spend time in some ruins on the outskirts of the city. Once there, they realized that they could not enter the city again because of orders that every person entering the city must show proper documentation. If they attempted to re-enter, they would surely be recognized and arrested. Therefore, they went to a village close by called Dolatabad. Mirza Kazim, a Bahá'í and the brother of the two illustrious martyrs of Isfahan (the King and the Beloved of the Martyrs), lived in this village. They consulted him and came to a decision that the best recourse would be to smuggle Jináb-i-Zayn and his friend to Isfahan, probably to get

necessary provisions before leaving. They entered the city by night on donkeys and a few days later, the King of Martyrs helped them leave Isfahan. He gave them provisions to travel to Baghdad (probably sometime in 1864). Jináb-i-Zayn had now left Iran and would never return again.

It is worth noting that the religious leaders of Isfahan truly hated Jináb-i-Zayn. Although Jináb-i-Zayn had left Isfahan and Iran altogether, they had not forgotten him. Every day a person would stand in the market square of Isfahan and with a loud and clear voice, curse Abu-Bakr, Omar, Uthman (the first three Caliphs who are considered to have gone against the last Will of Prophet Muhammad by Shia Muslims), Yazid and Shemr (they were responsible for the Martyrdom of Imam Husayn). At the end, he would add, *“upon Mulla Zaynul-Abadin, Babi-i-Najafabad, also be a curse”*.

Sojourn in Baghdad

Jináb-i-Zayn arrived in Baghdad when Bahá'u'lláh was in Adrianople. During Jináb-i-Zayn's sojourn in Baghdad, he made a pilgrimage to the House of Bahá'u'lláh. This deed pleased Bahá'u'lláh very much. The Blessed Beauty revealed a Tablet in which He extols this act of pilgrimage. Bahá'u'lláh states that this deed of Jináb-i-Zayn radiates as bright as the sun among his other deeds. Bahá'u'lláh further states that with this act, all his other deeds were fulfilled and accepted in the eyes of God.

Jináb-i-Zayn met and introduced Mishkín-Qalam to the Faith who later became a believer in Adrianople when he met the Blessed Beauty. Jináb-i-Zayn and Mishkín-Qalam would later be neighbors in 'Akká.



House of Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdad after restoration in early 1930's.

Life in Mosul

Extreme hardship and Unity

In 1868 all Bahá'ís living in Baghdad were arrested and exiled to Mosul. Taherzadeh writes that these *"refugees were subjected to severe hardships in Mosul. When they arrived, some of the inhabitants crowded onto the rooftops and threw stones at them. The shopkeepers refused to sell them food and no one would give them shelter. It took a long time for them to settle in Mosul."*

Mosul is on the path from Iran to 'Akká and as such, all believers who had received permission to go on pilgrimage to 'Akká traveled via Mosul. These pilgrims brought gifts such as goods and clothing from Bahá'u'lláh Himself to the friends in Mosul on their way back to Iran. The friends in Mosul were in such poverty that the Blessed Beauty wished to alleviate some of their difficulties. The King of Martyrs and the Beloved of Martyrs also greatly assisted with financial aid. Even with this aid, the friends lived in utter poverty.

Despite extreme difficulties and the scarcity of funds, the believers in Mosul had strong bonds of friendship and unity. Balyuzi writes that *"the Baha'is in Mosul, under the leadership and guidance of Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin, soon became a model Baha'i community reflecting something of the spirit of the 'Akká community."* They were unified. Even if the situation was very difficult, the stream of Tablets from the Blessed Beauty revealed in their honor washed their hearts of all sorrows.

Mirza Haydar-Ali, as he was passing through Mosul, recounted that the *"friends in Mosul, together with the person of Jináb-i-Zayn, made one remember the days spent in Bahá'u'lláh's holy presence in the holy city of 'Akká. These believers were living in the utmost unity and harmony. They vied with each other in their efforts and their services. They had no desire except first, to gain the good pleasure of the Blessed Beauty, and secondly, to attain His presence."*

Chief of the Mosul Community

Jináb-i-Zayn shouldered two main responsibilities while in Mosul. First and foremost was his role in maintaining the unity of the friends. If any problems arose Jináb-i-Zayn would mediate between the parties and remind them of who they were and why they were in Mosul. 'Abdu'l-Bahá writes, that *"when the believers were taken the prisoner in 'Iráq and banished to Mosul, Jináb-i-Zayn became their chief. He remained for some time in Mosul, a consolation to the rest, working to solve their many problems. He would kindle love in people's hearts, and make them kind to one another."*

Jináb-i-Zayn had a deep understanding of the Faith and could explain, encourage and inspire the friends. It is no wonder that he was the chief of the Bahá'ís in Mosul. An example of his understanding and beautiful logical reasoning is seen in one of his letters. Jináb-i-Zayn received a message from a friend in Najafabad expressing the extreme difficulty of being

united and in good cheer when they are constantly under the pressure of their persecutors. He and the other believers were finding it increasingly hard to keep their faith in God as the All-Powerful when He was not seen to doing anything to help.

Jináb-i-Zayn replied that our lack of understanding does not mean the absence of the Will of God. Difficulties and sufferings have always been the way by which God has chosen to raise His Cause. He then proceeded to explain that disunity, doubtfulness, and anxieties have no place in the hearts of the believers. Rather should this serve to strengthen their resolve. If they fear that calamities should befall them, they should know that this cup is not for everyone. This is a cup only offered for the lovers and pure in heart and that it is an honor to be offered the opportunity to make a sacrifice.

Jináb-i-Zayn continued to say that we have so little information about events taking place in this world. How can we know what is happening in all the divine worlds of God when we are not even aware of the events of this world?

He then refers to the question as for why God is not taking revenge and says that God will not forgive any man's oppression as He has said in the Hidden Words. However, everything has its set time and place. Jináb-i-Zayn asks the writer, have you not read the Lawh-i-Rais? Did not all that was foretold in that Tablet come to light? Then Jináb-i-Zayn says that you should not be in a hurry for God is in no hurry.

In those days when someone committed an injustice, one would want justice to take place quickly as the perpetrator could simply flee the town and never be found again. In reference to this line of thinking, Jináb-i-Zayn writes that God is not worried about events slipping out of His hands. He can do whatever He wants, whenever He wants and as long as the Proof is not concluded, God will not extend any punishment.

The concept of a proof being concluded (hujjat taman shavad) refers to the idea that first people must be given a fair chance to understand the Message and choose if they wish to follow or reject it. As there are many misunderstandings and false information about the Faith, it is not possible for people to fairly investigate and understand what the Religion is. Therefore, God is waiting until the proof is concluded.

Jináb-i-Zayn writes that the punishment will come and if you wish to see it, gird up the loins of perseverance and be patient. Then he reminds his friend that had we (the Bahá'ís) from the beginning obeyed and done what was the Will of God and what had been asked of us, the whole world would have become believers by now. However, the truth has not been concluded as the peoples have not heard the truth but been fed misinformation, lies, and slander. How could the people recognize the Truth in the midst of all this and be punished for not accepting it? Now is the time when the Bahá'ís must show good deeds, be steadfast and show praiseworthy character, to serve their fellow human beings so their actions and deeds can be a guide to those who seek God and thereby provide a conclusive proof.

Transcribing Tablets

His second responsibility was to make copies of Tablets of the Blessed Beauty. It was common that friends from various places would ask questions of the Blessed Beauty and Bahá'u'lláh would reveal Tablets in which their answers were provided. Jináb-i-Zayn would make one copy (transcription) for each person mentioned. As such, Balyuzi writes, *“these Tablets could be distributed more widely and each of those to whom a Tablet was addressed could have a copy.”*

Longing for the Sacred Threshold

Jináb-i-Zayn longed to be allowed to leave Mosul and settle in 'Akká and be closer to the Blessed Beauty. One day in September or October of 1885, Jináb-i-Zayn received a Tablet saying that (provisional translation):

O Zayn! Your longing to attain the Presence of the Sacred Threshold hath been mentioned. God Willing, He will draw you closer to Him and grant you the best of both worlds. If conditions allow, if the believers of that land [Mosul] will not be disunited, the journey is with happiness, and joy, then come.

When Jináb-i-Zayn received this Tablet, he prepared himself for moving to 'Akká. He finally managed to enter the Presence of the Sacred Threshold in 1303 (most likely in 1886) and moved his permanent residency to 'Akká. He also managed to have his wife and children moved to 'Akká shortly after.

Not long after, the Blessed Beauty revealed a Tablet addressed to the friends in Mosul. They were told that it was time for the friends to gradually and with utter wisdom move out of Mosul and find a new home in either Iran or Iraq but not in the 'Akká area. Following this, Mosul was gradually emptied of Bahá'ís.

Life in 'Akká

In 'Akká, Jináb-i-Zayn lived on the upper floor of the caravanserai named Khan-i-Avamid. He lived there from until he passed away in 1903. He had two rooms next to the pilgrim rooms. He lived in one of these rooms and used the other for receiving and meeting with friends and for transcribing Holy Writings. The Khan-i-Avamid has about 40 rooms. Families residing there would usually have two rooms. One would be used for living in and the other for storage. The rooms were quite large so that those living there would divide the room into three sections. The first section, closest to the entrance, functioned like a kitchen. The middle section would be for sleeping and the third section, furthest in and also commonly referred to as the head of the room, was a bit elevated and would be used as living room or for having guests.

Living at Khan-i-Avamid was not easy. Taherzadeh writes the following.

"The rooms in the Khan-i-'Avamid were damp and filthy. 'Abdu'l-Baha sold a certain gift which had been given to Him in Baghdad and with the proceeds began to repair the rooms for the companions of Baha'u'llah. He left the repair of His own room to the last. The money ran out and as a result, His room remained unrepaired and in very bad condition. Not only were its walls damp but the roof leaked and the floor was covered with dust. He sat and slept on a mat in that room. His bed cover was a sheepskin. The room was infested with fleas and when He slept under the sheepskin, fleas gathered and began biting."

Dr. Muayyad also testifies to the inhospitable conditions of Khan-i-Avamid. He writes the followings in his memoirs.

"The congestion of 'Akká's fleas is well beyond the imagination of those that have not experienced it. I recall that while in Khán-i 'Umdán [Avamid], my feet were covered with them, much like wearing a black boot" and "These fleas are renowned and until a person has experienced them, one finds it hard to believe how terribly plentiful and bothersome they are. I remember that once I walked into a room and immediately my two feet were covered by them to near my knees, much like wearing a pair of black socks."

A Master Transcribe

Jináb-i-Zayn occupied himself with transcribing the Holy Writings. He was not only very productive but also put great effort making sure that the transcriptions were precise. In fact, transcriptions in the handwriting of Jináb-i-Zayn are considered as accurate. That is why he is the most eminent of transcribes of Bahá'u'lláh's Writings.

Taherzadeh writes in the first volume of Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh that, *"He was meticulous in transcribing the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and took great pains to ensure that they were correctly recorded. Any Tablet in the handwriting of Jináb-i-Zayn is considered accurate. He has left to posterity, in his exquisite hand, many volumes comprising most of Baha'u'lláh's important Tablets; today Bahá'i publications in Persian and Arabic are authenticated by comparison with these"*.

Jináb-i-Zayn transcribed several volumes of the Holy Writings and put them together as a gift to the Blessed Beauty. Bahá'u'lláh kept these volumes near where He sat and at times, He would use them for recitation when He had visitors. Jináb-i-Zayn also transcribed a copy of "A Travellers Narrative" written

A page of A Travellers Narrative in the handwriting of Jináb-i-Zayn.

by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. In fact, E.G. Brown received a copy transcribed by Jináb-i-Zayn when he visited Bahjí in 1890.

Questions and Answers

Jináb-i-Zayn was honored with the task of asking questions regarding the laws of the Kitáb-i-Aqdás. Bahá'u'lláh says (provisional translation) to Jináb-i-Zayn, *“God Willing, you will be embraced by the Bounty of God in all the worlds of God. Your questions in My presence are acceptable because mankind will benefit from them. We have especially commanded you to ask questions about the laws and verses of God. We have made you a source of good for the peoples of the world.”*

Taherzadeh explains that he *“being a mujtahid and thus highly qualified in the application of Islamic laws, Jináb-i-Zayn received permission from Bahá'u'lláh to ask any questions he might have regarding the application of the laws revealed in the Kitáb-i-Aqdás. The answers given by Bahá'u'lláh provide further elucidation and expansion of His laws and this book is regarded as a supplement to the Kitáb-i-Aqdás”*.

In The Presence of the Blessed Beauty

During the spring, summer and parts of autumn, the Blessed Beauty would stay at the Mansion of Bahjí. During the rest of the year, He would stay in 'Akká. The Blessed Beauty had a donkey that He named “Barq” (meaning lightning) as it was very fast, and which He would use when visiting the Ridván Garden, the Mansion of Mazra'ih, Junayn Garden or when traveling between 'Akká and Bahjí. After some time, this donkey died and a new one was brought from Iran for the Blessed Beauty. This donkey brayed with a bad voice and therefore, the Blessed Beauty named it “Rád” (meaning thunder).

While the Blessed Beauty stayed in Bahjí, Jináb-i-Zayn never requested to be granted permission to visit Him. He never asked. He only went when invited by the Blessed Beauty. As he was so loved by the Baha'u'llah, he was invited to Bahjí quite frequently. In the presence of the Blessed Beauty at Bahjí he spent his days in utter joy and bliss and would return to 'Akká with exceeding happiness and inspiration.

One day in 1891 the Blessed Beauty came down from the Mansion in Bahji and went to Nahariya with His carriage. Among those present were Jináb-i-Zayn and Mishkín Qalam. When they arrived, a tent was pitched and the Blessed Beauty and the friends stayed there from morning to late afternoon. The Blessed Beauty began revealing The Epistle to the Son of the Wolf at this place. As for food at the picnic, the son of Jináb-i-Zayn recounts the following story.

“A sheep had previously been slaughtered, but all were worried about how they were going to cook and feed those gathered there. Eventually, they gave the responsibility for organizing the cooking and preparing the food to my father (Jináb-i-Zayn). He called for cooking utensils to be brought from the nearby village and he began to prepare two sorts of kebab. One was

the sort known as Husayni, but which from that day on became known as Kabab Zayni, the other Kabab Barg. All of this was done in a spirit of joy and happiness. When it came to eating, a portion of the food was taken to Bahá'u'lláh and it was said to Him: 'This is what Zayn has cooked'. He replied: 'Although it has been some time that I have not partaken of meat because Zayn has put himself to a lot of trouble, I will take a small portion to eat.'

It is interesting to note that Jináb-i-Zayn was present when the Blessed Beauty began revealing the epistle to the son of the same wolf who so hated Jináb-i-Zayn and tried so hard to have him arrested and likely executed.

His Sense of Humour

Jináb-i-Zayn was known to be very witty. He often used to remark that, *"My son and I always follow two of the laws of the Aqdas to the letter. I follow the law 'Whosoever ye be invited to a banquet or festive occasion, respond with joy and gladness.' Every time I am invited, I will attend with exceeding joy. My son follows 'for were a man to read a single verse with joy and radiance it would be better for him than to read with lassitude all the Holy Books of God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting.' Every time, in any meeting, they start reading the scriptures, after one or two minutes, he reminds the reader that it is enough."*

It is reported that once, Hájí Mírzá Haydar 'Alí, Jináb-i-Zayn and Mishkín Qalam were in the presence of the Blessed Beauty when Bahá'u'lláh asked them, *"Do you want Me to send you to the Abhá Kingdom?"*

Mírzá Haydar 'Alí response was in line with his life philosophy that, *"I surrender to whatever is Thy holy will."*

Mishkín Qalam then said, *"No, my Beloved; I want to be here in Thy presence."*

Jináb-i-Zayn, not really wishing to think of death and such matters, turned to Hájí Mírzá Haydar 'Alí and said: *"Tell the Blessed Beauty that I am hard of hearing and can't hear Him."*

During the Ministry of The Master

After the Ascension of the Blessed Beauty, Jináb-i-Zayn remained faithful to the Covenant. During the Ministry of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the number of pilgrims increased considerably. Year after year some 70 to 80 friends came from different countries, wearing different types of clothes and speaking a multitude of languages. It was quite common that some ten pilgrims would be dismissed and asked to leave in the morning, and on the same evening, a new group of 10 or sometimes more pilgrims would enter 'Akká. Oftentimes the Master, regardless of the season, would come to the Khan-i-Avamid and visit the pilgrims in the morning (sometimes even before sunrise). During these visits, which brought so much joy to the friends, they would recite from the Holy Writings, pray, listen to the Master and be blessed with His presence.

Youness Afroukhteh writes in his memoirs that, *"The pilgrim house [the rooms rented for this purpose in Khan-i-Avamid] was now in a buzz: loyal and steadfast friends were*

appearing from every direction. The atmosphere of love and unity infused a spirit of joy and elation into the hearts of all the believers, washing away the bitter anguish of the renewal of incarceration. Signs of happiness and gaiety were evident in every face. At times the pilgrims from the West and the East openly associated with each other. The letters from the West brought many happy tidings; some of them were read aloud in the pilgrim house. At times the Master visited the pilgrims. Mirza Haydar-'Ali, the anchor of the pilgrim house, shared loving and fatherly counsel with the newcomers, helping them to orient themselves in this happy paradise. Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin was the soul of the pilgrim house, while the wonderful Mishkin-Qalam brought delight and cheer to the hearts."

Jináb-i-Zayn continued to serve in any capacity he could. He was asked by the Master to teach Arabic and Bahá'í Writings to children. Youness Afroukhteh continues, *"The children enjoyed quite a few benefits in their training, appropriate to the prevailing conditions of austerity and hardship in the Most Great Prison. In addition to the study of Persian, English, mathematics and other lessons, they had to master a trade or vocation. Despite a rampant scarcity of all goods, each child had to have a desk. Training in shoemaking, carpentry, and tailoring were more readily available to the children and therefore most of them were already engaged as apprentices in these trades. The Master paid a great deal of attention to all facets of education of the young. Each and every one of them regardless of age or any other consideration was educated under His direct and close supervision. The young men, some loyal to the Faith and some violators of the Covenant, also received the same education. And while in their childhood they had been deprived of the opportunity to study foreign languages, here they received training in Arabic, literature, calligraphy, and penmanship. The late Mishkín-Qalam taught penmanship. Even the great Zaynul-Muqarrabin had been assigned to teach Arabic and Bahá'í Writings."*

Along the many services he rendered, he continued to transcribe the Holy Writings to the end of his life.

'Abdu'l-Bahá writes, "From his early years till his last breath, this eminent man never failed in service to the Manifestation. After the ascension, he was consumed with such grieving, such constant tears, and anguish, that as the days passed by, he wasted away. He remained faithful to the Covenant and was a close companion to this servant of the Light of the World, but he longed to rise out of this life and awaited his departure from day to day. At last, serene and happy, rejoicing in the tidings of the Kingdom, he soared away to that mysterious land. There he was loosed from every sorrow, and in the gathering-place of splendors he was immersed in light."



Picture of some believers in Akka. Jináb-i-Zayn is seated in the lower far right.

In 1321 (1903), at the age of 88, after being bedridden for about three weeks due to illness, his soul was finally released from this earthly life. He was and is still buried in the Bahá'í Cemetery of 'Akká.

That the term "sun" hath been applied to the leaders of religion is due to their lofty position, their fame, and renown. Such are the universally recognized divines of every age, who speak with authority, and whose fame is securely established. If they be in the likeness of the Sun of Truth, they will surely be accounted as the most exalted of all luminaries ... [Kitáb-i-Iqán]