The Life of Bahá'u'lláh

Part 4 - Baghdad (≈1858 - 1863)

1. Introduction

The process whereby the effulgence of so dazzling a Revelation was unfolded to the eyes of men was of necessity slow and gradual. The first intimation which its Bearer received did not synchronize with, nor was it followed immediately by, a disclosure of its character to either His own companions or His kindred. A period of no less than ten years had to elapse ere its far-reaching implications could be directly divulged to even those who had been intimately associated with Him—a period of great spiritual ferment, during which the Recipient of so weighty a Message restlessly anticipated the hour at which He could unburden His heavily laden soul, so replete with the potent energies released by God’s nascent Revelation. All He did, in the course of this pre-ordained interval, was to hint, in veiled and allegorical language, in epistles, commentaries, prayers and treatises, which He was moved to reveal, that the Báb’s promise had already been fulfilled, and that He Himself was the One Who had been chosen to redeem it. A few of His fellow-disciples, distinguished by their sagacity, and their personal attachment and devotion to Him, perceived the radiance of the as yet unrevealed glory that had flooded His soul, and would have, but for His restraining influence, divulged His secret and proclaimed it far and wide. (God Passes By, p. 103)

2. Opposition Begins

Image: Kazimayn Shrines

In 1858, there arrived in Baghdad a prominent Iranian cleric named Shaykh Abdul-Husayn Tihrani, who had been commissioned by Nasiru’d-Din Shah to reguild the domes of the Shi’í shrines in Iraq. He immediately became the centre of the opposition to Bahá'u'lláh and the Babis. He declared when he first arrived in Baghdad that the Babis were ignorant people and of no account and that should Bahá'u'lláh come out and debate his beliefs openly, it would be made evident to all that the views of the Babis were erroneous. One of those in Tihrani’s circle, who also came to Bahá'u’lláh’s house hoping to learn the secret of alchemy there, urged Tihrani to debate openly with Bahá'u’lláh and thereby make matters clear to everyone and he offered to make the arrangements for this. Tihrani agreed and so the man came to Bahá'u’lláh who also agreed to the debate at any place and any time within the next ten days. When this was relayed back to Tihrani, however, he began to create excuses and backed out. This affair became known among the Iranians in Baghdad and Kazimayn and greatly discomfited Tihrani. (Bahá'u’lláh A Short Biography, M. Momen p. 51)
3. Opposition is Strengthened

Image: Mustafa Nuri Pasha (most likely)

The new Persian consul [Mirza Buzurg Khan Qazvini] went to the Ottoman authorities with a strange statement, saying that he intended to lay hands on a number of rascally men who had fled from Iran. Mustafa Nuri Pasha, the Vali, who had come a few months before the Consul (in March 1860), was a just man and had heard 'Abdu'llah Pasha of Sulayminiyyih speak very highly of Baha'u'llah. He was also well aware of the purpose of Mirza Buzurg Khan. But he pretended ignorance and told the Consul to go ahead and make his arrests. To do this, replied Mirza Buzurg Khan, he would need help from the Government, at which the Vali expressed his surprise that the Persian consul required so much help just to lay hands on a few men. Perforce, Mirza Buzurg Khan had to reveal the identity of those Persians whom he wanted to arrest. Mustafa Nuri Pasha showed even greater astonishment that the Consul should speak in such coarse terms of persons whom all the residents of Baghdad, high and low alike, held in great esteem. He refused to have anything to do with Mirza Buzurg Khan's nefarious designs. The Consul's lame response was: 'But they are enemies of our Faith and yours', to which he received this crushing reply from the Vali: 'Do we then follow different Faiths?'

Nabil writes that from time to time Baha'u'llah would send Aqay-i-Kalim to visit Mirza Buzurg Khan. One day the foolish Consul, in all haughtiness, told Aqay-i-Kalim that he could do whatever he liked about Baha'u'llah. Aqay-i-Kalim replied: 'Why is it that I come occasionally to visit you? Do you think I come to ask you for a post, an office, an allowance? It is only to show you our friendly intent. By God! Should His favour towards you cease, these very men who are close to you would assuredly destroy you.' Then Aqay-i-Kalim went on to recount all the Consul's intrigues and evil actions, so precisely and effectively that all he could reply was: 'The past is past. Should He [Baha'u'llah] consider me with favour in future, I shall be of service to Him.' But, as Nabil points out, Mirza Buzurg Khan was incorrigible, and he never ceased concocting plots with Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Husayn. (Bahá'u'lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p. 137)

4. Attempt on His Life (Rida Turk)

Image: Example of a handgun in Ottoman times

Mírzá Buzurg Kháń, on his part, used his influence in order to arouse the animosity of the lower elements of the population against the common Adversary, by inciting them to affront Him in public, in the hope of provoking some rash retaliatory act that could be used as a ground for false charges through which the desired order for Bahá'u'lláh's extradition might be procured. This attempt too proved abortive, as the presence of Bahá'u'lláh, Who, despite the warnings and pleadings of His friends, continued to walk unescorted, both by day and by night, through the streets of the city, was enough to plunge His would-be molesters into consternation and shame. Well aware of their motives, He would approach them, rally them on their intentions, joke with them, and leave them covered with confusion and firmly
resolved to abandon whatever schemes they had in mind. The consul-general had even gone so far as to hire a ruffian, a Turk, named Ridá, for the sum of one hundred túmáns, provide him with a horse and with two pistols, and order him to seek out and kill Bahá'u'lláh, promising him that his own protection would be fully assured. Ridá, learning one day that his would-be victim was attending the public bath, eluded the vigilance of the Bábís in attendance, entered the bath with a pistol concealed in his cloak, and confronted Bahá'u'lláh in the inner chamber, only to discover that he lacked the courage to accomplish his task. He himself, years later, related that on another occasion he was lying in wait for Bahá'u'lláh, pistol in hand, when, on Bahá'u'lláh’s approach, he was so overcome with fear that the pistol dropped from his hand; whereupon Bahá'u'lláh bade Áqáy-i-Kalím, who accompanied Him, to hand it back to him, and show him the way to his home. (God Passes By, p. 142)

5. Story of Hurr

Image: Painting of the Battle at Karbila

At the instigation of a few highly-prejudiced opponents of Bahá'u'lláh, a large group of Kurds of Shi'ih belief went to His house in Baghdad one night with the purpose of stirring up mischief. Upon entering the courtyard, and without uttering a word, they stood near the wall, ready at a moment’s notice to unsheathe their swords.

The Blessed Beauty addressed one of them, asking: ‘In your estimation, where those who surrounded the Prince of Martyrs (The Imam Husayn) in the desert of Karbila, intending to slay him and his followers, believers in God and in His Messenger?’ ‘It is evident’, came the reply, ‘that they were unbelievers, for had they been Muslims and believers in God and the Prophet, they would not have put to death the kindred of the Prophet and His followers, and would not have led into captivity the family of the Prophet of God.’

Thereupon Bahá'u'lláh invited them to enter His house and be seated, had refreshments served, and undertook to explain in detail the tragic story of the Imam Husayn and his martyrdom. One by one the Kurds seated themselves, and the Ancient Beauty related to them the history of the opposition of Yazid, who had succeeded his father as the second Umayyad Caliph. He recalled to them the names of those who commanded the 4000-strong army sent against Husayn with only two hundred members of his family and devoted followers, and the startling change of the heart of the cavalry commander, Hurr, who crossed over to Husayn’s side.

‘And so,’ Bahá'u'lláh concluded, ‘with the utmost cruelty they martyred the Imam Husayn, and then proclaimed: “Verily, Husayn trespassed against the religion of his grandfather, and was killed by the sword of his grandfather.”’

Deeply moved, the Kurds were weeping as they arose from their seats and kissed the robe of Bahá'u'lláh. ‘We can be likened to Hurr,’ they asserted, ‘who at first was intent upon killing the Prince of Martyrs, but repented and became the first to yield up his life in his path.’ With the utmost sincerity and humility, they asked Bahá'u’lláh’s permission to take their leave. (Stories of Bahá'u’lláh, A.A. Furutan, no. 29)
6. Nabil-i-Akbar

Nabil-i-Akbar was acknowledged as one of the most outstanding men of learning in Persia. His fame had spread throughout the country to such an extent that once, when he spoke incognito to a number of divines in far-off Kirmán, his listeners were lost in admiration of his superb discourse and some were heard to say that the only person in the whole country who could rival such a man in the field of learning and knowledge would be the famous Mullá Muhammad-i-Qá’íní (that is, Nabil-i-Akbar himself).

He embraced the Bábí Faith about the year 1853. Some six years later, while in Baghdád, he went to visit Bahá'u'lláh. There he was warmly received by Him, and was accorded the honour of staying in the outer apartments of His house, normally reserved for the reception of visitors. Mírzá Áqá Ján was instructed by Bahá'u'lláh to act as host to him. The following is an extract from the spoken chronicle of Nabil-i-Akbar relating the events of those few days that he spent in the house of Bahá'u'lláh:

One afternoon I was seated in the room talking with Mullá Muhammad-Sádiq-i-Khurásání, known as Muqaddas. He was a learned man of great dignity and stature. As we were talking together, Bahá'u'lláh, Who had just returned from the town, arrived in the outer apartment accompanied by Prince Mulk-Árá whose hand He was holding. Mullá Sádiq, who was the embodiment of dignity and solemnity, immediately rose to his feet and prostrated himself at the feet of Bahá'u'lláh. This action did not please Bahá'u'lláh Who angrily rebuked Mullá Sádiq and ordered him to rise immediately, after which He went out of the room followed by the Prince.

I was amazed and bewildered at such behaviour on the part of Mullá Sádiq as I had never expected such an important person to act in this manner. Having witnessed Bahá'u'lláh's reaction also, I expressed my disapproval of Mullá Sádiq's behaviour and admonished him for it, saying: 'You are a man who occupies an exalted position in the realm of knowledge and learning and, above all else, you had the honour of attaining the presence of the Báb Himself. Your rank is next to the Letters of the Living and you are one of the Witnesses of the Dispensation of the Báb. It is true that Bahá'u'lláh is an eminent person Who belongs to the nobility and His ancestors have occupied high positions in the government. It is also true that He has suffered persecution and imprisonment as a result of embracing the Cause of God, that all His possessions have been confiscated and that He has finally been exiled to this land. Yet, your behaviour towards Him this afternoon was like that of an unworthy servant towards his glorious Lord.'

Mullá Sádiq refrained from answering me. He was in a state of spiritual intoxication, his face beaming with joy; he merely said to me, 'I beseech God to tear asunder the veil for thee and shower His bounties upon thy person through His abundant grace.' After this incident, I decided in my heart to investigate and began to observe the person of Bahá'u'lláh and His actions very carefully. The more I observed the less I discovered any sign which could point
to His claiming a station. On the contrary, I observed in Him nothing, either in word or deed, except humility, self-effacement, servitude and utter nothingness. As a result, I was led into grievous error, believing that I was in every way superior to Bahá'u'lláh, and preferred my own self to Him.

It was through my vain imagining that in the gatherings of the friends I always used to occupy the seat of honour, assume the function of the speaker and would not give an opportunity to Bahá'u'lláh or anyone else to say anything. One afternoon, Bahá'u'lláh arranged a meeting in His house and a number of friends had gathered, as usual, in the same large room, a room around which, according to the Pen of the Most High, circle in adoration the people of Bahá. Again, I occupied the seat of honour. Bahá'u'lláh sat in the midst of the friends and was serving tea with His own hands.

In the course of the meeting, a certain question was asked. Having satisfied myself that no one in the room was capable of tackling the problem, I began to speak. All the friends were attentively listening and were absolutely silent, except Bahá'u'lláh Who occasionally, while agreeing with my exposition, made a few comments on the subject. Gradually He took over and I became silent. His explanations were so profound and the ocean of His utterance surged with such a power that my whole being was overtaken with awe and fear. Spellbound by His words, I was plunged into a state of dazed bewilderment. After a few minutes of listening to His words—words of unparalleled wonder and majesty—I became dumbfounded. I could no longer hear His voice. Only by the movement of His lips did I know that He was still speaking. I felt deeply ashamed and troubled that I was occupying the seat of honour in that meeting. I waited impatiently until I saw that His lips were no longer moving when I knew that He had finished talking. Like a helpless bird which is freed from the claws of a mighty falcon I rose to my feet and went out. There three times I hit my head hard against the wall and rebuked myself for my spiritual blindness.

The eyes of Nabíl-i-Akbar were at last opened. He attended another meeting, this time in Kázimayn in the house of a certain Hájí 'Abdu'l-Majíd-i-Shírází. Bahá'u'lláh was present at this meeting. He spoke about the mysteries and origin of creation. Here a new world, full of fresh significances, dawned upon Nabíl-i-Akbar who considered every word of Bahá'u'lláh's to be like a priceless gem. All that Nabíl-i-Akbar had heard and studied during his life appeared to him to be but the talk of children.

At this point he decided to find out directly from Bahá'u'lláh Himself what His station was and wrote a letter to Him which he begged 'Abdu'l-Bahá to deliver. The next day he received a Tablet in which Bahá'u'lláh alluded to His lofty station. This was the end of Nabíl-i-Akbar's search for truth, for he wrote a second letter to Bahá'u'lláh, this time humbly acknowledging Him as the Supreme Manifestation of God and begging Him to guide his steps in His service. Bahá'u'lláh instructed him to return to Persia and teach the Cause of God there. (The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 1 p. 91-92)
7. Sahífiy-i-Shattíyyih (Book of the River)

*Image: Tigris river ca 1943*

Among the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh revealed in Baghdád is the Sahífiy-i-Shattíyyih (Book of the River). This Tablet is mainly in Persian. In it Bahá’u’lláh speaks about the irresistible power of the Cause of God and its sovereignty. Alluding to the Tigris which runs through Baghdád, He likens the onward march of the Faith to the flow of that river. Just as no obstacle, whether a fortified building or a mighty wall, can withstand the onrushing force of the water, or hold back its progress, so none of the enemies of the Cause, however fierce their onslaught or determined their opposition, can halt the advance of this resistless Faith of God. It will, in spite of all opposition, press onward, tear down every obstacle and ultimately establish its ascendancy over its adversaries. Similarly, the Cause of God will break up old and time-honoured institutions and will not allow any man, regardless of his rank or position, to stand in its way. (*The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 1* p. 205)

8. Attempt to Declare Jihad

*Image: House of Bahá’u’lláh*

Tihrani then convened a gathering of Shi’í clerics in Kazimayn to discuss how to deal with Bahá’u’lláh (this meeting probably occurred in July 1861). They decided to declare jihad, holy war, against the Babís and Bahá’u’lláh. One night, a certain cleric named Sayyid Husayn Rawdin-Khan, who had been at these meetings and who had been on friendly terms with Bahá’u’lláh in Tehran, came in disguise to the latter’s house, in a state agitation with the news. On the following night, a group of one hundred or more Shi’í Kurds would come past Bahá’u’lláh’s house performing the Muharram ritual of beating their chests and lamenting the martyrdom of the Shi’í holy figure, the Imam Husayn. It was planned that as they passed the house of Bahá’u’lláh, they would attack the house and kill all the occupants. Bahá’u’lláh calmed the man down, gave him some tea and told him to be assured that everything would be all right. Some of the Babís who heard the news came to the outer apartments of Bahá’u’lláh’s house the next day fully armed but he sent them away. Then that night, when the Kurds arrived, Bahá’u’lláh ordered his brother Kalim to open the doors and let them into the outer apartment and give them refreshments. Bahá’u’lláh then entered and sat down and spoke to them in such a way that they left amazed at the way their enmity and anger had been transformed into affection and acquiescence. (*Bahá’u’lláh A Short Biography, M. Momen* p. 53)

9. Attempt to Declared Infidels

*Image: Shaykh Murtida Ansari*

The attack by the Kurds having failed, the clerics gathered at Kazimayn decided to issue a joint declaration to the effect that Bahá’u’lláh and the Babís were infidels and should be killed. They thought that with this, all the Shi’í in Iraq would rise up against the Babís and kill them.
For this to be effective, however, they need the signature of the most senior cleric of all, Shaykh Murtida Ansari. He was invited to come from Najaf and join them. When he heard what they had to say, however, he left the meeting and refused to listen to their entreaties. He returned to Najaf. On the way back, he sent a message to Bahá’u’lláh, saying that he had been unaware of the purpose of the gathering and that had he known, he would never have left Najaf. He asked for God’s protection for Bahá’u’lláh from the evil planned against Him. With this key support missing, the plan for a joint declaration fell through. (*Bahá’u’lláh A Short Biography, M. Momen p. 54*)

10. Notifying Bahá’u’lláh of the Meeting

*Image: House of Bahá’u’lláh*

Those gathered at Kazimayn then arranged to come two days later and attack us. We were only forty-six in all, and our strong man was Aqa Asadullah-i-Kashi (Kashani), whose dagger, even when worn above his shal [the cloth used as a girdle], would dangle and touch the ground. Now there was a certain Siyyid Hasan from Shiraz. He was not a believer, but he was a very good man. One morning, when the Blessed Perfection had been up and about, this Aqa Siyyid Hasan came knocking at our door. Our black maid opened the door. Aqa Siyyid Hasan came in and, much agitated, asked, “Where is the Aqa [Bahá’u’lláh]?” I said, “He has gone to the riverside.” “What is it that you say?” he responded. I offered him tea and said, “He will come back”, he replied, “Aqa! The world has been turned upside down … It has become turbulent … Do you know that last night they held a council in the presence of Shaykh Abdu’l-Husayn and the Consul? They have also reached some sort of agreement with the Vali [governor]. How is it that the Blessed Perfection has gone to the riverside? They have decided to start their attack tomorrow”. Whilst he was telling me what had happened, the Blessed Perfection came in. Aqa Siyyid Hasan wanted immediately to express his anxiety. But the Blessed Perfection said, “Let us talk of other matters”, and went on speaking. Later, Aqa Siyyid Hasan stayed insisted on unburdening himself. However, the Blessed Perfection told him, “It is of no consequence”. So Aqa Siyyid Hasan stayed to lunch and then went home.

Later in the afternoon the Blessed Perfection came out. The friends gathered round Him. Amongst them were two who were double-faced: Haji Abdul-Hamid and Aqa Muhammad-Javad-i-Isfahani. The Blessed Perfection was walking up and down. Then He turned to the friends and said, “Have you heard the news? The mujtahids [senior Shiia clerics] and the Consul have come together and gathered ten to twenty thousand people round them to wage jihad against Us”. Then He addressed the two double-faced men, “Go and tell them, by the One God, the Lord of all, I will send two men to drive them away, all the way to Kazimayn. If they are capable of accepting a challenge, let them come”. The two hurried away and repeated what they had heard. (*Bahá’u’lláh A Short Biography, M. Momen p. 55*)

The governor was angry when he heard what the gathering of clerics had been planning and commented: “This is not Iran and if they intend to foment public disorder and civil
commotion, they will not be permitted to do that.” Then he wrote to them and said that, if they genuinely wanted to resolve the issue, then he would gather a meeting of the religious leaders of all communities, Bahá’u’lláh would come also and there could then be a public debate. Each side could put their case and it would become clear who was in the right and who was not. And if they tried to do something else, he would have them all drowned in the Tigris. When the clerics heard the governor’s message, they realised that they could not pursue their plan. (Bahá’u’lláh A Short Biography, M. Momen p. 55)

11. A Miracle as Proof

*Image: A typical Muslim Clergy*

But all these plans failed miserably and Shaykh ‘Abdu’l-Husayn began to dispatch a series of alarming letters to the court of the Sháh in Tihrán telling of Bahá’u'lláh's rising power. At last he managed to obtain full authority from the Sháh to take necessary measures against the Bábís with assistance from the Persian divines residing in 'Iráq.

Immediately upon receipt of this mandate the Shaykh invited all ranks of clergy to a conference held at his home. There he forcefully condemned Bahá’u'lláh's activities, accused Him of destroying the Faith of Islám, and demanded that holy war should be proclaimed against the Bábís. The body of the divines approved.

This time, however, the conference of the divines decided to send the devout and high-minded Hájí Mullá Hasan-i-'Ammú as an emissary to Bahá’u’lláh to put certain questions to Him, designed to establish the truth of His Mission. Hájí Mullá Hasan asked Prince Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán, the Fakhru'd-Dawlih, a friend and admirer of Bahá’u'lláh who often visited His home, to arrange an interview with Him.

When the appointed day came, the prince took him personally to the house of Bahá’u'lláh. No sooner had Hájí Mullá Hasan presented himself to Bahá’u'lláh than he discovered the ocean of His utterance surging before him and saw himself as a mere drop compared to the vastness of Bahá’u'lláh's knowledge. Having had his questions answered with brilliance and simplicity, he then ventured to inform Bahá’u'lláh that the divines regarded the performance of a miracle to be the final and conclusive evidence of the authenticity of His mission. These are the words of Bahá’u'lláh in answer to him:

Although you have no right to ask this, for God should test His creatures, and they should not test God, still I allow and accept this request...The 'ulamás must assemble, and, with one accord, choose one miracle, and write that, after the performance of this miracle they will no longer entertain doubts about Me, and that all will acknowledge and confess the truth of My Cause. Let them seal this paper, and bring it to Me. This must be the accepted criterion: if the miracle is performed, no doubt will remain for them; and if not, We shall be convicted of imposture. (God Passes By p. 144)
Hájí Mullá Hasan found this answer to be satisfactory. He arose, reverently kissed the knee of Bahá'u'lláh and promised to convey His words to the divines. But the assemblage of the divines decided not to respond to Bahá'u'lláh's challenge and did not pursue the matter. Hájí Mullá Hasan conveyed this decision to Bahá'u'lláh through Prince Zaynu'l-Ábidín Kháń. Upon hearing this news, Bahá'u'lláh is reported to have said:

We have, through this all-satisfying, all-embracing message which We sent, revealed and vindicated the miracles of all the Prophets, inasmuch as We left the choice to the 'ulamás themselves, undertaking to reveal whatever they would decide upon. (The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 1 p. 146)

12. Mirza Buzurg Khan

*Image: Persian Foreign Minister Mirza Said Khan*

In the end, the intrigues and machinations of the Shaykh and the efforts of the Consul-General so influenced the Sháh that he instructed Mírzá Sa'íd Kháń, the Persian Foreign Minister, to send a request to the Ottoman government for the transfer of Bahá'u'lláh from Baghdád. In the meantime, the enemy was becoming increasingly hostile towards Bahá'u'lláh. Siyyid Mírzá Husayn-i-Mutavallí, a notorious Bábí, suggested in a letter to Him that He remain at home for the sake of His own safety. In reply to this, Bahá'u'lláh revealed a Tablet in Persian known as Shikkar-Shikan-Shavand. (The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 1 p. 143-147)

13. The Seven Valleys

*Image: Statue of Attar*

One of the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh which was revealed after His return from Sulaymániyyih is The Seven Valleys. This work stands out as a masterpiece of mystical composition. It was written in response to the questions of Shaykh Muhyi'd-Dín, the judge of the town of Khánqáyn, who was a Súfí. Although not a Bábí, he was an admirer of Bahá'u'lláh and had written a letter to Him, expressing certain thoughts and posing some questions in mystical terms. (The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 1 p. 96)

14. Az Bagh-i-Irahi

*Image: Siyyid Javad-i-Karbilá'i*

Nábil has recounted in his as yet unpublished narratives the story of a gathering held one evening in the house of Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdád, sometime before His Declaration. He considered that gathering to have been one of the most memorable of his life. That night a wonderful feast had been arranged and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, then eighteen years of age, was acting as host. His youthful and radiant personality added distinction to the assembly. A number of believers from Baghdád and Karbilá were present, among them some eminent personalities such as Hájí Siyyid Javád-i-Karbilá’í, Shaykh Sultán, and Sayyáh.
After partaking of food they began to chant the Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, and soon the atmosphere became deeply spiritual. Hearts were filled with divine love and souls were illumined by the light of the New Day; so when the poem of Az-Bágh-i-Iláhí was chanted, its mysteries became apparent to them, revealing thereby the approaching hour of the unveiling of Bahá'u'lláh's divine station. Every sincere soul in that company experienced ecstasy and joy, and the atmosphere became alive with excitement and rapture.

An interesting incident occurred during the chanting of this ode. In one verse Bahá'u'lláh condemns the unfaithful among His companions. When this particular verse was chanted the believers all turned to look at Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahání. Although embarrassed, he arose, and to the amusement of some and the amazement of others, performed a dance of rapture in an attempt to dispel their suspicion.

Then without warning the door opened and Bahá'u'lláh entered majestically, holding in His hand a small glass vessel of rose-water. He greeted them with the salutation 'Alláh'u'-Akbar', and bade them not to arise or disrupt their meeting. He had felt the spirituality of that gathering, He said, and so had come to anoint them with rose-water. This He graciously did, going to every person in the room, after which He left.

It was a mighty climax and the highlight of the evening. No one was able to sleep that night, so intoxicated were they with the wine of His presence. 'The like of that night', Nabil writes, 'the eye of creation had not seen.' (The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 1 p. 219-220)

15. Ottoman Citizenship

Image: Example of Ottoman Passport

Qazvini was pressing the governor hard to have Bahá'u'lláh and the Babis delivered to the Iranian government at the border. Rumours spread in the town that this was going to happen and the Babis feared for their lives and property. Bahá'u'lláh wrote to Mirza Said Khan, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Iranian Government, but that produced no response. Eventually, Bahá'u'lláh decided that the Babis should apply for Ottoman citizenship in order to escape the clutches of the Iranian consul. The governor agreed and over twenty day period some 120 men, women, and children went to the government house and received Ottoman papers. (Bahá'u'lláh A Short Biography, M. Momen p. 57)

16. Letters to the Shah

Image: Iranian Ambassador in Istanbul

As part of their strategy against Bahá'u'lláh and the Babis, for some time Tihrani and Qazvini had been sending reports to the Shah and his government in Iran and to Mushiru'd-Dawlih, the Iranian ambassador in Istanbul. They claimed, for example, that some of the tribes in the area had been converted to the Babi religion and that Bahá'u'lláh was now in a position to lead 100,000 men against Iran. The reality was that there were about forty or fifty Babi men
(who with their families probably numbered 150 in all) in Baghdad and less than that number in nearby Kazimayn. Such reports, ..., were sufficient to alarm the Shah. (Bahá’u’lláh A Short Biography, M. Momen p. 58)

The Persian Ambassador in Constantinople, “was instructed to proceed without delay in presenting the case to the Sultán’s Grand Vizir and his Foreign Minister, putting before them two possible solutions. The one which the Persian government favoured was an extradition order, instructing Námiq Páshá, the Governor of Baghdád, to hand over Bahá’u’lláh and some of His followers to the Persian authorities in Kirmánscháh. In this way the Persian government could keep them in custody in a suitable place and prevent them from spreading their Cause. Should this suggestion prove to be unacceptable to the Sultán’s government, the ambassador proposed an alternative, which was to transfer Bahá’u’lláh from Baghdád to a remote part of the Ottoman territory where He could be confined far from the borders of Persia.

But reports of Bahá’u’lláh’s outstanding qualities and attributes had from time to time reached the Sultán, who had been so impressed by these accounts that he resolutely refused to accede to the demands of the Persian government for the extradition of Bahá’u’lláh from his territory. Instead, through ‘Álí Páshá he issued orders that Bahá’u’lláh proceed to Constantinople as a guest of the Ottoman government.

Instructions were sent to Namiq Pasha but he was reluctant to act on them. It was not until three months passed, during which he had received five successive instruction from the Prime Minister, that he could bring himself to act. (Bahá’u’lláh A Short Biography, M. Momen p. 59)

17. Sweeping the Dust – Story of Siyyid Ismail

Image: House of Bahaullah

... Dhabíh came to Baghdád and attained the presence of Bahá’u’lláh. In that city he stayed with a believer whose home was in the same neighbourhood as Bahá’u’lláh’s house. This man, Áqá Muhammad-Ridá, had invited Bahá’u’lláh to his home, begging Him for the inestimable privilege of acting as His host. Bahá’u’lláh accepted his invitation and a few days later, in the afternoon, honoured Áqá Muhammad-Ridá by going to his house.

In the Kitáb-i-Badi’, revealed a few years later in Adrianople, Bahá’u’lláh Himself has described His meeting with Dhabíh on that occasion. As was customary at that time of day, their host had provided several trays of various fruits and sweetmeats. Dhabíh was invited by Bahá’u’lláh to partake of the food but he begged most humbly and earnestly to receive instead, through Bahá’u’lláh’s bounty, a portion of spiritual food from the unseen treasury of His divine knowledge. Favourable to his plea, Bahá’u’lláh summoned Dhabíh to sit before Him and hearken to His words—words of incomparable power and awe which were filled with spiritual significance and which, according to Bahá’u’lláh’s testimony, no one is capable of describing. (The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 1, p. 101-103)

Siyyid Isma’il [his own account of the event] answered, precisely and considerately, while his eyes welled with tears: ‘What I have seen cannot be described. After I asked Him for spiritual
sustenance, and He said that it had been granted to me, door after door opened upon my heart, and my soul became acquainted with thoughts not of this world. One night, in His {biruni}, His Blessed Person asked for a candle to peruse a paper, and I, as usual lost in wonderment at my own condition, suddenly thought: "Is it possible that that visage, the sight of which the Chosen Ones and the Messengers of God had longed to behold, could be unveiled in a human temple?" and as soon as this thought passed through my mind, His blessed voice called out to me: "Aqa Siyyid Isma'il, look!" and when I gazed at His blessed face, I saw that which no word can ever describe. All that I can say is this: it seemed as if a hundred thousand seas, vast and sunlit, billowed upon that Blessed Face. What happened then, I do not know. My last word to you is this: never ask for anything like this and be contented with what is given unto you, and always say, "O God! allow it all to end well with us"—and pray for me that my own end shall be well.’ (Bahá’u’lláh, The King of Glory, HM Balyuzi p. 132)

Nabil knew that Siyyid Isma’il went out, every night around midnight, and with his turban swept the street where the house of Bahá’u’lláh was situated, gathering up all the sweepings in his (‘aba) to fling them into the Tigris. This earth and this dust, he would say, was hallowed by His blessed feet, and should not be touched by anything unclean.

In order to pay homage to his Lord and to express his inner feelings of humility and self-effacement towards Him, Dhabíh took upon himself the task of sweeping the approaches to the house of Bahá'u'lláh at the hour of dawn. In those days one of the duties of a servant in any household was to sweep a small portion of the path leading to the entrance of the house. As a token of humility and lowliness, however, Dhabíh would, instead of using a brush, unwind his green turban, the ensign of his holy lineage, and with it would sweep the approaches of the house of Bahá'u'lláh. He would then place in the fold of his cloak the dust on which the feet of his Beloved had trodden and, unwilling that others should tread on it, would carry it all the way to the river to throw it into its waters. (The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 1, p. 101-103)

18. Kitáb-i-Íqán – Uncles of the Báb

Image: Iqan transcribed by Abdul-Baha

In the whole range of Bahá’u'lláh's Writings, the Kitáb-i-Íqán (The Book of Certitude) has most importance, with the exception of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas (The Most Holy Book). It was revealed in Baghdád about two years before His Declaration, in honour of Hájí Mírzá Siyyid Muhammad, the Báb's maternal uncle. The Báb had three maternal uncles. The first to embrace His Faith was Hájí Mírzá Siyyid 'Alí, known as Khálí-i-A'zam (the Greatest Uncle). It was he who cared for the Báb and, after the passing of His father, was responsible for bringing Him up.

Hájí Mírzá Siyyid 'Alí became aware of the spiritual qualities and superhuman powers which his Nephew manifested from an early age. He readily recognized the station of the Báb and became an ardent believer as soon as he became acquainted with His claims. Indeed, next to the Letters of the Living, he was the first person in Shíráz to acknowledge the divine origin of
the Message of the Báb. From then on he devoted his life entirely to the promotion of the newly-born Faith and the protection of its youthful Founder. A few months before the martyrdom of the Báb, he was arrested and, upon refusing to recant his faith, was publicly martyred. He is one of the Seven Martyrs of Tihrán.

The eldest uncle, Hájí Mírzá Siyyid Muhammad, although fully aware of the outstanding qualities of his Nephew, was not converted to His Faith until he met Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdád and received the Kitáb-i-Íqán in answer to his questions. The third uncle was Hájí Mírzá Hasan-'Álí. ...

Although several of the Báb's kinsmen, including His wife, had accepted the Faith during the early days of His ministry, and thousands of His followers had laid down their lives in His path, nevertheless Hájí Mírzá Siyyid Muhammad was not absolutely convinced that the Báb, his Nephew, could be the Promised One of Islám. Several believers tried to dispel his doubts but their efforts did not win him over. Hájí Mírzá Habíbu'lláh, an Afnán who was one of the custodians of the House of the Báb in Shíráz, has recorded the following account by his father, Áqá Mírzá Núru'd-Dín, a follower of the Báb, of a series of discussions which he held with Hájí Mírzá Siyyid Muhammad. These discussions appear to have been the turning-point in the spiritual life of the Báb's uncle.

...During the initial stages of our discussions Hájí Mírzá Siyyid Muhammad maintained a negative attitude and would repudiate any proof or argument that I put forward. These discussions lasted for several meetings. Once when I was talking with great fervour and conviction about the Faith, he turned to me in astonishment and exclaimed: 'Are you really saying that my nephew is the promised Qá'im?' When I reaffirmed my belief that He was, Hájí Mírzá Siyyid Muhammad became perplexed and expressed his view that this was all very strange. He then began to meditate and was lost in thought. Seeing him in this reflective mood, I could not prevent myself from laughing. He asked my reason for laughing, but as it would reflect badly upon him I was reluctant to tell. However, he insisted, so I told him: 'Your view that your nephew cannot be the promised Qá'im is similar to the objection which Abú-Lahab [an uncle of Muhammad who refused to acknowledge His Prophethood and was hostile to Him] had. He also said "how could it be possible for my nephew to become a prophet?" But Muhammad was the true Prophet of God. Now it is up to you to investigate this Cause. You must be very proud that this Sun of Truth has dawned from your family and its Light shone forth from your home. Do not hold back from it and be not surprised. For God is able to make of your nephew the Promised One of Islám. Be assured that the hands of God are never tied.'

Hájí Mírzá Siyyid Muhammad was moved by these words. He said: 'This is an irrefutable answer. Now what shall I do?' I suggested to him that he might go as a pilgrim to the holy Shrines in 'Iráq, where he could also visit his sister (the mother of the Báb) who had been living there since the martyrdom of her son, then go to Baghdád, attain the presence of Bahá'u'lláh, ask his questions of Him and put forward his difficulties. I urged him to persevere in his search and to rely upon God. I expressed the hope that the veils which now prevented him from seeing the truth might be lifted from his eyes and that he might attain to the true
Faith of God...He agreed to my suggestion and said that he felt in his heart that this was the right course to take. ...

It was on his return to Baghdád that he was taken to the house of Bahá'u'lláh where he attained His presence alone. This was in the year 1278 A.H. (A.D. 1862).

Bahá'u'lláh's amanuensis, Mírzá Áqá Ján, has described the circumstances which led to the revelation of the Kitáb-i-Íqán, in a Tablet* addressed to Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Majíd-i-Shírází. He says that one day Hájí Siyyid Javád-i-Karbilá'í went to Bahá'u'lláh and informed Him that the two uncles of the Báb, having visited the holy Shrines in Najaf and Karbilá, were now in Baghdád and would be returning home soon. Having ascertained from Hájí Siyyid Javád that he had not discussed the Faith with them, Bahá'u'lláh lovingly admonished him for not being engaged in the teaching of the Cause. He then instructed him to invite the two brothers to come to His presence.

The next day Hájí Siyyid Javád arrived with the uncle of the Báb, Hájí Mírzá Siyyid Muhammad. The youngest brother did not come. The utterances of Bahá'u'lláh uplifted and overwhelmed the Báb's uncle as he sat in His presence. At the end he begged Bahá'u'lláh to clarify the truth of the Báb's Message, bearing in mind that, in his view, some of the traditions of Islám concerning the promised Qá'im were apparently not fulfilled by his Nephew. To this Bahá'u'lláh readily consented. He bade him go home and, after careful consideration, make a list of all the questions which had puzzled him and all the traditions which had bred doubts in his mind, and to bring these to Him.

The following day Hájí Mírzá Siyyid Muhammad arrived with his questions. Within the span of two days and two nights the Kitáb-i-Íqán, a lengthy epistle (of over two hundred pages) dealing with all his questions, was revealed by Bahá'u'lláh. In the early days this book was known as Risáliy-i-Khál (Epistle to the Uncle) but later Bahá'u'lláh designated it as the Kitáb-i-Íqán. ...

The Kitáb-i-Íqán dispelled every doubt that Hájí Mírzá Siyyid Muhammad had harboured in his mind. As a result of reading this book he reached the stage of certitude and recognized the station of the Báb. (The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 1, p. 156-158)

19. Tablet of the Holy Mariner

Image: Namiq Pasha Governor of Baghdad

On Naw-Rúz of 1863, Bahá'u'lláh had pitched “His tent in a field on the outskirts of Baghdád”. “Bahá'u'lláh was celebrating this festival with a number of His companions, who were likewise living in tents in the open countryside.”

On the fifth day of Naw-Rúz (26th of March 1863), the Lawh-i-Malláhu'l-Quds (Tablet of the Holy Mariner) was revealed. Mírzá Áqá Ján, Bahá'u'lláh's amanuensis, emerged from the tent of Bahá'u'lláh, gathered the believers around him and chanted that mournful Tablet to them. Nabil, who was present, has recorded the following:
Oceans of sorrow surged in the hearts of the listeners when the Tablet of the Holy Mariner was read aloud to them...It was evident to every one that the chapter of Baghdád was about to be closed, and a new one opened, in its stead. No sooner had that Tablet been chanted than Bahá’u’lláh ordered that the tents which had been pitched should be folded up, and that all His companions should return to the city. While the tents were being removed He observed: ‘These tents may be likened to the trappings of this world, which no sooner are they spread out than the time cometh for them to be rolled up.’ From these words of His they who heard them perceived that these tents would never again be pitched on that spot.

The “tents had not yet been taken away when an emissary of Námiq Páshá, the Governor of Baghdád, arrived and handed to Bahá’u’lláh a communication inviting Him to come for interview with the Governor at his headquarters. Bahá’u’lláh accepted the invitation, but not wishing to visit the authorities in government headquarters”, “he would meet Him in the mosque, opposite the Government House.

One day, late in the afternoon as arranged, Baha’u’llah came out of His house attended by Aqa Muhammad-Rida, a Kurdish youth well versed in Turkish, to visit the Vali in the mosque. He permitted no one else to accompany Him. The news was conveyed to Namiq Pasha, who was delighted, but” “feeling ashamed to meet Him face to face on that fateful occasion, the Governor sent his deputy, Amín Effendi, to the mosque to deliver the message.

It was an invitation to come to Istanbul that was presented to Baha’u’llah, definitely not a command, and He accepted in the spirit and the way it was offered.

Aqa Rida writes that on that first night, after Baha’u’llah’s meeting with the Deputy-Governor and His return from the mosque, when the news of the migration to Istanbul spread, the Babis of Baghdad were so stricken by sorrow and the thought of their impending separation from Baha’u’llah that sleep departed from all eyes. Many of them, Aqa Rida says, made up their minds to die rather than suffer the disaster of separation. Gradually, with His counsel and tender care, Baha’u’llah calmed their fears, assuaged the pain of their bruised hearts and imbued them with strength to face the unknown future with hope and determination.

Throughout those weeks, until the time of departure, Aqa Rida reports, meetings were held in the homes of the companions which Baha’u’llah attended, and there He spoke to them with love, compassion and authority. Not only were the Babis sad, anxious and forlorn, but, according to Aqa Rida, the whole populace of Baghdad were feeling the pangs of separation. (The above historical account is from the Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh Volume 1, Chapter 12 & 13 and Bahá’u’lláh, The King of Glory page 155)

Instructions were sent to Naqim Pasha but he was reluctant to act on them. It was not until three months passed, during which he had received five successive instructions from the Prime Minister, that he could bring himself to act. (Bahá’u’lláh A Short Biography, M. Momen p. 59)

20. Ownership of the House in Baghdad

*Image: House of Bahá’u’lláh in Baghdad*
This Tablet in Arabic is revealed in honour of Hájí Mírzá Músá-i-Javáhirí, entitled by Bahá'u'lláh the Harf-i-Baqá (Letter of Eternity). His father, Hájí Mírzá Hádí, formerly a Persian vizir, was a remarkable person who was held in high repute among the notables of Persia and 'Iráq. He had migrated to Baghdád where he had established his residence and, being a man of great wealth and influence, was highly esteemed by the inhabitants of that city. Towards the end of his life, Hájí Mírzá Hádí became attracted to Bahá'u'lláh and was devoted to Him. He would often enter His presence and sit at His feet in humility and self-effacement.

After his death great difficulties arose over his estate. When everything was settled, his son, Hájí Mírzá Músá, who was a loyal and steadfast follower of Bahá'u'lláh, inherited a portion of the estate. He owned the house of Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdád and was eager to present it to Him, along with other properties. But Bahá'u'lláh refused to accept this gift. Hájí Mírzá Músá continued to plead with Him, however, until at last Bahá'u'lláh gave instructions that the house be purchased from him at a fair price. This was accomplished and the house became a property of the Faith.

Bahá'u'lláh has designated this house as the 'House of God', the 'Most Great House', and ordained it to be a centre of pilgrimage. Within its walls innumerable Tablets were revealed and the verses of God were sent down in great profusion for many years. From this sacred spot Bahá'u'lláh shed the splendour of His name upon the peoples of the world and breathed the spirit of life into the body of mankind. This House and the House of the Báb in Shíráz are, next to the Holy Shrines in 'Akká and Haifa where the earthly remains of Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb are interred, regarded by Bahá'ís as the holiest places on earth. (The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 1, p. 211)

21. Reason for Leaving Baghdad

Image: Garden of Ridvan in Baghdad (Green area)

The love and admiration of the people for Bahá'u'lláh was fully demonstrated on the day of His departure from His 'Most Great House' in Baghdád. Then His majesty and greatness were evident to both friend and foe. The news of His forthcoming departure for Constantinople had spread rapidly among the inhabitants of Baghdád and its neighbouring towns, and large numbers wished to attain His presence and pay their last tributes to Him. But soon it became apparent that His house was too small for the purpose. When Najib Páshá, one of the notables of the city of Baghdád heard of this, he immediately placed his garden-park, Najíbiyyih, at the disposal of Bahá'u'lláh. This beautiful garden, designated by His followers as the Garden of Ridván (Paradise), was situated on the outskirts of Baghdád, across the river from Bahá'u'lláh's house. (The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 1, p. 259)

22. Leaving the Most Holy Habitation

Image: House of Bahá'u'lláh
On the thirty-first day after Naw-Ruz in 1863, Bahá’u’lláh left “for the last time, amidst weeping and lamentation, His “His Holy Habitation”, out of which had “gone forth the breath of the All-Glorious,” and from which had poured forth, in “ceaseless strains,” the “melody of the All-Merciful,” (Adapted from God Passes By, p. 148)

When Baha’u’llah appeared in the courtyard of His house, His companions, grief-stricken and disconsolate, prostrated themselves at His feet. For some time He stood there, amid the weeping and lamentations of His loved ones, speaking words of comfort and promising to receive each of them later in the garden. In a Tablet Baha’u’llah mentions that when He had walked some way towards the gate, amid the crowds, a child of only a few years ran forward and, clinging to His robes, wept aloud, begging Him in his tender young voice not to leave. In such an atmosphere, where emotions had been so deeply stirred, this action on the part of a small child moved the hearts and brought further grief to everyone.

Outside the house, the lamentation and weeping of those who did not confess to be His followers were no less spectacular and heartrending. Everyone in the crowded street sought to approach Him. Some prostrated themselves at His feet, others waited to hear a few words and yet others were content with a touch of His hands or a glance at His face. A Persian lady of noble birth, who was not herself a believer, pushed her way into the crowd and with a gesture of sacrifice threw her child at the feet of Baha’u’llah. These demonstrations continued all the way to the riverbank. (The Child of the Covenant, A. Taherzadeh, p. 70)

What else can I say? In this manner, when the Ancient Beauty stepped outside [of the inner apartments], the people rushed forward from all directions. He descended the steps from the courtyard of the Blessed House into the narrow street before it joined the main road. The entire area was thronged with people, both believers and otherwise, in such a way that movement was not possible. Friends could not be distinguished from strangers. The sound of lamentation and grief was raised in all directions. ... Everyone was crying. The Iranians were saying, “O God, we have been orphaned! We are dying! Our bright days have turned dark!” Their howling and weeping had reached the highest pitch. And the Arab friends, whether believers or otherwise, similarly were crying and sobbing, “O Master, O Siyyid! What are we to do when separated from Thee, O our Master?” Wailing, crying and lamentation reached the highest pinnacles. (A Lifetime with Bahá’u’lláh, A.H. Ashchi, Translated by Ahang Rabbani)

23. Crossing the River

Image: Qufih (round boat)

Baha’u’llah, as he walked to the bank of the Tigris, gave generously to the poor and the deprived, and consoled and comforted the people who were never to see Him again. But they were now so acutely conscious of their evident and grievous loss that words failed to console them. And it must be remembered that the vast majority of them were men and women not in any way connected with the Faith of the Bab. Ibn-Alusi, a leading cleric of the Sunni community, was seen weeping over their plight, and he was heard to heap imprecations on Nasiri’d-Din Shah, who was generally held responsible for Baha’u’llah’s exile from Baghdad.
‘This man is not Nasiri’d-Din – the Helper of Religion; he is Mukhdhili’d-Din – the Abaser of Religion.’ Such being the reaction of men in high position not affiliated to the Faith of the Bab, one can better imagine the feelings of those Babis who, perforce, had to remain in Baghdad. Aqa Rida writes that so disconsolate were they that those who were to accompany Baha’u’llah sorrowed with them. ‘God alone knows’, he writes, ‘how those believers who were not to come fared on that day.’ (Bahá’u’lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi p. 168)

Baha’u’llah arrived to “the bank of the Tigris, where a quffih (round boat made from woven reeds and waterproofed with tar) awaited to take Him to the further bank, to the garden of Najib Pasha (known as the Najibiyiyih). The thoroughfare to the riverside brimmed with people, men and women, young and old, from all walks of life, who had gathered to see Him go and bewail His departure.” (Bahá’u’lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi p. 169)

He, at length, reached the banks of the river, and was ferried across, accompanied by His sons and amanuensis, to the Najibiyiyih Garden, situated on the opposite shore. “O My companions,” He thus addressed the faithful band that surrounded Him before He embarked, “I entrust to your keeping this city of Baghdad, in the state ye now behold it, when from the eyes of friends and strangers alike, crowding its housetops, its streets and markets, tears like the rain of spring are flowing down, and I depart. With you it now rests to watch lest your deeds and conduct dim the flame of love that gloweth within the breasts of its inhabitants.” (God Passes By, p. 149)

24. Arriving to the Ridvan Garden

_Bahá’u’lláh was then ferried across the river, accompanied by three of His sons: ‘Abdu’l-Baha, Mirza Mihdi (the Purest Branch) and Muhammad-‘Ali, who were 18, 14 and 10 years of age, respectively. With them also was His amanuensis, Mirza Aqa Jan. The identity of others who may have accompanied Him, of those in the garden who pitched His tent and made preparations for His arrival, or of those who might have followed Him on that day, is not clearly known._

_The call to afternoon prayer was raised from the mosque and the words ‘Allah’u’Akbar’ (God is the Greatest), chanted by the muezzin (the one who calls to prayer), reverberated through the garden as the King of Glory entered it. There, Baha’u’llah appeared in the utmost joy, walking majestically in its flower-lined avenues and among its trees. The fragrance of the roses and the singing of the nightingales created an atmosphere of beauty and enchantment._ (The Child of the Covenant, A. Taherzadeh, p. 71)

_Those who were entrusted to assist with this move, transferred all the provisions and raised the tabernacle of God’s mighty sovereignty in the midst of the Garden, and firmly planted the ropes of all tents throughout the Garden. On that same day the river overflowed and only on the ninth day was it possible for His family to join Him in the Garden._ (A Flame of Fire, A. Q. Faizi)
At that time the Garden was filled with red roses, colorful flowers, divers tulips and green and verdant trees. With the utmost refinement, purity and gracefulfulness, a pool of water was situated in the middle of [Bahá’u’lláh’s] tent; and outside, everywhere streams of water flowed in all directions. Every believer was thoroughly devoted to ensuring utmost order and grace in all affairs in such wise that the Garden had never seen such beauty in all its days. (A Lifetime with Bahá’u’lláh, A.H. Ashchi, Translated by Ahang Rabbani)

25. Tablet of Patience

Image: Son of Haji Muhammad Taqi, Hand of the Cause of Bahá’u’lláh

Haji Muhammad-Taqi of Nayriz, who had stood heroically and proudly under the banner of the erudite, the peerless Vahid, and had suffered immeasurably, was another well-tested veteran of the Faith, come to seek solace and asylum in 'Iraq; he found both, on attaining the presence of Bahá’u’lláh. The story of Haji Muhammad-Taqi, whom Bahá’u’lláh later honoured with the designation of Ayyub (Job), is both moving and awe-inspiring. He survived the holocaust of Nayriz and fell into the clutches of Zaynu'l-'Abidin Khan, the sadistic and greedy governor of that town, who had helped himself copiously to the riches of the wealthy Haji. Every day, as the Governor sat watching and mocking him, he was thrown into an ice-cold pool, battered on the head every time he surfaced, then dragged out and mercilessly lashed (to the accompaniment of the Governor's evident enjoyment and laughter) until blood poured out of his wounds. In response to Zaynu'l-'Abidin Khan's jeers, Haji Muhammad-Taqi praised God for the bounty of suffering in His path. At last, the Governor tired of his satanic pleasures and decided to get rid of the Haji. But the Governor's men proved more God-fearing. They let Haji Muhammad-Taqi go, and told him to take himself away as soon and as far as he could, lest he should be discovered alive by their master.

Haji Muhammad-Taqi, covered with wounds, was left alone in the wilderness. With that superb patience which would earn him the designation of Ayyub from the Most Sublime Pen, he managed to reach a village in the neighbourhood, with the headman of which he had been on very friendly terms in the past. That excellent man harboured the Haji for a month, hiding him from all and nursing him with care. But Haji Muhammad-Taqi knew that before long he must put a safe distance between himself and the town of Nayriz. As soon as he could walk, he bade farewell to the kind headman and joined a caravan wending its way to the holy cities of 'Iraq. In that caravan there were many pilgrims trudging on foot, and Haji Muhammad-Taqi kept them company, although after all he had gone through he was weak and enfeebled. However, out of a tent emerged a man, obviously well provided for the long journey, who had a good look at Haji Muhammad-Taqi, and then invited him to be his guest as far as Karbila. 'In my dream last night,' the man said, 'the Prince of the Martyrs, himself, commanded me to take you as my guest.' In this miraculous way Haji Muhammad-Taqi reached 'Iraq and the presence <p131> of Bahá’u’lláh. The {Lawh-i-Ayyub} (Tablet of Ayyub), revealed by Bahá’u’lláh, has immortalized the name of Haji Muhammad-Taqi of Nayriz. (Bahá’u’lláh, The King of Glory, HM Balyuzi p. 129-131)
26. So Challenging a Claim

Image: Image of Ridvan Garden when hospital had been built

‘Abdu’l-Baha has described how, upon His arrival in the garden, Baha’u’llah declared His station to those of His companions who were present and announced with great joy the inauguration of the Festival of Ridvan. The Child of the Covenant (Adib Taherzadeh)

Undaunted by the prospect of the appalling adversities which, as predicted by Himself, were soon to overtake Him; on the eve of a second banishment which would be fraught with many hazards and perils, and would bring Him still farther from His native land, the cradle of His Faith, to a country alien in race, in language and in culture; acutely conscious of the extension of the circle of His adversaries, among whom were soon to be numbered a monarch more despotic than Nasiri’Din Shah, and ministers no less unyielding in their hostility than either Haji Mirza Aqasi or the Amir-Nizam; undeterred by the perpetual interruptions occasioned by the influx of a host of visitors who thronged His tent, Baha’u’llah chose in that critical and seemingly unpropitious hour to advance so challenging a claim, to lay bare the mystery surrounding His person, and to assume, in their plenitude, the power and the authority which were the exclusive privileges of the One Whose advent the Bab had prophesied. (God Passes By, p. 159)

Rejoice with exceeding gladness, O people of Bahá, as ye call to remembrance the Day of supreme felicity, the Day whereon the Tongue of the Ancient of Days hath spoken, as He departed from His House, proceeding to the Spot from which He shed upon the whole of creation the splendors of His name, the All-Merciful. God is Our witness. Were We to reveal the hidden secrets of that Day, all they that dwell on earth and in the heavens would swoon away and die, except such as will be preserved by God, the Almighty, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh no. XIV)

Sadness and grief vanished and the believers were filled with delight. Although Baha’u’llah was being exiled to far-off lands and knew the sufferings and tribulations which were in store for Him and His followers, yet through this historic declaration He changed all sorrow into blissful joy and spent the most delightful time of His ministry in the Garden of Ridvan. (The Child of the Covenant, A. Taherzadeh, p. 71)

27. The Three Statements

Image: Ridvan Garden from the River

"Baha’u’llah moved to the garden of Ridvan, outside the gates of Baghdad. The Babis thronged there to see the last of their Beloved so cruelly torn from their midst. It was the twenty-first day of April. With tears in their eyes they gathered around Him. He was calm, serene, and unruffled. The hour had struck. To that company Bahá’u’lláh revealed Himself - He was the Promised One in Whose path the Bab had sacrificed his life, 'Him Whom God will make Manifest,' the Shah Bahram, the Fifth Buddha, the lord of Hosts, the Return of Christ, the Master of the Day of Judgment. A deep silence fell upon the audience. Heads were bent as
the immensity of that Declaration touched the consciousness of men. Not a breath of dissent - one and all they threw themselves at His feet. Sadness had vanished; joy, celestial joy, prevailed." Balyuzi Bahá’u’lláh Biography

Although the manner of His Declaration is not clear, there is a Tablet ..., which throws light on some of Bahá’u’lláh’s utterances. According to this Tablet, on the first day of Ridván Bahá’u’lláh made three particularly important statements to His followers.

The first was to forbid the use of the sword in His Dispensation. During the ministry of the Báb the believers defended themselves against their persecutors; Bahá’u’lláh clearly forbade this. In many Tablets He counselled His followers to teach the Cause with wisdom and prudence and not to arouse the antagonism of a fanatic enemy. He enjoined caution when teaching those who were determined to uproot the foundation of the Faith and harm its adherents. ...

The second statement made by Bahá’u’lláh on the first day of Ridván, as attested in the aforementioned Tablet, was that no other Manifestation of God would appear before the expiration of a thousand years. ...

Bahá’u’lláh’s third statement on the first day of Ridván was that, the moment He uttered those words, all the names and attributes of God were fully manifested within all created things. By this He implied the advent of a new Day and the infusion of a fresh capacity into all beings. (The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol. Ch 16)

28. His Family Joining in the Ridvan Garden

*Image: River of Tigris*

“Bahá’u’lláh left His home “on the thirty-second day after Naw-Ruz for the Ridvan Garden. On that same day the river overflowed and only on the ninth day was it possible for His family to join Him in the Garden. The river then overflowed a second time, and on the twelfth day it subsided and all went to Him.” (A Flame of Fire, A.Q. Faizi)

During the twelve days of His sojourn in that garden, every morning and every afternoon He would speak of the Báb’s Cause and declare His own. (My Memories of Bahá’u’lláh (Ustád Muhammad-‘Alíy-i- Salmáni)

29. Pile of Roses

*Image: Roses*

“Every day,” Nabil has related, “ere the hour of dawn, the gardeners would pick the roses which lined the four avenues of the garden, and would pile them in the center of the floor of His blessed tent. So great would be the heap that when His companions gathered to drink their morning tea in His presence, they would be unable to see each other across it. All these
roses Baha’u’llah would, with His own hands, entrust to those whom He dismissed from His presence every morning to be delivered, on His behalf, to His Arab and Persian friends in the city.” (God Passes By, p. 153)

30. Consider these Nightingales

*Image: Painting from Qajar Era*

“One night,” he continues, “the ninth night of the waxing moon, I happened to be one of those who watched beside His blessed tent. As the hour of midnight approached, I saw Him issue from His tent, pass by the places where some of His companions were sleeping, and begin to pace up and down the moonlit, flower-bordered avenues of the garden. So loud was the singing of the nightingales on every side that only those who were near Him could hear distinctly His voice. He continued to walk until, pausing in the midst of one of these avenues, He observed: ‘Consider these nightingales. So great is their love for these roses, that sleepless from dusk till dawn, they warble their melodies and commune with burning passion with the object of their adoration. How then can those who claim to be afire with the rose-like beauty of the Beloved choose to sleep?’ (God Passes By, p. 153)

31. Visitors

*Image: Tents of Bahá’u’lláh (probably this kind but not these exact ones)*

Bahá’u’lláh stayed in the Garden for twelve days and during the entire period, the eminent rulers, ‘ulamá and jurists attained His blessed presence in a raised tabernacle and asked complex questions and received conclusive replies which resolved their perplexities. Some of the friends were engaged [in service] and those whose residence was in Baghdad would come during the day and return home at night, and yet return to the Garden the next morning. This lowly one was among those servants [in the Garden] who was engaged in carrying out whatever he was instructed. (A Lifetime with Bahá’u’lláh, A.H. Ashchi, Translated by Ahang Rabbani)

For three successive nights I watched and circled round His blessed tent. Every time I passed by the couch whereon He lay, I would find Him wakeful, and every day, from morn till eventide, I would see Him ceaselessly engaged in conversing with the stream of visitors who kept flowing in from Baghdad. Not once could I discover in the words He spoke any trace of dissimulation.” (God Passes By, p. 153)

Outstanding among them was the renowned Alusi, the Mufti of Baghdad, who, with eyes dimmed with tears, execrated the name of Nasiri’Din Shah, whom he deemed to be primarily responsible for so unmerited a banishment. “I have ceased to regard him,” he openly asserted, “as Nasiri’Din (the helper of the Faith), but consider him rather to be its wrecker.” (God Passes By, p. 149)
Another distinguished visitor was the governor himself, Namiq Pasha, who, after expressing in the most respectful terms his regret at the developments which had precipitated Baha’u’llah’s departure, and assuring Him of his readiness to aid Him in any way he could, handed to the officer appointed to accompany Him a written order, commanding the governors of the provinces through which the exiles would be passing to extend to them the utmost consideration. “Whatever you require,” he, after profuse apologies, informed Baha’u’llah, “you have but to command. We are ready to carry it out. Extend thy consideration to Our loved ones,” was the reply to his insistent and reiterated offers, “and deal with them with kindness” – a request to which he gave his warm and unhesitating assent. (A Flame of Fire, A.Q. Faizi)

32. Departure from the Ridvan Garden

Image: Picture of Husayn Ashchi

The afternoon of departure arrived. What am I to say? When the pen wanted to describe this mood, the pen broke and the paper was torn. (A Lifetime with Bahá’u’lláh, A.H. Ashchi, Translated by Ahang Rabbani)

The departure of Baha’u’llah from the Garden of Ridvan, at noon, on the 14th of Dhi’l-Qa’dih 1279 A.H. (May 3, 1863), witnessed scenes of tumultuous enthusiasm no less spectacular, and even more touching, than those which greeted Him when leaving His Most Great House in Baghdad. “The great tumult,” wrote an eyewitness, “associated in our minds with the Day of Gathering, the Day of Judgment, we beheld on that occasion. Believers and unbelievers alike sobbed and lamented. The chiefs and notables who had congregated were struck with wonder. Emotions were stirred to such depths as no tongue can describe, nor could any observer escape their contagion.” (A Flame of Fire, A.Q. Faizi)

The believers who were to stay behind in Baghdad were weeping and wailing in such wise that from their lamentation most believers who were to depart with Bahá’u’lláh began to sob and cry as well, as were the denizens of the Exalted Tabernacle, from whose eyes tears poured forth and the sound of weeping and wailing filled the air. In truth, each one like “a mother grieving over a lost son lamented and sobbed” to the highest pinnacles of heaven. The nonbelievers, including, the ‘ulamá, jurists, rulers and commoners – in short, every person who was present – were all crying and weeping as well. (A Lifetime with Bahá’u’lláh, A.H. Ashchi, Translated by Ahang Rabbani)

... Ahmad begged Baha’u’llah to be amongst His companions in exile, but Baha’u’llah did not accede to this request. He chose a few people and instructed the others to stay to teach and protect the Cause emphasizing that this would be better for the Faith of God. At the time of His departure, those who were left behind stood in a row and all were so overcome with
sorrow that they burst into tears. Baha’u’llah again approached them and consoled them saying: “It is better for the Cause. Some of these people who accompany me are liable to do mischief; therefore I am taking them with Myself.” One of the friends could scarcely control his anguish and sorrow. He addressed the crowd reciting this poem of Sa’di:

“Let us all rise to weep like unto the clouds of the Spring Season. On the day when lovers are separated from their Beloved, one can even hear the lamentations of stones.”

Baha’u’llah then said, “Verily this was said for this day.” (A Flame of Fire, A.Q. Faizi)

33. The Arabian Stallion

Image: An example of Kajavih (Howdah)

At last the mules were loaded, the kajavihs (howdahs) were settled on them, the ladies and children took their seats in the Kajavihs, and towards sunset the red roan stallion was brought out for Baha’u’llah to mount. King of Glory ((Bahá’u’lláh, The King of Glory, HM Balyuzi p. 175)

Mounted on His steed, a red roan stallion of the finest breed, the best His lovers could purchase for Him, and leaving behind Him a bowing multitude of fervent admirers, He rode forth on the first stage of a journey that was to carry Him to the city of Constantinople. “Numerous were the heads,” Nabil himself a witness of that memorable scene, recounts, “which, on every side, bowed to the dust at the feet of His horse, and kissed its hoofs, and countless were those who pressed forward to embrace His stirrups.”

“How great the number of those embodiments of fidelity,” testifies a fellow-traveler, “who, casting themselves before that charger, preferred death to separation from their Beloved! Methinks, that blessed steed trod upon the bodies of those pure-hearted souls.”

“He (God) it was,” Baha’u’llah Himself declares, “Who enabled Me to depart out of the city (Baghdad), clothed with such majesty as none, except the denier and the malicious, can fail to acknowledge.” These marks of homage and devotion continued to surround Him until He was installed in Constantinople. (God Passes By, p. 155)

All those whose narratives have come down to us state that seeing Baha’u’llah in the saddle, and about to depart, evoked from the vast crowd heart-rending, unbearable cries of distress. The call: ‘Allah-u-Akbar’ – ‘God is the Greatest’ – rang out time and again. People threw themselves in the path of His horse, and as Aqa Rida expresses it, ‘it seemed as if that heavenly steed was passing over sanctified bodies and pure hearts’. On that day for the first time they witnessed Baha’u’llah’s splendid horsemanship. During all those years in Baghdad, although horses were never unavailable, Aqa Rida states that Baha’u’llah had always chosen to ride a donkey. Another symbolic sign of the divine authority that He now visibly wielded was the change in His headgear, on the first day of the Festival of Ridvan – the day He left His house in Baghdad for the last time, to take His residence in the Najibiyyih prior to His departure for the capital of the Turkish Empire. It was then seen that He was wearing a taj (crown), finely embroidered. (Bahá’u’lláh, The King of Glory, HM Balyuzi p. 176)