The Life of Bahá'u'lláh

Part 6 – Adrianople (1863 - 1868)

1. Introduction

The initial phase of that Proclamation may be said to have opened in Constantinople with the communication (the text of which we, alas, do not possess) addressed by Bahá'u'lláh to Sulṭán Abdu'l-'Azíz himself, the self-styled vicar of the Prophet of Islám and the absolute ruler of a mighty empire. So potent, so august a personage was the first among the sovereigns of the world to receive the Divine Summons, and the first among Oriental monarchs to sustain the impact of God’s retributive justice. The occasion for this communication was provided by the infamous edict the Sulṭán had promulgated, less than four months after the arrival of the exiles in his capital, banishing them, suddenly and without any justification whatsoever, in the depth of winter, and in the most humiliating circumstances, to Adrianople, situated on the extremities of his empire. (God Passes By, Shoghi Effendi, p. 159)

2. Travel to Adrianople

Image: Map depicting the path taken from Constantinople to Adrianople (image from Bahá'u'lláh.org)

It was now the heart of winter, which can be very severe in those eastern parts of Europe. Although carriages, wagons and pack animals were provided, as well as ox-carts for their belongings, it was a hard journey, taxing the strength of all, and it lasted twelve days. Snow was falling as they left Istanbul and they were not clad for freezing weather. Recalling their sufferings, Baha'u'llah declared, 'The eyes of Our enemies wept over Us, and beyond them those of every discerning person.' ‘They expelled us ... with an abasement with which no abasement on earth can compare.'

In the late afternoon of the first day the travellers reached Kuchik-Chakmachih, about three hours' journey from Istanbul. An official named 'Ali Big, with the rank of Yuz-Bashi (Centurion, commander of a hundred men), who accompanied them, found lodgings for Baha'u'llah. The next day, they left at dawn and arrived towards noon at Buyuk-Chakmachih, where they were housed in the home of a Christian. It was night-time when they took to the road again, to reach Salvari. Here too they were lodged in the house of a Christian. But Aqa Rida states, some had to be taken elsewhere with all the cooking utensils. At midnight, in pouring rain and intense cold, they moved out of Salvari, and reached Birkas the next day. The last halting-place before arrival at Adrianople was Baba-Iski. Apart from the inconveniences of the extreme cold, Aqa Rida had nothing in particular to record of the events of the journey. But he says that everywhere, the owners of the houses where they lodged were liberally remunerated, to their satisfaction. (Bahá’u’lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p. 206)
3. Arrive to Adrianople

*Image: View of Adrianople (Image from Bahá’u’lláh.org)*

It was Saturday, 12 December 1863 (1 Rajab AH 1280), when they arrived at Adrianople, a city characterized by Baha'u'llah as 'the place which none entereth except such as have rebelled against the authority of the sovereign'. Baha'u'llah was now virtually a prisoner of the Ottoman government. (*Bahá’ú’lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p. 205*)

We arrived at Adrianople all sick – even the young and strong. My brother again had his feet frozen on this journey. Our family, numbering eleven persons, were lodged in a house of three rooms just outside the city of Adrianople. It was like a prison; without comforts and surrounded by a guard of soldiers. Our only food was the prison fare allowed us, which was unsuitable for the children and the sick. That winter was a period of intense suffering, due to cold, hunger, and, above all, to the torments of vermin, with which the house was swarming. These made even the days horrible, and the nights still more so. When they were so intolerable that it was impossible to sleep, my brother would light a lamp (which somewhat intimidated the vermin) and by singing and laughing seek to restore the spirits of the family. In the spring, on the appeal off the Blessed Perfection to the governor, we were removed to somewhat more comfortable quarters within the city. Our family was given a second story of a house, of which some of the believers occupied the ground floor. (*Bahiyyih Khanum’s recollections in The Master in Akka, Myron Phelps, p 48*)

4. The Remote Prison

*Image: Map of Adrianople with Mosque of Mradiyyih marked with a red dot*

This historic city, in a far corner of the European continent, was the furthest place from His native land that Baha'u'llah was ever to reach in the course of His ministry. And it was the first time in the known history of religion that a Manifestation of God had come to dwell on the European continent. ... At the time of Baha'u'llah's sojourn there, Adrianople's population was 100,000 and it was the capital of an important province of the Turkish Empire. (*Bahá’ú’lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p. 218*)

5. First Residence in Adrianople

*Image: Photo of the Muradiyyih Mosque taken around 1963*

On their arrival the travellers were all huddled together in a caravanserai called Khan-i-'Arab, where accommodation was poor and restricted. Baha'u'llah stayed there for three nights. Then a house in the Muradiyyih quarter, in the north-eastern part of the city, was procured for Him and His family, which Ashchi recalls was on high ground, with a good view of the whole of Adrianople. (This quarter is centered on the Muradiyyih mosque, which was built by Sultan Murad II.) Others remained at the inn, where their meals were brought to them from
the house of Baha'u'llah. Ashchi, too, has something to say about the extreme severity of that winter. On the road from Constantinople to Adrianople he had seen a number of people frozen to death. In Adrianople it was said that they had not experienced such a hard winter for forty years, and there were frequent snowfalls well into the spring. For several days the public baths had to shut their doors, and springs were blocked with ice so that people had to light huge fires by them and wait a long time before any water would flow. In Baha'u'llah's own room, despite the stove, a carafe of water froze one night. The suffering of Baha'u'llah and His people, ill-provided as they were, is obvious.

After a short stay in that house in the Muradiyyih quarter, which was too small, another house in the same quarter but more spacious, close to the Takyih of the Mawlavis, was obtained for Baha'u'llah. Others, who were still in the caravanserai, moved to the first house which Baha'u'llah had just vacated. Next door to the second residence in the Muradiyyih quarter, a third house was rented for Aqa Rida remarks, were old, draughty and badly constructed, and keeping out the cold was a constant problem. (Bahá'u'lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p. 219)

6. The Ceaseless Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh

In Adrianople Bahá'u'lláh did not appear in public as much as He had done in Baghdád. Instead He allowed 'Abdu'l-Bahá to do this for Him. But He did occasionally visit the mosques of Murádíyyih and Sultán Salím where some of the learned and devout came in contact with Him, recognized His greatness and became His admirers. … In spite of the hardships and rigours of yet another exile, the outpourings of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh continued unabated in Adrianople. In one of his writings dated 17th Jamádí 1281 A.H. (19 October 1864), Mírzá Áqá Ján has testified that from the days of 'Iráq up to that day, Tablets had been sent down successively and unceasingly from the heaven of the Will of God. This process acquired still greater momentum in Adrianople. From the tone of these Tablets it became clear that the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh had already entered a new phase and that He, who in previous years had only alluded to His station, was now openly summoning the believers to Himself as the Supreme Manifestation of God. (The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 2, p. 63)

7. Asking for Promotion

Aqa Rida recounts the story of 'Ali Big, the centurion, who had accompanied Baha'u'llah and His party from Constantinople. When he came to take his leave, he begged Baha'u'llah for promotion. He had been a centurion too long and was no longer young; to gain the rank of Big-Bashi and to be posted to Adrianople was his dearest wish. Baha'u'llah assured him that all would be well with him, and indeed, before long he turned up at Adrianople, a Big-Bashi. He sought Baha'u'llah's presence to express his gratitude, telling everyone that it was by the
bounty of Bahá'u'lláh that he had obtained his remarkable promotion. After a while, however, he began to long for another step up the ladder. Once again he begged Bahá'u'lláh that his desideratum be granted to him, and once again he was assured that he would be given the higher rank. And so, one day, he appeared with the badge of a Mir-Alay. He himself could not believe his luck in having attained such a high military rank, and never ceased to declare openly that he owed it all to Bahá'u'lláh. And he consorted with His followers wherever and whenever he could. But as he had come such a long way, would it be unreasonable to desire and attain the rank of a Pasha? 'How long do you want to live?' Bahá'u'lláh asked him. And not long after, he was dead—Mir-Alay 'Ali Big. (Bahá'u'lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p. 219)

8. Joyous in Difficulties

Image: Mirza Musa

Life was indeed hard in that first winter in Adrianople. Before long, financial difficulties too began to be felt. By this time Aqa Husayn, himself, was working in the kitchen; hence his name of Ashchi (maker of broth, in other words, cook). He recalls that there were days when the only fare available for the luncheon spread was bread and cheese; yet he effected economies enabling him to prepare, every now and then, a feast for Bahá'u'lláh, and managed to buy two cows and a goat to provide the household with milk and yoghurt. (Bahá'u'lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p. 220)

But, first, to the supreme joy and bliss of those loyal companions of Bahá'u'lláh which Aqa Rida’s and Ashchi’s narratives depict. No matter how hard the winter, no matter how straitened the circumstances, no matter how poorly clad and badly housed, how dire the dark look of an uncertain future, they had attained their heart’s desire and were happy. They lived in close proximity to their Lord and served Him with utter devotion. They heard by day and by night, from His own lips, verses—majestic, commanding, compassionate—which betokened the sunrise of the Day of Days, and they basked continuously in the life-giving rays of that Sun. Aqa Rida relates that Bahá'u'lláh visited them oftentimes, in that first house of the Muradiyyih quarter, and also visited the house of Aqay-i-Kalim, His brother, next door to His own house, where those few of His followers who were in Adrianople forgathered. (Bahá'u'lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p. 220)

9. In His Presence

Image: Mirza Heydar Ali

A certain man, who was a follower of Azal, once requested the late Hájí Siyyid Javád-i-Karbilá’í..., an early believer and one of the Mirrors of the Bábí Dispensation, to describe the countenance of the Báb...and its beauty. He said 'He was unsurpassed in beauty and sweetness; I saw in Him all the goodness and beauty ascribed to the person of Joseph.'
Since the questioner was an Azalí and a few other Azalís were also present, I felt that these men might deduce from the late Hájí Siyyid Javád's statement that he was also a follower of Azal. Therefore I asked him to tell us about the beauty of the One in Whose holy presence the Kingdom of beauty prostrates itself and at whose threshold the most high realm of omnipotence and majesty raises a song of praise and glory [Bahá’u’lláh]. He replied, 'Know with absolute certainty that if anyone, whether friend or foe, claims that he was able to look directly into the blessed face of Bahá’u’lláh he is a liar. I tested this repeatedly and tried time and again to gaze upon His blessed countenance, but was unable to do so. Sometimes, when a person attains the presence of Bahá’u’lláh, he is so enamoured and carried away that in fact he becomes dumbfounded, awe-struck, oblivious of himself and forgetful of the world. And whenever he is not carried away, should he try to look into His blessed face with concentration, it would be like looking into the sun. In the same way that the eye is blinded by the effulgent rays of the sun, causing tears to flow, should one persist in gazing upon the countenance of the Blessed Beauty, tears will fill the eyes making it impossible to gain any impression of Him.'

I myself had this experience. During the seven months that I stayed in Adrianople, I was so carried away and dazzled [by His presence] that I was completely oblivious of myself and all creation. (The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 2, p. 9)

10. Tablet of Ahmad

Image: Ahmad to whom the Tablet of Ahmad was revealed

The Lawh-i-Ahmad (Tablet of Ahmad) is one of the best known Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh, translated into English and many other languages. It was revealed around 1282 A.H. (1865) in honour of Ahmad, a native of Yazd. A cursory glance at the original Tablet makes it clear that Bahá’u’lláh wrote this before He was poisoned by Mírzá Yahyá. (The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 2, p. 107)

After a few years he once again left his home and work and set out on foot towards Adrianople, the city of his love and desire. When he reached Istanbul he received a Tablet from Bahá'u'llah, now well known as "The Tablet of Ahmad". He describes receipt of this Tablet as follows:

"I received the Tablet of 'The Nightingale of Paradise' and reading it again and again, I found out that my Beloved desired me to go and teach His Cause. Therefore I preferred obedience to visiting Him."

He was specially commissioned to travel through Persia, find the old Bábí families and convey to them the new message of the Lord. Hence such glorious reference to the Báb in this Tablet. The task was arduous beyond description and therefore such exhortations as, "Be thou a flame of fire to My enemies and a river of life eternal to My loved ones and be not of those who doubt." The path to be pursued by him would be full of blood, thorns and hardships to be borne, but followed by such soul stirring promises of victory as "And if thou art overtaken by affliction in My path, or degradation for My sake, be not thou troubled thereby."
With this divine amulet in his possession - a small piece of paper which had been "invested by Baha'u'llah with a special potency and significance", and clad in the simple garments of a mendicant, Ahmad made his way back to Persia. He entered the country from the district where the Báb had been imprisoned and martyred and crossed this region like unto the breeze of life. Many of the Bábis were thus enabled to see the sun then shining from Adrianople and even many of the Moslems embraced the Faith wholeheartedly. *(A Flame of Fire, published in Conqueror of Hearts, A.Q. Faizi)*

**11. Finding a New Residence**

*Image: The ruins of House of Amrullah, picture taken in 1933*

Baha'u'llah, according to Aqa Rida, stayed about ten months in that second house in the Muradiyyih quarter. But since its accommodation was inadequate, and its situation made it lonely and difficult access, He wished to obtain another residence, more commodious and easier to reach. One day, Aqa Rida relates, Baha'u'llah said to Mirza Mahmud-Kashani: 'You are a tall man and nearer to God. Pray that He may give Us a better house', and within a few days a house was found, right in the heart of the city, to the north of the Mosque of Sultan Salim and close to it. ... As to the house, it was a spacious and magnificent mansion, called the house of Amru'llah, which means 'the Cause of God' [Shoghi Effendi in God Passes By translates the 'house of Amru'llah' as 'House of God's Command']. Baha'u'llah, Aqa Rida says, personally went to view it, and it met with His approval. Mirza Yahya was also present. Baha'u'llah observed: 'God answers the prayer of Aqa Mirza Mahmud. He prayed that God may give us a house; his prayer was answered and this house was found.' Its andaruni (inner quarter) of three storeys had thirty rooms. Baha'u'llah and His family occupied the upper floor, Mirza Muhammad-Quli and his family the middle one, and some of the attendants were housed in the ground floor. This vast house had a Turkish bath of its own, with running water in the kitchen and also a place for the storage of water. Aqa Rida writes: 'The house could not be faulted'. The biruni (outer quarter) had four or five beautiful rooms on its upper floor for reception, as well as accommodation for preparing and serving refreshments. The rest of the companions occupied he middle floor of the biruni. Two other houses were found in the same quarter, one for Aqay-i-Kalim and his family, and one for Mirza Yahya and his. All meals were prepared in the house of Amru'llah and distributed from there. *(Bahá'u'lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p. 221)*

**12. Calm Before the Storm**

*Image: Mosque of Sultan Salim in Adrianople*

Baha'u'llah had advised His companions that it was now the opportune time for them to engage in some trade. ... In this house of Amru'llah, Aqa Rida comments, they were all together at night, and in the daytime, some went about their trades, while others served in the house. ... 'We were all very happy together in that house of Amru'llah', he comments, 'and
no thought of separation ever crossed anyone's mind.' This state of affairs lasted for about a year.

In the second year of their stay in that house, Aqa Rida states, Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani and Haji Mirza Ahmad-i-Kashani began openly to show their true natures, compounded of treachery and insubordination. ... During that time, writes Aqa Rida, the companions gathered every night in the large room in the outer quarters of the house of Amru'llah, to read prayers of the Bab, because signs of Mirza Yahya's defection were appearing. But it was all still under cover. At times, he and Siyyid Muhammad were closeted together, concerting their plans. For a while, matters thus rested, until all at once a chasm gaped open, wide and unbridgeable. It was caused by the open rebellion of Mirza Yahya and the titanic upheaval which resulted from it. (Bahá'u'lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p. 222)

... the monstrous behavior of Mirza Yahya, one of the half-brothers of Baha'u'llah, the nominee of the Bab, and recognized chief of the Babi community, brought in its wake a period of travail which left its mark on the fortunes of the Faith for no less than half a century. This supreme crisis Baha'u'llah Himself designated as the Ayyam-i-Shidad (Days of Stress), during which 'the most grievous veil' was torn asunder, and the 'most great separation' was irrevocably effected. It immensely gratified and emboldened its external enemies, both civil and ecclesiastical, played into their hands, and evoked their unconcealed derision. It perplexed and confused the friends and supporters of Baha'u'llah, and seriously damaged the prestige of the Faith in the eyes of its western admirers ... It brought incalculable sorrow to Baha'u'llah, visibly aged Him, and inflicted, through its repercussions, the heaviest blow ever sustained by Him in His lifetime. It was engineered throughout by tortuous intrigues and incessant machinations of that same diabolical Siyyid Muhammad, that vile whispered who, disregarding Baha'u'llah's advice, had insisted on accompanying Him to Constantinople and Adrianople, and was now redoubling his efforts, with unrelaxing vigilance, to bring it to a head. (God Passes By, Shoghi Effendi, p. 163)

13. Mirza Yahya Begins His Opposition

Image: Mirza Yahya (Azal)

As the news of the Declaration of Bahá'u'lláh as 'He Whom God shall make manifest' began to reach the ears of the Bábís in Persia, and a few Bahá'í teachers actively engaged in the propagation of His Cause and the dissemination of His newly-revealed Tablets, a crisis unprecedented in its scope and severity was brewing in Adrianople and soon assailed the companions of Bahá'u'lláh in that city. Originating from Mírzá Yahyá and engineered by Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahání, it eventually engulfed the whole community, bringing in its wake untold sufferings to Bahá'u'lláh and creating a temporary breach in the ranks of the believers.

Soon after his arrival in Adrianople Mírzá Yahyá realized that his life was no longer in danger. He had feared persecution and death ever since the martyrdom of the Báb. It was this fear which had prompted him to hide himself away in Persia and 'Iráq for about thirteen years. ... But now, in Adrianople, he knew the situation was different and there was no persecution.
Bahá’u’lláh, soon after His arrival, had won the respect and admiration of the people of Adrianople including the Governor and other dignitaries. The co-operation and goodwill of the people became apparent when most of Bahá’u'lláh's companions, as directed by Him, engaged themselves in some work or profession and were integrated into the community.

Highly jealous of the rising prestige of Bahá’u'lláh and aware of the declaration of His station as 'He Whom God shall make manifest', Mírzá Yahyá decided it was time to come into the open and wrest the leadership of the community from the hands of the One who had been his guide and refuge all his life, and who had, through His sin-covering eye, concealed many of his shameful deeds. Emboldened by Bahá’u'lláh’s loving forgiveness, duped by Siyyid Muhammad's enticing prospects and spurred on by his own ambitious lust for leadership, Mírzá Yahyá embarked upon a path which is exclusively reserved for the evil, namely, to attempt a person's life. This was his only way, for he knew that he had no power whatsoever to confront Bahá’u'lláh. It is a fact that whenever Mírzá Yahyá came into the presence of Bahá’u'lláh, he found himself speechless. The majesty and authority of the Supreme Manifestation of God was so overwhelming that he was unable to utter a word. Several people have testified to this including Mírzá Áqá Ján, who mentions that in the early days in Baghdad he discovered that Mírzá Yahyá was so insignificant in the presence of Bahá’u’lláh that he could not speak. This puzzled Mírzá Áqá Ján, until later he realized that Mírzá Yahyá was like anyone else in the presence of Bahá’u’lláh. However, Bahá'u'lláh had instructed His amanuensis not to disclose his observations to anyone. (The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 2, p. 152-153)

14. Poisoning of Bahá’u’lláh

Image: The International Archives on Mount Carmel where a blood-stained handkerchief is preserved with which Baha'u'llah used to wipe His mouth on the night He fell ill, as a result of poisoning.

Desperate designs to poison Baha'u'llah and His companions, and thereby reanimate his own defunct leadership, began, approximately a year after their arrival in Adrianople, to agitate his mind. Well aware of the erudition of his half-brother, Aqay-i-Kalim, in matters pertaining to medicine, he, under various pretexts, sought enlightenment from him regarding the effects of certain herbs and poisons, and then began, contrary to his wont, to invite Baha’u'llah to his home, where, one day, having smeared His tea-cup with a substance he had concocted, he succeeded in poisoning Him sufficiently to produce a serious illness which lasted no less than a month, and which was accompanied by severe pains and high fever, the aftermath of which left Baha'u'llah with a shaking hand till the end of His life. So grave was His condition that a foreign doctor, named Shishman was called in to attend Him. The doctor was so appalled by His livid hue that he deemed His case hopeless, and, after having fallen at His feet, retired from His presence without prescribing a remedy. A few days later that doctor fell ill and died. Prior to his death Baha'u'llah had intimated that doctor Shishman had sacrificed his life for Him. To Mirza Aqa Jan sent by Baha'u'llah to visit him, the doctor had stated that God had answered his prayers, and that after his death a certain Dr Chupan, whom he knew to be
reliable, should, whenever necessary, be called in his stead. (Bahá’u’lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p. 225)

On another occasion this same Mirza Yahya had, according to the testimony of one of his wives, who had temporarily deserted him and revealed the details of the above-mentioned act, poisoned the well which provided water for the family and companions of Baha’u’llah, in consequence of which the exiles manifested strange symptoms of illness. (God Passes By, Shoghi Effendi, p. 163)

15. Bahá’u’lláh’s Convalescence

Image: Old Map of Adrianople with Muradiyyih quarters marked out.

Narrating the circumstances of Baha’u’llah’s prolonged illness, Aqa Rida says that for weeks the companions were bereft of attaining the presence of Baha’u’llah. They were heartbroken, but certainly would not be so bold as to ask to be permitted to visit Him. Then, one night during His convalescence, when most of them (including 'Abdu'l-Baha and His half-brother, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali) had been invited to dinner in the house of Aqay-i-Kalim, and Aqa Rida and two others had remained to carry wood for heating, Baha’u’llah, sitting up in His bed, called them in and bade them be seated. He spoke to them and told them how weak He felt. After that, as soon as He was able to walk unaided, He came to visit the companions. In the vicinity of the Muradiyyih quarter there was a piece of land, dotted with trees. Mirza Muhammad-Quli rented it, and Mirza Mahmud-i-Kashani planted flowers there. In the late afternoon Baha’u’llah would repair to that shaded spot, and the companions, returning from their day’s work, knew where to find Him and attain His presence. One such day, Baha’u’llah enquired how Khayyat-Bashi was, for the man had been ill. When Aqa Rida said that he had no news of his progress, Baha’u’llah replied that he should have gone first to visit Khayyat-Bashi before coming to this garden. ‘This I tell you,’ He said, ‘that you all should learn to care for one another at all times, and look after each other.’ The house of Aqay-i-Kalim was close by this orchard, and Baha’u’llah would, at times, visit His brother’s home before returning to His own. (Bahá’u’lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p. 226)

16. Shaykh Salman, The Barber

Image: Shaykh Salman

‘One day, while I was attending at the bath, waiting for the Blessed Perfection to arrive, Azal came in, washed himself and began to apply henna. I sat down to serve him and he began to talk to me. He mentioned a former governor of Nayriz who had killed the believers and had been an inveterate enemy of the Cause. Then Azal went on to praise courage and bravery and said that some were brave by nature and at the right time it showed in their conduct. He again mentioned Nayriz and said that at one time there was left of the children of the believers only one boy, of ten or eleven years. One day, when the Governor was in the bath, this boy went in with a knife, and as the Governor came out of the water, he stabbed him in the belly and
ripped him open. The Governor cried out and his servants rushed into the bath, saw the boy with the knife in his hand and attacked him. Then they went to see how their master was, and the boy, although wounded, rose up and stabbed him again. Azal again began to praise bravery and to say how wonderful it is to be courageous. He then said, "See what they are doing to the Cause; everybody has risen up against me, even my Brother, and in my wretched state I know nothing of comfort." His tone and implication were that he, being the successor of the Bab, was the wronged one and his Brother a usurper and aggressor. (I take refuge in God!) Then he again said that bravery is praiseworthy, and the Cause of God needs help. In all this talk, relating the story of the Governor of Nayriz and praising bravery and encouraging me, he was really urging me to kill Baha'u'llah.

'The effect of all this upon me was so disturbing that I had never felt so shattered in my life. I felt as if the building were tumbling about me. I said nothing, but in a very agitated state of mind went out to the ante-room and sat upon the bench there. I told myself that I would go back to the bath and cut off his head, no matter what the consequences. Then I reflected that to kill him was not an easy matter and perhaps I would offend Baha'u'llah. Suppose I kill this man, I said to myself, and then go into the presence of the Blessed Perfection and He asks me why I killed him, what answer could I give? This thought prevented me from carrying out my intention. I returned to the bath and being very angry told Azal to "clear off". [In Persian "{Gum Shaw}" is highly insulting.] Azal began to whimper and tremble and asked me to pour water over his head to wash off the henna. I complied and he washed and went out of the bath in a state of great trepidation and I have never met him since.

'My condition was such that nothing could calm me. As it happened I the Blessed Perfection did not come to the bath that day, but Mirza Musa came, and I told him that Azal had set me on fire with his fearful suggestion. Mirza Musa said, "He has been thinking of this for years; take no notice of him. He has always been thinking in this way." No one else came to the bath; so I closed it. I then went to the Master ['Abdu'l-Baha, the Most Great Branch] and told Him that Mirza Yahya had spoken words which had infuriated me and that I had wanted to kill him, but did not. The Master said this was something which people did not realize and told me not to speak of it but to keep it secret. I then went to Mirza Aqa Jan and reported the whole incident to him and asked him to tell Baha'u'llah. Mirza Aqa Jan returned and said: "Baha'u'llah says to tell Ustad Muhammad-'Ali not to mention this to anyone."

'That night I collected all the writings of Azal and went to the coffee-room of Baha'u'llah's house and burnt them in the brazier. Before doing this I showed them to seven or eight of the believers present, saying "These are the writings of Azal". They all protested and asked me why I did it. I answered that until today I esteemed Azal highly, but now he was less than a dog in my sight.' (Bahá’u’lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p. 228)

17. The Rapture (Suryih-i-Amr)

*Image: Suryih-i-Amr*
The moment had now arrived for Him Who had so recently, both verbally and in numerous Tablets, revealed the implications of the claims He had advanced, to acquaint formally the one who was the nominee of the Bab with the character of His Mission. Mirza Aqa Jan was accordingly commissioned to bear to Mirza Yahya the newly revealed Suriy-i-Amr, which unmistakably affirmed those claims, to read aloud to him its contents, and demand an unequivocal and conclusive reply. Mirza Yahya's request for a one-day respite, during which he could meditate his answer, was granted. The only reply, however, that was forthcoming was a counter-declaration, specifying the hour and the minute in which he had been made the recipient of an independent Revelation, necessitating the unqualified submission to him of the peoples of the earth in both the East and the West. (*Bahá’u’lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi*, p. 230)

Such a claim by one who was the embodiment of deceit and falsehood evoked the wrath of God, and was clearly regarded as a signal for the eventual split between Bahá’u'lláh and Mírzá Yahyá. We must bear in mind that the majority of the community in Adrianople was faithful to Bahá’u'lláh and wholly devoted to Him. The rest consisted of a few men who were evil or mischief-makers, and some weak and vacillating. They freely associated with each other and consequently tests and trials were immense at that period. Ever since their banishment to Adrianople the faithful companions of Bahá'u'lláh had been filled with anguish and sorrow as a result of the activities of Mírzá Yahyá and his supporters. With the revelation of the Súriy-i-Amr and Mírzá Yahyá’s reactions, the contest between the forces of light and darkness came to a head. Embarking on an action reminiscent of His solitary retirement to the mountains of Kurdistán when the unfaithful were shamefully destroying the Cause of God, Bahá’u'lláh, who at this time was residing in the house of Amru'lláh, withdrew with His family to the nearby house of Ridá Big which was rented by His order, and refused to associate with anybody. This was on 10 March 1866. The reason for this withdrawal, which fortunately was of short duration, was similar to that which had motivated Him to retire to Kurdistán a decade earlier: namely, to relieve the tension and alleviate the feelings of enmity which during the course of years had been engendered in the hearts of some by Mírzá Yahyá and were fanned into flame by his latest actions. (*The Revelation of Bahá’u’l-Láh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 2, p. 162*)

When Bahá’u’lláh moved His residence from the house of Amru’l-Láh to the house of Ridá Big, He ordered His brother Áqáy-i-Kalím to divide all the furniture, bedding and utensils and send half of them to the house of Mírzá Yahyá, and to see that he received his full share of the government allowance allocated to the exiles. He also directed that several items such as the rings of the Báb, His seals and some manuscripts be delivered to him. Mírzá Yahyá had longed to possess these relics which the Báb, before His martyrdom, had specifically sent to Bahá’u'lláh. (*The Revelation of Bahá’u’l-Láh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 2, p. 142*)

### 18. Spreading of Falsehood

*Image: Nabil-i-Azam*

The withdrawal of Bahá’u'lláh to the house of Ridá Big and His refusal to meet any of the exiles created a situation in which some of the unfaithful openly turned against Him and
transferred their allegiance to Mírzá Yahyá. Emboldened by the absence of Bahá'u'lláh, Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahání, who until then used to attain His presence and associate with His loved ones, publicly threw in his lot with the arch-breaker of the Covenant of the Báb and, thinking that the arena was now cleared for him, openly rose up in opposition to Bahá'u'lláh and began a vigorous campaign to discredit Him among the people. A period of intense activity ensued in which Mírzá Yahyá and Siyyid Muhammad played a major part. Assisted by their infamous allies and associates they loaded their letters with calumnies and false accusations against Bahá'u'lláh and disseminated them far and wide among the believers in Persia and 'Iráq.

These letters caused much confusion and dissension among some of the Bábí community in Persia. Certain individuals were misled by these slanderous statements and lost their faith altogether. A number of Bábís wrote to Bahá'u'lláh and begged for guidance and enlightenment. Several Tablets in this period were revealed in response to such questions. Other believers had already reached the stage of certitude in their faith. These souls were moved by the dissemination of these evil letters to take action, and they arose, together with others whom Bahá'u'lláh had specifically chosen, such as Nabil, to champion the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. They defended it most ably against those egotistical personalities in the Bábí community who were determined to bring division within the Cause of God. (The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 2, p. 165)

19. Change of Governor in Adrianople

Image: Interior of House of Rida Big (image from Bahá'u'lláh.org)

In those days of turmoil Khurshid Pasha had just been appointed to the governorship of Adrianople, and had taken up his duties in March 1866, according to British consular records. His deputy was 'Aziz Pasha. Both were capable administrators, whose integrity was beyond reproach. One day, 'Aziz Pasha called to visit Baha'u'llah, showing remarkable humility and reverence. He became particularly attached to 'Abdu'l-Baha, and was eager to drink deeply from His fount of knowledge, although Ghusn-i-A'zam (the Most Great Branch) was a young man in His early twenties. Many years later, when Baha'u'llah had been exiled to 'Akka, 'Aziz Pasha became the Vali of Beirut. He visited 'Akka twice to pay his respects to Baha'u'llah and renew his friendship with Baha'u'llah's eldest Son, Whom he greatly admired.

Not satisfied with these perfidious deeds, Mírzá Yahyá decided to carry his rebellion to circles hitherto untouched by these matters. Thinking that Bahá'u'lláh would continue to bear every false accusation and any amount of ill-treatment with resignation and forbearance, he sent a petition to Khurshid Páshá, the Governor of Adrianople, and to the Governor's assistant 'Aziz Páshá. This communication, which the Governor shared with Bahá'u'lláh, was couched in obsequious language, contained false statements about Bahá'u'lláh and was aimed at discrediting Him in the eyes of the Governor, who was one of His most ardent admirers. One of Yahyá's false accusations was that he was not receiving his share of the allowance which the Government had allotted to Bahá'u'lláh and His fellow exiles. To support this claim he sent one of his wives to call on the Governor to complain that her husband's share of
allowance was cut off by Bahá'u'lláh and that as a result he had become destitute and his children were on the verge of starvation. ... Hájí Mirzá Haydar-'Alí, who arrived in Adrianople a few months after these distasteful events and attained the presence of Bahá'u'lláh many times, has written concerning Mirzá Yahyá's petition to the authorities in these words:

When Azal arose in hostility with his satanic spirit to oppose and challenge the Blessed Beauty, through calumnies and false accusations, he wrote a letter to the Governor of Adrianople. We all saw this letter. It opened with these words: 'May my soul and body be a sacrifice for thee.' It went on to say: 'O thou 'Azíz, we come to you in destitution, grant us some corn.' He continues falsely to accuse the Ancient Beauty of having cut off his livelihood.

The opening sentence of his letter, the statement of his needs, and the complaints all demonstrate that God cannot be confused with man, and that there is no likeness between the two. We see the contrast, for instance, in these words of the Ancient Beauty as He addresses the late Sultán 'Abdu'l-'Azíz: 'O thou Ra'ís [Chief], hearken to the voice of God, the Supreme Ruler, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. He verily calleth between earth and heaven and summoneth mankind to the scene of effulgent glory.'

In this blessed Tablet, He foreshadows that the Sultán would lose his throne and the country would pass out of his hands...To return to our subject: Bahá'u'lláh had, through an intermediary, proved to the Governor that these allegations [by Mirzá Yahyá] were false and, in a message, explained to him that these calumnies were designed to hurt and humiliate Him... (The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 2, p. 166)

20. End of Bahá'u'lláh's Self-Imposed Seclusion

Image: House of Bahá'u'lláh (Aqa Bīq) in Adrianople

Mirza Yahya now appealed to Khurshid Pasha obsequiously, as well as to 'Azíz Pasha. Khurshid Pasha and his deputy showed Mirza Yahya's letters, replete with fulsome flattery, to Ghusn-i-A'zam. Aqa Rida writes that when Baha'u'llah was apprised of Mirza Yahya's action, He knew that the time had come to end His seclusion; the 'ordained time' was over. 'We secluded ourselves', He said 'that perchance the fire of hostility might be quenched, and such disgraceful acts be averted, but they have resorted to measures more extreme than before.' (Bahá'u'lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p. 233)

Because of the harmful actions of Mirzá Yahyá and Siyyid Muhammad, Bahá'u'lláh was forced to end His withdrawal, which had lasted about two months, and come forward to protect the Cause of God from the onslaught of the unfaithful. It was at this time that Bahá'u'lláh expelled Siyyid Muhammad from the gatherings of His followers and soon the 'Most Great Separation', which was a clear division between the followers of Bahá'u'lláh and those of Mirzá Yahyá, became public. The two-months' withdrawal of Bahá'u'lláh acted as a spiritual vacuum for the exiles in Adrianople. It created a great test and as a result each one of them showed the measure of his sincerity and faith. When the time of separation came, each person knew to which side he belonged. However, the great majority of the exiles remained steadfast in the
21. Haji Mirza Heydar Ali’s Audience with Bahá'u'lláh

Image: Picture of the friends in Adrianople

In the course of Hájí Mirzá Haydar-‘Alí’s account of what appears to be his first audience with Bahá'u'lláh in Adrianople, we find the following story of Hájí Muhammad-Báqír. Having explained that he cannot express in words the excitement, awe and wonder of what he felt in his heart whenever he attained the presence of Bahá'u'lláh, Hájí Mirzá Haydar-‘Alí writes:

Because it was the early days of the rise of the Day-Star of the World [Bahá'u'lláh], Bahá'u'lláh asked me to give Him an account of the state of the believers in Tihrá'n, Qazvín, Zanján and Tabríz, the towns I had passed through. He enquired of their faith, and their love for the Cause. I did not reply.† After we [Hájí Mirzá Haydar-‘Alí and his two companions] were dismissed from His presence, we were taken to a place where it was arranged for us to stay. There, Bahá'u'lláh sent someone to whom I could recount the conditions of the believers. I reported all I knew about each person, including the late Hájí Muhammad-Báqír who was at that time a well-known merchant, foremost among the believers in faith, certitude and enthusiasm, and was serving the Cause with devotion and self-sacrifice.

The messenger left and after some minutes returned with an exalted Tablet which had been revealed in honour of the Hájí. He stated [on behalf of Bahá'u'lláh]: 'This man attained the presence of Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdád. There He wrote a letter to Him and begged for wealth and prosperity. In answer, this exalted and wonderful Tablet was revealed for him. In it Bahá'u'lláh stated that his request would be granted and that the doors of prosperity and wealth would be opened for him from every direction. He warned him, however, to be on his guard and not to allow riches to become a barrier and make him heedless.

Now you are here to attain the presence of Bahá'u'lláh and in the future you will witness that this man [Hájí Muhammad-Báqír] will be overtaken with fear to such an extent that he will renounce God and His Cause. Not long after, he will make substantial losses, following which he will write a letter to Bahá'u'lláh and repent. God will then turn his losses into profit and he will become again highly successful in his business and will emerge as the foremost merchant in Constantinople and Tabriz. However, this time he will wax prouder than before, more heedless and deprived...This time he will lose all his possessions, will be unable to continue trading and will become helpless in arranging his affairs. It is then that he will repent and return, and will be content to live as a poor man. He will spend the days of his life in the service of the Cause of God. His end will be blessed and he will receive great confirmations from God.' He then said to me: 'Remember all these things, for they will come to pass, and you shall witness them.'

We were in Adrianople when news came that Javád, the younger brother of the Hájí, had been arrested and cast into prison. Hájí Muhammad-Báqír had paid one thousand túmáns for the release of his brother and had left Tabríz for Constantinople in great haste. Upon arrival...
he had gone to visit the late Mushíru'd-Dawlih, the Persian Ambassador, and there in his presence had recanted his Faith. Bahá'u'lláh affirmed that this was the beginning of his tests and instructed that believers passing through Constantinople should not associate with him.

Later, I left Adrianople for Constantinople where I stayed for fourteen months. There I heard that the Hájí had bought enormous quantities of cotton and because the prices had suddenly fallen drastically, not only had he lost all his possessions, but he was also unable to pay his creditors...When this happened he wrote a letter supplicating Bahá'u'lláh and repenting. A holy and blessed Tablet was revealed in his honour. In it Bahá'u'lláh gave him the glad-tidings that he would soon make enormous profits. When I went to Egypt, I heard that the price of cotton had risen considerably and the Hájí's wealth as a result increased tenfold.

This time Hájí Muhammad-Báqir became very rich and influential. He emerged foremost among the merchants of Constantinople and acquired great fame. However, his wealth again became a barrier between him and God. Again he forsook the Cause, and completely cut off his relationship with Bahá'u'lláh. After some years Bahá'u'lláh asked Hájí Abu'l-Hasan-i-Amin to establish contact with him and find out how he was. Hájí Amin went to see him in Constantinople. He found him to be utterly heedless and forgetful of Bahá'u'lláh and the Cause. The world and its attractions had so possessed him that at one point in the interview, Hájí Muhammad-Báqir pointed to a coffer in his office and said, 'My god is in this box!' Hájí Amin has stated that when he reported this to Bahá'u'lláh, He became very sad. As He was pacing up and down, He stopped, held out His hand, palm open, and said 'With this hand We conferred upon him riches.' Then with a sudden movement, He withdrew, closed His hand, and said, 'Now with the same hand We take it back from him.'

Soon Hájí Muhammad-Báqir lost all his possessions. He again became repentant and wrote to Bahá'u'lláh. This time a Tablet was revealed for him in which Bahá'u'lláh clearly stated that God took away his wealth so that he might return to Him and become steadfast in His love. He directed Hájí Muhammad-Báqir to leave Constantinople and occupy himself with transcribing the holy Writings.

After this incident, Hájí Muhammad-Báqir lived the remainder of his life in the utmost poverty. He grew strong in his faith and devoted his time to the service of the Cause. Hájí Mírzá Haydar-'Alí, who met him after this event, writes:

I met him [Hájí Muhammad-Báqir] in Tabríz. He said 'After the revelation of the Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh, it was as if the nails in the wall, the curtains in the room, and everything else had ears to hear and were carrying out the command of Bahá'u'lláh. I lost everything that I had earned. The house I live in now is owned by my wife and the clothes I wear are tailored by my children.'

† It was not unusual for the believers who were in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh not to reply to His questions. In the first place, they were so carried away that they could not utter a word. Secondly, to speak was regarded by many as being contrary to the spirit of utter self-effacement in His presence. (The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 2, p. 226)
The Blessings of His Presence

Image: House of Bahá’u'lláh (Aqa Big)

It was now springtime. 'We had rented a house in another quarter,' writes Aqa Rida; 'we were all together there, and prayed together by day and by night. We read from the sacred Writings and implored God that this night of separation might end, and the dawn of nearness break; that the door might be opened once again unto His presence. And when our prayers were answered, and the gates of bounty were flung open, we rented another house in the vicinity of the house of Rida Big and all took our abode there. That house had a well with good water, and the courtyard was vast with plenty of flower-beds, well planted. We took it in turns, every day, for one to stay in the house and do all the housework: draw water, sweep, cook, prepare tea, tend the flower-beds, as if all the rest were his guests for the day, and he himself was the host. When dinner was over he would wash up and hand over the plates and utensils to the one whose turn it was, the next day, to act as host. Most days, the Branches [sons of Baha'u'llah] came to this house, and occasionally the Blessed Beauty would come too. It was a good, pleasant house.'

There were visitors now, who had travelled to Adrianople to attain the presence of Baha'u'llah, such as Aqa 'Ali-Akbar-i-Khurasani and Shaykh Salman, the courier. They all stayed with evident joy at the house which Aqa Rida has described. Some Tablets were revealed in that house, and verses would flow from the tongue of Baha'u'llah as He sat with His companions. One day, Aqa Rida has recorded, He said: 'This is a fine place and a fine province. But I do not wish that we stay here. Before long all will be changed.' Aqa Rida adds that henceforth Baha'u'llah spoke frequently of the change which was to come, although outwardly there was no sign of it. Aqay-i-Kalim had also taken a house in that neighbourhood.

Baha'u'llah was still living in the house of Rida Big, and would, at times, come to spend an hour or two in the orchard and meadow near the Muradiyyih quarter. Then the house of Amru'llah (which had been rented by 'Aziz Pasha) fell vacant again, and Baha'u'llah moved to it once more. The companions moved at the same time to a house close by, which had been previously occupied by Mirza Yahya and his family. Aqay-i-Kalim also moved to another house at this time.

Both in the house of Amru'llah (which was now the residence of Baha'u'llah) and in the house rented by the companions, meetings were held regularly, to which Baha'u'llah came and spoke. And they, the companions, thus highly honoured, were privileged witnesses of how revelation came and how divine verses flowed from His tongue. It was in the house of Amru'llah that the answer to 'Ali-Muhammad-i-Sarraj (the leathermaker, who was a partisan of Mirza Yahya) was revealed. It has the proportions of a book. (Bahá’u’lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p. 237)

Meagre Food

Image: An example of an old ottoman brazier
Husayn-i-Áshchí, a youth from Káshán who served Bahá'u'lláh as a cook in Adrianople and later in 'Akká, has left to posterity the following account of the days when He stayed in the house of Amru'lláh in Adrianople.

This house [of Amru'lláh] was very large and magnificent. It had a large outer apartment where all the loved ones of Bahá'u'lláh used to gather. They were intoxicated with the wine of His Peerless Beauty...However, the means of livelihood were very inadequate and meagre. Most of the time there was no food which could be served to Bahá'u'lláh other than bread and cheese. Every day I used to save some meat and oil and store them in a special place until there was enough to cook. I would then invite Bahá'u'lláh to a meal on the lawn. We managed to save some money and buy two cows and one goat. The milk and yoghurt which were produced were served in the holy household...In the winter there was a brazier in each room. It was among my duties to light them. In order to economize I used to measure the amount of coal that I placed in each brazier. Someone had informed Bahá'u'lláh of this. He summoned me to His presence and said: 'I hear you count the pieces of coal which go into each brazier!' Bahá'u'lláh smiled and was very amused. He agreed that such economy was necessary in a large house. (The Revelation of Bahá'u’lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 2, p. 169)

Baha'u'llah was still residing in the house of Amru'llah, ... But His second stay in that house was of short duration, for within six months the owner of the house sold it, and Baha'u'llah then rented the house of 'Izzat Aqa in another quarter of the city--the last of His residences in Adrianople. (Bahá’u’lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p. 239)

24. The Challenge

Image: Artistic rendition of Muhammad’s Mubahilih

It was in this house, in the month of Jamadiyu'l-Avval 1284 AH (Sept. 1867) that an event of the utmost significance occurred, which completely discomfited Mirza Yahya and his supporters, and proclaimed to friend and foe alike Baha'u'llah's triumph over them. (God Passes By, Shoghi Effendi, p. 168)

Having for years observed the exemplary patience with which Bahá'u'lláh had endured all the calumnies and falsehoods which Mirzá Yahyá had heaped upon Him while counting on His forbearance, knowing that He did not generally seek to appear in public and assuming that He would never consider meeting His unfaithful brother face to face, Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahání, in order to strengthen his own position, expressed to a few Persians of Muslim faith in Adrianople that, whereas he and Mirzá Yahyá were ready to confront Bahá'u'lláh in public he was sure that Bahá'u'lláh would not respond to the challenge. (The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 2, p. 291)

This form of confrontation, known as mubáhilih, had taken place in Islám. ... This is a challenge between truth and falsehood; the two parties come together, each one invoking God to annihilate the other, and calling on His wrath to strike down the faithless. It is expected in these circumstances that the power of Truth will destroy the forces of falsehood.
The person who became instrumental in bringing this matter to its conclusion was Mír Muhammad-i-Mukárí from Shíráz, a caravan-driver who had accompanied the Báb on His pilgrimage to Mecca, and later, Bahá'u'lláh from Baghdád to Constantinople. Although he was uneducated, Mír Muhammad was a man of great discernment, wisdom and courage. He was a Bábi and, being confused with the differences which had arisen in the Faith, he travelled especially to Adrianople in order to investigate the truth for himself. While in that city, he moved freely among the companions of Bahá'u'lláh and the supporters of Mírzá Yahyá alike.

Soon after his arrival he heard Siyyid Muhammad's propaganda about a confrontation with Bahá'u'lláh. This created great interest in Mír Muhammad who urged Siyyid Muhammad to induce Mírzá Yahyá to meet Bahá'u'lláh in a public place for a mubáhilih. He in turn promised personally to invite Bahá'u'lláh to accept the challenge. (The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 2, p. 292)

25. The Planned Encounter at Mosque of Sultan Salim

Image: Mosque of Sultan Salim in Adrianople

Foolishly assuming that his illustrious Brother would never countenance such a proposition, Mirza Yahya appointed the mosque of Sultan Salim as the place for their encounter. No sooner had Baha'u'llah been informed of this arrangement than He set forth, on foot, in the heat of midday, and accompanied by this same Mir Muhammad, for the aforementioned mosque, which was situated in a distant part of the city, reciting, as He walked, through the streets and markets, verses, in a voice and in a manner that greatly astonished those who saw and heard Him.

'O Muhammad! He Who is the Spirit hath, verily, issued from His habitation, and with Him have come forth the souls of God's chosen ones and the realities of His Messengers. Behold, then, the dwellers of the realms on high above Mine head, and all the testimonies of the Prophets in My grasp. Say: Were all the divines, all the wise men, all the kings and rulers on earth to gather together, I, in very truth, would confront them, and would proclaim the verse of God, the Sovereign, the Almighty, the All-Wise. I am He Who feareth no one, though all who are in heaven and all who are on earth rise up against me.... This is Mine hand which God hath turned white for all the worlds to behold. This is My staff; were We to cast it down it would, of a truth, swallow up all created things.' (God Passes By, Shoghi Effendi, p. 239)

26. At the Mosque

Image: Interior of Mosque of Sultan Salim

The news and date of the confrontation became known among the peoples of Muslim, Christian and Jewish religions in the city. All of them had heard of the miracles of Moses and the story of His confrontation with Pharaoh. And now they were expecting the meeting face to face in the mosque between His Holiness the Shaykh Effendi (a designation by which the people called Bahá'u'lláh to express their reverence for Him) and Mírzá 'Alí who had denied
Him. (For fear of being recognized, Azal had called himself by this name.) Therefore, from the morning of Friday until before noon, a large multitude drawn from the followers of these three religions had thronged the area between the house of Amru'lláh...and the entrance to the mosque. ... Bahá'u'lláh, the Day-Star of Glory, emerged from His home...and as He passed through the crowd, people showed such reverence as is difficult to describe. They greeted Him with salutations, bowed and opened the way for Him to pass. Many of them prostrated themselves at His feet and kissed them. Bahá'u'lláh, the Countenance of majesty and omnipotence, in acknowledgement greeted the crowd by raising His hands (as was customary among the Ottomans), and expressed His good wishes. This continued all the way to the mosque. As soon as He entered the mosque, the preacher, who was delivering his discourse, became speechless or perhaps he forgot his words. Bahá'u'lláh went forward, seated Himself and then gave permission to the preacher to continue. Eventually the preaching and prayers came to an end. But Azal did not turn up. We heard that he had feigned illness and asked to be excused. (Stories from the Delight of the Heart, Mirza Heydar Ali, p. 77-79)

27. Visit to the Mawlavi Dervishes

*Image: Dancing Dervishes*

In every city in the Ottoman Empire, there are Mawlavís, who are dervishes and followers of Mawlavi, the author of Mathnaví. Every Friday they hold their services in their takyihs (centres of congregation) when they whirl around their master and chant certain words in unison. Inside its chambers some play music and sing delightful melodies. When Bahá'u'lláh was about to leave the mosque He said: 'We owe a visit to the Mawlavís. We had better go to their takyih.' As He rose to go, the Governor of Adrianople and other dignitaries, together with the divines, availed themselves of the opportunity to be in His presence and so they accompanied Him. As a token of their humility and courtesy, the Governor, the Shaykhu'L-Islám [the head of the Muslim ecclesiastical institution in the city], the 'ulamá [divines and men of learning], and other dignitaries walked four or five steps behind Bahá'u'lláh while the stream of His utterance was flowing. Sometimes, through His grace and loving-kindness, Bahá'u'lláh would stop and beckon the Governor and the others to walk in front. But they would refuse to do so. In this way, with majesty and glory born of God, Bahá'u'lláh arrived in the takiyh. At that time the Shaykh of the Mawlavís was standing in the centre and the dervishes were circling around and chanting. As soon as their eyes beheld Him, they all stopped their service without any reason. They bowed and showed their respect for Him and became absolutely silent. Bahá'u'lláh then seated Himself, permitted others who were with Him to be seated, and then He gave permission to the Shaykh to resume his service again. (The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 2, p 296)

28. Request for Postponement

*Image: Seals of Bahá’u’lláh (image from Bahá’u’lláh.org)*
Mir Muhammad, who had been sent ahead to announce Baha'u'llah's arrival, soon returned, and informed Him that he who had challenged His authority wished, owing to unforeseen circumstances, to postpone for a day or two the interview. Upon His return to His house Baha'u'llah revealed a Tablet, wherein He recounted what had happened, fixed the time for the postponed interview, sealed the Tablet with His seal, entrusted it to Nabil, and instructed him to deliver it to one of the new believers, Mulla Muhammad-i-Tabrizi, for the information of Siyyid Muhammad, who was in the habit of frequenting that believer's shop. It was arranged to demand from Siyyid Muhammad, ere the delivery of that Tablet, a sealed note pledging Mirza Yahya, in the event of failing to appear at the trysting-place, to affirm in writing that his claims were false. Siyyid Muhammad promised that he would produce the next day the document required, and though Nabil, for three successive days, waited in that shop for the reply, neither did the Siyyid appear, nor was such a note sent by him. That undelivered Tablet, Nabil, recording twenty-three years later this historic episode in his chronicle, affirms was still in his possession, 'as fresh as the day on which the Most Great Branch had penned it, and the seal of the Ancient Beauty had sealed and adorned it,' a tangible and irrefutable testimony to Baha'u'llah's established ascendancy over a routed opponent. (Bahá'u'lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p. 240)

29. The Vain Imaginings of Miracles

**Image: Haji Mirza Heydar Ali**

The news was widely circulated in Adrianople that when Shaykh Effendi [Bahá'u'lláh] had entered the mosque the preacher was unable to deliver his sermon and when he went to the taykih, the dervishes and their leader forgot their words and stopped their service. The following evening some believers attained His presence and I was among them...Bahá'u'lláh made these remarks: 'When We entered the crowded mosque, the preacher forgot the words of his sermon, and when We arrived inside the takyih, the dervishes were suddenly filled with such awe and wonder that they became speechless and silent. However, since people are brought up in vain imaginings, they foolishly consider such events as supernatural acts and regard them as miracles!' (The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, A. Taherzadeh, p. 296)

30. Forgiveness Offered to Mirza Yahya

**Image: Illuminated copy of Kitáb-i-Aqdas commissioned by `Abdu'l-Bahá in 1902**

The detailed news of the mubáhilih and Mirzá Yahyá's failure to appear before Bahá'u'lláh was communicated to the believers in Persia by a certain Áqá Mirzá Hádiy-i-Shírází. He wrote a full account of this event and quoted those Tablets which Bahá'u'lláh had revealed for this particular occasion. His account was widely circulated among the believers. This event, which established Bahá'u'lláh's ascendancy in the eyes of the public over one who is stigmatized by Him as the 'source of perversion', removed the veil from the eyes of many among the followers of the Báb and enabled them to embrace the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. (The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, A. Taherzadeh, p. 296)
Baha'u'llah's reaction to this most distressful episode in His ministry was, as already observed, characterized by acute anguish. 'He who for months and years,' He laments, 'I reared with the hand of loving-kindness hath risen to take My life.' 'The cruelties inflicted by My oppressors,' He wrote, in allusion to these perfidious enemies, 'have bowed Me down, and turned My hair white. Shouldst thou present thyself before My throne, thou wouldst fail to recognize the Ancient Beauty, for the freshness of His countenance is altered, and its brightness hath faded, by reason of the oppression of the infidels.' 'By God!' He cries out, 'No spot is left on My body that hath not been touched by the spears of thy machinations.' And again: 'Thou has perpetrated against thy Brother what no man hath perpetrated against another.' 'What hath proceeded from thy pen,' He, furthermore, has affirmed, 'hath caused the Countenances of Glory to be prostrated upon the dust, hath rent in twain the Veil of Grandeur in the Sublime Paradise, and lacerated the hearts of the favored ones established upon the loftiest seats.' And yet, in the Kitab-i-Aqdas, a forgiving Lord assures this same brother, this 'source of perversion,' 'from whose own soul the winds of passion had risen and blown upon him,' to 'fear not because of thy deeds,' bids him 'return unto God, humble, submissive and lowly,' and affirms that 'He will put away from thee thy sins,' and that 'thy Lord is the Forgiving, the Mighty, the All-Merciful.' (God Passes By, Shoghi Effendi, p. 169)

31. Súriy-i-Hajj

*Image: House of the Báb (entrance) and House of Bahá'u'lláh in Bagdad. The first Tablet was revealed before the “Most Great Separation” and the second, just after. The Most Great Separation took place in March of 1866.*

During this period Bahá'u'lláh revealed the Súriy-i-Hajj (Súriy of Pilgrimage) for visiting the house of the Báb, sent the Tablet to Nabíl, and directed him to go to Shíráz. In this Tablet Bahá'u'lláh prescribes the rites which have to be performed when pilgrims visit the house of the Báb. He instructed Nabíl to perform them on His behalf. When Nabíl carried out these lengthy rites, which begin outside the city and continue all the way to the house and inside, he attracted a great deal of attention and passers-by concluded that he had lost his mind!

Having carried out the instructions of Bahá'u'lláh in Shíráz, Nabíl received another Tablet, the Súriy-i-Hajj (Súriy of Pilgrimage) for the house of Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdád, and was directed to proceed to that city and perform the rites of pilgrimage for that house also on His behalf. With great devotion and enthusiasm, and in spite of a curious public, he succeeded again in carrying out the rites ordained by Bahá'u'lláh in this Tablet.

These holy observances were later affirmed in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas and will be implemented in the future when the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh is fully established and circumstances radically changed. (*The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 2, p. 240*)

32. Instructions to Transfer Remains of the Báb

*Image: Haji Akhund*
It was, too, during the days of Bahá’u’lláh’s banishment to Adrianople that a Tablet was addressed by Him to Mullá ‘Ali-Akbar-i-Sháhmírzádí and Jamál-i-Burújírdí, two of His well-known followers in Tihrán, instructing them to transfer, with the utmost secrecy, the remains of the Báb from the Imám-Zádíh Ma’súm, where they were concealed, to some other place of safety—an act which was subsequently proved to have been providential, and which may be regarded as marking another stage in the long and laborious transfer of those remains to the heart of Mt. Carmel, and to the spot which He, in His instructions to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, was later to designate. (God Passes By, Shoghi Effendi, p. 177)

33. – Respect of the Vali of Adrianople

Image: Ruins of House of Izzat Aqa

We have already noted the high esteem in which Khurshid Pasha, the Vali of Adrianople, held Baha’u’llah. Aqa Husayn-i-Ashchi relates that he was most eager to entertain Baha’u’llah at Government House, but at first He did not accept to call on Khurshid Pasha. But one day in the month of Ramadan, when the Governor had invited the divines and the leading men of the city to break their fast at his house, he entreated 'Abdu'l-Baha to beg Baha’u'llah to honour that great feast and glittering assemblage with His presence. Baha’u'llah accepted that invitation. Ashchi relates how the guests, amongst whom were both men of substance and men of high learning, sat spellbound, captivated and exhilarated by Baha’u’llah's utterance. Humbly and courteously they asked Him questions which He answered with overwhelming power and authority, to their marvel and complete satisfaction. And when, Ashchi remarks, the Sultan decreed Baha’u’llah's removal from Adrianople, these men were sorely aggrieved and felt acutely their loss. Being signally honoured by Baha’u’llah, Khurshid Pasha requested 'Abdu'l-Baha to spend as many evenings as He could in Government House, during that month of Ramadan, which, Ashchi says, the Most Great Branch granted him. (Bahá’u’lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p. 243)

34. Carrier of Water to the House of Baha’u’lláh

Image: Gate to House of Bahá’u’lláh in Bagdad

Baha’u’llah refers to this outrage perpetrated against His people, in His Letter to Nasiri’d-Din Shah. The arrest and transportation of these Baha’is was preceded by the brutal murder in Baghdad of Aqa 'Abdu'r-Rasul-i-Qumi, whose task it was to carry water in sheepskins from the river to the house of Baha’u'llah. One morning, by the riverside, enemies were waiting for him. They set upon him and with daggers tore open his bowels. He staggered on, clinging with one hand to his load of water, holding back with the other his entrails, until he reached the house. Then he collapsed and died. Aqa Husayn-i-Ashchi gives a graphic and moving account of the day when the letter conveying the news of the martyrdom of Aqa 'Abdu'r-Rasul reached Baha’u'llah. Those who were present and heard Baha’u'llah read the account wept unrestrainedly. Baha’u’llah assured them that they were lamenting the cruel death of Aqa
'Abdu'r-Rasul, but he had attained what he had always desired—the station of martyrdom. *(Bahá'u'lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p. 248)*

**35. Progressive Proclamation – Garden of Ridvan in Bagdad**

*Image: Ridvan Garden outside of Bagdad*

Bahá'u'lláh unveiled His station gradually and in stages. His Declaration took place in the Garden of Ridván in 1863. On that historic occasion, which may be regarded as the initial stage of His announcement of the advent of the Day of God, He revealed the transcendent glory of His station to only a few of His Companions. Many of the Bábís who were assembled in that Garden to pay their last homage to Him on the day of His departure for Constantinople, had no knowledge of this declaration; they learnt of it months later.

Mírzá Asadu'lláh-i-Káshání in his spoken chronicle mentions this fact. He was a self-appointed guard of Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdad, a devoted servant who against Bahá'u'lláh's advice and in spite of his very short stature, carried a dagger under his clothes and walked behind Him in public. This is how he describes Bahá'u'lláh’s departure from the Garden of Ridván and the state of the believers left behind in Baghdad:

Although Bahá'u'lláh had commanded the friends not to follow them, I was so loath to let Him go out of my sight, that I ran after them for three hours. He saw me, and getting down from His horse, waited for me, telling me with His beautiful voice, full of love and kindness, to go back to Baghdad, and, with the friends, to set about our work, not slothfully, but with energy: 'Be not overcome with sorrow—I am leaving friends I love in Baghdad. I will surely send to them tidings of our welfare. Be steadfast in your service to God, who doeth whatsoever He willeth. Live in such peace as will be permitted to you.' We watched them disappear into the darkness with sinking hearts, for their enemies were powerful and cruel! And we knew not where they were being taken. Weeping bitterly, we turned our faces towards Baghdad, determining to live according to His command.

We had not been, at that time, informed of the great event of the 'Declaration', that our revered and beloved Bahá'u'lláh was He Who should come—'He Whom God shall make Manifest'—but we again felt that unspeakable joy, which surged within us, overcoming our bitter sorrow with a great and mysterious radiance.

Mírzá Asadu'lláh then describes how after some time, one of the believers brought a Tablet from Adrianople and through it the friends in 'Iráq learnt of Bahá'u'lláh’s well-being, His Declaration in the Garden of Ridván and His public proclamation in Adrianople. *(The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 2, p. 301)*

**36. Progressive Proclamation – Open Proclamation**

*Image: View of Adrianople*
The second stage in the revealing of the station of Bahá'u'lláh was its announcement mainly to the members of the Bábí community, through the revelation of innumerable Tablets from Adrianople as well as the teaching exploits of some of His outstanding disciples. And now, the final stage was this majestic proclamation to the world at large through the kings and leaders who at that time wielded great power and, together with the ecclesiastical authorities, dominated the minds of their subjects. (The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 2, p. 303)

37. Súriy-i-Mulúk (Tablet to the Kings)

Image: Pen case of Bahá’u’lláh

The unprecedented outpouring of the Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh which took place immediately after the downfall of Mírzá Yahyá reached its climax with the revelation of the Súriy-i-Mulúk (Súrih of Kings). This most momentous of the Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh is chiefly addressed to the kings of the world collectively. Revealed in Arabic, it proclaims in unequivocal terms the claims of its Author and His station in language of might and power. To a sincere and unbiased observer, the opening paragraph alone portrays the authority and majesty of the One who announces Himself as the Vicegerent of God on earth and summons the kings and rulers of the world to renounce their possessions and embrace His Cause. (The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 2, p. 301)

38. Tablet to Nasirí’d-Dín Sháh

Image: Photo of Bádí when he was 15, about the same time the Tablet was Revealed

The remaining months in the house of ‘Izzat Aqa constituted the most fecund period in the whole course of the ministry of Baha’u’lláh: Tablets and verses flowed continuously from His pen and His tongue. One day, Aqa Rida relates, Baha’u’lláh said to His companions and the visitors, as He paced the courtyard of the biruni: 'Today in the bath We wrote something to Nasiri’d-Din Sháh; it is not transcribed yet, but who will "bell the cat"?' There were many, Aqa Rida says, who coveted that distinction, but the great task, which would call forth such heroism and immolation, was specified, as we shall see, for a youth, as yet impervious to the power emanating from Baha’u’lláh. Bahá’u’lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p. 243)

The Lawh-i-Sultán, the Tablet to Násírí’d-Dín Sháh, Bahá’u’lláh’s lengthiest epistle to any single sovereign, was revealed in the weeks immediately preceding His final banishment to ‘Akká. It was eventually delivered to the monarch by Bádí’, a youth of seventeen, who had entreated Bahá’u’lláh for the honour of rendering some service. His efforts won him the crown of martyrdom and immortalized his name. The Tablet contains the celebrated passage describing the circumstances in which the divine call was communicated to Bahá’u’lláh and the effect it produced. Here, too, we find His unequivocal offer to meet with the Muslim clergy, in the presence of the Sháh, and to provide whatever proofs of the new Revelation they might consider to be definitive, a test of spiritual integrity significantly failed by those
who claimed to be the authoritative trustees of the message of the Qur’án. (*The Summons of the Lord of Hosts, Introduction to, The Universal House of Justice, p. 1*)