1. Introduction

Know thou that upon Our arrival at this Spot, We chose to designate it as the 'Most Great Prison.' Though previously subjected in another land (Tihrán) to chains and fetters, We yet refused to call it by that name. Say: Ponder thereon, O ye endued with understanding! (God Passes By, Shoghi Effendi, p.185)

The inhabitants, whom Bahá'u'lláh had stigmatized as 'The Generation of Vipers', had sunk to a very low level. Among these people wild rumours and false accusations were circulating concerning Bahá'u'lláh and His followers as they were about to arrive. The company of exiles, those God-intoxicated heroes who had accompanied their Lord to this most desolate of cities, were considered to be evil men, criminals of the worst type who deserved to be treated most cruelly. It is no wonder, therefore, that great numbers from among the inhabitants of 'Akká had assembled at the landing site to jeer at them and at their Leader whom they referred to as 'the God of the Persians'. (The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 3, p.11)

How incomparable is the difference between the vision of those assembled at the sea gate of 'Akká to jeer at and demonstrate their hostility towards the company of exiles and their Leader, and the vision of Bahá'u'lláh Who a few years before, in the Tablet of Sayyáh† foreshadowing His arrival in the city of 'Akká, disclosed to those who were endowed with spiritual insight a vastly different spectacle: Upon Our arrival We were welcomed with banners of light, whereupon the Voice of the Spirit cried out saying: 'Soon will all that dwell on earth be enlisted under these banners.' (The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 3, p.15)

2. The Prison Barracks

Image: This drawing from a book published in the 1880s depicts Akka from a beach to the city's west. The sea gate is near the left edge of the sea wall. Source: W.M. Thompson, The Land and the Book – From Bahá’í World News Service

By the time of Baha'u'llah's arrival, 'Akka's principal importance to the Turkish Empire was that it acted as a prison-city for criminals and political prisoners--the 'Bastille of the Middle East', as it is referred to by one writer. ... Aqa Rida depicts 'Akka as 'a town, with narrow and mean streets, dark and dirty, gloomy and tortuous; without a single dwelling-place worth looking at.' He also describes the citadel: 'It was built in the days of Jazzar Pasha for troops. It is very high and spacious, with a pool of water in the middle, and palms and fig-trees. To the north-west, the upper floor, well-built, contained four or five good rooms with an “ayvan” and there was also a “biruni” : one large room with veranda and other rooms. ...The Blessed
Perfection and His family occupied that section." (Bahá’u’lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p.276)

3. The Condition of the Barrack


Bahá’u'lláh was placed in a filthy room completely bare and devoid of any furniture. Later He was moved into a room on the upper floor of the barracks; this room, the interior of which is now kept in good condition and visited by Bahá’í pilgrims, was in the days of Bahá’u'lláh unfit for habitation. He Himself has recounted in a Tablet that its floor was covered with earth, and what plaster remained on the ceiling was falling.

Bahá’u'lláh’s followers were huddled into another room, the floor of which was covered with mud. Ten soldiers were posted at the gate to guard the prisoners. The foul air and the stench in the prison, coupled with the sultry heat of the summer, were so offensive that Bahá’íyyih Khánum, the daughter of Bahá’u'lláh entitled the 'Greatest Holy Leaf', was overcome and fainted on arrival. (The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 3, p.16)

4. The First Day

Image: The barracks square of the prison. Bahá’u’lláh was first held in a room adjacent to the square and later moved to his cell on the second floor of the building in the center of the photo. Photo Credit: Bahá’í World Centre archives, c. 1920. From Bahaullah.org

'The first night of our arrival we suffered because of lack of water. The water in the pool had become malodorous. We wanted to go out and procure fresh water, but they would not permit us. From the house of 'Abdu'l-Hadi Pasha, the Mutasarrif of 'Akka, they brought some cooked rice, but it was not enough. (Bahá’u’lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p.277)

That first night, water was withheld from the prisoners. Everyone was thirsty in those hot surroundings and some of the women and children were overcome by thirst. Mothers with suckling babes were unable to feed them, and for hours the children were crying for food and water. 'Abdu'l-Bahá made several appeals to the guards to show mercy to the children and even sent a message to the Governor of 'Akká, but all was without avail. (The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 3, p.16)

5. The Harsh Conditions

Image: A view of some of the cells that were occupied by the exiles. The room of Bahá’u’lláh is on the left. Photo Credit: Bahá’í World Centre archives, c. 1921. From Bahaullah.org

As for the prisoners, the filthy conditions under which they were living, the lack of proper food and hygiene, and the severity of restrictions, took their toll. Shortly after their arrival in
the barracks, all but two fell sick. Nine of the ten guards were also struck down by illness. Malaria and dysentery added to their ordeal. The only two unaffected at that stage were 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Áqá Ridáy-i-Qannád, although both of them were taken ill at a later time. The Master, helped by this believer, attended to the needs of the sick and nursed them day and night. The authorities did not call for a doctor to administer medicine. With the few provisions at His disposal all that 'Abdu'l-Bahá could do was to cook for them a simple broth and some rice each day. But the hygienic conditions were appalling. The heat was severe during the day and there was no adequate water for washing. (*The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 3, p.18*)

6. The Water in Akka

*Image: The aqueduct to carry water to ‘Akká was built in about 1815 to replace an earlier one destroyed by Napoleon. By the time of Bahá’u’lláh’s arrival, it had fallen into disrepair. From Bahá'u'lláh.org*

When Bahá'u'lláh arrived in 'Akká there was no source of fresh water within the city gates fit to drink. There was a well, situated about ten minutes walk from the city, from which most of the people carried water to their homes. But its taste was very unpleasant. Bahá'u'lláh and His companions used this water, which was carried by the believers to the prison. There was one believer in particular, Áqá 'Azím-i-Tafrishí, who served Bahá'u'lláh and His companions as a water-supplier. It was a difficult task, as he had to make numerous trips to the well and carry skinfuls of water on his back to the friends in 'Akká. Later he managed to get water with a better taste from springs at Kabrí, which were situated in the same direction as Bahjí and about half an hour's walking distance from 'Akká. (*The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 3, p.22*)

7. The First Sacrifice

*Image: The interior of the cell occupied by Bahá’u’lláh. Photo Credit: Clarence Welsh, 1921. From Bahá'u'lláh.org*

“...three of the exiles died. Aqa Abu'l-Qasim-i-Sultanabadi was the first to go, and then Ustad Baqir and his brother Ustad Isma'il-i-Khayyat, who died the same night, in the words of Bahá'u'lláh, 'locked in each other's arms'. The guards would not allow the exiles to see to the funeral of their dead. Bahá'u'lláh had to give a carpet on which He Himself slept, to be sold to defray the expenses demanded by the guards. However, the guards pocketed the money, and had the corpses interred in their clothes--unwashed, unshrouded and without coffins. Bahá'u'lláh has attested that the money given to the guards was twice the amount normally required for a decent burial. (*Bahá’u’lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p.286*)
8. The Following Days

*Image: The Prison Barrack*

At last in the morning some water was given to the prisoners and three loaves of bread to each as a daily ration. (*The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 3, p.16*)

The ration for each person, according to Aqa Rida and Aqa Husayn-i-Ashchi, was three loaves of black bread, salty and inedible. (*Bahá'u'lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p.277*)

The next day, officials came to see what was happening to us. They went into the presence of the Blessed Perfection, and to them He spoke such words of knowledge and wisdom that, in that very first meeting, they realized that here were people endowed with erudition, wisdom and rare understanding. One of them had said, there and then, that never before had such pure and sanctified souls set foot in 'Akka. (*Bahá'u'lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p.277*)

Soon after the arrival of the prisoners the Governor visited the barracks for inspection. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, accompanied by a few believers, went to see him. But the Governor was discourteous and spoke to them in a provocative manner. He threatened to cut the supply of bread if one of the prisoners went missing and then ordered them back to their room. Husayn-i-Áshchí, one of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's attendants, could not bear to remain silent after such insulting treatment. He retorted with rage and hurled back at the Governor some offensive remarks. 'Abdu'l-Bahá immediately chastised Husayn by slapping him hard in the face in front of the Governor and ordering him to return to his room. This action by 'Abdu'l-Bahá not only defused a dangerous situation but also opened the eyes of the Governor to the existence of a real leader among the prisoners, a leader who would act with authority and justice.

Husayn-i-Áshchí, who has recorded this incident in his memoirs, and who prided himself on being chastised by the Master on that occasion, recalls that because of this action the Governor's attitude towards 'Abdu'l-Bahá changed. He realized that, contrary to the wild rumours circulating in 'Akká at the time, 'Abdu'l-Bahá and His family were from a noble background, and not criminals as he had been led to believe. The Governor therefore began to act in a more humane way towards the prisoners. He eventually agreed to substitute the allotted ration of bread with a sum of money and allowed a small party of the prisoners, escorted by guards, to visit the markets of 'Akká daily to buy their provisions. (*The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 3, p.18*)

9. Isolation

*Image: Sultan Abdul-Aziz of the Ottoman Empire. Image from Wikipedia by W. & D. Downey - From an album of 'Royal Portraits’*

Explicit orders had been issued by the Sultan and his ministers to subject the exiles, who were accused of having grievously erred and led others far astray, to the strictest confinement. Hopes were confidently expressed that the sentence of life-long imprisonment pronounced against them would lead to their eventual extermination. The farman of Sultan 'Abdu'l-'Aziz, dated the fifth of Rabi'u'th-Thani 1285 AH (July 26, 1868), not only condemned them to
perpetual banishment, but stipulated their strict incarceration, and forbade them to associate either with each other or with the local inhabitants. The text of the farman itself was read publicly, soon after the arrival of the exiles, in the principal mosque of the city as a warning to the population. *(God Passes By, Shoghi Effendi, p.186)*

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

In the course of a talk to the friends in Haifa, 'Abdu'l-Bahá has described His being summoned by the Governor of 'Akká to hear the contents of the edict. When it was read out to Him that they were to remain in prison for ever (in Arabic the term used for life imprisonment is often 'prisoner forever'), 'Abdu'l-Bahá responded by saying that the contents of the edict were meaningless and without foundation. Upon hearing this remark, the Governor became angry and retorted that the edict was from the Sultán, and he wanted to know how it could be described as meaningless. 'Abdu'l-Bahá reiterated His comment and explained that it made no sense to describe their imprisonment as lasting forever, for man lives in this world only for a short period, and that sooner or later the captives would leave this prison either dead or alive. The Governor and his officers were impressed by the vision of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and felt easier in His presence. *(The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 3, p.17)*

10. The Farman

*Image: The Farman (verdict) of the Sultan. Image from King of Glory by Balyuzi.*

In a Tablet addressed to Aqa Mirza Aqay-i-Afnan, Nuri'd-Din, over the signature of Khadim (Mirza Aqa Jan, the amanuensis), Baha'u'llah recounts that such was the surveillance exercised by the authorities that even when a barber or bath-attendant was required, he was brought to the citadel accompanied by a member of the police force, who stood by all the time. For that reason Baha'u'llah did not use the bath for a while. It will be recalled that Ustad Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Salmani, who had served Baha'u'llah as a bath-attendant (and would serve Him in that capacity in future), was at this date in Iran, having been expelled by the Ottoman authorities. *(Bahá'u'lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p.286)*

The Persian Ambassador, accredited to the Sublime Porte, had thus assured his government, in a letter, written a little over a year after their [the Baha'is] banishment to 'Akka: 'I have issued telegraphic and written instructions, forbidding that He (Baha'u'llah) associate with anyone except His wives and children, or leave under any circumstances, the house wherein He is imprisoned. 'Abbas-Quli Khan, the Consul-General in Damascus... I have, three days ago, sent back, instructing him to proceed direct to 'Akka ... confer with its governor regarding all necessary measures for the strict maintenance of their imprisonment ... and appoint, before his return to Damascus, a representative on the spot to insure that the orders issued by the Sublime Porte will, in no wise, be disobeyed. I have, likewise, instructed him that once every three months he should proceed from Damascus to 'Akka, and personally watch over them,
and submit his report to the Legation.’ Such was the isolation imposed upon them that the Baha’is of Persia, perturbed by the rumors set afloat by the Azalis of Isfahan that Baha’u’llah had been drowned, induced the British Telegraph Office in Julfa to ascertain on their behalf the truth of the matter. (KOG 2 286 quoting (God Passes By, Shoghi Effendi, p.186)

11. Prayer for Protection

*Image: The view from the prison. Photo Credit: Lutfu’llah Hakim, 1921. From Bahaullah.org*

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

In the Name of God, the Forgiver! Although this evil state in which I am, O my God, maketh me deserving of Thy wrath and punishment, Thy good-pleasure and Thy bounties demand Thy forgiveness to encompass Thy servants and Thy good favour to reach them. I ask Thee by Thy Name which Thou hast made the King of all names to protect me by Thy power and Thine Omnipotence from all calamity and all that is repugnant to Thee and all that is contrary to Thy Will. Thou art Supreme over all things. *(Bahá’u’lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p.287 provisional translation by H.M. Balyuzi)*

12. Lawh-i-Rais

*Image: Cut reed pen belonging to Bahá’u’lláh and decorated pen case belonging to Bahá’u’lláh. Images from Bahá’í Media Bank.*

In the early stages of His imprisonment in the barracks and soon after the death of three of His followers, Baha’u’llah revealed the momentous Tablet of Ra’is in Persian, addressed to ‘Ali Pasha, the Grand Vizir of Turkey, who was His great adversary and the one who had brought about His exile to ‘Akka. Already, a few months earlier, on His way to Gallipoli, Baha’u’llah had addressed to ‘Ali Pasha a Tablet in Arabic known as the Suriy-i-Ra’is. In it He had forcefully condemned the actions of the Grand Vizir as the main instigator of His exile to the prison city. Now, in the Lawh-i-Ra’is, the second Tablet to ‘Ali Pasha, written from within the walls of the Most Great Prison, Baha’u’llah rebukes him further for his acts of cruelty and inhuman treatment.

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

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

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

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

Baha'u'llah explains that the only reason for this proposition was that a number of women and children were among the prisoners and had become the victims of tyranny and were afflicted with great hardship and suffering. He reiterates the basic principle that it is not befitting God to justify Himself to any man. For all the peoples of the world have been created to worship and obey Him. However, Baha'u'llah had consented in this case to allow the Sultan to seek from Him the truth of His Cause, so that the innocent might not suffer. But neither did the Sultan respond to this challenge nor did the above-mentioned officer send a report to Baha'u'llah. (The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 3, p.34)

13. The Loving Care of the Master

Life was indeed hard and onerous in the barracks of 'Akka, and particularly so when the exiles fell victim to maladies, such as malaria and dysentery, that the autumn brought in its wake. Aqa Rida says that they had never known such fevers as afflicted them, and states that the Most Great Branch, being very careful of what He ate or drank, did 'not go down' like the rest, but was always up and about, tending the sick and nursing them.  *(Bahá’u’lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p.286)*

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

Aqa Husayn-i-Ashchi gives more detail of the care and supervision which the Most Great Branch exercised in attending to the welfare and health of the companions. Every day He would stand by the gates of the citadel, awaiting the return of those who had gone into the town, accompanied by guards, to make necessary purchases, and would inspect all they had bought and even their pockets, to see that nothing injurious to the health of the inmates was brought in. Whatever He considered unsuitable for their consumption He would throw away. *(Bahá’u’lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p.288)*

### 14. The Recovery of Mirza Jafar-i-Yazdi

*Image: Prison Cell of Bahá’u’lláh.*

There was one more case of very severe illness, then miraculous recovery. Mirza Ja’far-i-Yazdi was almost given up for dead. A Christian physician, named Butrus (Peter), was called in. On feeling the pulse of the patient, he rose up angrily, protesting that he had been brought to attend a dead man. ‘I am not Christ’, he said and departed Aqay-i-Kalim went to Baha’u’llah and reported Mirza Ja’far’s plight. *(Bahá’u’lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p.288)*

Mírzá Áqá Ján ran to Bahá’u’lláh, with word of the death. Not only had the patient ceased to breathe, but his body was already going limp. His family were gathered about him, mourning him, shedding bitter tears. The Blessed Beauty said, “Go; chant the prayer of Yá Sháfi—O Thou, the Healer—and Mírzá Ja’far will come alive. Very rapidly, he will be as well as ever.” I reached his bedside. His body was cold and all the signs of death were present. Slowly, he began to stir; soon he could move his limbs, and before an hour had passed he lifted his head, sat up, and proceeded to laugh and tell jokes. *(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Memorials of the Faithful, p.157)*

Baha’u’llah, Aqa Rida recounts, revealed a prayer and told Aqay-i Kalim not to give up hope but continue nursing him. As Aqa Rida puts it, a new life was breathed into Mirza Ja’far, and he recovered. Hence Baha’u’llah called him Badi’u’l-Hayat (Wondrous Life). *(Bahá’u’lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p.288)*
15. The Wave of the Handkerchief

Baha’is in Iran had, at last, learned that Baha’u’llah was incarcerated in the citadel of ‘Akka. A number of them came that perchance they might gain admittance to the presence of their Lord. However, the two Azalis, lodged as they were over the gateway, were keeping a keen watch and reporting to the authorities the arrival of any Baha’i whom they recognized. And the officials would immediately take action to expel the Baha’i who had managed to come within the city walls. There were some who had walked all the way, over the high mountains of western Iran and the deserts of ‘Iraq and Syria, to reach ‘Akka. Foiled, at the end, by the machinations of enemies, the only solace left for them was to stand beyond the second moat, facing the citadel, to obtain a momentary glimpse of the figure of their Lord, as He stood behind the bars. Only a wave of His blessed hand, from afar, was their reward after months of toil and travel. Then, most of them turned homewards, grateful for that bounty bestowed upon them. It was enough to kindle a more vigorous flame in their hearts, enough to intensify their dedication. Others came in their wake and took back the memory of that figure, appearing at the window behind iron bars--a memory which they treasured above everything else in their lives. (Bahá’u’lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p.299)

16. The Trustees

The very few who succeeded in penetrating into the city had, to their great distress, to retrace their steps without even beholding His countenance. The first among them, the self-denying Haji surnamed Amin-i-Illahi (Trusted of God), to enter His presence was only able to do so in a public bath, where it had been arranged that he should see Baha’u’llah without approaching Him or giving any sign of recognition. (God Passes By, Shoghi Effendi, p.187)

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

They succeeded in sending a message to Baha’u’llah informing Him of their arrival and expressing their eagerness to attain His presence. Baha’u’llah allowed them to see Him in the public bath, but they were advised to show no sign of recognition. On the appointed day the two men entered the public bath. But no sooner did Haji Abu’l-Hasan behold the majestic person of Baha’u’llah than he was seized by such emotion that his body shook, and he
stumbled and fell to the ground. The floor being made of stones, he injured his head very badly and had to be carried out with blood pouring on his face and body. (The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 3, p.74)

17. Tablets Revealed in the Barracks

Image: Example of Revelation writing of Bahá’u’lláh’s Tajalliyát, by Mirzá Áqá Ján. Image from Baha’í International Community.

This is a significant Tablet revealed in honour of Shaykh Salman ... He is the one who travelled every year between Persia and the places of Bahá’u’lláh’s exile, carrying His Tablets for the friends to Persia and bringing their letters and messages back to Him. ... This Tablet was revealed in 'Akka during the early part of Bahá’u’lláh’s imprisonment in the barracks, for in it He refers to the believers exiled to Mosul from Baghdad. This happened in the summer of 1868.

In this Tablet Bahá’u’lláh counsels Salman to be resigned to the decrees of God and with acquiescence accept tests and trials in His path. He describes His own sufferings, states that although every door is closed to His face and the enemies are at all times at work trying to extinguish His light, yet it shines as brilliant as the sun, shedding light upon all who are in heaven and on earth. He urges Salman to follow His example and never complain when afflicted by abasement or misery in this life, rather he should focus his attention upon God, and seek no one but Him. ... Bahá’u’lláh reminds Salman that those who look for glory in this world and are proud of their position in it have grievously erred, for soon the messenger of death will bring an end to all earthly attachments. (The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 3, p.26)

Though captive in the hands of His enemies and cut off from the outside world, the Supreme Pen wrote many more Tablets in the prison of 'Akka. In the year 1869 two important Tablets were revealed and delivered; one addressed to Napoleon III, in which Bahá’u’lláh explicitly foretells his extinction; the other to Pope Pius IX. Within almost a year’s time Napoleon, the most powerful monarch of his time in Europe, was driven into exile and suffered an ignominious death, while in the same year the supreme Pontiff’s temporal powers which had existed for many centuries, were seized from him and his vast dominion was reduced to the tiny Vatican State. (Bahai World News vol. XV – Essays and Reviews, A. Taherzadeh, page 769)

18. Temporarily Blinded the Eyes of the Guards

Image: Picture of Abdu’r Rahim (from Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh Vol 3) and the stairway leading to the ‘Akká prison within the citadel, c. 1901. Image from Bahá’í Media Bank.
A devoted follower of Baha'u'llah who found his way into the prison in an extraordinary fashion in the early days of Baha'u'llah's incarceration in the barracks was a certain 'Abdu'r-Rahim ... His original name was Ja'far, but when he attained the presence of Baha'u'llah he was given the name Rahim (Compassionate). Before his conversion to the Faith, 'Abdu'r-Rahim had been a fanatical Muslim. Having noticed the growth of the Faith, he once sought guidance from a local clergyman as to his attitude towards the Baha'is. 'To fight them', the clergyman said, 'is as meritorious as taking part in the Jihad (holy war), to kill them is praiseworthy in the sight of God, and to be killed is a privilege which bestows upon the individual Muslim the reward of martyrdom and entrance into the highest paradise.'

These words provoked in 'Abdu'r-Rahim a strong urge to kill some Baha'is. Armed with a weapon, he one day confronted an old believer by the name of Haji Baba and told him in no uncertain terms that he had come to take his life because he had strayed from the path of truth and had embraced the Faith of the Baha'is. Faced with the threat of death, Haji Baba displayed unruffled calm and spoke with tenderness such words that the heart of 'Abdu'r-Rahim was touched. Soon his mood changed. Instead of being an enemy intent upon killing, he now wanted to investigate the truth. Haji Baba conducted 'Abdu'r-Rahim to the home of the sister of Mulla Husayn where the friends often held their meetings for teaching the Cause. That meeting with 'Abdu'r-Rahim lasted one day and one night, during which time he was most assiduously involved in discussion. At the end of that marathon meeting he recognized the truth of the Cause and became filled with such a new spirit of faith and enthusiasm that he could not rest in his native town any longer. Knowing that the Supreme Manifestation of God was on this earth he could not resist the urge to go and see Him face to face. So, he set off on the long journey to attain His presence.

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

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

With the utmost devotion and a heart overflowing with the love of Baha'u'llah, 'Abdu'r-Rahim approached the prison and began to circumambulate it. Then to his surprise he noticed that a hand from a window of the prison was beckoning him to come inside. He knew it was the hand of Baha'u'llah summoning him to His presence. He rushed to the gate of the prison which was guarded by soldiers. But the soldiers seemed to him to be motionless and without life; they appeared not to see him. They did not even move an eyelid as he went through the gate.
Soon 'Abdu'r-Rahim found himself in the presence of His Lord, overwhelmed by emotion and carried away into the world of the Spirit, communing with the One who was the object of his adoration and love. Baha'u'llah told him that through the hands of power and might He had temporarily blinded the eyes of the guards so that he might attain His presence as a bounty on His part. (The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 3, p.59)

19. Badi Arrives to Akka

Image: A view of the land gate from outside the walls of the city. (Clarence Welsh, 1921). Image from Bahaullah.org

He arrived there early in 1869. ... Badi' seems to have entered the city without much difficulty. The watchful eyes of Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani and his accomplice Aqa Jan, who were housed above the gate of the city so that they might report to the authorities the arrival of any person they suspected of being a Bahá'í, failed to recognize the youth carrying his water skins and wearing a long cloak of coarse cotton of the type worn among the Arabs. (The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 3, p.178)

Once inside the city, however, he was at a loss, for he had no idea how to contact his fellow-believers and could not risk betraying himself by making enquiries. Uncertain as to the course he should follow, he repaired to a mosque in order to pray. Towards evening, a group of Persians entered the mosque and, to his delight, Badi' recognized 'Abdu'l-Bahá among them. (Bahá'u'lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p. 297)

He waited till the prayer was finished and then approached the Master with great reverence and handed him a note containing two lines of a poem he had hurriedly composed on the spot. In it he had, without introducing himself, declared his loyalty to the Master and his faith in Bahá'u'lláh in moving and tender language. 'Abdu'l-Bahá warmly welcomed Badi' and managed to take him to the barracks. (The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 3, p.179)

20. The Transformation of Badi

Image: Picture of Mirza Aqa Buzurg at the age of 15, in the Persian empire sometime in the 1860’s. Picture from King of Glory.

In one of the Tablets written by Mirza Aqa Jan, it is stated that Badi’ was ushered into the Presence of Bahá'u'lláh alone on two occasions. No one knew what was happening in these audiences except that Bahá'u'lláh had said that God was about to create a new creation and Badi' himself was unaware of it. In another Tablet, Bahá'u'lláh states that He created him anew with the hands of power and might and sent him out as a ball of fire. It was in the course of these two meetings that Bahá'u'lláh gave him the name Badi' -- Wonderful. (The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 3, p.179)

In yet another Tablet Bahá'u'lláh has testified that He took a handful of dust, mixed it with the waters of might and power and breathed into it a new spirit from His presence, adorned
it with the ornament of a name (Badi') in the Kingdom of Creation and sent it out to the King with a Book revealed by God. (*The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 3, p.179)

In a Tablets to the father of Badi’, Bahá'u'lláh recounts in moving language the exciting events which took place when his son had attained His presence. He indicates that when He desired to create a new creation, He summoned Badi’ to come to His room and uttered 'one word' to him, a word which caused his whole being to tremble. He affirms that had it not been for the divine protection vouchsafed to him at that moment, Badi’ would have swooned away. Then the Hand of Omnipotence, according to Bahá'u'lláh’s description, began to create him anew and breathed into him the spirit of might and power. So great was the infusion of this might, as attested by Bahá'u'lláh, that single and alone he could have conquered the world through the power of God, had he been ordered to do so. (*The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 3, p.180)

Bahá'u'lláh states that when this new creation came into being he smiled in His presence and manifested such steadfastness that the Concourse on High were deeply moved and exhilarated and the voice of God was heard calling aloud: ‘Hallowed and glorified be Baha for having fashioned a new and wonderful creation.’ Bahá'u'lláh testifies that He disclosed to his eyes the 'Kingdom of Revelation', and as a result his whole being was filled with an ecstasy that rid him of all attachments to this world and made him arise to assist his Lord and bring victory to His Cause. (*The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 3, p.180)

### 21. Badi Receives Instructions

*Image: Badi, picture taken shortly before he was executed.*

Many were the men, veterans, who had longed for the honour to be entrusted with that Letter. But Bahá'u'lláh had made no move and waited. He had waited a long time until the forlorn, the weary youth, who had come to receive the gift of second birth from His hands, reached the gates of 'Akká, and entered the citadel. (*Bahá'u'lláh, The King of Glory*, H.M. Balyuzi, p. 297)

When Badi’ learnt that Bahá'u'lláh was looking for someone to deliver a special Tablet to Násiri’d-Dín Sháh, he begged to be allowed to carry out this service, knowing full well that he would have to lay down his life. Bahá'u'lláh accepted him for this important mission, instructed him to proceed to Haifa where he would be given the Tablet and instructed him also not to associate with any believer, either on the way or in Tihran. The Tablet to the Shah of Persia was not handed to Badi’ in ‘Akká. Bahá'u'lláh entrusted Haji Shah-Muhammad-i-Amin with a small case and a Tablet to be delivered into the hands of Badi’. (*The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 3, p.182)

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali has recorded in his history Bihjatu's-Sudur an account he heard from Haji Shah-Muhammad-i-Amin: 'I was given a small box, the length of which was one and a half spans, its width was less than one span and its thickness was one-quarter of a span, and I was told to deliver it to him [Badi’] in Haifa together with a few pounds. I did not know what was in the box. I met him in Haifa and gave him the good news that a favour had been bestowed
upon him and I was entrusted with its delivery. And so we went outside the town, onto Mount Carmel, and I delivered the box to him. He held it with both hands and kissed it, then he prostrated himself. There was also a sealed envelope for him which he took from me. He walked some twenty or thirty paces away from me and, turning towards the place of Bahá'u'lláh's imprisonment, he sat down and read it. (The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 3, p.183)

He then prostrated himself again and his face was radiant with joy and ecstasy. I asked him whether I could also have the honour of reading the Tablet which he had received but he replied: "There is no time." I understood that it was a matter which could not be divulged. What was it? I had no idea at all of the significance of what was happening, nor of the importance of the task with which he had been commissioned. (Bahá'u'lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p. 298)

'I said to him, "Come with me into Haifa for I have been instructed to deliver a sum of money to you." He replied, "I won't come into the town with you, you go and bring the money." I went and returned but could not find him anywhere - he had departed. I wrote to Beirut that they should give him the money there but they had not seen him. I had no further news of him until I heard reports of his martyrdom from Tihran. Then I realized that in that box had been the Lawh-i-Sultán, and in the envelope had been a Tablet bearing tidings of the martyrdom of that essence of steadfastness and constancy.'(Bahá'u'lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p. 298)

22. Nabil-i-A'zam

Image: Picture of Nabil-i-A'zam.

Nabil-i-A'zam, whom we last met in an Egyptian prison, was freed and banished to Anatolia, not long after the ship which carried Baha'u'llah left Alexandria for Haifa. Thence he went to Cyprus, learnt what was happening to the Baha'is there, and then made his way to 'Akka, but due to the machinations of the Azalis he was deprived of gaining admittance to the presence of Baha'u'llah. Aqa Husayn recounts that the first time Nabil made his way into 'Akka he was spotted, intercepted and hauled before the authorities, who wanted to know what he was doing there. He said that he had come to buy provisions. But the officials forbade him to make any purchases and expelled him from the city. (Bahá'u'lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p. 291)

According to a letter written by Nabil from 'Akka to the Baha'is of Darakhsh in the province of Khurasan, he made the first attempt to enter the city around the end of October 1868. He succeeded in entering and stayed for three days but could not attain the presence of Baha'u'llah before being expelled. He retreated to the caves of Mount Carmel and roamed the countryside for about four months. But he could not endure separation from His Lord. The ardour of his love was increasing day by day until he found it impossible to remain away from the city of his Beloved. (The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 3, p.57)
However, outside the citadel, around the district of 'Izzi'd-Din, to the north of 'Akka, he stood one day gazing at the fortress. Bahá'u'lláh appeared at the window, behind the bars and with the movement of His hands recognized Nabil's presence there. The same day, a prayer was revealed by the Supreme Pen in his honour. Nabil, thereafter, spent his days roaming over Mount Carmel and the Galilee, alternating his residence between Haifa and Nazareth. (*Bahá'u'lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p. 291*)

In about the middle of February 1869 he made his second attempt to enter the city. This time he succeeded in remaining for a longer period. He met Mirza Aqa Jan and a few other believers who had come out of the barracks to purchase provisions. But in his letter Nabil mentions that at last he achieved his heart's desire of seeing Bahá'u'lláh on the 18th of Muharram 1286 (1 May 1869). (*The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 3, p.57*)

The Guardian of the Baha’i Faith mentions that he also lived for a while in Hebron. Then he was summoned to 'Akka and stayed eighty-one days in the citadel. (*Bahá'u'lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p. 291*)

23. Nabil-i-Qaini

*Image: The view from the prison cell occupied by Bahá'u'lláh in ‘Akká, early 1900s. Image Bahá’í Media Bank.*

Another eminent Baha’i who came to ‘Akka but was recognized and expelled from the city was Mulla Muhammad-'Ali, surnamed Nabil-i-Qa’ini by Bahá'u'lláh. (*The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 3, p.57*)

He was at one time a confidant of the Amir of Qa’inat in the province of Khurasan and frequently visited the capital. There he met Bahá'u'lláh in early days and they became friends. As soon as he heard of the claim of Bahá'u'lláh, he, without any hesitation, gave Him his allegiance, and became instrumental in leading a number of prominent people to the Faith which he himself had zealously and ardently embraced. Having become well known as a Babi he was forced to leave his native land and set out for the prison-city. Arriving there he succeeded in gaining admittance to the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. (*Bahá’u’lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p. 291*)

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

This great man, who had lived many years of his life in luxury and honour and had been held in high esteem by the people of his native town, was now living in such poverty that like Ustad Isma’îl he too had to sell needles and thimbles as a peddler to the people of Nazareth. He earned his living in this way for about two years, selling to the women of Nazareth needles at the rate of three for an egg! During this time he succeeded in converting a number of her Christian citizens to the Faith. (*The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 3, p.58*)
24. The Story of Shaykh Mahmud

Image: Courtyard of the citadel of 'Akká, early 1900s. Image Bahá’í Media Bank.

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

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

Shaykh Mahmud was very perturbed one day to see 'Abdu'l-Baha in the Mosque. He is reported to have grabbed 'Abdu'l-Baha by the hand and exclaimed, 'Are you the son of God?'

The Master with His characteristic charm pointed out that it was he who was saying it, and not 'Abdu'l-Baha. He then reminded him of the injunction of Islam as stated in one of the Traditions: 'Be charitable toward the guest even though he be an infidel.'

The impact of these words and the loving personality of the Master affected Shaykh Mahmud and he changed his attitude of aggressiveness towards Him. But being a religious leader, he could not remain indifferent to the presence of the group of exiles whom he considered ungodly. He therefore decided to put an end to all this by himself. One day he hid a weapon under his cloak and went straight to the barracks with the intention of assassinating Baha'u'llah. He informed the guards at the prison gate that he wished to see Baha'u'llah. Since he was an influential personality in 'Akka, the guards complied with his request and went to inform Baha'u'llah of the identity of the visitor. 'Tell him', Baha'u'llah is reported to have said, 'to cast away the weapon and then he may come in' (these are not the exact words of
Baha'u'llah, but convey the message he is reported to have given). On hearing this Shaykh Mahmud was astounded, for he was sure that no one had seen the weapon under his cloak. In a state of utter confusion, he returned home but his agitated mind could not be at rest. He continued in this state for some time until he decided to go to the barracks again, but without any weapons this time. Being a strong man, he knew he could take Baha'u'llah's life by the mere strength of his hands.

So he went again to the prison gate and made the same request to visit Baha'u'llah. On being informed of Shaykh Mahmud's desire to meet Him, Baha'u'llah is reported to have said: 'Tell him to purify his heart first and then he may come in.' Perplexed and confused at these utterances, Shaykh Mahmud could not bring himself to visit Baha'u'llah that day. Later he had a dream in which his father and the old Shaykh appeared to him and reminded him of their vision regarding the coming of the Lord. After this dream Shaykh Mahmud went to the barracks again and attained the presence of 'Abdu'l-Baha. The words of the Master penetrated his heart and he was ushered into the presence of Baha'u'llah. The majesty and glory of His countenance overwhelmed the Shaykh and he witnessed the fulfilment of the prophecy of the coming of the Lord to 'Akka. He prostrated himself at His feet and became an ardent believer.

After recognizing the station of Baha'u'llah, he arose to serve Him and His Cause. He played a significant part in assisting the believers to enter the city and then harbouring them until they were able to attain the presence of Baha'u'llah. On some occasions he even ordered ropes to be lowered so that the Baha'i visitors might be pulled up the walls which surrounded the city. Another method he sometimes employed was to leave the city and return at night accompanied by one of the believers who would be posing as a servant carrying a lantern in front of his master (in the old days there was no public lighting and therefore it was necessary to carry a lantern at night. Important people always had servants who performed this service for them.) After the believer had attained the presence of Baha'u'llah, Shaykh Mahmud would enable him to leave the city in the same manner that he had entered it. (*The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 3, p.65*)

### 25. The Purest Branch

*Image: Skylight in the ceiling of the citadel and the uncovered stone at the place where Mirza Mihdi fell. In the background is the doorway that leads to rooms including the cell of Baha'u'llah. (2004). Image from Bahá’í News Service*

On 22 June 1870, early in the evening, Bahá'u'lláh informed His son that he was not needed that day to write and that instead he could go up on the roof for prayer and meditation as was his custom (*The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 3, p.205*).

Mírzá Mihdí was free, ... , to climb the stairs to the flat prison roof, a favourite place for the prisoners to go. How good it felt at the end of a hot summer’s day to stand on the roof in the fresh evening air. (*The Story of Bahá'u'lláh, Druzelle Cederquist*)
... on that fateful evening as he chanted the verses of the Qasídíy-i-Varqá’íyyih, one of Bahá’u’lláh’s most moving poems revealed in Kurdistan, he was carried away in a state of utter detachment and joy. Mirza Mihdi, pacing up and down that roof-top engrossed with his thoughts and meditations, did not notice an open skylight and plunged through it to the floor below, falling upon a crate which pierced his chest. (Bahá’u’lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p. 311)

26. The Fall

Image: The spot under the skylight on which the Purest Branch fell.

The Greatest Holy Leaf recounts:

The room into which he fell had a lofty ceiling; it was the living room of the family. No one was in the room at the time, but, hearing his cries, some of the family rushed in and found him lying in a heap on the floor with the blood pouring from his mouth. (Myron Phelps, The Master in Akka)

He was badly wounded and bled profusely. He was so terribly injured that they had to remove his clothes by tearing them from him. (The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 3, p.206)

Ashchi recounts:

We carried his precious person to his room and called a doctor who was an Italian, but he could not help... In spite of much pain and agony, and being weak, he warmly greeted those who came to his bedside, showered an abundance of love and favours upon them and apologized to everyone, saying he was ashamed that while they were all sitting, he had to lie down in their presence... (The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 3, p.206)

Members of the Holy Family and some of the companions gathered around him and all were so distressed and grief-stricken that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá with tearful eyes entered the presence of Bahá’u’lláh, prostrated Himself at His feet and begged for healing. Bahá’u’lláh is reported to have said ‘O my Greatest Branch, leave him in the hands of his God.’ He then proceeded to the bedside of his injured son, dismissed everyone from His presence and stayed beside him for some time. (The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 3, p.207)

At Mírzá Mihdí’s bedside, Bahá’u’lláh said that He wished to be alone with His son and dismissed everyone else from His presence. When the others had gone, father and son talked for some time. No one else knew what was said, except for one thing. Bahá’u’lláh promised Mírzá Mihdí that God could heal him completely. He had only to ask.

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

Despite his own pain, Mírzá Mihdí thought of all the Bahá’ís who longed to see their Lord. As he looked into his father’s loving face, the pure-hearted Mírzá Mihdí did not ask for his own healing. “I wish the people of Bahá to be able to attain Your presence, replied Mírzá Mihdí. Bahá’u’lláh accepted His beloved son’s final request. “And so it shall be,” He said, “God will
grant your wish.” ... Within twenty-two hours of his fall he breathed his last. “Mihdí! O Mihdí!” Bahá’u’lláh lamented. (The Story of Bahá’u’lláh, Druzelle Cederquist)

27. The Great Sacrifice


When the Purest Branch passed away, Shaykh Mahmud begged the Master to allow him to have the honour of washing the body and not to let anyone from the city of ‘Akká perform this service. The Master gave permission. A tent was pitched in the middle of the barracks. We placed his blessed body upon a table in the middle of the tent and Shaykh Mahmud began the task of washing it. The loved ones of God were wailing and lamenting with tearful eyes and, like unto moths, were circling around that candle which the hands of God had lighted. I (Ashchi) brought water in and was involved in washing the body. (The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 3, p.209)

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

The Most Great Branch, sorely stricken by the death of His dearly-loved brother, His grief, Ashchi remarks, imprinted on His visage, was during that period walking outside the tent with rapid paces, keeping watch. (Bahá’u’lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p. 313)

The Greatest Holy Leaf recounts:

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

The casket was carried high on the shoulders of men out of the barracks with utmost serenity and majesty. It was laid to rest outside ‘Akká in the graveyard of Nabi Salih ... At the time of returning to the barracks an earth tremor shook the area and we all knew that it was the effect of the interment of that holy being. (The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 3, p.209)

Nabil-i-A’zam has said that he, Siyyid Mihdiy-i-Dahaji and Nabil-i-Qa’ini were in Nazareth when the earth tremor occurred. It lasted for about three minutes and people were frightened. Later when they heard the news of the death of the Purest Branch they realized
that it coincided with the timing of his burial and then they knew the reason for it. Bahá’u’llaúde, in one of His Tablets referring to the Purest Branch, confirms the cause of the earth tremor in these words: *When thou wast laid to rest in the earth, the earth itself trembled in its longing to meet thee.* (The Revelation of Bahá’u’llaúde, A. Taherzadeh, Vol 3, p.209)

28. The Change


Recounting His sufferings in this period, He has written regarding Himself: 'He hath, during the greater part of His life, been sore-tried in the clutches of His enemies. His sufferings have now reached their culmination in this afflictive Prison, into which His oppressors have so unjustly thrown Him. (God Passes By, Shoghi Effendi, p.187)

However, despite this high-handed action on the part of the Persian ambassador, more than a year after the arrival of the exiles in 'Akka which was tantamount to unabashed interference with the internal administration of the Turkish realm, and despite the fact that nothing had been changed by a jot or tittle in the original edict of Sultan 'Abdu'l-'Aziz, the Ottoman officials on the spot, as we shall see, found themselves more and more disinclined, even unable, to resort to harsh measures in their treatment of the prisoners; and the townspeople, exceedingly hostile at the start, had been slowly and gradually won over to respect and reverence towards the inmates of the citadel. It was chiefly the mien and the bearing of Bahá’u’llaúde's eldest Son that wrought his amazing transformation. (Bahá’u’llaúde, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p. 287)

29. The Gates Open

*Image: Khan-i-Avamid.*

At last came a day, four months after the death of the Purest Branch, when the movement of troops in the Ottoman domain compelled the authorities to have access to and make use of the barracks of 'Akka. The gates were flung open and the exiles were sent to other accommodation within the city walls. Bahá’u’lláh and His family were moved to the house of Malik, in the Fakhurah quarter, in the western part of the prison-city. The majority of the companions were lodged in a caravanserai, called Khan-i-'Avamid, close to the sea-shore. But a number of them found separate homes. Aqay-i-Kalim and his family went to live in a house within the compound of the caravanserai. (Bahá’u’lláh, The King of Glory, H.M. Balyuzi, p. 316)