

back more than 1300 years, to the kings of ancient Persia. These ancestors were people of illumined mind, of great wealth and distinction. So pre-eminent were they among the people that they were regarded as a superior order of beings. They possessed immense estates and many cattle, and built for themselves a great palace on the side of the mountain where the magnificent view took in valley and river. In this palace they entertained in princely fashion their summer guests.

Bahá'u'lláh's father was Prime Minister to the Shah. He was looked upon by his contemporaries as a genius; his beautiful handwriting is to this day used as a model in calligraphy and the samples of it which still remain are highly prized by connoisseurs. He also had bitter enemies, due to his fearless speaking of the truth, and his high position. During the winter he lived in his palace in Tihrán. But in the summer he retired to his country estate at Núr.

1817 Childhood

In 1817, in the palace in Tihrán, Bahá'u'lláh was born. Although there were other children in the family, the parents had a unique love for this little boy, feeling even in his infancy the radiance of his remarkable power. Over the entrance to his house Bahá'u'lláh's father inscribed a verse which shows an intuition of his son's future. This inscription may still be read:

"When thou enterest the sacred abode of the Beloved

"Say, 'I am at Thy command.'

"This is the home of Love. Enter with reverence,

"This is holy ground. Remove thy shoes when thou enterest here."

Bahá'u'lláh, when a child, had a dream in which he saw himself in a vast desert and around his head was flying every species of bird. Passing over the desert he came to the ocean. He swam in the ocean and all the fishes came to him and swam around his head. He related this dream to his father who told it to a celebrated Interpreter of dreams. This Interpreter said that the birds and fishes meant the thinkers of the world and that this boy would after a while become so great that all the thoughtful ones of the earth would follow him.

The perfection of character and the radiant spirit of the little child drew to him not only his father and mother, but prominent persons began to prophesy concerning his future. He was so beloved by the people that his father's enemies, even, withheld their attacks, because of this little boy.

When he reached maturity it was supposed that he would, because of his father's high position, enter the government service. But Bahá'u'lláh's purposes were of a different nature.

A very prominent theologian of Persia, a distant relative of Bahá'u'lláh, had a dream. He found himself in a deep valley, beside a beautiful palace. He wished to enter the palace but was told by the people that he must not do so for "The Promised One was within in conference, alone, with Bahá'u'lláh."

The theologian related this dream to many people, and all wondered concerning the spiritual station of Bahá'u'lláh. The theologian said, "Perhaps he has so high a station because he is my relative."

Some thoughtful people replied, "But you, yourself, did not have permission to enter."

This theologian had about a thousand students who met with him in class in order to discuss difficult problems of theology. One day, when their discussion was at its height, Bahá'u'lláh entered the room. After listening for a while he began to speak, and for nearly an hour they listened, wonder-struck, to the torrent of explanation which poured from his lips. The students were astounded, and the teacher marveled, saying, "We have all studied the books - but here is one who without having studied imparts to us something greater than we have ever heard."

Bahá'u'lláh was by this time regarded by many as a superman, and everyone in the province felt that they must follow his counsel. Then, in 1838, his father died, leaving a vast estate of lands and cattle. Even before his father's death Bahá'u'lláh gave large sums of money to aid the poor.

1844 The Báb Calls

When Bahá'u'lláh was twenty-seven years old, and living in his home in Tihrán, the Báb declared himself. The people came to Bahá'u'lláh regarding the matter, and he told them, "What the Báb says is true." He also advised his family to study the Báb's writings.

We have no evidence that the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh ever met, yet we know that their spiritual communication was continual. There is a story, which is probably true, that when the Báb was under guard, on the outskirts of Tihrán, Bahá'u'lláh visited him, and the people observed how, contrary to his usual custom, the Báb paid extraordinary honor to Bahá'u'lláh, thus showing his recognition of his great spiritual station.

In the early morning of the Cause, when Bahá'u'lláh's own station was as yet unknown, he powerfully assisted the movement, with utmost effort and sacrifice, comforting the persecuted followers of the Báb and giving large sums of money to assist the spreading of the new teachings. With irresistible logic and perfect wisdom he taught the new principles. He had never in his life been to school, yet he wrote with a style of transcendent beauty, and spoke as one inspired. To the listening people his words seemed like the waves of a vast tumultuous ocean.

The wonderful abilities of Bahá'u'lláh, however, aroused the opposition of bitter enemies who made every effort to halt the spread of the movement. In 1847 he was imprisoned for a number of days because of his efforts in behalf of some prominent followers of the Báb who had been arrested. Shortly after his release a great conference of the believers of the Báb was held at Badasht. There, many distinguished disciples came to gether to discuss ways and means for spreading the Cause. During this time they lived in tents which they

pitched on the plain outside the town. Bahá'u'lláh attended this conference and through his great wisdom unity of thought was achieved among all the different minds. It was into the midst of this imposing conference that Qurratu'l-'Ayn appeared with face unveiled, and declared that a New Day had dawned, the day of the emancipation of women, of the resurrection of souls, when men and women would rise from the graves of ignorance and limited beliefs and would see the Sun of God's Bounty which had appeared from the invisible horizon. Previous to this conference she had written to the Báb that she realized how he, in his wisdom, was giving his new teachings, little by little, according to the capacity of the people, but would he give her permission to teach still more; and if she was rejected she would gladly sacrifice herself to spread God's new Light.

During the great siege of Mazindarán, which occurred after the conference at Badasht, Bahá'u'lláh, taking with him eleven believers, went to the authorities and pled for the besieged. But in answer, he with his eleven companions was arrested and a great mob, gathered from the surrounding district and armed with all manner of weapons tried to kill them. For safe keeping the guards at last hid them in a mosque and the Governor himself interfered to save Bahá'u'lláh and his companions. Some Muhammadan mullás who had been confounded by Bahá'u'lláh in a discussion of scientific subjects now came forward and incited the people to attack the mosque and inflict injury upon Bahá'u'lláh. The mob became so violent that the guards found it impossible to check them so they made a hole in the wall and through it slipped Bahá'u'lláh and his companions out of the mosque and to safe hiding in a well protected house unknown to the people. Later he and the others were set free and they returned to Tihrán.

After the martyrdom of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh traveled to Baghdad and Karbala where he inspired many, many people through his example and his great illumination. After a year's absence he returned to Tihrán where a veritable reign of terror had started against the Bab's followers. The Prime Minister sent a request to him, at his summer residence just outside Tihrán, to depart quickly and save himself. But Bahá'u'lláh refused to do this and remained where he was. Soon, a mob went to his palace, brought him out and compelled him, with hands manacled and bare feet to run for miles, amidst the jeers of the people. He was put in an underground dungeon with a number of believers, his neck, feet and hands in heavy chains and these chains fastened to the floor. Here he was kept for four months. Each day a believer was taken out to be killed by the people in the public square. But the presence of Bahá'u'lláh was so glorious that those steadfast souls crowded with him in the dungeon were supremely happy and joyous. He would chant, "God is our Sustainer," "Sufficient unto us is God." And the rayless cell would be transformed into the light of heaven. In their renunciation and spiritual joy they sang and danced even under the swords of their executioners.

1853 Baghdád

Unable to find any pretext for executing Bahá'u'lláh, and because he was of

the nobility, the Persian government decided at last to exile him and in this way extinguish the new movement. He was ordered to leave Tíhrán immediately, for Baghdád. He was not allowed time to obtain money or to secure even necessary clothing for himself and his family, but all were mounted on horses and started upon the journey. It was mid-winter and heavy snow storms and bitter cold were the companions of the band of exiles as, surrounded by guards, they hurried along over the perilous mountain roads. After the most tragic sufferings they arrived in Baghdád, in 1853.

From Baghdád the light of Truth shone forth brighter than ever and Bahá'u'lláh taught his universal principles. The "lesser resurrection" was ended and the "universal resurrection" appeared. There were many believers of the Báb who kept the faith but, because of the terrible persecutions, were in hiding. These, many of them, when they heard that Bahá'u'lláh was living in Mesopotamia, in comparative freedom, started out for Baghdád and joined him there.

Humanity is ever prone to oppose its spiritual leaders. And now, many followers of the Báb who had arisen with great courage to accept his teachings, which were far in advance of those preached by the Persian religious leaders of that time, were unable to understand the wonderful and progressive teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. They felt that he was abrogating the precepts of the Báb. Therefore much discussion arose. Another cause of disturbance at that time was the appearance of a malady ever present in the world - love of leadership. This crept in among these early disciples causing many of the Báb's followers to believe themselves important. Bahá'u'lláh had not yet declared himself the Manifestation and they had no excuse for attacking him; yet they realized that one had come among them whose power their love of leadership might find a serious obstacle. On the other hand there were many who possessed true insight; these, as soon as they heard Bahá'u'lláh speak recognized him as their new leader and acknowledged him. Finally, after being in Baghdád for about a year, Bahá'u'lláh decided to withdraw for a while that the believers might decide whom they wished to follow. So, quietly one night he slipped away and not even his family knew where he had gone nor the hour of his departure. In the morning, when his absence was discovered, a wide search was made, in every direction, and to every place where he was wont to go. But no trace nor sign of him could anywhere be found.

For two long years no word came from Bahá'u'lláh, and those followers of the Báb who were sincere and faithful came fully to realize what a great and glorious light had been withdrawn. They were confused and at loss; they were like sheep without a shepherd, like lamps whose light had been extinguished. They now saw clearly that only Bahá'u'lláh was their bulwark and sustainer, their source of light and wisdom.

When he left his home in Baghdád, Bahá'u'lláh journeyed to Kurdistán and into the mountain wildernesses of that country, to a place called Suleymániyyé. Here he lived, in a cave, dressed in the garb of a religious hermit. Those wild mountains were full of highwaymen and desperadoes and he who

traveled in that region took his life in his hands. But as these people came to know Bahá'u'lláh a great love and respect for him filled their hearts. They did not know who he was, only, they said, that he was the embodiment of divine attributes.

Bahá'u'lláh had a most melodious voice, and in the night, in his cave in the mountains, he would chant in Persian the most exquisite poems and prayers. Then the people near his cave would awake, and rise, and congregate at the mouth of the cave to listen to the wonderful singing. Later, these prayers were collected and printed in a volume in remembrance of those sacred hours. This volume is now in the possession of the believers.

One day, in the hills of Suleymániyyé, Bahá'u'lláh came upon a little boy, weeping bitterly. Tenderly he picked up the child and, holding him in his arms, inquired as to his trouble. The little boy replied that his teacher had written a line on his slate and told him to copy it exactly. When he could not do this as well as the other pupils the teacher had beaten him. "Therefore," said the child, "I am unhappy." Bahá'u'lláh lovingly consoled him and said that he would teach him to write. He took the slate from the boy's hand and wrote upon it, in most beautiful handwriting, a thought compelling epigram, then told the child to carry this to his teacher. The teacher upon reading the profound epigram, written in such beautiful handwriting was much surprised and inquired where the one who so wrote could be found. Thus the learned men of that region came to know of Bahá'u'lláh's presence among them.

Soon the fame of his knowledge and wisdom spread throughout Kurdistán and the thoughtful ones, regarding him as a saint, came to him with their problems in spiritual and mystical subjects. Finally the news that a very holy man was living in the mountains in Kurdistán reached the ears of Bahá'u'lláh's family, who immediately said that this could be none other than Bahá'u'lláh and they must set out to find him.

There was a physician, a member of the Persian Consulate, who frequently visited the family of Bahá'u'lláh and felt much sympathy for them because of their great sorrow at his absence. One day this physician came with a story of a merchant who had traveled to Hamadan to sell some bales of goods. On the homeward journey he was attacked by a band of Bedouin robbers who, unable to find his money, cut his throat, carried him back into the mountains, there threw him down and, covering his body with stones left him. A shepherd coming that way a little later, saw drops of blood on the ground and following their trail found the poor merchant, whose heart was still feebly beating. A physician was quickly brought. The merchant was unable to speak, but before he died he wrote upon a bit of paper that there was money secreted in his clothing, which he was carrying to "a renowned saint who lived in the mountains," and he begged that the money be taken to this saint, to be devoted to his cause.

These stories convinced the believers in Baghdad that it was Bahá'u'lláh who was living in the cave in the mountains of Kurdistán. One who was very

faithful, said, "I will go and find Bahá'u'lláh and will beg him to return. If he does not wish to do so, I will remain with him." His companions replied that the journey was most dangerous for the country was full of robbers. But he said, "I will go."

After encountering many difficulties he finally reached the cave. He proffered to Bahá'u'lláh many letters supplicating and entreating him to return to Baghdád. At last Bahá'u'lláh consented and started forth with this companion.

His return to Baghdád brought a wonderful impetus to the Cause. His very appearance, so majestic and compelling drew to him people from all walks of life, for one need but look into his face to see that he was not as others. Soon a constant stream of visitors was pouring into his house; the rough Kurds from the mountains, in sheepskin clothing, coming in search of their Master who had so recently been among them; leaders of thought, Jewish, Muslim, Christian, seeking an audience; the various consuls and other dignitaries stationed at Baghdád, who stood silent in his presence, waiting for his words of wisdom. There were also numbers of pilgrims who came to visit the holy shrines established in the cities near Baghdád. Many of these earnest men came to see Bahá'u'lláh to investigate his teachings: returning to their homes they carried the new message.

With Bahá'u'lláh present among them a new spirit shone from the hearts of the believers. He taught them that the way to spread the Cause was for each believer to become a divine lamp of guidance among all the people. The more they were harmed by the enemies of the Cause, he told them, the more must they show forth love and kindness. Then other believers, from all parts of the country, left their homes and relatives and came to Baghdád to be with Bahá'u'lláh, who trained them in these noble characteristics, changing iron into gold, until many were drawn to the movement through the spiritual lives of these early followers.

Then the enemies of the Cause again bestirred themselves. The story is told of a religious leader who was greatly drawn to Bahá'u'lláh. Learning that the enemies were plotting against him he decided to warn Bahá'u'lláh. So he went early one morning to his home, with this intention. He found Bahá'u'lláh beside the River Dajlah, walking up and down the beautiful bank which he loved, pouring forth his revelation. The visitor, greatly surprised that Bahá'u'lláh was so undisturbed by his impending danger, waited until he returned to his house, and then told him of his danger. Bahá'u'lláh reassured him, saying, "God is working through invisible means."

In spite of all the persecutions the believers did not become downcast or discouraged. They had supreme confidence in Bahá'u'lláh. They were so aglow with the spirit of sacrifice and devotion to the Cause of God that if their material possessions were taken away from them it made no difference to them, for they were living in the paradise of nearness to Bahá'u'lláh.

During these days in Baghdád many books and Tablets were revealed through the

pen of Bahá'u'lláh. The Ighan was written during this period, also the Hidden Words, Seven Valleys, Jewels of Mysteries in the Highest Journey, a great Tablet called the Tablet of Jacob, and many other luminous epistles. Bahá'u'lláh wrote and spoke in brilliant epigrams so inspiring to mind and spirit that they were repeated everywhere. Philosophers and poets longed to meet him, and his teachings spread far and wide throughout the Eastern countries. Therefore Baghdád during these years was a great center of divine light.

THE enemies of Bahá'u'lláh, wishing to exile him from Baghdád, met in consultation. They asked a prominent divine, a very good and sincere man, with many followers, to meet with them. This divine was not a follower of Bahá'u'lláh, but when he heard the plan of the enemies he refused to have anything to do with it, saying that they had never investigated the matter, and therefore could not know the truth; then he left the meeting. The others finally decided to send one of their number to talk with Bahá'u'lláh. This man, also, was good and sincere and when he met Bahá'u'lláh he beheld in wonder the radiance of his spirit. He asked what he should say to those who had sent him. Bahá'u'lláh replied, "You must tell them all that you have seen and felt." The emissary said, "They do not doubt your greatness and knowledge. What they really want is a miracle." Bahá'u'lláh answered, "You have read in all the sacred books that miracles do not appear through the wish of the people, but by the will of God. If God followed the will of the people the order of the world would be destroyed, for the people are many and each one holds in his mind a wish different from the others. However, you may tell your friends that they may consult together and choose one miracle; if I perform this miracle, then they must all believe."

The emissary, rejoicing, returned to his colleagues. While they were considering Bahá'u'lláh's message one said, "If Bahá'u'lláh, through his unseen power should perform this miracle, then would we accept him, and become believers?" To this question they answered, No. So the matter of the miracle was dropped.

1863 Ridvan Garden

At last the enemies of the Cause secured from the government authorities an order banishing Bahá'u'lláh from Baghdád. It first read that he should go, alone. But later this was changed, permitting his family and a few followers to accompany him. The band of exiles left Baghdád and paused, first, in a beautiful garden outside the city. Here they sojourned for twelve days. A tent was pitched for Bahá'u'lláh, and around it the tents for the others. These days in the garden are called "The days of Ridván" and they are of supreme importance, for it was then that Bahá'u'lláh declared, to a few followers, his great mission and began to build the palace of peace and unity for the world. He revealed many wonderful verses which sing the melodies of the New Day of God.

When the twelve days were over, the party, mounted on horses and donkeys and guarded by Turkish soldiers, set out again. The believers who could not

accompany them were utterly broken-hearted. It was as though Bahá'u'lláh was a king starting upon a glorious journey. Outwardly, an exile - but in his spirit a great light was shining.

The desert of Asia Minor over which they had to travel in order to reach Constantinople is full of jagged mountains - a most inhospitable land whose vast reaches of wilderness are the hiding place of robbers and wild animals. Through the burning heat of this desert wilderness, in the hottest season of the year, Bahá'u'lláh and his party traveled for months. Only once along the way did they pause. The reason for this delay, a rest for the exiles of nine days, was this: they came upon a merchant who had been attacked by a band of robbers and his load of goods stolen. He appealed to the Turkish soldiers accompanying Bahá'u'lláh to help him; but they refused. Then he approached Bahá'u'lláh and besought him to intercede in his behalf. Bahá'u'lláh called the soldiers to him and told them to assist to their utmost this unfortunate man. So the guards were obliged to leave the party of exiles and to scour the country until they found the robbers, rescued the stolen goods and returned them to the merchant. When this was done Bahá'u'lláh was ready to continue the journey.

1863 Constantinople and Adrianople

After four months of travel through the desert the party reached the seaport town of Samsoun, where they went on board a ship and sailed along the Black Sea to the Bosphorus, finally arriving in Constantinople. Here they were met by government officials and the whole party quartered in one small house. Four months they stayed in Constantinople, and from this cosmopolitan center, the highway between Asia and Europe, the fame of Bahá'u'lláh spread like wildfire. Many prominent men visited him here, and left his presence marveling at the wisdom of his answers to their questions.

Seeing the power of his influence and how the Cause was spreading, the enemies in their jealousy decided to drive him from Constantinople. He was urged by several prominent men to write a letter to the Sultan of Turkey stating his case. But Bahá'u'lláh declined to do this, saying that he preferred to leave his affairs in the hands of God.

The enemies growing more and more afraid of his influence secured an order for his exile from Constantinople to Adrianople. in the extreme corner of European Turkey and a nine days' journey by carriage from Constantinople. Here Bahá'u'lláh and his party lived as exiles for five years, under the surveillance of the Turkish government. In Adrianople he wrote two wonderful Tablets, called the Tablet of Command and the Tablet of The City of Unity. In these Tablets he gives instructions for a united humanity and proclaims to the world his divine mission as the Manifestation of God and the Center around which all the names revolve and the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Scriptures. He also, at this time, wrote many other glorious epistles, each one a flame of light to inspire and illumine the believers. He wrote two Tablets, one in Persian and the other in Arabic, and called them both "The Tablet of

Ahmad." In the Arabic Tablet of Ahmad Bahá'u'lláh says: "Whosoever is sorrowful and disillusioned and disappointed let him read this Tablet; then joy and happiness will enter into his heart."

It was now very difficult for Bahá'u'lláh to communicate with his followers in other regions, due to the strict surveillance of the enemies. However, several of the believers managed to travel back and forth, bringing letters to Bahá'u'lláh and taking back his Tablets of instruction and encouragement. Inspired by his example and self-sacrifice the friends went forth to carry to the ends of the earth the message that the Promised One had come and the Day of Resurrection had dawned, the day of reconciliation and international unity.

1868 Akka

After five years in Adrianople his influence had become so great and his followers so numerous that the enemies of the Cause determined to banish him again, this time alone, and to some very remote place, sending his family and the other members of his party to a different city. When this heart-breaking news was brought to them the little party was panic stricken. They had forsaken every worldly possession and comfort in order to be near to Bahá'u'lláh and now they declared that they could not endure existence away from him.

Then officials stationed at Adrianople, and representing various European governments, came to Bahá'u'lláh and offered him their assistance, that he might go to one of the European countries and live in peace the remainder of his life, or that a protest might be made against his persecutors. But Bahá'u'lláh replied, "No. Reliance is in God, and not in any human power."

His family and the little band of devoted followers were finally allowed to remain with him, and all were exiled together to Gallipoli. Here they were met by an order countermanding the last one and commanding that he be separated from his party.

Bahá'u'lláh now manifested his spiritual authority. He wrote a mighty epistle, called the Tablet of Ra'is. Although this Tablet was written to the one who, according to earthly sovereignty had power of life and death over him, yet a person unacquainted with the facts would suppose it to be written by a King to his most submissive subject. In this Tablet Bahá'u'lláh speaks with power divine and rejects the command of separation from his family and followers. He also prophesies concerning the bloodshed which would occur in Adrianople.

The order commanding the separation of the party was rescinded and a steamship made ready to carry them all to Alexandria. Arriving there (in 1868), after a five days' journey, they re-embarked in a ship bound for Haifa, Palestine. Three more days at sea brought them to Haifa where, after one night's rest, they were put into small boats and taken to Acre, a distance of about nine miles.

The city of Acre is surrounded by high walls whose iron gates were closed at night. The streets were never cleaned. There was no water for drinking save

that filtered from the sea. These unsanitary conditions, added to a very bad climate, bred a disease from which many died. In fact, there was a saying that if a bird flew over Acre it would die. The barracks, where Bahá'u'lláh and his party were imprisoned, was the most unwholesome place in Acre. The dungeon-like rooms were rayless and damp, without windows, and swarming with vermin. The soldiers behind the iron gates who were given custody of the prisoners were the roughest of characters, and had government orders to shoot at sight any one of the prisoners who attempted to leave the prison. For some time after they were put into this prison they were given neither bread nor water, and the men, women and children were in a most pitiable condition. When they were finally given some bread it was such that they could hardly eat it. And the water allowed them made them all ill, some of the party dying from drinking it. The enemies of the Cause were sure that the exiles would all die within a few months, knowing that human beings cannot long survive such conditions. And one may imagine what this meant for Bahá'u'lláh and his family, who were of the nobility of Persia and had lived in great luxury. But their invincible faith and the confirmations of the Holy Spirit sustained them, and all through those dark and grievous months their hearts were filled with heavenly joy

After some time the restrictions were somewhat abated and two of the friends were permitted to go out, once a day, to the bazaars to purchase supplies. They went accompanied by soldiers who had orders to keep strict watch upon them and if they attempted to speak one word other than those needed to make their purchases to shoot them instantly.

Before Bahá'u'lláh arrived in Acre a wonderful thing happened. One of his followers decided to go there and open a shop. He had been in Acre for some time, and had had no news of his Master's fate, for the place to which Bahá'u'lláh was exiled was kept secret by the Turkish government. Then one day he encountered the two believers buying their supplies. They recognized each other in silent joy and happiness. Through this believer communication with the outside world was established. The physician who attended Bahá'u'lláh and his party when they all became ill through drinking the terrible water of Acre soon loved them very much, and he asked to be allowed to serve them. So, when he left the barracks he would carry with him Bahá'u'lláh's epistles and Tablets, to send them to his followers, and would receive their answers.

When the believers learned where Bahá'u'lláh was incarcerated many started out, on foot, across the mountains and the desert, in search of their Great Teacher. After journeying many months they would arrive outside Acre. As access to Bahá'u'lláh was impossible they would stand outside the city wall near the sea until Bahá'u'lláh came to the window of his prison room. After looking at him for a few moments they would turn about, their hearts singing with joy that they had seen their Beloved and been recognized by him.

During this imprisonment in the barracks Bahá'u'lláh revealed many wonderful books and Tablets which brought to the far-away friends supreme happiness. At

the end of the second year of their imprisonment a tragic event occurred. One of Bahá'u'lláh's sons, called the Purest Branch, a young man seventeen years of age, endowed with a character of superlative spiritual beauty, was one day walking on the roof of the prison. He served Bahá'u'lláh as his secretary and wrote down, at his dictation, his Tablets. As he walked up and down on the roof of the barracks chanting a beautiful prayer he made a misstep over the edge of the roof and fell to the floor below. He was picked up so badly injured that his life quickly ebbed away. Before he died Bahá'u'lláh asked him if he had any request to make. He replied, "My only supplication is that this suffering of mine and my death may be a sacrifice to the friends of God, through which the prison doors may be opened and a greater freedom of access may be given to Bahá'u'lláh."

When this request was made known to the officials their hearts were touched, and because of it and because, little by little, during those two years, they and the townspeople had begun to realize somewhat of the beauty of the lives of these exiles, their love and their unselfishness, the prison doors were opened and they were allowed to secure a small house in the town. Bahá'u'lláh was not permitted to leave the house, but the living conditions were better than those in the barracks. Seven long years he spent, within the four walls of that house, nor did he in all that time look upon a blade of grass or rushing water or hear the singing of the birds which he had loved in his native land. During these years 'Abdu'l-Bahá was a link between Bahá'u'lláh and the outside world. He went among the people, with the utmost kindness, telling them stories, imparting to them knowledge and wisdom. The religious leaders and the government officials learned to love 'Abdu'l-Bahá. So now and then he would take one of these prominent men to Bahá'u'lláh, whose mighty presence was so majestic, whose words were so luminous that many became believers and offered to render any service their positions permitted.

Finally, after nine years' close imprisonment, through the efforts of these influential men Bahá'u'lláh was granted permission to walk in the streets of Acre. Later he was allowed to leave the city and have a beautiful garden, called the Garden of Ridván, about two and a half miles outside of Acre. And finally he went to live in a house called the palace of Bahji, also outside of Acre. Here he lived until 1892, when he ascended into the spiritual world.

Bahá'u'lláh was sent by his enemies to Acre, Palestine, against his will, an exile and a prisoner. But through this very act of the enemies in banishing him to the Holy Land many wonderful and divine prophecies, of the Israelitish prophets and Muhammad were fulfilled; and many people, Christians, Jews and Muslims, came to see and to follow the new faith.

There is a prophecy in the Old Testament which says that in the Latter Day God will make the valley of Achor a door of hope to all nations [Hosea 2:15]. This prophecy could have no physical significance, for the small town of Acre, with its high walls and iron gate and its unfortunate inhabitants could never, of itself, become a door of hope for the people of all the earth. Therefore the prophecy must be interpreted spiritually, and means that from this dark spot

will arise a spiritual light which will shine into tile hearts of men, everywhere.

Acre is very damp and the place is infested with fleas. There is in the traditionsl a strange verse, which says, "Blessed is the man who is bitten by the fleas of Acre." Another verse states, "Happy is he who eats the onions of Acre," referring undoubtedly, to the unpleasant odors of the place. Outside Acre there is a well of stagnant, tepid water to which one descends by means of several steps. This well is called "ain o'lbagar" and Muhammad prophesied concerning it, saying how happy would be the man who tasted the water of "ain o'lbagar." It is impossible that these prophecies should have a literal fulfillment; therefore it is clear that the greatness of Acre will be spiritual.

1892 Spread of the Faith

From Acre the spiritual teachings of Bahá'u'lláh spread through the world. The enemies did their utmost to crush the light, but it became more and more brilliant. The friends arose everywhere to teach, and distribute the Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh. In many parts of Persia they were martyred, but this only united the hearts of the friends more firmly. The movement spread to India and grew apace in Turkey and Russia and certain parts of Europe.

In the wonderful Tablets and holy books which Bahá'u'lláh revealed in Acre one feels that the author is standing upon the highest mountain of the earth, looking down upon humanity with eyes of compassion and universal love, bidding all to climb the mountain and become characterized with the attributes of the sons of God. With one mighty blow Bahá'u'lláh destroyed the separating walls of tradition and dogma and invited all religions and races to realize that they are brothers and sisters and so to live as to attain the pinnacle of prosperity and success. In his writings we find the perfection of all divine religions, a new interpretation of the heavenly books which breaks the seals and establishes unity among the believers in all the world religions. He ushers in the age of the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, of divine justice, equality and peace among all the children of God.

Notes

1. The translator has put "Qur'an"

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