

The Báb in Shiraz

An Account by Mírzá Habíbu'lláh Afnán

Translated and Annotated by
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The Báb in Shiraz

An Account by Mírzá Habíbu'lláh Afnán

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Abstract

Síyyid 'Alí-Muhammad, known to history as the Báb, was born in 1819 in Shiraz and in 1844 declared himself the Promised One of Islam, thereby inaugurating a new religious movement in Iran. This is a translation of an important document written by Mírzá Habíbu'lláh Afnán – a relative of the Báb – comprising family recollections of the early days of the Báb. It relates the story of the early years of the Báb in Shiraz, Bushibr and Karbala, including his marriage, and leading up to the declaration of his mission in 1844. It then tells the story of the arrival of the Letters of the Living and the departure of the Báb for his pilgrimage to Mecca. It continues with events after his return from pilgrimage and the conversion of Síyyid Yahya Vahíd Dárábí, a leading cleric of the period, as well as recounting the persecution that the Báb suffered at the hands of the governor of Shiraz. Some of the details given in this account vary from those given in Nabíl's Narrative.²

In the 1920s in Iran, Mírzá Asadu'lláh Fádíl Mázandarání, a renowned scholar and capable historian, undertook a massive project to compose a documented history of the Bábí–Bahá'í religions, which he entitled *Tárikh Zubúru'l-Haqq* [The History of the Appearance of the True One]—an effort that was greatly encouraged by Shoghi Effendi, the

¹ The kindness of Abu'l-Qasim Afnan, who initially requested the translation of the two narratives by his father, Mirza Habib Afnan, and offered many valuable suggestions – some of which appear as footnotes under his name – in the course of translation, and of Professor Juan R. I. Cole, who generously shared a copy of the *Tárikh Amrí Fárs va Shíráz* manuscript, is warmly acknowledged.

² Nabíl [Zarandí], *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabíl's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahá'í Revelation* (trans. and ed. Shoghi Effendi, Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1970)

Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith.³ For his history, Mázandarání needed detailed accounts of events and occurrences during the first century of the Bahá'í Faith. With the aim of gathering such data and documentation, he and others traveled extensively throughout Iran and vicinity, combing through the Bahá'í community for available information, such as tablets, memoirs, letters, pictures, narratives, poems, historical sites, and family trees. However, Mázandarání recognized that he needed much more information, so he turned to Shoghi Effendi for assistance.

In the latter part of 1924, Shoghi Effendi began the process of recording the recollections of the Bahá'ís who had witnessed the early years of the Bábí and Bahá'í Movements. Knowing that these memoirs would have a profound effect on the understanding of future Bahá'ís about the genesis of their religion, Shoghi Effendi called for a systematic campaign to assemble such narratives. In the Haifa–‘Akká area, companions of Bahá'u'lláh such as Áqá Husayn Áshchí [broth-maker] and Áqá Abú'l-Qásim Bághbán [gardener] were interviewed for what they remembered of the formative days of the Bábí–Bahá'í Faiths. Sometimes, as in the case of Áshchí, such interviews happened literally on the person's deathbed.

During the next two decades, Shoghi Effendi wrote to the Bahá'ís of Iran urging them to prepare detailed histories of each local community, particularly those that had a significant Bahá'í presence from the earliest days. He further called upon individuals who had witnessed the unfolding of the Heroic Age (1844–1921) in the “Cradle of the Faith” (Iran) to record their experiences in writing.

In accordance with this request, the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Shíráz entrusted the task of writing a comprehensive history of the Bahá'í Faith in this central region to Mírzá Habíbu'lláh Afnán, the hereditary custodian of the House of the Báb in Shíráz, who readily obeyed and wrote of what he had witnessed and the remarkable stories

³ Shoghi Effendi himself also participated in this enterprise, first by producing an elegant edited translation of Nabíl Zarandí's history, *The Dawn-Breakers*, and later by writing two monumental analytical histories of the Bábí–Bahá'í Faiths, respectively entitled *God Passes By* and *Lawh-i Qarn* [Tablet of the Century].

that he had heard from those associated with the founding of the Bábí–Bahá’í Faiths. Mírzá Habíbu’lláh notes:

In accordance with the instructions of the Guardian of the Cause of God in his wondrous and blessed letter, which stated: “Each town must write a brief history of the Faith since the dawning of the Sun of Horizons,” the Spiritual Assembly [of Shíráz] entrusted this service to this unworthy servant, Hájí Mírzá Habíbu’lláh Afnán. Even though this ephemeral servant considers himself unprepared for this great enterprise, yet hopeful of the divine confirmations of the Beloved, has committed to paper to a prescribed degree what he has seen or heard from reliable observers, that the sanctified command of the Guardian be fulfilled.⁴

Fárs and Shíráz

The land of Fárs is a province that millennia earlier had given birth to two great dynasties—the Achaemenian in the sixth century BC and the Sassanian in the third century AD. These empires were administered by leaders of great insight and learning, and engendered cultivated societies, formidable armies, great visions for humanity, and just rulers whose achievements were legendary and unprecedented. Indeed, the brilliance of their triumphs was so dazzling that the name of the region was extended to the entire country, and Persia—from *Persis*, the Greek form of *Fárs*—was born.⁵ Therefore, for Persians the name *Fárs* evokes a deep sense of pride and heritage. It calls to mind the past splendors associated with that cradle of civilization, when wise rulers from their seat in Persepolis wielded authority over a kingdom that extended from North Africa to China—kings who governed with such liberty and equity that the authors of the Old Testament were prompted to speak most glowingly of their benevolence.

⁴ Afnán, *Tárikh Amrí Fárs va Shíráz*, p. 1.

⁵ *Fárs* is the Arabicized version of *Párs*. *Persia* and *Persian* both derive from *Persis*, the Hellenized form of the root word *Párs*. The Old Persian word was *Pársá*.

The language of the nation, Fársí—the language of Fárs—descends lineally from the language that Cyrus and Darius spoke and is the language in which the proclamations were engraved by their command on the rock-tablets of B́i-sitún and Naqsh Rústam, and upon the walls and columns of Persepolis. This language stirs a profound sense of spirituality and refinement derived from the poetry of Háfiz, voice of the invisible and the master of Persian lyrical poetry, and Sa‘dí, the sweet-tongued poet and the author of the famous *Gulistán*, a book of sonnets called the *Garden of Roses*. No other Iranian writers to this day enjoy—not only in their own country but also wherever their language is cultivated—a wider celebrity or a greater reputation than these two poets of Sh́iráz. Indeed, for Iranians, there is no Persian language more elevated than that which they have learned from Háfiz and Sa‘dí, and deep in their collective consciousness the legacy of these two towering literary giants of Sh́iráz pervades modern Iranian culture.⁶

Beyond the circle of Iranians, the Bahá’í world community will forever associate the name of Sh́iráz with the opening chapter of its own history, for it was in Sh́iráz that the initial emanation of the divine revelation for this religion broke forth from the merchant-Prophet of that city. The Báb, He Who is acclaimed as the “Point round Whom the realities of the Prophets and Messengers revolve,”⁷ Who styled Himself “the Primal Point from which have been generated all created things...the Countenance of God Whose splendor can never be obscured, the Light of God Whose radiance can never fade,”⁸ arose meteor-like over the horizon of Sh́iráz.

In regard to this city, Bahá’u’lláh has written:

Sanctified be God! The All-Glorious Providence has decreed for the land of Sh[íráz] to be the dawning-place of light and fire. That is, before God, the appearance of these two attributes is most prominent and most evident in that realm. And this is because the fire of

⁶ Those interested in a more detailed discussion of the general history of Fárs and Sh́iráz should consult appendix 7 and the sources cited there.

⁷ Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 3.

⁸ The Báb, *Sections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 11.

opposition broke forth brightly in that city before it appeared in all other lands.⁹

Mírzá Habíbu'lláh Afnán

It was in the House of the Báb in Shíráz that Mírzá Habíbu'lláh Afnán (1875–1951) was born and then reared by none other than Khadíjih Bagum, the widow of the Báb. The stories that he heard from her were the bittersweet stories of the Báb and the deeply devoted disciples who circled around the Báb in Shíráz. Khadíjih Bagum had a particular affinity towards the young lad's father, Áqá Mírzá Áqá Núri'd-Dín, who, at a time when tribulations had most fiercely beset Khadíjih Bagum, was promised by the Báb to be the family member who would arise for her protection and support, and who had done just that. This immense love of Khadíjih Bagum likewise readily embraced Núri'd-Dín's children, and Mírzá Habíbu'lláh basked in the brilliance of her attention and affection.

In 1891–92 at the age of 16, Mírzá Habíbu'lláh was fortunate to be able to accompany his family to the Holy Land, where he spent some nine months in the immediate proximity of Bahá'u'lláh in the Mansion of Bahjí. Subsequently, from Egypt he remained in constant communication for the next decade with 'Abdu'l-Bahá and periodically visited Him in 'Akká, where as a trusted Afnán he was privy to some of the heart-wrenching scenes of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ministry and granted a glimpse into the most private inner workings of the Bahá'í Faith—he witnessed the disloyalty of the half-brothers of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, their corrupt ways, the consequent anguish of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's efforts to conceal their perversion and their violation of laws, and the means by which this sad news was transmitted to the Bahá'í community.

At the turn of the century, in 1902, 'Abdu'l-Bahá wished for Núri'd-Dín and his family, including his son, Mírzá Habíbu'lláh, to return to Shíráz to rebuild the House of the Báb, which had fallen into disrepair. Shortly before the completion of this reconstruction, Núri'd-Dín passed away, and it fell to Mírzá Habíbu'lláh to complete the

⁹ *Light* is a reference to the Declaration of the Báb in Shíráz. Original Tablet in *Núri'd-Dín Collection*, no. 144, dated 1 Rajab, AH 1307 [21 February 1890].

construction and to become the custodian of that sacred edifice. This was the hallmark service of his life, as for the next half-century he served with great distinction as the hereditary custodian of the House of the Báb in Shíráz. Consequently, he stood uniquely qualified to tell the story of the Bábí and Bahá'í Movements in Shíráz as well as to recount his recollections of the days of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the Holy Land.

Narratives of Mírzá Habíbu'lláh Afnán

Mírzá Habíbu'lláh wrote two lengthy documents. The date of composition of the first narrative, entitled *Tárikh Amrí Fárs va Shíráz*, is not known with any degree of precision, although it has been estimated to be in the 1920s or possibly in the early- to mid-1930s. The original version was handwritten by Mírzá Habíbu'lláh, and the final draft was written by Mírzá Abú'l-Hasan Ansif Nayrízí. This final copy was edited by the author, whose handwritten remarks are evident along various margins and lines throughout the manuscript; this is the version used for translation purposes.

Of this first narrative, unquestionably the most valuable portions are those on the life of the Báb in Shíráz, a city acclaimed by the young Prophet as the *baladu'l-amn*, “the land of refuge.”¹⁰ Mírzá Habíbu'lláh did not wish to write a comprehensive history of the Báb's life, since he knew full well that others had already attempted such an undertaking—men like Nabíl Zarandí, surnamed Nabíl A'zam, who was well known to Mírzá Habíbu'lláh. Rather, his objective was to tell stories of the Báb's sublime life that were current among the Báb's immediate family in Shíráz, particularly reminiscences he had heard from Khadíjih Bagum.¹¹

¹⁰ INBMC (Iranian National Bahá'í Manuscript Collection) 91:6–10, no. 3, and 91:13–14, no. 4. In chapter 55 of *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'*, the Báb refers to Himself as the Gate of the land of refuge (*Báb-i baladu'l-amn*). Verse 35 of the chapter “Pillar” (*rukn*) of the same book refers to Shíráz as the *baladu'l-amn*.

¹¹ Those not fully familiar with the story of the Báb may find it helpful while reading this history to refer to Nabíl's history, presented in an edited version in *The Dawn-Breakers*, and to Hasan Balyúzi's biography, *The Báb*. These volumes describe many of the persons and incidents mentioned in this narrative, but depict them in a wider

The second narrative, entitled *Khátirát Hayát*, is the account of Mírzá Habíbu'lláh's pilgrimages to the Holy Land and his decade-long stay in Egypt. The exact date of the composition of this autobiography is unknown, but the author's sons, Abú'l-Qásim and Hasan Afnán, indicate that it was first composed shortly after Mírzá Habíbu'lláh's return to Iran.¹² Based upon the evidence in the narrative and family records, it is known that these notes were recopied and reorganized in the mid-1940s.¹³ Of this narrative, the most important part is the author's recollection of being near Bahá'u'lláh from the middle of July 1891 until shortly after Naw-Rúz 1892, that is, a little more than two months prior to the passing of Bahá'u'lláh. The remaining portions are singularly important, as they clarify many aspects of the first decade of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ministry when the opposition of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's half-brothers was at its height.¹⁴

Mírzá Habíbu'lláh was a well-educated man. He attended the same school that the Báb had attended and received tuition from one of the city's ablest educators. Bahá'u'lláh arranged for him to study with His own sons in the Mansion of Bahjí. Subsequently, he spent many years receiving daily instructions from the celebrated Mírzá Abu'l-Fadl Gulpáygání, one of the most erudite Bahá'ís of his generation. Therefore, the style of his composition is very learned and represents an important literary achievement in its own right. It is hoped that in due course the original Persian of these two narratives will also be published so that students of history will become better acquainted with his elegant style of composition.¹⁵

context. For an academic treatment of the same subject, see Abbas Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*.

¹² Private communications, summer 1985.

¹³ For example, Mírzá Habíbu'lláh notes that fifty-five years had elapsed since the spring of 1892 when he had met Tarazu'llah Samandari in the Holy Land, and assuming these years are reckoned in accordance with the lunar calendars, this then places the date of recomposition around 1945–46.

¹⁴ An annotated rendering by the present translator is published under the title, *Memories of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá* at: <http://ahang.rabbani.googlepages.com/>

¹⁵ The original text of *Tárikh Amrí Fárs va Shíráz* has been published electronically; see <<http://www.h-net.org/~bahai/arabic/vol4/shiraz/shiraz.htm>>.

Notes on the Present Translation

What is offered in this monograph represents merely a rendering of the first 115 pages of *Tárikh Amrī Fars va Shiraz*, where the story of the Báb is told.¹⁶ In the course of this translation, every effort has been exerted to stay as close to the original document as possible, to the degree that a literal rendering has often been preferred to a more stylistic one. Footnotes have been added to augment information, clarify obscure points, and provide a more detailed perspective. Occasionally, comments by the translator have been added to improve the clarity or continuity of the material. These comments are enclosed in square brackets, thus [...]. All comments within parentheses are by the author, Mírzá Habíbu'lláh. The system of transliteration used in this monograph is consistent with the method used in other academic publications and varies from the system used in most Bahá'í publications by: (1) avoiding subdots and underlines (e.g., Fádil), and (2) dropping the *izafih* connecting the first name to the surname (e.g., Husayn-‘Alí Núrí, instead of Husayn-‘Alí-i-Núrí). The page numbers of the original manuscript are indicated in square brackets, such as [p. 10], every five pages.

Since any single Islamic year (denoted AH) typically overlaps with two Christian years, where only the Islamic year of the event is known, the equivalent Gregorian date is given as the first of the two years partially covered by that Islamic year.

Typically, the original text refers to the Central Figures by such honorific titles as “His Holiness” or “His blessed Person,” and these honorifics have been omitted for the most part. Nor does the translation reproduce such expressions commonly used in the Iranian literature of the Bahá'í Faith as, “May my life be a sacrifice unto His Sacred Threshold.” Many key individuals are often referred to by titles, such as His Holiness the Exalted One, a reference to the Báb; or the Blessed

¹⁶ A translation of the complete text has been prepared by the present translator and approved by the Baha'i World Centre for publication. It is scheduled for publication in 2008.

Perfection or the Blessed Beauty, expressions used for Bahá'u'lláh; or “the exalted wife,” a term used to refer to Khadíjih Bagum, the widow of the Báb. These titles have been replaced with their more recognizable names, the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, or Khadíjih Bagum.

By the time Mírzá Habíbu'lláh wrote his narrative, many principal personalities featured in this history had died, and the original text therefore often refers to them as “the late” or “the deceased.” These terms, too, have largely been omitted.

Some details of the events recorded in Mírzá Habíbu'lláh's chronicle differ from those found in *Nabíl's Narrative*, the standard history of these events. However, given that the chronicle represents an oral tradition within the family of the Báb, it has its own importance and must form part of the analysis of historians. It should be emphasized that the spoken words attributed to the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, and ‘Abdu'l-Bahá in these pages cannot be ascribed with scriptural authority or equated with their authorized Writings. No one took notes at the time those words were uttered, although it cannot be ruled out that some may indeed be the very words spoken.

First Portion of *Táríkh Amrí Fars va Shiraz*

The Beginning of the History

[p. 2:1] The names of the paternal and maternal ancestors of the Báb are as follows:

The blessed name of the Báb was Áqá Mírzá ‘Alí-Muhammad,¹⁷ son of Mír[zá] Muhammad-Ridá, the son of Áqá Mír[zá] Nasru’lláh, the son of Áqá Mír[zá] Fathu’lláh, the son of Áqá Mír[zá] Ibráhím.¹⁸ He was born into a highly regarded family of Husayní Siyyids¹⁹ to whose nobility, integrity, trustworthiness, piety, devotion, and detachment everyone in the province of Fárs would testify. Merchants by profession, they were all considered exemplary in integrity and purity in the entire region of Fárs. The mother of the Báb was Fátimih Bagum, the daughter of Hájí Mírzá Muhammad-Husayn, who was the son of Áqá Mírzá ‘Abid,²⁰ the son of Áqá Mírzá Siyyid Muhammad. This family also ranked among the renowned and trustworthy merchants of Fárs.

Early Years

His blessed birth took place on the first night of Muharram AH 1235 [20 October 1819], in the house belonging to His mother’s paternal uncle,

¹⁷ In the *Qayyúmu’l-Asmá’*, Surih al-Qarabih [kinsmen], verse 14, the Báb reveals:

Verily, We have named this Remembrance by two Names from the divine Self, after two Beloved Ones among Our servants in the heavens.

¹⁸ The Báb gives a slightly different genealogy in *Sabíh Baynu’l-Haramayn* (The Treatise Between the Two Shrines): “Say: My name is Muhammad after the word ‘Alí [i.e., ‘Alí-Muhammad]. And the name of My father, as hath been revealed in the Book of God, is Ridá after Muhammad. And the name of My grandfather in the Book of God is Ibráhím [Abraham], and his father is named Nasru’lláh as has been revealed in the Qur’án (Fathu’lláh)” (Browne Or. MSS F.7[9]). The final statement is a reference to Qur’án 61:13: “And another [favor will He bestow], which ye do love—help from God [Nasru’lláh] or a speedy victory [Fathu’lláh]; so give the glad tidings to the believers.” The same genealogy is given in the *Qayyúmu’l-Asmá’*, Surih al-Qaribih, verses 14–15.

¹⁹ That is, this family traced its ancestry to Imám Husayn.

²⁰ Fayzí, *Hadrat Nuqtih Ula*, p. 64, gives his name as Zaynu’l-‘Abidín.

Áqá Mírzá ‘Alí.²¹ The oft- recounted utterances of that exalted lady, the mother of the Báb, were along these lines:

From the moment of birth, it was evident that, unlike other children, He was not rapacious in drinking milk. Normally, He was serene and made no noise. During the twenty-four-hour period, He would desire milk only four times. While nursing he would be most gentle, and no movement was discerned from His mouth. Often I would become anxious and ask myself, “Why is this Child not like other children? Perhaps He has some illness that prevents His desiring milk.” Then I would console myself, saying, “If He really had some unknown illness, He would manifest signs of agitation and restlessness.”

Unlike other children, He did not complain or behave in an unseemly manner during the weaning period. I was most thankful that now that the Exalted Lord had granted me this one Child, He was gentle and agreeable.

Moreover, according to what trustworthy persons have reported, it was evident from the beginning of His childhood that He had an extraordinary character that excited the wonder and amazement of all, whether relatives, friends, or strangers, for He [p. 5] was unlike any other child.

Schooling

²¹ The Báb provides the date of His birth in the *Sahifih Baynu’l-Haramayn*: “Say O denizens of the Concourse! Hear the command of the Remnant of God from this Servant, the Exalted, the Wise. And this Servant was born, as hath been concealed in the Book of God, on the first day of Muharram of the year twelve hundred and thirty-five.” Also, the same date can be computed precisely from His age given in His personal diary appended to the Azali publication of the *Kitáb Panj Sha’n* (the Book of Five Modes). Other references to His age are to be found in the Persian *Bayán* 2:1 and 4:11, and the *Dala’il Sab‘a* (the Seven Proofs).

According to Mullá Fathu'lláh Maktab-Dár [the school-master], son of Mullá Mand-‘Alí, when His blessed age had reached five years old,²² He was taken to the [quranic school of] Shaykh ‘Abid,²³ known as Shaykh Anám,²⁴ located in Qahviyih Awlíyá,²⁵ one of the mystic convents occupied by the mystics of Fárs, on the Tayr marketplace,²⁶ near the house of His maternal grandfather, and His respected maternal uncle. Mullá Fathu'lláh Maktab-Dár, son of Mullá Mand-‘Alí, was the custodian of the Masjid Vakíl.²⁷ Like his father, he was one of the early believers [in the Báb] and, because of the persecutions and harassment, became a fugitive and forced to travel extensively.²⁸ He related:

When they brought His Holiness to the maktab [quranic school], I worked for Shaykh Anám in the Qahviyih Awlíyá, which is one of the mystic convents in the old

²² In Persian, when someone’s age is reported as, say, five years of age, it means they are in their fifth year of life. In English, during the whole of the fifth year of life, a child is said to be four years old. In general, whenever age is given in Bahá’í histories translated from the Persian, it is necessary to subtract one to get the age in the English manner of reckoning. However, in the present translation, everywhere an age is provided, the original Persian reckoning is given.

²³ His given name was Shaykh Muhammad (d. AH 1263/AD 1847), and he is also known as Shaykh Zaynu’l-‘Abidín or Shaykh Mu‘allim. The Báb mentioned him in the Arabic *Bayán* 6:11, “Say: O Muhammad, My teacher! Do not beat Me ere My years have gone beyond five.”

²⁴ A variation of the same name, Shaykhuná, is employed in Nabíl A‘zam, *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 75.

²⁵ Named after a certain Sufi saint, Dervish Awlíyá (d. AH 1119/AD 1707), this convent is occupied by the dervishes and Sufis. Located in the Bazaar Murgh, it is situated near the house of the Báb’s maternal uncle, Hájí Mírzá Siyyid ‘Alí, and over the years it has decayed so thoroughly that no trace of it is now evident.

²⁶ Known also as the Bazaar Murgh [poultry market] quarter, this is one of the most prosperous and religiously significant quarters of the city and one of the five Haydarí wards of Shíráz. For further details, see Fasá‘í, *Fársnámih Násirí*, vol. 2, pp. 27–47.

²⁷ Masjid Vakíl was the largest and most important of Shíráz’s mosques.

²⁸ Mullá Fathu'lláh and his father converted on the day the Báb proclaimed His Call in the aforementioned mosque. Both were among the martyrs at Shaykh Tabarsí, and therefore his recollection of the Báb must have been conveyed to the Afnán family at an early time.

neighborhood of Shíráz,²⁹ where the school had several rooms with a circular portico around them. The honored Shaykh ‘Abid, a man of many qualities, was the schoolmaster and taught the children of the noblemen, the affluent, the merchants, and other distinguished citizens. He was a tall, ever-dignified man with a long beard. A follower of the late Shaykh Ahmad Ahsá’í and Siyyid Kázim Rashtí, he ranked among the leading figures and divines of Shíráz.

At that time, I served the Shaykh as the khalifih (that is, the [school’s] principal). Those wishing for their youngster to receive tuition from him, had to come beforehand and meet with him in person. They would ask the Shaykh for a place either through a letter or through a distinguished intermediary. This was because the Shaykh did not accept the children of just anyone and was particularly reluctant to accept lads from the bazaarí shopkeepers, because of their ill manners and dirty clothing.

Description of His Condition During Childhood

In any event, one morning, I saw the honored Áqá Mírzá Muhammad-Ridá,³⁰ who had been a friend of Shaykh Anám in the past, come to the Qahviyah [Awliyá]. He sat next to the Shaykh and described his situation as follows:

“After forty years, the Exalted Lord has graced me with a Child who has caused me to wonder over His behavior.” The Shaykh asked him to explain further, but he only replied, “It is hard to say.” [The Shaykh] insisted, to which [the father] offered:

²⁹ Mírzá Habíbu’lláh adds parenthetically, “And the center of this convent was inhabited, surrounded by ruins and evidence of old graves and gravestones.”

³⁰ A.Q. Afnán has said that on that occasion, Hájí Mírzá Siyyid ‘Alí, the Báb’s maternal uncle, went to the school (private communication, August 1993).

“O venerable Shaykh! Which of His amazing conditions should I recount? Such peculiar characteristics are manifest in Him that the people are astonished. Now, when He is five years old, He sometimes raises His hands to the threshold of the One God, and recites prayers. He wakes in the middle of the night³¹ and stands to offer His obligatory prayers, in the midst of which He weeps. Sometimes He is sad, on other occasions He is happy, or immersed in rapture, or preoccupied with the imaginary world. My astonishment and bewilderment prevents me from describing further. Were I to recount all that I have observed from the time of His birth until the present, it would make a thick book.”

“At such a [young] age, He tells whether an unborn child is a boy or a girl, for the whole clan. After the birth, it is as He foretold.

“And again, some time ago, together with His maternal uncle, the esteemed Hájí Mírzá Siyyid ‘Alí, we were at the bathhouse of Bazaar Murgh quarter.³² This Child was sleeping between His uncle and me, when suddenly He rose and stated, ‘The vaulted roof of the Garm-Kháníh [steam chamber] of Mírzá Hádí’s bathhouse, which was for women, has just caved in, and five women and one child have been [killed] under the rubble.’ His uncle said to Him, ‘Áqá, please sleep and refrain from saying such things. What manner of talk is this!’ He responded, ‘It is as I said.’ It was not long after that we heard a tumult of voice from the direction of the bathhouse, saying that Mírzá Hádí’s bathhouse was wrecked and a number of women were under the rubble.

³¹ This suggests that the Báb woke before dawn to offer His first morning prayer and, unlike most others, was not combining the first and the second Muslim obligatory prayer.

³² A.Q. Afnán suggests that only the Báb and His maternal uncle, Hájí Mírzá Siyyid ‘Alí, were present on that occasion (private communication, August 1993).

One person said twenty women [were killed]; another said thirty or forty; but later it was determined that five women and a child had been killed. The truth was just as He had said.

“In another instance, a while ago He informed us, ‘Last night, I dreamt that a large balance was suspended in mid-air in a [p. 10] vast space. Imám Ja‘far Sádiq was seated on one of the plates, and, because of His weight, that plate was resting on the ground while the other plate was suspended in the air. An invisible person lifted Me and placed Me on the empty plate. My plate was now heavier than the other, and I came to the ground and the first dish rose into the air.’ I said to Him, ‘Alas, Child, how bizarre! Do not talk like that.’

“What should I say! There are so many astonishing stories about Him that I cannot tell. At one time, Áqá Mírzá Siyyid Hasan³³ suggested that this Child might be under the spell of jinn or fairies, and he said that we should take Him to those knowledgeable in such matters and request protective prayers for Him. Even though I do not believe that such things are true and trustworthy, in the light of his [Siyyid Hasan’s] comment I brought Áqá Muhammad-Hasan, the Munajjim [astrologer], to the house and described for him the details. He made some calculations and said, ‘He is protected from the malevolence of jinn and fairies, and he has not suffered any harm from sprites.’ Then he asked for His birthdate. Thereupon, he wrote certain protective charms and prayers and gave them [to us], recited some mysterious verses and, having learned of His birthdate, he left. After the departure of Áqá Muhammad-Hasan, the Child tore up the talismans, the writings he had left, and the sheet of instructions he had given [us], and tossed them out,

³³ The Afnán Kabír of later years, brother-in-law of the Báb.

saying to me, ‘In the words of the mystic: You make a great show of assistance, but I am that assistance.’³⁴

“In short, for some time I have been consumed with the difficulties of this Child, and I do not know which of His conditions I should describe to you. It is now time for His education and training, and I wish Him to receive His tuition and religious training from you.”

I was most astounded by the descriptions of the venerable Mírzá [Muhammad-Ridá], and the Shaykh was astonished as well. It was decided that at an agreeable time on [the following] Thursday morning the Child would be brought to the school.

On the promised morning, the Child arrived followed by a servant³⁵ carrying a small [copper-tray] filled with sweets and a student’s version of the Qur’án, which is customary for the new pupil to read from in the schools in Shíráz.

Because of Áqá Mírzá Muhammad-Ridá’s descriptions of Him, the Shaykh, several of the students who had reached the age of maturity, and I were thoroughly enthralled in watching Him. He came in, greeted [everyone], and sat before Shaykh Anám. Soon after, His maternal uncle, Hájí Mírzá Siyyid ‘Alí, arrived as well and sat next to the Shaykh. After the exchange of formal pleasantries, the Shaykh took the Qur’án from the tray of sweetmeats, opened it, and said [to the young Pupil], “Come Áqá, read.” He smiled and said, “As you please.” As was customary, the Shaykh told Him to read, “He is the Deliverer, the All-Knowing.”³⁶ His Holiness remained silent. The Shaykh repeated the verse, but He kept His silence. The Shaykh persisted. He [the Báb]

³⁴ An alternative reading of this poem is, You bring forth a prayer, and I am that Prayer.

³⁵ In the original, *ghulám* implies a slave or indentured servant.

³⁶ Qur’án 34:25.

asked, “Who is ‘He’. Can you explain?” The Shaykh responded, “‘He’ is God. You are still a child, and what concern of Yours is the meaning of ‘He’?” The Pupil responded, “I am the Deliverer, the All-Knowing!” The Shaykh was deeply enraged and picked up his stick and said to Him, “Do not utter such things here!” His Holiness commenced reading, and His maternal uncle smiled and ordered certain arrangements and then left.³⁷

The late Áqá Muhammad Ibráhím Ismá‘íl Beg, who was a well-known, trusted, and respected merchant, related:

I was twelve years old at that time, and on that day Siyyid-i Báb came and sat between me and Áqá Mírzá Muhammad-Ridá Mustawfí who was about the same age as I. In fact, He [the Báb] kneeled, in a refined way. His head was bowed over the student Qur’án, but He did not read a word, so I asked, “Why are You not reading the lesson [aloud] like the other children?” He made no reply; however, two other lads sitting near us [p. 15] were heard reading poems from Háfiz aloud, and they came to this verse:

From Heaven’s heights the birdsong calls to you
in sorrow that you’re trapped in walls of clay.

He turned quickly to me and said, “That is your answer.” I replied, “Well done.”³⁸

Similarly, it is related:

³⁷ Nabíl A‘zam, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 75–76, tells a similar story, though considerably different in details.

³⁸ Brief recollections from Áqá Muhammad Ibráhím have previously appeared in Balyúzí, *The Báb*, pp. 34–35.

Since Shaykh Anám was a learned man and a follower of Shaykh Ahmad [Ahsá'í], each morning he conducted a seminary session in Qahviyih Awlíyá where several of his [theological] students would gather to engage him in discussions and debates. One day a scientific topic was being discussed, and after considerable debate it remained unresolved, since it was particularly complex. The venerable Shaykh stated, “Tonight I will study the [authoritative] books on this topic, and tomorrow we will discuss the matter again and solve it completely.” At this point, the exchange was concluded.

Suddenly the young Pupil [who had been listening] raised His blessed head and with sound reasoning, irrefutable proof, and scientific evidence, propounded the answer they sought and removed all complexities. They were wonder-struck and amazed. The [seminarian] students informed the Shaykh that they had no recollection of ever having discussed that topic so that this Child could have memorized it like a parrot and now repeat it for them. They expressed their bewilderment, and the Shaykh responded that he too was filled with awe. Full of amazement, he asked Him where He had gained this knowledge. The Pupil smiled and offered this couplet from Háfiz:

Should the Holy Spirit’s grace again assist,
Others too will do what Christ has done.³⁹

In all events, during those tender years, many such manifestations of extraordinary and innate qualities were observed in Him and are testified to by both friends and foes, and are beyond my abilities to describe.⁴⁰

³⁹ See Balyúzi, *The Báb*, p. 35. For similar childhood stories of the Báb, see Nabíl A‘zam, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 75–76.

⁴⁰ The Báb in the *Qayyúmu’l-Asmá’*, Surih al-Sina, verse 5, addressing Himself states, “And We favored Thee during Thy Childhood with the mighty Cause of God, as it had been decreed as such in the Mother Book.” In the same Book, Surih al-Ism,

His father, Áqá Mír[zá] Muhammad-Ridá, passed away when the Báb was only nine years old,⁴¹ and from then on He was reared in the bosom of His maternal uncle, Hájí Mírzá Siyyid ‘Alí. This uncle had witnessed such remarkable and astonishing feats by Him with his own eyes, that when He declared His Cause, without requiring any proof or evidence, Hájí Mírzá Siyyid ‘Alí readily and unhesitatingly accepted His claim and became a believer. He sacrificed his life and possessions in the path of the Beloved of the world.

The Testimony of the Khál A‘zam

My paternal grandmother, [Zahrá Bagum], who was a paternal cousin of the Báb’s mother, related that she had personally heard the uncle [Hájí Mírzá Siyyid ‘Alí] discussing [the claim of the Báb] with his younger brother, Hájí Mírzá Hasan-‘Alí, and the latter was resisting the argument saying, “Brother, what religious principles are these that you have turned to now? You have departed from our ancestral religion and follow our Nephew!” The eminent, martyred-uncle responded, “You should know well that God Most High has fulfilled the proof before me. After what I saw with my own eyes in His childhood and what I know with complete confidence about him since His adulthood, there is no room for doubt for anyone, especially for me.”

He then continued:

Have you forgotten our journey to Sabz-Púshán⁴² when He was a child aged nine years old? There was a group of us,

verse 34, the Báb proclaims, “Verily, as a child I was aware of the truth of My own Self, and God is the Almighty, the All-knowing.”

⁴¹ In the *Qayyúmu’l-Asmá’*, Surih al-Jihad, verse 39, the Báb states, “O My God, My Lord! Verily, in accordance with Thy will, My father passed away, and I do not remember Him. My Master, when he is seated with the heavenly angels, inform him of My Cause and record him in this Mighty Book.”

⁴² Mírzá Habíbu’lláh added parenthetically, “Located in the mountains south of Shíráz, the shrine of Sabz-Púshán is about twelve kilometers from the city. The route to that place is most difficult, and even strong individuals are exhausted by the journey. People often visit that spot in the summer.”

and He came along as well. When we arrived, being completely exhausted, we performed our ablutions, offered our late afternoon and the evening obligatory prayers, [p. 20] paid our homage of visitation, ate dinner, and went to bed. It was not long after, at midnight, that I awoke and noticed that He was not in bed. Deeply perturbed, I was overtaken with anxiety that perhaps He had fallen from the mountain. Finally, after searching extensively, I heard a voice raised in the obligatory prayer and prayers of glorification to the Lord, coming from the lower extremities [of the mountain]. When I followed the melody of that chant, I found the Child, standing alone and in private, in consummate rapture voicing prayers and supplications to the One Who transcends all mention, on the deserted mountainside and at that late hour of the night. My beloved brother, I ask: After observing such things, is there any room for doubt? With a knowledge born of certainty, with truth that stands most manifest, and with my own unimpeachable observations, it is thoroughly evident that the Promised One whom we had anticipated has now appeared after twelve hundred and sixty years. The proof has been completed. Whosoever denies these revealed verses, each page of which stands equal to the whole of the Qur'án, must surely be among the most inequitable.

In short, our grandmother often spoke to us on this theme.

Commerce

When the Báb had reached the age of fifteen, He joined the commercial office of His uncle, [Hájí Mírzá Siyyid 'Alí], in Shíráz.⁴³ He remained for

⁴³ A.Q. Afnán suggests that based on extensive family correspondence examined by him, the Báb began to work in His uncle's office at the age of ten, and it was at the age of fifteen—the age of maturity in Islamic law—that He moved to Búshíhr (private communications, August 1992). The same information is provided by the Báb Himself in the *Kitáb Fihrist*, “After My childhood had passed, by the will of God, I began the

a short while in Shíráz and then moved to the port city of Búshihhr. In that city, His office was in the Mínandí caravansary. Although it was before the declaration of His Cause, the many signs and evidences of His sanctity and the wondrous verses that flowed from His blessed pen would attract the envy and the jealousy of men of learning.⁴⁴

One day in Egypt during the time when the illustrious Abú'l-Fadl was occupied with writing the *Kitáb-i Fará'id*, we came to talk about the early years of the Báb prior to His declaration and the period when He was engaged in trading. Mírzá Abú'l-Fadl related the following to me:

I myself heard Hájí Siyyid Javád known as Karbalá'í relate that

when His Holiness [the Báb] was active as a merchant in Búshihhr, because of my friendship and close association with His maternal uncles, I used to stay with them whenever I visited either Shíráz or Búshihhr. One day Hájí Mírzá Siyyid Muhammad, a maternal uncle [of the Báb], came to me with a request, "Give some good counsel to my Nephew. Tell Him not to write or speak about certain studies that can only provoke the jealousy of certain people. These people cannot tolerate seeing a young merchant of little schooling demonstrate such scientific erudition and therefore become envious and resentful." He was very insistent that I should counsel Him [to desist from such activities], but in the end I replied with this verse:

The luster of the fair of face cannot be veiled,
Shut him in and out of eyelet will he show his
visage.

occupation of commerce as this was decreed by God, and I commenced this from the age of ten."

⁴⁴ Nicolas, *Seyyed Ali Mohammad dit le Bab*, p. 189, n. 131, on the authority of Hájí Mírzá Jání of Kashan, whom Nicolas assumed to be the author of the *Kitáb-i Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*, suggests that at the age of eighteen the Báb revealed *Risálib Fiqihyyih*.

and added: “We are earthbound and He is celestial. Our counsel is no use to Him.”⁴⁵

In Búshihir He engaged in commerce for six years⁴⁶ and associated with all strata of society, including the ‘ulamá, the merchants, and the shopkeepers, and dealt with all in such wise that they were very satisfied and grateful in every respect. In every gathering and assembly, men praised His splendid qualities.

During one of my journeys to the sacred presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, He spoke one day about the time the Báb stayed [in Búshihir] and of his commercial activities. He stated:

During His stay in Búshihir, the Báb achieved extraordinary things and thoroughly demolished the foundation of people’s corrupt practices. The merchants of Búshihir had a custom that after a deal had been concluded they would renege and barter to receive a considerable discount. Some of them came to His Holiness, negotiated purchase of indigo dye, and bought a very large quantity. After they had sealed the bargain and moved the lots of indigo to their own office, they returned to renege and bargain. His Holiness did not accept and said, “You made a bargain, [p. 25] signed papers, and the transaction has been completed. I will not give a discount and will not renegotiate.” They insisted. He replied, “What I said is final.” They pleaded, “It is the custom of the country.” He responded, “Many of these customs are wrong and will soon be abolished.” No matter how much they insisted, He would not agree. The merchants were obstinate, and at last He said, “[If] the price is high, return the merchandise as I will not barter.” They insisted, “It is the custom here.” He replied, “I wish to put

⁴⁵ A similar translation appears in Balyúzi, *The Báb*, pp. 39–40.

⁴⁶ The Báb indicates He was in Búshihir for five years; see *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, pp. 180–81.

an end to this custom.” They insisted, “If a merchant has bought commodities and moved them to his warehouse, and then returns them, he will forfeit his standing with merchants.” “It is your choice,” He told them, “accept the terms and refrain from re-negotiation.” Again they insisted, “But this is the custom of the realm.” Yet again, He reminded them, “I am ending this custom.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá continued relating:

Eventually, He [the Báb] ordered the merchandise brought back to His shop and did not yield to their efforts at bargaining. He changed many of their unseemly practices during the period He was a merchant in Búshihir.

Soon thereafter, one of His maternal uncles arrived at Búshihir, and the same merchants who had returned the indigo dye came to see the uncle and complained about His behavior, saying, “He has ruined our reputation. We had a deal on dyes, however, as customary, we wished to renegotiate, but He did not comply. He arranged for the goods to be brought back from our store. This is a great insult to us as merchants. You should counsel Him not to repeat such offenses.”

The maternal uncle approached the Báb advising Him, “Why do You refuse to yield to people’s wishes and disrupt the established customs of the realm?” He told him, “Even now, if they should wish to bargain after a transaction is completed, I would refuse again.”

That was a very blissful day. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá smiled unceasingly and repeated several times, “Prior to His declaration, the Báb announced that He would change many of the accepted ways.”

In short, after six years’ residence in Búshihir, [the Báb] wrote several times to His uncles, “I plan to visit the ‘Atabát.⁴⁷ One of you

⁴⁷ The ‘Atabát is a general term referring to the region where Najaf, Karbalá,

should come to Búshihr and take over the business so I can commence my journey to the ‘Atabát.” The uncles procrastinated and did not comply with His wish. When the time for His departure arrived, He settled His accounts with everyone, prepared a detailed ledger, sealed the books, and left them in the office. He then sealed the entrance to the office and entrusted the key to the custodian of that building with the instructions that whichever of His maternal uncles should arrive first from Shíráz to Búshihr should be allowed to enter. Thereupon, He wrote to Shíráz “Though I wrote you repeatedly asking that one of you come to Búshihr as I have a journey to the ‘Atabát in mind, you have not come. Therefore, I have sealed the door of the shop and entrusted the key to the custodian and have left for the ‘Atabát.”⁴⁸ So, after six years in Búshihr, He left for the ‘Atabát.

Once His blessed letter was received in Shíráz, [His eldest maternal uncle,] Hájí Mírzá Siyyid Muhammad became deeply worried and perturbed, complaining, “What manner of conduct is this? Our good name in the commercial community will be ruined, and the chain of our business transactions will be broken! What will happen to our accounts with the people?” To this, the illustrious uncle, Hájí Mírzá Siyyid ‘Alí, responded, “Rest assured! I know Him, and our Nephew does not do anything wrong. [I am certain that] He has arranged people’s accounts before leaving.”

The uncle, Hájí Mírzá Siyyid Muhammad, set out for Búshihr.⁴⁹ Upon his arrival, he secured the key from the custodian of the caravansary, noted the seal on the door of the room, opened the door, and began a careful examination of the books. He found that the accounts relating to every person were most satisfactory and accurate.

Kázimayn, and Sámarrá are located. The first of the two cities hold within them the Shrines of Imám ‘Alí and Imám Husayn, respectively. Kázimayn is famous because the Shrines of the seventh and the ninth Imáms are located there. Sámarrá is where the Shrines of the tenth and the eleventh Imáms, ‘Alí an-Naqi and Hasan al-‘Askari, are situated.

⁴⁸ Mírzá Abú’l-Fadl, *Tárikh Zubúr Díyánt Hadrat Báb va Hadrat Bahá’u’lláh*, gives the date of Báb’s departure as 1 Rabí’u’l-Avval AH 1257 [23 April 1841].

⁴⁹ A.Q. Afnán suggests that it was the younger uncle, Hájí Mírzá Siyyid ‘Alí, who went on Búshihr. (Private communications, Nov. 1992).

Relieved, he wrote to his brothers, “the accounts and record books are in order” [p. 30] and expressed praise and gratitude for their Nephew.⁵⁰

In the ‘Atabát

The Báb arrived at the ‘Atabát. His blessed stay in the ‘Atabát is an extensive story, but it will be related here briefly, as our attention is focused on events in Fárs.

One day Mullá Husayn, who at that time was engaged in studies in the ‘Atabát under the tutelage of Siyyid [Kázim Rashtí], saw His Holiness [the Báb] while He was standing in prayer at the sanctuary of the Shrine of the Prince of Martyrs.⁵¹ He saw a young Siyyid, aged twenty-two, offering His supplications with an intense humility and rapture that was not to be observed previously among any of the ‘ulamá, the mystics, or the pilgrims [to that sacred Shrine]. He was carried away with petitioning God and performing the rites of pilgrimage. Mullá Husayn was astounded and attracted by his beauty and perfection. He approached [the Báb] and greeted Him. However, wrapped in devotions, His Holiness did not reply. Mullá Husayn moved to the back and waited there. Having completed the pilgrimage prayers in the inner sanctuary, [the Báb] went out to the courtyard, and to Mullá Husayn’s utter astonishment, repeated the pilgrimage prayers there.

Once more, Mullá Husayn approached and greeted Him. Being occupied with His prayers, [the Báb] did not respond, which further deepened the Akhúnd’s wonder.⁵²

When [the Báb] had completed the pilgrimage prayers, He moved outside from the courtyard. The Akhúnd [Mullá Husayn] approached Him and greeted Him. This time, [the Báb] returned his greeting and

⁵⁰ For a brief description of the Báb’s stay in Búshahr, see Nabíl A‘zam, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 77–80.

⁵¹ A reference to Imám Husayn.

⁵² Mullá Husayn is referred to as ‘Akhúnd’, meaning a lower-level divine who serves the people, somewhat analogous to a parish priest or a teacher of divinity at a school. The term has become pejorative in modern times but has been retained in several places in the present translation in the interest of authenticity. In a few places though it has been replaced with ‘Mullá Husayn’ to clarify the meaning.

apologized, “Twice you have showed your courtesy, but absorbed and transported in the rites of pilgrimage, concentrating only on the exalted Shrine of the Imám—upon Him be peace—I did not respond. For this, I wish to apologize. Whosoever attains that sacred ground must forget himself and all worldly matters. As such, I had become oblivious of My own Self and overcome with other conditions. Once more, I apologize to you.”⁵³

Hearing such a speech only served to enhance the amazement of the Akhúnd, as he had never thought that a young merchant could manifest such extraordinary depth of humility, reverence, piety, and veneration. It was unusual and contrary to the fashionable neglect of religion. Therefore, he extensively expressed the depth of his gratitude and thanks, and asked, “Master, where is Your home, for I wish to make the customary courtesy call?” [The Báb] told him how to find the house. [Mullá Husayn] then said, “Siyyid [Kázim Rashtí] holds a service of prayers and admonition at his own home every Friday morning. Should You decide to attend, it would greatly honor the assembly, and we would be profoundly grateful.” [The Báb] responded, “There is no harm in that,” and promised to attend the session.

The Akhúnd reported with great care the details of what had transpired to Siyyid [Kázim] who had smiled and recited this verse:

That which my heart had understood in dreams
was hidden behind this veil, and is now found.

During the last two or three years, Hájí Siyyid Kázim Rashtí devoted his sermons and lectures solely to the manifestation of the Promised Proof. He repeatedly expounded on the signs of His appearance and the characteristics of the Lord of Command. Many a time he would tell [his students that the promised Qá’im] must be young, not instructed by anyone else, and must be a scion of the Baní-Háshim.⁵⁴

⁵³ For a description of a similar observation by Shaykh Hasan Zunúzí, see Nabíl A‘zam, *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 30.

⁵⁴ That is, a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad.

On the morning of the appointed Friday, [the Báb] made his promised visit to the home of the Siyyid where the latter was occupied with preaching from the pulpit and the house was filled to capacity with worshippers. Finding no seat available, His Holiness [the Báb] sat at the threshold. On seeing His countenance, the late Siyyid said no more, preferring pure silence. All those present were astonished. After a quarter of an hour, he resumed an oration regarding the signs of the manifestation of the Promised One. He said, “Behold, He is manifest as the sun” [p. 35]. With these words he concluded his arguments and descended the pulpit.⁵⁵ It was at this moment that with the utmost reverence Akhúnd Mullá Husayn approached His Holiness [the Báb] and led Him to a seat next to the Siyyid.

Were I to detail the sojourn of the Báb in the ‘Atabát and the events that transpired there and the glad tidings imparted by the late Siyyid, it would be like a Qur’án commentary or a thick book of history. But our purpose is to outline the events in Fárs.

Return from the ‘Atabát

After six months of His blessed stay in the ‘Atabát had passed, His mother, longing to see her only Offspring, earnestly petitioned her brother, Hájí Mírzá Siyyid ‘Alí, to proceed for the ‘Atabát and to bring His Holiness to Shíráz—a matter that she greatly insisted upon. Deeply devoted to his sister and Nephew, the illustrious uncle agreed and proceeded at once to the ‘Atabát.

On meeting His Holiness, he stated, “I have come to accompany you in Your return to Shíráz.” [The Báb] refused. However much the uncle insisted, He refused, stating, “I intend to remain in the ‘Atabát for some time.”

Because his sister was looking forward to His Holiness’s arrival in Shíráz, the uncle did not defer to this refusal. Through a message transmitted by Hájí Siyyid Javád Karbalá’í, he appealed to the Siyyid [Kázim] to convince His Holiness to return to Shíráz.

⁵⁵ See Nabíl A‘zam, *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 27, where Nabíl outlines slightly different recollections of that day from Shaykh Hasan Zunúzí.

One day, the uncle himself went to the home of the Siyyid [Kázim] and explained the situation as follows: “My Nephew lived in Búshihir for six years before coming to the ‘Atabát. His mother has no other child beside Him and deeply longs to see Him and plans to arrange for His marriage. He has not consented to what I say, in bidding Him return to Shíráz. Therefore, I beg of you to speak with Him, that He may accompany me to Shíráz.” At first, the Siyyid replied, “Is it up to us to interfere? Allow us the benefit of His presence for a while longer.” The illustrious uncle responded, “As His mother is anticipating His arrival and her approval is important as well, kindly tell Him to agree to return to Shíráz.”

Eventually, the Siyyid transmitted the message to His Holiness [the Báb], saying, “If it pleases You, return to Shíráz.” Because it was the wish of the Siyyid, His Holiness agreed. In the company of His uncle, He set out for Shíráz.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ The following is noted in Fayzí, *Khándán Afnán*, pp. 132–33, on the authority of Mázandarání, *Tárikh Zubúru’l-Haqq*, volume 3:

Because of the insistence of the mother of the Báb and other kinsmen as well as his own profound desire, Hájí Mír[zá] Siyyid ‘Alí, the Khál, had come to Karbalá. One day the Báb met Mullá Sádiq [Khurásání] in the courtyard of the Shrine of Imám Husayn. The Báb said to him, “My uncle has recently arrived from Shíráz, and if you wish to meet him, come to our abode.” The Akhúnd expressed his deep interest and with thanks assured Him he would come. That very afternoon he went to the home of the Báb where a great many of the ‘ulamá, merchants, and other dignitaries were present, with the Khál sitting and conversing with the guests, and the Báb serving tea and sherbet. Mullá Sádiq spoke of the Báb’s peerless qualities and His exalted character. In response, the Khál said, “Even though our entire family is well known in Shíráz and its vicinity for our pious nature and goodly characters, yet this Youth shines like a most brilliant candle in our midst, and it is most evident that He is cut from a different cloth. Our one wish is for Him to undertake study of divers sciences so it would bring added honor to us. However, He refuses.” Mullá Sádiq responded, “If you do not take Him with you to Shíráz, I will see to it that He is engaged in studying.” Thrilled at the prospect, the Khál stated, “Even though it is very agonizing for His mother and other kinsmen to be far from Him, yet because of your assurance, I will

Marriage

There He rejoined His mother and relatives. After several months He expressed the desire to return to the ‘Atabát. Hearing that His Holiness entertained such considerations caused His mother to grow deeply anxious, and with great urgency she spoke with her brother, Háji Mírzá Siyyid ‘Alí, about His marriage. Having spoken with the illustrious consort, Khadíjih-Sultán Bagum, daughter of the late Áqá Mírzá ‘Alí and a paternal cousin of the Báb’s mother, the arrangements for the wedding ceremony were made. The wedding⁵⁷ took place on Friday, the eighteenth of Rajab AH 1258 [25 August 1842] in the presence of an assemblage of the merchants, the noblemen, and the ‘ulamá of Fárs.⁵⁸

And since the appointed time for His Manifestation was near, He did not travel anywhere, but prayers and verses in Arabic and expositions on [divine] sciences continually flowed from His pen.

return by myself to Shíráz.” A few days later, the Khál returned to his native city and left the Báb in Karbalá. However, it was not long thereafter that He, too, returned to Shíráz.

⁵⁷ As customary on such occasions, the wedding consisted of two separate celebrations, one for the men and the other for the women. The men gathered in the house of the Báb’s uncle, Háji Mírzá Siyyid ‘Alí, while the women gathered in the residence of Khadíjih Bagum’s father, which house was next door. The wedding was conducted by Shaykh Abú-Turáb, the Imám-Jum‘ih (A.Q. Afnán, private communications, August 1992).

⁵⁸ A copy of the Báb’s marriage certificate provides the same date, see Balyúzi, *The Báb* page opposite 80, and Fayzí, *Khándán Afnán*, pp. 158–61. The Báb refers to His wedding as follows: “O concourse of Light! Hear My call from the point of Fire in this ocean of snow-white water on this crimson earth. Verily, I am God, besides Whom there is no other God. On the exalted throne a beloved noble woman, bearing the same name [Khadíjih] as the beloved of the First Friend [the Prophet Muhammad], was wedded to this Great Remembrance; and verily, I caused the angels of Heaven and the denizens of Paradise, on the day of the Covenant, to bear witness, in truth, to God’s Remembrance” (The Báb, *Qayyúmu’l-Asma’*, Surih of Qarábat [The Chapter of Kinship], quoted in Fayzí, *Khándán Afnán*, pp. 7–8).

Ahmad, the Báb's Son

After a year, that is in AH 1259 [1843], God granted Him a son who died at birth. Before his birth, [the Báb] had prophesied, “The child is a boy named Ahmad, but it is not his destiny to live.” The child was buried in the Bábí Dukhtarán cemetery of Shíráz.⁵⁹ My paternal grandmother, [Zahrá Bagum], who was the sister of Khadíjih Bagum, related for me the details surrounding the child's birth:

[p. 40] The delivery of the child was very difficult, to the point that several times we lost all hope for the mother's recovery. During the final surge of the labor pains, the mother of His Holiness went to Him. He asked her, “Has she delivered?” to which she responded negatively. [The Báb] then took a small mirror that lay by His side, penned a prayer and a talisman on the face of the mirror, gave it to His mother, [saying that she should] take it to His wife and hold it before her face. She took the mirror and held it before [Khadíjih Bagum]. As her gaze fell upon the mirror, instantly the lifeless child was delivered, and the mother recovered.⁶⁰

The Báb's mother then returned to His presence and remonstrated with her Son, “As You evidently possessed such [preternatural] abilities, why did You not perform this

⁵⁹ Thus named since the tomb of Bábí Dukhtarán is located there. For further details, consult Fasa'í, *Fársnámih Násirí*, vol. 2, p. 1131.

⁶⁰ The following passage from The Báb, *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'*, Surih Qarábih, is addressed to Khadíjih Bagum (cited in Balyúzí, *Khadíjih Bagum*, pp. 8–9, edited slightly below): “O well-beloved! Prize thou highly the grace of the Great Remembrance for it cometh from God, the Loved One. Thou shalt not be a woman like unto others, if thou obeyest God in the Cause of Truth, the Most Great Truth. Know thou the great bounty conferred upon thee by the Ancient of Days, and take pride in being the consort of the Well-Beloved, Who is loved by God, the Most Great. Sufficient unto thee is this glory, which cometh unto thee from God, the All-Wise, the All-Praised. Be patient in all that God hath ordained concerning the Báb and His family. Verily, thy son, Ahmad, is with Fátimih [the Prophet Muhammad's daughter], the Sublime, in the sanctified Paradise.” Also, see Balyúzí, *Khadíjih Bagum*, p. 9, for another mention by the Báb of his son Ahmad, in Suratul-'Abd of the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'*.

act sooner and preserve the life of the child?” He smiled and replied, “It is not My destiny to leave any progeny.” His mother was infuriated with this comment but said no more.⁶¹

The wife of the Báb recounted for me:

One night I dreamt that there was a fearsome male lion in the courtyard. My hands were around the neck of the lion. The beast dragged me around the courtyard two and a half times. I woke up, profoundly alarmed and trembling with fright. His Holiness asked me the cause of my agitation, and I told him what I had dreamt. His comment was: “You awoke too soon, as [your dream portends that] our life together will not last more than two-and-a-half years.” And what He said, transpired.

Declaration of the Báb

It proceeded thus until finally the declaration of the Báb took place on the eve of Friday, the fifth day of Jamádíyu'l-Avval AH 1260 [23 May 1844], two hours and eleven minutes into the night.⁶² There is a magnificent story of these wonderful events related by the wife of the Báb as follows:

The practice of His Holiness was that each day He would return home about an hour after the sunset and commence devotions, the chanting of the names of God, and writing. About three hours into the night He would have the evening meal and would retire about four hours past sunset. In the morning, He would rise one hour before the dawn and, after washing, would perform His ablutions and then proceed to

⁶¹ See Nabíl A‘zam, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 76–77, for a brief reference to this incident and a purported prayer by the Báb marking the passing of His son.

⁶² The exact time and date of the Báb’s declaration is given in the Persian *Bayán* 2:7.

the upper chambers of the House, which had been set aside as His formal guestroom and formed an outer apartment. There, He stood to recite tablets of visitation, prayers, supplications, and to repeat the names of God. When the sun had risen, Fiddih⁶³ would fire up the samovar and prepare the tea in the chamber occupied by His mother. His Holiness would come down to that apartment and have the morning tea. After that, He would proceed to His merchant office to engage in His own business.

However, one night, unlike other nights, He came home at dusk, saying, “Tell Fiddih to prepare whatever we are having for the evening meal sooner than usual. Tonight I have a particular task to attend to.” About an hour and a half into the night, the dinner was served, and He joined us for this purpose. Afterwards, Fiddih brought water for Him to wash His blessed hands, and, as usual in the evenings, she spread our bedding and retired to her own quarters. His Holiness retired for the night.

It was not long after that I saw Him rise from the bed and leave the room, going to the outer courtyard. At first, I thought He had gone to the lavatory. When considerable time had passed and He did not return, I was seized by apprehension. I rose from my bed and left the apartment. I looked in the lavatory but did not see Him. Checking the street door, I found it locked from within. I looked in the chamber of His mother and did not find Him there either. By then I was deeply bewildered and perplexed. I walked to the western part of the house and looked up towards the upper chamber, situated on the eastern wing of the House and serving as His private quarters, and saw that it was well lighted. It seemed as if a thousand lamps illumined the room. This added to my surprise, because there were no guests to require so many lamps. Therefore, full of

⁶³ Mírzá Habíbu'lláh adds parenthetically: Fiddih and Mubárak were two Black servants purchased in Búshíhr during His days of commerce.

astonishment, I went up the steps to the room. When I entered, I found that the room was so brilliantly lit that it dazzled my eyes, although there was only a single lamp.

[p. 45] I saw His Holiness standing, facing the Qiblih; His hands raised heavenwards, intoning a prayer. As soon as my gaze fell upon His blessed Being, I beheld such majesty and resplendence as is beyond my powers to explain. Suddenly, such awe and trepidation enveloped me that I stood transfixed where I was, trembling uncontrollably like a leaf. I could neither retrace my steps nor stand. I was close to losing consciousness. All kinds of perplexities enveloped me. Suddenly He made a gesture with His blessed hand, telling me to go back. This movement of His sanctified hands released me from that state, and I returned to the apartment and bed. But I could not sleep, and I remained deeply disturbed. Every detail of the image of His blessed Person and that scene [in the upper chamber] added to my consternation. I felt like a wrongdoer who has fallen short and awaits the all-powerful sovereign to pass sentence on her. I did not sleep that night, until the mu'adhdhin's⁶⁴ call to morning prayers sounded from the mosque adjacent to the house.

After the adhán [call to prayer] He came downstairs. As soon as my eyes alighted on His blessed Countenance, I was seized by awe and perplexity. He no longer seemed like the Person with whom I had lived for two and a half years. I did not have the courage to utter a word. In any case, the sun was rising and I rose, carried out my ablutions, and performed the obligatory prayer.

In accordance with our daily routine, our servant, Fiddih, had prepared the samovar and tea in the room of His mother and informed us that the tea was ready. Accompanied by Him, I proceeded there. In His mother's

⁶⁴ Each mosque has one or more mu'adhdhin who announce the time for the obligatory worship (salát).

room, He drank some tea. Each moment added to my perplexity and conjecturing. With His blessed hand He poured a cup of tea, passed it to me, and with a heavenly smile said, “What is it that troubles you? You are distraught.” I drank the tea, which eased my perturbation and anxiety to some extent. I said, “Áqá, what exalted state was it that I witnessed in Your chamber last night?” He replied, “At what an extraordinary time you arrived! That was untimely. But it was the will of God that you should see it with your own eyes. Know and be certain that at that very moment the One Exalted God appointed Me for the guidance of these servants. I am that Promised One whose advent they have been expecting. For the past twelve hundred and sixty years they have perpetually beseeched the Almighty for His appearance. I am the one appointed for the salvation of the people.”

As soon as I heard Him speak these words, I kissed His knees and became a believer in Him. In prostration, I raised my voice in gratitude to the Lord for having enabled me to recognize Him.⁶⁵

It was thus that the first woman to believe in Him was the illustrious wife of the Báb, [Khadíjih Bagum], and among the men of this family [the Afnán], it was the martyred uncle, [Hájí Mírzá Siyyid ‘Alí,] and among the ‘ulamá it was Akhúnd Mullá Husayn Bushrú’í, the Bábu’l-Báb, whose story will be recounted next.

The Evidence Presented to Akhúnd Mullá Husayn in Shíráz and How He Attained [to the Faith]⁶⁶

⁶⁵ See Balyúzí, *Khadíjih Bagum*, pp. 10–13, for a different rendering. In *Kitáb Fibríst*, the Báb states that the first descent of Spirit on Him was on 15th of the third month of AH 1260 [3 April 1844]. From this it is possible to infer that the event described by Khadíjih Bagum occurred on that date.

⁶⁶ The section pertaining to Mullá Husayn correlates closely with the narrative of Siyyid Husayn Hamadání (see *Tárikh-i Jadíd*, pp. 35–39), which is purported to be based on

After the passing of Siyyid [Kázim Rashtí], who was a harbinger of this blessed Manifestation, the Akhúnd [Mullá Husayn] was afflicted with great perturbation and restlessness. Together with a group of fellow-students, who numbered more than forty, he undertook a period of meditation. The group included Áqá Mírzá [Siyyid] Muhammad-‘Alí Barfurúshí,⁶⁷ Mullá ‘Alí Bastámí, Akhúnd Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Jalíl Khú’í, Mírzá ‘Abdu’l-Hádí, Mírzá Muhammad-Hádí, Áqá Siyyid Hasan Yazdí, Mullá Hasan Bajistání, Mullá Bashír, Mullá Báqir Turk, and Mullá Ahmad Abdal—all of them learned men who were expecting the manifestation of the Promised One. Details related to each one of them are captured in the historical narratives, and our intention is only to recount the events of Fárs.

After a period of forty days of ascetic observance in the Masjid Kufih and Masjid Sahlih, the Akhúnd [Mullá Husayn] established a pact with his companions that if any one of them should hear the Call of the Truth, he would inform the others at once. Feeling himself drawn towards Shíráz, he set out.

Because he had been acquainted with His Holiness [the Báb] during His time in the ‘Atabát, when he arrived in Shíráz he desired [p. 50] a meeting and inquired where His Holiness lived. He wished to pass the few days he would remain in Shíráz in His home. [Locating the Báb’s House], he knocked at the door, and His Holiness Himself came and opened the door. He warmly greeted and welcomed the Akhúnd, and expressed great kindness and affection. Together they proceeded to the upper room that served as the guestroom. [The Báb] said, “All day I

recollections of Mírzá ‘Abdu’l-Wahháb Khurásání from utterances of Mullá Husayn and captured in the history of Háji Mírzá Jání of Káshán. The present translator has not been able to determine if a copy of Mírzá Jání’s valuable history was in the possession of the early Afnán family. However, it is known that Mírzá Jání’s original text, which is about 80 or pages long, is extant and is in the possession of a non-Bahá’í in Tíhrán. Although he did not allow his precious manuscript to be copied, because of his longstanding friendship with Fádil Mázandarání he permitted the latter to examine this document, and he certified its authenticity. See Nabíl A‘zam, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 52–66, for Nabíl’s moving, though very different, description of the Báb’s declaration.

⁶⁷ Quddús had returned to his native town some months prior to Siyyid Kázim’s passing; see Mázandarání, *Tárikh Zubúru’l-Haqq*, vol. 3, pp. 405–7.

have felt disinclined to go to the caravansary.⁶⁸ Evidently this was because of your arrival.”

After they had exchanged the customary inquiries and pleasantries, tea was served, and the Host enjoyed it with the Akhúnd [Mullá Husayn]. After showing him the courtesies due to a guest, the Host asked about the teachings and doctrines, the station and character of Shaykh [Ahmad] and Siyyid [Kázim]. Mullá Husayn replied, “Whatever the topic under discussion, their whole focus was the Traditions and sayings based on the glad tidings of the manifestation of the Promised One.” The Báb then asked, “You, the Shaykhís, have an essential doctrine that, after the passing of the late Siyyid, there must be someone else who assumes his title. It is now five months since his death. After him, who is the leader of the cause?” “As yet,” [Mullá Husayn] replied, “we have recognized no one. After him, no successor is specified. Rather, we anticipate the Author of the Cause, Whose advent is expected by all, to appear.” “What manner of man,” He asked, “must the Author of the Cause be?” The Akhúnd pondered for a moment and then enumerated a certain number of the spiritual and physical⁶⁹ characteristics of the expected Person. “Do you observe these in Me?” As Mullá Husayn had not observed any signs of knowledge during his Host’s residence in Karbalá and knew that He had not studied with the deceased teachers, responded, “I do not see any of these qualities in you.” His Holiness did not respond to this.

After a while, [Mullá Husayn] observed several books in a small niche. Examining one of them, he found it to be a commentary on the Surih Baqara.⁷⁰ After reading a little, he saw that it was a commentary like no other. He was astonished and asked who the author might be. “A mere youthful beginner,” He answered, “who has much other knowledge and attainments, in addition to this.” Again, he asked who and where the writer was. “You see Him.” Mullá Husayn did not apprehend His meaning, “You see Him.” He read another page, where it was written, “the explanation of the essence of the essence.” Considering

⁶⁸ Mírzá Habíbu’lláh adds parenthetically: The Báb’s place of business was at the custom building, known as the caravansary.

⁶⁹ The original Arabic phrase literally means “theoretical and practical.”

⁷⁰ See, Lawson, “The Qur’án Commentary of Sayyid ‘Alí Muhammad, the Báb.” For copies of manuscripts see, MacEoin, *The Sources for Early Bábí Doctrine and History*.

this an error, he stated, “It should be, ‘the explanation of the essence’” He answered, “It is, ‘the explanation of the essence of the essence.’ What can I say! The Author of this commentary writes masterfully and with utmost authority. Consider the passage attentively.” This time, the Akhúnd read more closely and realized that the phrase, “exposition of the essence of the essence,” was correct as it was written. He said, “I am tired. You read some more, and I will listen.” His Holiness read for a time, and then with the customary haughtiness of an Akhúnd, Mullá Husayn said, “It is enough. That was sufficient. Do not trouble Yourself any further.”

Mullá Husayn enjoyed lunch and then rested for a while. In the late afternoon, His Holiness had invited several merchants and Shaykhí ‘ulamá to drink tea and meet the Akhúnd. [In the course of the conversation,] it was agreed that the next morning they would all gather at Masjid Ilkhání where the Akhúnd would deliver a lecture.

The group gathered, as appointed, in the mosque. When the Akhúnd [Mullá Husayn] wanted to start his discourse, he found that in place of eloquent expression and clear explanations, he had become tongue-tied, to the extent that he lost all power of speech. Filled with amazement, he thought, “this is so contrary to custom and nature, it must have some purpose,” and he wondered “who is exercising this secret control, and what might be his object in rendering me mute and in such state of ecstasy that, in this gathering, I am like one who has been transported in spirit?” [p. 55]. Such was his powerlessness, and so strong the astonishment and emotion which took possession of him, that he was not able to speak on any topic, and he cancelled the meeting and returned to his lodgings, deeply bewildered.

The next day when he wished to deliver his lecture, he found himself even more mute and devoid of ready knowledge than the previous day. There was nothing he could do but apologize to the audience.

The same happened on the third day. On this last occasion, he departed from the mosque in a state of utmost misery and perplexity. The Exalted One, noting Mullá Husayn’s despondency, told the rest of their friends to go to their own houses, while he took Mullá Husayn, with his consent, to His own home.

When they arrived at His Sacred House, after a short rest, the Báb said, “By what proofs and signs of his station, can you recognize the Author of the Cause, and by what proof can you pass from distraction and wandering in the valley of search to recognizing the Beloved and have complete confidence in the guidance He gives?” Mullá Husayn answered, “By scientific writings and by the Exalted Point which is the well-spring and center of all the knowledge of past and future prophets and saints.” “Do you perceive these qualities in Me?” He inquired, “What if I were so endowed with such attributes?” Upon hearing this, Mullá Husayn was deeply perturbed, and said, “That You are devout, godly, and holy of life, is true; but innate knowledge and infinite wisdom are the only entry and evidence of this most exalted Station.” At this comment, His Holiness was silent for while as though in wonder, while Mullá Husayn thought to himself, “What idea can this devout and sincere Youth be harboring that He so persistently introduces this topic, although he has no education? I must at all events ask some questions of His honored Person which He has never heard discussed and cannot answer, so that He may be turned aside from His vain imaginings.”

Therefore, he presented to His Holiness a question which appeared to him very difficult to resolve, and which he had always had in mind during the lifetime of the late Siyyid [Kázim], but had never found an opportunity of propounding it in such wise as to have the difficulty removed in a satisfactory manner. Without hesitation, his Host provided a full and sufficient answer. Mullá Husayn was filled with amazement. He asked another difficult question, which his Host again answered comprehensively and conclusively. Mute with astonishment, [Mullá Husayn] reflected to himself, “Is not this Youth Who but a few days ago did not correctly read the Commentary on the Surih Baqara? How is it that He has now become the source and well-spring of all the sciences of the past?” All manners of thoughts filled his being.

All of a sudden, he observed His Holiness anew: he was sitting in a most dignified and majestic attitude, the left hand laid on the left knee and the right hand over it. He began to utter most wondrous verses containing answers to whatever question passed through Mullá Husayn’s mind, until many verses had been revealed from the Fount of Divine

Revelation. During this entire period, Mullá Husayn waited anxiously for Him to conclude, so strong was the fear and awe that possessed him.

At length He ceased, and [Mullá Husayn], in the extremity of terror, rose up to flee, as some delinquent might flee from a mighty sovereign. He asked permission to take his leave, but His Holiness responded, “Remain seated! Where are you going? Anyone who beholds you in this state would think you had lost your mind.” Constrained by His bidding, he could do nothing but sit again, while His Holiness withdrew to the private section of the House.

During His absence, the Akhúnd [Mullá Husayn] was prey to most anxious thoughts. Care for worldly interests and the possibility of opposition from divers quarters, the need for caution and prudence, all passed through his mind. However, he realized that in the presence of the Lord, he could not be insincere, nor offer excuses and objections. [p. 60] He saw no way out save confession and acceptance. He was greatly perturbed, agitated, and troubled beyond all measure.

An hour later, contrary to His practice on other days, the Báb Himself brought in the tea, seated Himself near Akhúnd [Mullá Husayn], and showered him with most gracious expressions. He poured tea [for Mullá Husayn] and handed him the cup, but the honored Akhúnd, remained as one distraught and so amazed that he again asked permission to depart. “You are still in a state of extreme bewilderment,” [the Báb] informed him, “though you are not yourself aware of it. Anyone who saw you in this state, would think you were possessed.”

After an hour, however, when he had regained his composure, [Mullá Husayn] was permitted to take his leave.⁷¹

⁷¹ The date of the Báb’s Declaration is fixed in the Persian *Bayán* 6:13 and 2:7, “And from the moment when the Tree of the Bayán appeared until it disappeared is the Resurrection of the Apostle of God, as is divinely foretold in the Qur’án; the beginning of which was when two hours and eleven minutes had passed on the eve of the fifth of Jamádíyu’l-Avval, AH 1260 [22 May 1844], which is the year of 1270 of the Declaration of the Mission of Muhammad” (translation in *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 107). In a Tablet in honor of Mírzá Qábil of Ábádih, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá specifies this date as Kamál (8th) of Azamat; see Ishráq-Khávárí, *Gangínih Hudúd va Abkám*, p. 426.

On the occasion of the next visit, [Mullá Husayn] was shown a commentary that the Báb had written on the Hadíth-i Jariyyih.⁷² He read it and recalled that the late Siyyid [Kázim] had stated when he was alive that the Proof Who was to appear would compose a full explanation of this Tradition. Now Mullá Husayn saw his Promised manifest before him. Moreover, he remembered that one day, when he was alone with the late Siyyid [Kázim] in the library, in the course of conversation, he [Mullá Husayn] had asked why the Surih Yúsuf [Joseph] of the Qur’án is titled the *Absanu’l-Qisas* [the Best of Stories], to which the late Siyyid had replied that it was not then the proper occasion for explaining the reason. This incident remained concealed in his mind.

Now His Holiness said, “Mullá Husayn, do you recall inquiring once of the late Siyyid, why the Surih Yúsuf is called the *Absanu’l-Qisas*, and how he replied that the proper occasion for explaining this had not yet come? The time for this explanation has now arrived.” Then He showed [Mullá Husayn] a commentary on this Surih revealed from the Most Exalted Pen. On reading it, the eminent Akhúnd attained the shore of faith and prostrated himself in gratitude to God.⁷³

⁷² Ishráq-Khávarí, *Kitáb Muhadhirat*, p. 14, notes that Jariyyih was a daughter of Khadíjih, the wife of Muhammad. For a discussion of this Tradition of the Handmaiden attributed to Imám Ja‘far Sádiq, see Kulayni, *al-Usul min al-Kafi*, vol. 1, pp. 95–96. See also Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, vol. 1, p. 30.

⁷³ In the course of the first section of the Báb, *Kitáb Panj Sha’n* (the Book of Five Modes), p. 9, revealed on the sixth anniversary of His declaration, the Báb describes the night of His declaration in the language of prayer:

In the name of God. There is no God but God. Sanctified art Thou, O God, My God. I testify that at an hour such as this, Thou hast bestowed honor and exaltation, glory and loftiness upon this night and hast sanctified it above all other nights through Thy Manifestation. This is the hour of the appearance of the Point of Bayán, Who is the sign of Thy dawning, the countenance of Thy morn of eternity, the evidence of Thy unity, the manifestation of Thy oneness, the confirmation of Thy loftiness, the signifier of Thy holiness, and the very essence of the divinity of Thy kingdom. Sanctified and exalted art Thou, that thou hast glorified this hour by creating whatsoever is within the Bayán and by decreeing the manifestation of whatsoever Thou willest. I testify and all things testify that on such a night as this I was at My house before Thy

Conversion of Mullá Sádiq Khurásání

Mullá Husayn said, “During our stay at the Masjid Kufih and Masjid Sahlih prior to dispersing [in search of the Promised Qá’im], my companions and I established a pact that whichever of us first heard the Call of Truth would inform the others. One in particular, Akhúnd Mullá Sádiq [known as] Muqaddas Khurásání, proceeded towards Isfahán and is now in that city. Please instruct me to go to Isfahán and to inform him so that he, too, may attain the station of faith.” “There is no harm in that,” the Báb replied, “however, it must be conditioned upon several things.” “Whatever is Your command,” [Mullá Husayn] responded, “I will instantly and faithfully obey.”

The Báb then revealed a detailed commentary on one of the shorter Surihs of the Qur’án and entrusted it to the honored Akhúnd Mullá Husayn, instructing him, “Take this commentary with you to Isfahán. After you have renewed your acquaintance with the Akhúnd [Mullá Sádiq Muqaddas], first ask if, during his travels, he has heard of, or met, anyone who advanced a claim to be the Promised One? Should he respond that he has neither met a claimant nor heard of such a call, ask if he himself is putting forth a claim. Should he present one, he must confirm it by means of divine verses, in the way that you have witnessed. Only if he states that he has no claim of his own are you to present him

threshold when the first person [i.e., Mullá Husayn] who has tasted the sweetness of Thy love in this Ridván attained to Me. He prostrated himself before Thy effulgence in this Paradise, and with him were the Letters of the Three. At such an hour, Thou didst cause Me to show Myself to him. Sanctified and exalted art Thou for enabling him [i.e., Mullá Husayn] to recognize upon hearkening unto the signs of Thy guidance, and for having created in him a clear vision when I made mention of Thee. Therefore praise and gratitude be to Thee, O My God, a praise the like of which no soul hath offered in the past nor any will offer in the future, and such gratitude as none before hath offered and none will offer in the future, for the first who recognized My person, and for the recognition with which he recognized Me.

From this passage it is not clear whether the three travel companions of Mullá Husayn also attained the presence of the Báb that very night, or on a later occasion.

with this commentary, without identifying its Author, as he himself must discern [the Source of Revelation].”

Mullá Husayn proceeded to Isfahán in accordance with the Báb’s instructions and upon arrival, was reunited with Mullá Sádiq. “O honored Akhúnd,” he asked him, “after we separated, did you meet any claimant or hear any call?” “I have encountered no one, and heard no call,” he replied. “Do you suspect any qualities in yourself, which could serve as evidence of some exalted station?” Deeply puzzled, Mullá Sádiq rejoined, “Have you gone mad? You and I are of no account. The One who raises a call must possess innate knowledge. Have you lost your rational faculties, that you ask such a question?”

Upon being certain of Mullá Sádiq’s position, [p. 65] in accordance with the Báb’s wish, he presented the commentary to him. After reading a little of it, Mullá Sádiq seized the hem of Mullá Husayn’s garment, demanding, “Who wrote this commentary? The Author of these words is certainly the Truth. Where is He, and Who is He?” Refusing to answer his question directly, [Mullá Husayn] said “I am not permitted to say; you must discern it for yourself.” In the face of [Mullá Sádiq’s] insistence, he remained adamant.

Soon the darkness of dusk fell, and supper was served. Afterwards, the honored Mullá Husayn retired, satisfied in the knowledge that he had carried out the mission entrusted him in its totality.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Mírzá Habíbu’lláh has added the following marginal note in his own hand: “Áqá Mírzá ‘Alí-Muhammad, the illustrious son of Mullá Muhammad-Sádiq Muqaddas related for me the following description which he had heard from his honored father: ‘No matter how I implored Mullá Husayn [to divulge the name of Him Who claimed to be the promised Manifestation], he refused and would only state that it was forbidden for him to do so and that I must seek Him independently. Disappointed by this response, I proceeded to the room set aside for devotions and performed my ablutions. I spread the prayer mat and began my supplications. I entreated with such earnestness that the tears pouring from my eyes dampened the prayer mat. In the midst of such contemplation and in a state of near-unconsciousness, I beheld the Young Siyyid that I had met in the gathering of late Siyyid [Kázim Rashtí]. He stood over me saying, ‘What do you desire? If you seek Faith, it stands apparent and manifest.’ This experience was repeated twice before dawn. After the third occurrence of this vision, I came to the room where Mullá Husayn was resting. I woke him and said, ‘Mullá Husayn, I have discovered the identity of the Master of this Cause. It must

The story of Mullá Sádiq and the manner of his recognition is well loved and is no doubt related thoroughly in narratives of the history of Isfahán. As such, this servant will not add to the burden of the reader.

In short, after achieving certitude, Mullá Sádiq together with several others proceeded to Shíráz so that they would attain the blessed presence [of the Báb]. Upon arrival in Shíráz, however, they learned that His Holiness had departed on His journey to Mecca.

The honored Akhúnd Mullá Sádiq and his companions began to propagate the news of the Revelation, particularly in the Masjid Báqir-Ábád. Ascending the pulpit, they would present proofs to the people. This matter was reported to the ‘ulamá, who consulted [on the matter]. By order of [the Governor] Husayn Khán, the Ajúdán-Báshí, known as Sáhib-Ikhtiyár, those illustrious personages were seized, beaten with sticks, their beards burnt, their noses pierced and a rope passed through the incision. From dawn to dusk, the executioner paraded them through the bazaar and received a sum of money from each shopkeeper and artisan.

At sunset, those oppressed ones, being extremely hungry and fatigued, and having been severely beaten and injured, were expelled from the city.⁷⁵

The Arrival of Quddús

The affirmation of faith of Áqá Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí Barfurúshí, who was surnamed Quddús: He was among the ‘ulamá and learned divines famous for piety and godliness, and because of his inner spirituality and purity, no sooner had he heard this Call than he set out for Shíráz to investigate the matter.⁷⁶

be none other than that same Shírází Siyyid that we met in the ‘Atabát.’ Mullá Husayn responded affirmatively.”

⁷⁵ A similar description is provided in Nabíl A‘zam, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 144–48 relating to the events that befell Quddús, Mullá Sádiq, and Mullá ‘Alí-Akbar Ardistání subsequent to the Báb’s return from pilgrimage.

⁷⁶ In his writings, Quddús describes his vision of the Báb some time prior to the Latter’s declaration that enabled him to recognize the promised Manifestation. He further states that on the first day of Jamádiyu’l-Avval [18 May 1844], he left his native

Upon arrival at that city and meeting the Báb in the street, without seeking proofs or signs, nor evidence or deductions, he instantly attained complete certitude. From the moment of that meeting, he ranked among the foremost disciples, manifesting unsurpassed qualities, displaying all-embracing virtues. The details related to his glorious life, his magnificent services, and his martyrdom are described in depth in the history of the events of Fort Tabarsí and as such will not be repeated in these pages.⁷⁷

The Báb's Blessed Journey to Mecca in Sha'bán 1260⁷⁸

The blessed and heavenly pilgrimage group that included the Báb left for Mecca—an undertaking that completed the proof for all who dwell on earth. Among those who were in His blessed presence were the late Hájí Abú'l-Hasan, father of Áqá Mírzá Báqir Khán Dihqán, whose goodly qualities are beyond any description; Áqá Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí, surnamed Quddús; and Hájí Mubáarak, a slave with a pure nature and pleasant disposition who had been purchased by the Báb when He was a merchant in Búshihir.⁷⁹ They set out from Shíráz. That year a large contingent of the city's inhabitants, including many of the ‘ulamá and merchants, were also travelling to Mecca.⁸⁰ Shaykh Háshim (a brother of

town for Shíráz. For a detailed discussion of the life and writings of Quddús, see the present translator's forthcoming book on this subject, *Quddús: Life and Writings*.

⁷⁷ Among the various eyewitness accounts of Shaykh Tabarsí, the most detailed were recorded by Lutf-‘Alí Mírzá Shirází and Mír Abú-Talib Shahmírzádí. With the Bahá'í World Centre's consent, the present translator is completing a translation of the latter account.

⁷⁸ August–September 1844. The Báb in one of His sermons, known as *Khutbah Jaddiyih*, gives the date of His departure from Shíráz as 26 Sha'bán (10 September 1844); see, Ishraq-Khávarí, *Kitáb Muhadhirat*, pp. 729–31.

⁷⁹ The Báb provides a brief outline of His hajj journey in the Persian *Bayán* 4:18; for translation see *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, pp. 89–91. See also the Persian *Bayán* 4:16 and 6:17.

⁸⁰ From Búshihir, the Báb sent the following letter to His wife in Shíráz (Text quoted in Fayzí, *Khándán Afnán*, pp. 166–67, the original letter is displayed in the International Bahá'í Archives in Haifa):

O the best of Protectors! In the Name of God, the Exalted.
My sweet life! May thou be guarded by God!

the Imám-Jum‘ih of Shíráz, Shaykh Abú-Turáb) who was much hated and very quarrelsome, was also among this group of pilgrims.

That year, pilgrims from all corners of the world where Muslims live were proceeding towards Mecca, for according to the Islamic teachings, whenever the 10th day of Dhi’l-Hajjih, which is the observance of the ‘Id-i Adha [the Festival of Sacrifice], falls on a Friday, that pilgrimage is called the ‘Greater Pilgrimage,’ and that is the year of the Manifestation [of the Promised One]. According to a well-known Tradition, [on such an occasion], the Qá’im will place His back against the wall in the court of the Masjidu’l-Ahrám and will openly declare His Cause.

At that time, journey by sea was most difficult and disagreeable, as steam vessels did not operate in the Persian Gulf. It was necessary to go by sailing ship, which made the voyage to Jaddih by sea a minimum of three or four months. [p. 70] One day the late Hájí Abú’l-Hasan [who had been a travel companion of the Báb] described his pilgrimage journey to this servant, saying:

It was not because of sadness that I did not write sooner,
 Nor was it due to My heart being sorrowed
 Nay, My hand wrote thee,
 But My tears washed away the words.

God is My witness that I have been overcome with so much sorrow since our separation that it cannot be described. However, since we are all seized in the grasp of destiny, such has been decreed for us. May the Lord of the world, by the righteousness of the Five Near-Ones, ordain My return.

It is now two days since we arrived in Búshih. The temperature is extremely hot, but the Lord of creation will protect [us]. Apparently, our ship will sail this very month. May God watch over Us, out of His mercy. At the time of departure, it was not possible to meet My esteemed mother. Therefore, kindly convey My greetings to her and ask for her prayers. Regarding the silk cloth, I will write to Bombay. I am also intent on securing a maidservant for you. God willing, that which is ordained will come to pass. Upon thee rest the peace, favors, and grace of God.

During the time I was in the presence of His Holiness aboard the ship, there was a large group of pilgrims, who for the most part were hostile [towards the Báb]. Among them was Shaykh Abú-Háshim who molested [Him] both verbally and physically, and would cause great discomfort for His Holiness. The affront and nuisance he caused reached such a degree that on several occasions the captain of the ship came and reprimanded him not to torment the innocent Siyyid [i.e., the Báb]. However, he did not change his behavior.

One day he started an argument with the captain and uttered such unseemly words that the latter became so aggravated that he instructed his sailors to seize the Shaykh and throw him in the sea. Greatly perturbed and enraged, the captain himself stood nearby, and the sailors hastened to bring the Shaykh to throw him in the sea. At that instant, His Holiness arrived and interceded. The captain did not accept [His intercession] and commanded loudly, “Throw this accursed one into the sea!”

Seeing that they were about to throw the Shaykh in the sea, His Holiness threw Himself on the Shaykh and embraced him firmly, and pleaded with the captain to forgive the Shaykh’s offences one more time, on His account. Deeply moved by the benevolence and the generosity manifested by His Holiness, the captain accepted His intercession. Then he said, “Master, this accursed one has wronged you more than anyone else, so You should be even more eager than others to see him perish. Why did You stop us?” “Such people only harm themselves,” the Báb said, “we should look upon their deeds with sin-covering eyes.” The meekness exhibited by His sacred Self and His intercession on behalf of the Shaykh caused a change of heart among many passengers, and they no longer displayed enmity and hatred, instead becoming repentant and remorseful.

Once our ship had arrived at Jaddih, His Holiness proceeded towards Mecca. That year, there were innumerable pilgrims. Roughly speaking, the Arab, Turkish, Iranian, Kurdish, and Indian pilgrims, together totaling in excess of seventy thousand, for the most part came from the ranks of the ‘ulamá and the learned. Many had mastered the science of divination and jafr [numerology] and had determined that in that year, the True Summoner would openly issue his summons in Mecca, and they had come to witness the event.

Among them was the renowned Háji Siyyid Ja‘far Kashfí,⁸¹ who ranked as the ablest in the field of numerology and who had a profound knowledge of jafr. He had studied the Hadíth-i Marvy narrated by the Immaculate One [the eighth Imám, ‘Alí ar-Ridá], upon Him rest peace: “In the year Sixty, His Cause will be made manifest and His Remembrance exalted,” and the allusions of certain mystics who had openly given many signs for His appearance, such as Sháh Ni‘matu’lláh Valí, who in his poems had clearly given the news of the Manifestation:

If thou reachest the year of planting *ghars*,⁸² behold,
the renewal of the sovereign, realm, nation, and
faith.

And again:

With the passing of *ghars* years,
I see the Absent One has appeared.

And also in the collection of poetry by Khajih Háfiz:

⁸¹ The renowned father of Vahíd Dárábí and one of the most distinguished theologians of his generation. For a detailed discussion of his life and writings, see Ahang Rabbani, *The Bábís of Nayríz: History and Documents*.

⁸² According to the Abjad system, *ghars* has a numerical value of (1000+200+60=)1260, hence signifying the year of the appearance of the Báb.

Behold the crest of the moon in Muharram,
 and drink from the wine cup,
 Since this is a sign of safety and absence of harm,
 and augurs the year of peace and love.

He [i.e., Siyyid Ja‘far] had studied these according to the science of numerology and had consulted an expert in divination: “As this is the year ‘sixty,’ will the Qá‘im appear in Mecca?” To which he had received an affirmative response. He had then asked, “If I go [on pilgrimage], will I attain the presence of the Qá‘im?” And again he had received a positive response. The Siyyid had then asked if he was destined to become a follower of the Qá‘im, to which the expert responded: “You will not become a believer.”

I myself met Hájí Siyyid Ja‘far in Mecca. He saw [the Báb] with his own eyes and heard [Him proclaim His Faith] with his own ears but did not become a believer.

Hájí Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí [Quddús], some other believers, and I were in His blessed presence [of the Báb]. After the conclusion of the pilgrimage rites [p. 75] throngs of pilgrims were present in the Masjidu‘l-Haram, and all the courtyards and rooftops overflowed with waves of people. His Holiness approached the Shrine and leaned His blessed back against the Ka‘bih, holding the door-chain with His sacred Hand. With the utmost clarity and eloquence He announced three times loudly: “I am the Qá‘im Whose appearance you have been expecting!”

It was a true wonder that despite of the massive multitude and the noise, as soon as the Báb begun to speak a complete silence overcame that whole area in such wise that if a bird were to flap its wings, everybody would hear. Once complete silence was established over everyone, He uttered the same blessed proclamation three times, with the utmost distinctness, so that all the pilgrims could hear.

The pilgrims were recounting and translating the Báb's words for one another. All conversations among the multitude concerned only this event. Indeed, the very first topic that the pilgrims of every land wrote about to their kinfolk was that a young merchant and Siyyid, twenty-five years of age, had taken hold of the Ka'bih's chain and with resounding voice had advanced the claim of the Qá'imiyat.

In a short time, this news was spread in all parts of the world. Those who sought the Truth and whose souls were prepared to attain any degree of certitude responded, "We hear and obey!"⁸³ and made haste on the pathway of Faith.

The news of this event was noised abroad in Shíráz. Prior to the voyage to Mecca not all of the city's inhabitants were aware of this Call. Some had heard it and recognized its truth, while others had not heard the claim, and yet others were saying, "These words are imputed to Him, and there is no truth in them." After the news of Mecca had reached Shíráz and His exact utterances were written and disseminated, the whole of the people were now aware and fully informed, and no room remained for doubt and vacillation for anyone.⁸⁴

Return from Búshihr

The time was nigh for the arrival of His Holiness in Shíráz.⁸⁵ Shaykh Abú-Háshim, [brother of Imám-Jum'ih,] wrote a most provocative

⁸³ Qur'án 2:285.

⁸⁴ See Nabíl A'zam, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 130–41, for further details on the Báb's hajj journey.

⁸⁵ The Báb gives the following chronology of His travels in a Khutbih [Sermon] (Ishrâq-Khávarí, *Kitáb Muhádirát*, pp. 729–31):

Left Shíráz	10 September 1844
Arrived Búshihr	19 September 1844
Left the port	2 October 1844
Reached Mecca	12 December 1844
Hajj Completed	24 December 1844
Left Mecca	7 January 1845
Arrived Medina	16 January 1845

account to Shíráz, promoting mischief and raising the cry, “Our religion is lost!” A great excitement was caused when his letter reached Shíráz. A contingent of the ‘ulamá, such as Shaykh Husayn Zalim [the tyrant], known as the Názimu’sh-Shari‘ah; Akhúnd Mullá Muhammad-‘Alí Mahallátí; Shaykh Mahdí Kajawví; and a score of others went before Husayn Khán, who was at that time the governor-general of Shíráz. They complained, “The Siyyid Who publicly claimed [the station of] the Qá’imiyyat and the Bábiyyat⁸⁶ in Mecca will shortly arrive [in Shíráz], and you must join with the adherents of Islam in quenching this fire and silencing this Call, so it is kept under control.” Husayn Khán gave in to the flattery of the clerics. When the Báb arrived at Búshihir, Husayn Khán sent a mounted escort of several men to Búshihir to arrest His Holiness and to return Him to Shíráz.

Late one afternoon, His Holiness was standing on an elevation by the village of Dálakí,⁸⁷ a distance of two days’ journey to Búshihir, when the troops passed through that location. His Holiness instructed Hájí Mubáarak, “Go quickly and ask the soldiers where they are going and what their mission is.” In accordance with His command, Hájí Mubáarak approached the soldiers and asked where they were going. The soldiers, being argumentative, said, “Where we are going and what we are doing is none of your business, black man!” Hájí Mubáarak returned to His presence and informed Him, “The horsemen refused to say what their mission is.” The Báb said, “Go and tell them to come to Me.” Hájí Mubáarak went to the soldiers and said, “My Master asked that you should be so kind as to come, so that we can make your acquaintance.”

A certain Aslán Khán, who was older and wiser than the rest, came back with Hájí Mubáarak and attained His blessed presence. He was asked, “Where are you going and what mission have you been given?” The soldier again refused to divulge their orders. The Báb said, “No

Left Medina 12 February 1845

Arrived Jiddah 24 February 1845

Embarked on ship 27 February 1845

Sailed for Iran 4 March 1845

⁸⁶ Meaning, claims to be the Promised One and to be the gate of communication with the Imáms.

⁸⁷ About five miles south of Burázján.

reason to conceal it: your mission is to take the Siyyid-i Báb to Shíráz. [p. 80] Do not trouble yourselves. I stand ready. If you went on to Búshihr according to your orders and passed this village by, you would not accomplish your mission.” The official looked closely at His Countenance and noted all the signs that he had been given in Shíráz to identify Him and realized that this was the Siyyid in person. He returned to his companions and reported what had transpired, which caused them all to exclaim with wonder, “If a man is sought by the government or the people, it is only natural for him to flee the officers sent to take him under guard from one place to another. How is it then that with the utmost courage and firmness this Personage has come forward, informing us that He is undoubtedly the object of our quest? Of a certainty He must be of the true!”

The valor of the Báb awakened the consciousness of the men. They attained His blessed presence, and His Holiness showered upon them His immense kindness and benevolence. He instructed Hájí Mubárak to serve them the supper he had prepared, as these men had been traveling and were hungry and tired. Hájí Mubárak served the same quantity of food that he had prepared for two persons and brought it. The men saw that there was very little food and that it would not even suffice one of them, but they sat to dine and ate their fill. This experience deepened their wonder. In the course of the journey they witnessed many such miracles.⁸⁸

With the utmost respect and dignity, the men accompanied His Holiness to Shíráz and told their friends and acquaintances of what they had observed and of the grandeur and majesty of the Báb.

Return of the Exalted One from Mecca to Shíráz in AH 1261 [1845]

In all events, after the true ‘ulamá, who were the heralds of the Manifestation, had raised the news of the Cause throughout the realm and it had been particularly widely reported in Shíráz, His Holiness

⁸⁸ In a Tablet dated 24 Jamádíy’th-Thání AH 1261/30 June 1845 to His uncle, Hájí Mírzá Siyyid ‘Alí, the Báb mentions the esteem that the horsemen showed Him during this journey (A.Q. Afnán, private communications, August 1993).

returned from Mecca in AH 1261. When He proclaimed His Cause publicly in Mecca, the news spread even further than before. This is reported in all the histories of the Cause and will be recounted briefly here as well.

In short, His Holiness arrived in Shíráz in the company of the guards. They proceeded directly to the governor's office and reported their arrival. They recounted all that had occurred—how they had met Him at the first staging-post at Dálakí and what they had seen with their own eyes along the way—to the Nizamu'd-Dawlih. Husayn Khán ordered that His Holiness should be detained. This news spread fast. Some ignorant people with a reputation for knowledge were present and began to torment and mock [the Báb]. They attributed to Him what was applicable to themselves. Shaykh Husayn Zálím tormented His Holiness with his own hand.

When the maternal uncle [of the Báb] and the revered mother of His Holiness were informed of these events, they were deeply perturbed. The latter went to her brother, Hájí Mírzá Siyyid 'Alí, and began to lament and bewail [over the condition of her Son].

The Báb's maternal uncle departed for the governor's office. On meeting Husayn Khán, he said, "It is reported that His Holiness has returned from the exalted city of Mecca, and His mother and other members of His family have been awaiting His arrival. Why have you detained Him? Is He not a descendant of the Prophet of God? Is there no shame before His illustrious Ancestor?" Noting the forceful manner in which the uncle defended Him, Husayn Khán replied, "If you will mediate and serve as a guarantor that He will not go to meet with anyone, that no one will be admitted to Him, and that He will not write anything or share His writing with anyone, I will release Him."

Because the illustrious uncle, Hájí Mírzá Siyyid 'Alí, was respected by the merchants and associated with reputable people, he responded, "I associate with men from all strata of society, and His Holiness is my Nephew [p. 85] and has returned from Mecca. Naturally, the people want to see Him. How can I give my word, when He has come from Mecca, to say that He may not see people?" Faced with irrefutable logic, Husayn Khán responded, "For three days, people may come and go, but on the fourth day, you are to close the door to all and allow no one to

visit your house.” Having given his surety on these terms, the uncle brought His Holiness home with him.

[Upon the Báb’s arrival home], His mother and His blessed wife, along with other friends and relatives, attained His honored presence, and for three days all the believers and friends delighted in this union and benefited from its immeasurable spiritual bestowal. Divine verses were sent down like a continuous rain: all were recorded in His own blessed Hand on large sheets of cashmere paper and bestowed upon the visitors.

On completion of the three days, all access was denied to the friends, and no one was permitted to attain the presence [of the Báb]. However, even if the Sun of Reality is covered by a sullen cloud of formal restrictions, its radiance and effulgence shines ever more apparent. Consequently, although to all appearances the believers were denied access [to the Báb], they still continued to submit to Him their questions and difficulties, and to receive replies, for it is incumbent on the generous to answer him who asks, especially when the questions refer to religious matters, and the demands are for guidance and direction in the path of salvation. The result was that many people, including people from the surrounding areas, came to inquire into the matter, submitted their questions, and received full and satisfactory answers, each according to his own capacity, so that they too were led to believe.⁸⁹

Arrival of Vahíd Dárábí

One of those who attained the presence [of the Báb] in Shíráz was the honored Áqá Siyyid Yahyá Dárábí. His story is wonderful and amazing: he was the illustrious son of Hájí Siyyid Ja‘far Kashfí, who has been mentioned in the recollections of Hájí Abú’l-Hasan, in the section pertaining to Mecca.

[Siyyid Yahyá Dárábí] was eminent among the mujtahids and students of truth, gifted with supernatural faculties and an exalted

⁸⁹ This paragraph is congruent with the narrative of Siyyid Husayn Hamadání; see *Tárikh-i Jadíd*, p. 203.

spiritual station, unrivalled in debate and investigation, no less than for his austerity and piety. At that time he was in Tihrán. The late Muhammad Sháh Qájár trusted him profoundly, to the extent that he would not take any action or assign any task contrary to the permission and the fatwa of Siyyid Yahyá. When the news of this Cause reached the monarch's ears, he summoned the honored Áqá Siyyid Yahyá and said, "According to the information received at our court, a certain Personage in Fárs has advanced a claim to the stations of Qá'imiyyat and Bábiyyat. As you enjoy our utmost confidence, you must proceed at once to Fárs, and fully investigate a matter of such universal purport. Send word to our court regarding the truth or falsity of these claims, so that we may know our civil and religious duties. You must depart with all haste, and write a prompt report on this issue for us." He provided for his expenses, ordered that he be provided with a horse, and sent him on his way to Shíráz.

Upon arrival at Shíráz he met with the honored Hájí Siyyid Javád Karbalá'í, who was a scholar of divinity and wise in the wisdom of the eternal. The two had been friends and associates in the 'Atabát. Through him, [Siyyid Yahyá] met with several other [Bábí] 'ulamá and prominent believers and, having explained the purpose of his investigation, requested a meeting [with the Báb]. However, the summons was delayed because of various obstacles. He spent the interval in examining some of the revealed verses. Finding in them no ground for objection or denial, he said in confidence to the honored Hájí Siyyid Javád, "These luminous words and verses bear witness to the truth of the claim and leave no room for doubt; yet were I permitted to behold some miracle or sign beyond this, I would gain a fuller certitude and assurance." [p. 90] That illustrious person answered, "If we were to ask that Perfect Reality for wonders and miracles, we would be like those who have seen a thousand marvels more wonderful than the fabled cleaving of the moon, but are so befuddled that they continue to seek light from a candle or lantern in the full blaze of the radiant sun."

In short, Áqá Siyyid Yahyá prepared a petition, requesting that a commentary on the blessed Surih of Kawthar be revealed for his edification. One night, about four hours after sunset, he himself took this supplication to the Blessed House of the Báb and attained His

presence, presenting his request. [The Báb] instructed him to return at dawn to receive the response to his request.

In the early dawn, as bidden, [Siyyid Yahyá] again attained His presence and was given the response in the form of an unrivaled commentary on the Surih of Kawthar extending to nearly five thousand written verses.⁹⁰ He returned with it to his own home. Then, astonished by the number and quality of its luminous verses, on meeting the honored Siyyid Javád Karbalá’í, he remarked, “I have beheld a marvel a hundred-thousand-fold beyond what I have [previously] witnessed, for, with all my learning and scholarship, I spent nine whole days in writing one single page of questions containing not more than twelve lines. At four hours into the night, I presented them myself, and at dawn, I received such a response! I am astonished that these luminous verses, of such eloquence and clarity of style, should be revealed and written down during five or six hours of the latter part of the night, which is the time for His rest and sleeping.”

As soon as Áqá Siyyid Yahyá had studied that most precious proof, he prostrated himself in adoration, and attained certitude. After a sojourn of some little while, during which the honor of an interview was accorded him, he received permission to set out for Yazd, by way of Bávanát and Marvast [Marv-Dasht], to proclaim the blessed Cause and to teach the Faith there. The details of the occurrences in Yazd will certainly be documented in the histories of that city. God willing, his return from Yazd and the events of Nayríz will be narrated at the proper place in this book.

The Báb’s Public Announcement at Masjid Vakíl

In all events, the enmity of enemies was now manifest in the utmost degree, and they exerted many efforts to prevent the friends from attaining the presence [of the Báb] and meeting with His Person. However, the devotion of the believers and the grandeur of the Cause withstood their onslaught, and the friends’ visits to His sacred presence increased considerably in accordance with the verse, “Verily the devils

⁹⁰ For comparison, the Qur’án is slightly more than 6,600 verses.

inspire their friends.”⁹¹ The honored opponents reported the events to Husayn Khán [who issued an order for the arrest of the Báb], and on the eve of 21 Ramadán [11 September 1846], over the neighbor’s wall, the guards entered the House of His Holiness.

‘Abdu’l-Hamíd Khán, the Dárúghih, who was charged with carrying out this order, arrived with several of his farrashes and noted that His Holiness was alone in the dwelling. Deeply embarrassed, ‘Abdu’l-Hamíd Khán submitted, “Certain reports reached us that a crowd had gathered at this location, and therefore we came to investigate. However, since it is evident that no one is here, we take our leave.” He then asked for a gratuity, to which [the Báb] responded, “There is nothing here.” Insisting on receiving a prize, ‘Abdu’l-Hamíd Khán seized the imported cashmere shawl that the Báb was wearing around His waist and sliced it in the middle, taking half with him.

The Dárúghih thereupon went before Husayn Khán, telling the latter that none were in the Báb’s House save He. However, the mischievous elements, led by the ‘ulamá, continued to instigate sedition, and as such Husayn Khán, the governor, sent his men to summon His Holiness with His maternal uncle to the governor’s office. There, Husayn Khán rebuked the illustrious uncle, roaring, “You guaranteed that none would be associating [with the Báb], but you have acted against your own written statement. Consequently, you must be punished.” He then turned to the farrashes and spoke harshly and contemptuously with them as well and instructed that sticks⁹² be brought. The illustrious uncle, who was a greatly respected Siyyid and [p. 95] more than sixty years of age, was struck with sticks most severely, and the Báb was struck in the face as well. Afterwards, a sum of money was extracted from the victims, and [as the uncle was unable to walk] the farrashes carried him over their shoulders to his house where he remained injured in bed for a period of time.

His Holiness was subject to brutal treatment and imprisoned in the house of ‘Abdu’l-Hamíd Khán. For a while it passed thus. Once again, the ‘ulamá assembled and went before Husayn Khán demanding

⁹¹ Qur’án 6:121.

⁹² Most likely it is meant bastinado.

that he must follow through and force the Siyyid-i Báb to be summoned and compelled to recant His claim.

One afternoon all the ‘ulamá gathered in the Government House, that is, the governor’s office, and consulted on the situation and unanimously decided that His Holiness must be brought to Masjid Vakíl where all of the city’s inhabitants, including such ranks as the ‘ulamá, the merchants, the shopkeepers, and others would be present, and in that assemblage He must be forced to withdraw His claim.

My brother, Hájí Mírzá Buzurg, and I were present once when the late Hájí Mírzá Muhammad-Sádiq Mu‘allim [teacher], who was a most respected man and had witnessed the event of Masjid Vakíl, related briefly that episode for the late ‘Andalíb. The details are as such:

I was about twenty-five years old and had reached the age of being able to discern truth from falsehood. It was noised throughout the city that, on the request of the ‘ulamá, the authorities were inviting all inhabitants of Shíráz from every strata to gather in the Masjid Vakíl where the Siyyid-i Báb would renounce His claims. I went to the mosque as well and exerted particular effort to find a spot near [the pulpit] where I could behold Him and clearly hear His utterances and speech. From the morning of that day, rank upon rank of onlookers arrived at the mosque, and by three o’clock in the afternoon the entire courtyard, the cloisters, the roofs, and even the minarets of the mosque were thronged with people. The governor, the ‘ulamá, the merchants, and other dignitaries entered and sat in the cloisters, near the stone pulpit. (This is a pulpit carved out of one piece of marble and has fourteen steps.)

I was sitting near the pulpit when a commotion was raised in the courtyard: “He is coming!” He entered through the cloister’s entrance accompanied by ten farrashes and ‘Abdu’l-Hamíd Khán, the Dárúghih, and drew near the pulpit. The Báb was wearing a turban and an ‘abá and walked with such dignity, might, grandeur, and magnificence that it is truly indescribable. Such a multitude of people in

attendance meant nothing to Him, and He heeded them not in the least.

He said to the ‘ulamá and the governor, “What is your purpose in summoning Me to this place?” They responded, “The intention is that You should ascend this pulpit and repudiate Your false claim so that this fury and excitement may subside.” [The Báb] did not respond and ascended the pulpit where He stood on the third step. With great vehemence, Shaykh Husayn Zálím said, “Ascend to the top of the pulpit so everyone can see You and hear Your voice.” His Holiness ascended to the top of the pulpit and sat there. Suddenly, an absolute silence prevailed and not a whisper could be heard from the people, and it seemed as if not a soul was in that mosque. Everyone was listening most attentively.

At first, with utmost majesty and sovereignty, He commenced recitation of an exquisite Arabic homily with absolute eloquence and clarity that lasted some half an hour. The entire concourse of people, high and low, learned and illiterate alike were in total rapture and listened with great fascination. People’s silence, caused agitation in Shaykh Husayn who said to the governor, “Have you summoned the Siyyid in the presence of these people to establish the validity of His Cause or to recant His false claim? He is casting a spell on the assemblage with His enchanting speech. Instruct Him to say what He was intended to say. What drivel is He uttering?” Husayn Khán, the Sáhib-Ikhtiyár, said [to the Báb], “Siyyid, state what they [i.e., the ‘ulamá] have told you to affirm, [p. 100] what is this idle chatter?” His Holiness remained silent for a moment and then uttered, “O People, know this well and be informed. I say unto you what My Grandfather, the Messenger of God, spoke twelve hundred and sixty years ago, and I do not speak what He spoke not. ‘What Muhammad made lawful remains lawful unto the Day of Resurrection, and what He forbade remains forbidden unto the Day of Resurrection.’

In accordance with this Hadíth-i Marví from the Immaculate One, ‘Verily, the Qá’im will usher forth the Day of Resurrection.’”

Having recited this Tradition, He then descended the pulpit. Many of those who had previously harbored enmity or malice, once having beheld Him, were guided aright and repudiated their ways.

Shaykh Husayn Zálím, out of sheer hostility, raised his walking-stick to strike His Holiness in the head, when the late Mírzá Abú’l-Hasan Khán, the Mushíru’l-Mulk, who was a young man in those days, readily brought forward his shoulder to ward off the attack, and it was his shoulder that sustained the hit. Afterwards, Husyan Khán instructed that His Holiness once again be imprisoned in the home of ‘Abdu’l-Hamíd Khán.

In short, the aforementioned Hájí [Mu‘allím], though not a believer but an admirer [of the Báb], related this story to the late ‘Andalíb. His purpose was that [the Báb] on that occasion affirmed the truth of His Cause and completed His proof before the concourse of people.⁹³

Fatwá Against the Báb

After His Holiness returned from the mosque and was placed under house-arrest at the home of ‘Abdu’l-Hamíd Khán, the entire body of the ‘ulamá assembled and fixed their seal on a fatwá decreeing the death of His Holiness. Among those present who signed the document was Shaykh Husayn Zálím, known as the Nazimu’sh-Sharí’ih, who was the source of all sedition and the prime instigator of mischief. Others were Shaykh Abú-Háshim, Shaykh Asadu’lláh, Shaykh Mihdí Kujúry, Mullá Muhammad-‘Alí Mahallátí, and those like them. They wrote whatsoever they wished and signed that paper.

⁹³ See Balyúzí, *The Báb*, pp. 96–98, for a slightly different translation.

That congregation then proceeded to the home of the late Shaykh Abú-Turáb,⁹⁴ the Imám-Jum‘ih, who, despite their insistence and every effort, had refused to attend their assemblage. Attaining the presence of the Shaykh, they acquainted him with their purpose and presented the document, requesting him to fix his seal on the paper as well so that the matter of the Siyyid be concluded [and the Báb be slain]. Upon perusing the fatwa and considering its content, the Shaykh, profoundly moved with indignation, threw the paper to the ground and cried, “Have you lost your faculties! Never will I sign such a paper, as I have no misgivings whatsoever regarding the nobility, chastity, integrity, sagacity, piety, and virtue of this Siyyid! In this Youth, I behold the ultimate manifestation of Islamic and human attributes, as well as evidence of the highest expressions of wisdom and rational reasoning. I see two possibilities: Either He speaks truthfully, or He is, as you allege, a liar. If He speaks genuinely, then I would be remiss to issue a fatwa against an honest and trustworthy person. And should He, as you aver, be a liar and a perjurer, which of us standing here can claim to have spoken only the truth in our lives? Therefore, arise and leave this place, and do not conceive such empty imaginings.” No matter how they pleaded, the late Shaykh Abú-Turáb, may his station be exalted, refused to ratify the document with his seal, and through this refusal, their efforts came to naught, their purpose was frustrated, and their wish remained unfulfilled.

Departure for Isfahán

In short, at this time, for the warning and awakening of the neglectful and the ignorant, the Ocean of Divine Wrath stirred forth, and a grievous cholera epidemic fell upon Iran and raged with especial fury over Shíráz. Great multitudes from all ranks, including nobles, peasants, learned, illiterate, ministers, and subjects made haste to escape from this

⁹⁴ A son of Shaykh Muhammad Záhíd [pious] who had served as the Imám-Jum‘ih of Shíráz after his father, Shaykh Abú-Turáb ranked as the foremost divine of the city and was greatly loved and admired by the citizens. He lived for a few years during the reign of Muhammad Sháh in Tihrán but eventually returned to Shíráz where he passed away in 1855; see Bámdád, *Sharh Hál Rijál Iran*, vol. 1, p. 71.

evident calamity. The first to retreat was Husayn Khán, the governor, and then others followed from all ranks of society.

A large number died. It chanced that the two young sons of ‘Abdu’l-Hamíd Khán, the Dárúghih, fell ill of the cholera and came nigh to death’s door. Their mother, deeply agitated, spoke harshly to her husband, ‘Abdu’l-Hamíd Khán, saying, “Their illness is because of your evil doings towards this wronged Siyyid [p. 105] Who has been unjustly imprisoned here. Through such negligence, you will bring ruin upon yourself and the whole household. Let this innocent Siyyid leave.” ‘Abdu’l-Hamíd Khán besought the Báb, earnestly stating, “Depart for wherever Your holy inclinations may lead You.” [The Báb] responded, “Husayn Khán has fled from the city in the face of divine chastisement; however, when he returns, you will be responsible [for My whereabouts].” “It is I,” ‘Abdu’l-Hamíd Khán pleaded, “who must remain answerable to Husayn Khán as, because of my misdeeds, my sons are now near death. After them, I wish not to live any longer in this world.” He cried bitterly for the fate that had befallen him and beseeched the intercession of His Holiness, Who prayed and responded by handing him a sweet pomegranate and stating, “Have your sons eat from this fruit.” After the lads had partaken of the pomegranate and full recovery was theirs, ‘Abdu’l-Hamíd Khán, having witnessed the occurrence of this miracle, implored Him, “Do not tarry, even for one hour, in this dwelling, I will not prevent Your departure in whatever direction You will. And furthermore, I stand ready to offer whatever service that Your Holiness may require.”

[The Báb] retired to His house, and there the family and kinsmen came to visit Him. Later, in the company of Áqá Muhammad-Husayn Ardistaní, who was reckoned among the believers and among His close companions, [the Báb] proceeded for the city of Isfahán.⁹⁵ The events

⁹⁵ In the language of prayer, the Báb gives an outline of the events that had befallen Him:

Thou art aware, O My God, that since the day Thou didst call Me into being out of the water of Thy love till I reached fifteen years of age I lived in the land that witnessed My birth [Shíráz]. Then Thou didst enable Me to go to the seaport [Búshihir] where for five years I was engaged in trading with the goodly gifts of Thy realm and was

occurring in that land are indeed beyond all description and assuredly have been recorded in the narratives pertaining to that city. For our purposes, only the following note regarding the incidents of Isfahán should suffice.

Upon arrival in the city of Isfahán, the late Manuchihr Khán, the Mu‘tamidu’d-Dawlih,⁹⁶ exalted by his station, came into the presence [of the Báb] and immediately became a most ardent admirer. His Holiness described some of the tyranny and injuries that He had previously endured at the hand of Husayn Khán, adding, “When We departed from Shíráz, cholera raged over the province of Fárs, and Husayn Khán escaped with all deliberate speed from the city. I was made captive at the home of ‘Abdu’l-Hamíd Khán, but because of the epidemic and the fact that his own sons fell victims to the illness, he released this Wronged-One and of necessity asked that I leave. In so doing, he remarked, ‘Upon Husayn Khán’s return, I will personally shoulder the responsibility.’ Surely, after the pandemic of cholera has been eradicated and quiet has once again become the city’s norm, Husayn Khán will return and will inquire after Me. As he is a wicked and ill-natured man, upon discovering that I no longer reside within His grasp, he will injure my kinsmen and family. My purpose is to ask your Excellency to petition Husayn Khán

occupied in that which Thou favored Me through the wondrous essence of Thy loving-kindness. I proceeded therefrom to the Holy Land [Karbálá] where I sojourned for one year. Then I returned to the place of My birth. There I experienced the revelation of Thy sublime bestowals and the evidences of Thy boundless grace. I yield Thee praise for all Thy goodly gifts, and I render Thee thanksgiving for all Thy bounties. Then at the age of twenty-five I proceeded to Thy sacred House [Mecca], and by the time I returned to the place where I was born, a year had elapsed. There I tarried patiently in the path of Thy love and beheld the evidences of Thy manifold bounties and loving-kindness until Thou didst ordain for Me to set out in Thy direction and to migrate to Thy presence.

—*Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, pp. 180–81

⁹⁶ For a biography of Manuchihr Khán, see Bámdád, *Sharh Hál Rijál Iran*, vol. 4, pp. 159–63. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has revealed a Tablet of Visitation for him wherein it is revealed that visiting his resting-place in Qum is endowed with special spiritual potency.

that he may not disturb [My family].” As soon as this request was made by his distinguished Guest, the late Mu‘tamidu’d-Dawlih wrote a detailed letter to the governor-general of Fárs, with words to the effect that “the Siyyid-i Báb is a guest in my abode in Isfahán, and I stand as His protector. Should the government summon Him [to Tíhrán for further inquiry], I will personally deliver Him. You have no cause to harass His family or inflict disturbance upon them.” This letter was sent to Shíráz with a special envoy.

When the epidemic subsided to a prescribed degree, the people who had fled the city returned forthwith, including Husayn Khán who [as anticipated by the Báb] immediately inquired from ‘Abdu’l-Hamíd Khán the whereabouts of His Holiness. The latter responded, “As the epidemic raged uncontrollably throughout the land and my wife and sons had fallen victim to the illness as well, I could no longer properly minister His affairs and as such asked Him to retire to His own dwelling.” Deeply angered by the turn of events, Husayn Khán instructed ‘Abdu’l-Hamíd Khán to proceed at once in company of ten farrashes and search the home of His Holiness or wherever else He might be and bring Him forthwith to the government-house.

Persecution of the Báb’s Family

As instructed, they proceeded immediately to the House of His Holiness and, not finding Him there, proceeded to the home of His illustrious uncle, [Hájí Mírzá Siyyid ‘Alí,] but were unable to locate the latter at home either. [p. 110] They then proceeded to the residence of the late Hájí Mírzá Abú’l-Qásim. The latter was a paternal cousin of the Báb’s mother and a brother of the honored wife of the Báb, [Khadíjih Bagum,] and at the time was the renowned standard-bearer of the family. My maternal grandmother [Zahrá Bagum], who was the sister of the Báb’s wife, related:

My late brother, that is, Hájí Mírzá Abú’l-Qásim, was home suffering from cholera and resting in bed due to weakness caused by the illness, when some time before noon, there was a violent knock on our door. The entire household was

deeply disturbed. Fírúz, our black, house-born servant, went to inquire who it was when suddenly and without warning, ‘Abdu’l-Hamíd Khán, the Dárúghih, in the company of a number of farrashes and some other lewd characters entered our home and filled the courtyard. A most disturbing uproar ensued as they hurriedly searched the house for any trace of His Holiness and disappointed [in their inability to locate the Báb,] came to the room where my late brother was resting in bed due to his illness. The farrashes placed him on their shoulders and took him before Husayn Khán, the Sáhíb-Ikhtiyár.

Profoundly infuriated, the latter inquired callously, “Where lies the Siyyid-i Báb?” “I have been afflicted with cholera,” my brother replied, “and still suffer from the illness. As such, I do not know His whereabouts, nor do I have any news of Him.” Husayn Khán dealt with him most harshly and severely and finally he was granted fifteen days to either present His Holiness or to pay a fine of fifteen-hundred tumáns.⁹⁷ Reluctantly, he accepted. Then the governor asked for a guarantor, and Hájí Muhammad-Sádiq Isfahání, who ranked among the best known and most respected of the merchants and who was a very close friend of the honored Hájí, stood in this capacity. After a surety was extracted, the Hájí was dismissed and returned home.

After the lapse of the agreed upon days, farrashes were sent to summon the Hájí [Abú’l-Qásim] to the governor’s office and to present him before Husayn Khán. The latter, once again, spoke most sternly demanding either the delivery of His Holiness or the sum of fifteen-hundred tumáns. The more the Hájí implored for mercy and the more he swore that he was bereft of any news from Him, the angrier the governor grew. Finally, [unable to withstand the governor’s admonishments,] the Hájí fell to the ground

⁹⁷ Fifteen-hundred tumáns represented an extraordinarily large sum of money for that time.

unconscious, and it was at that moment that the special envoy sent from Isfahán bearing the letter of the late Mu‘tamiu’d-Dawlih arrived and the envelope displaying the seal of Manuchihr Khán presented to Husayn Khán.

Upon considering its content, [Husayn Khán] realized that he could no longer cause trouble or remonstrate, but he nevertheless extracted fifteen-hundred tumáns from him before allowing the late Hájí to leave.

He further issued a command that hereafter should any piece of paper be found in that city bearing the handwriting of His Holiness or a verse revealed by Him, he would demolish that house.

Husayn Khán rounded up all the believers and devotees of His Holiness, and, after administering severe beatings with sticks and causing them much injury, he extracted from the victims whatever sum they could muster.

Husayn Khán was an ill-natured, wicked man, and His Holiness the Exalted One has described his evil doings in the *Khutbah-i Qabriyyih* addressed to Hájí Mírzá Aqásí, and the reader may refer to that Tablet.⁹⁸ From his contemptible, base, and malicious deeds, it can readily be discerned how truly evil and corrupt a person Husayn Khán was.

The Fate of the Báb’s Writings

In short, my late maternal grandmother would continue relating:

After the governor’s order was noised in the city, whoever had received such Writings [revealed by the Báb] would bring them in bundles and deposit the packs in a long vestibule in the house of Hájí Mírzá Abú’l-Qásim. One side

⁹⁸ See Fayzí, *Hadrat Nuqtih Ulá*, pp. 151–53, and Mázandarání, *Tárikh Zubúru’l-Haqq*, vol. 3, pp. 85–89. In a Tablet (INBMC, vol. 64, p. 115), the Báb describes the governor to Muhammad Sháh as “vicious and sinister” who owing to consummate drunkenness “was never able to pass a sound judgment.”

of the courtyard was filled with such Writings stacked high, all penned on large exquisite cashmere papers in the hand of His Holiness. Were even a page of those precious Writings available today, it would surely be worth an immense fortune. Those papers all contained innumerable commentaries, prayers, homilies, and scientific treatises on diverse themes. The illustrious uncle⁹⁹ of the Báb was asked in what manner were we to dispose of those Writings, and he had made reply, “These are all the Words of God and as such cannot be treated disrespectfully. Wash the papers and throw the water in the well of the courtyard.”

[p. 115] We placed four large washtubs on the ground of the courtyard, and the four of us, that is, the mother [of the Báb], Khadíjih Bagum, the wife of Hájí Mírzá Abú’l-Qásim,¹⁰⁰ and I began to place stacks of these papers in the tubs and washed them much like cloths are washed by hand. Page by page, the ink was washed away from all the sheets, and the water and the papers thrown down the well.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Presumably, a reference to Hájí Mírzá Siyyid-‘Alí.

¹⁰⁰ Her name was Sultán Bagum, and she was from Jahrum.

¹⁰¹ For other details on the Báb’s stay in Shíráz, see Nabíl A‘zam, *The Dawn-Breakers*, chapter 8.