

The following story is from the book

The Central Figures

The Báb

Volume One



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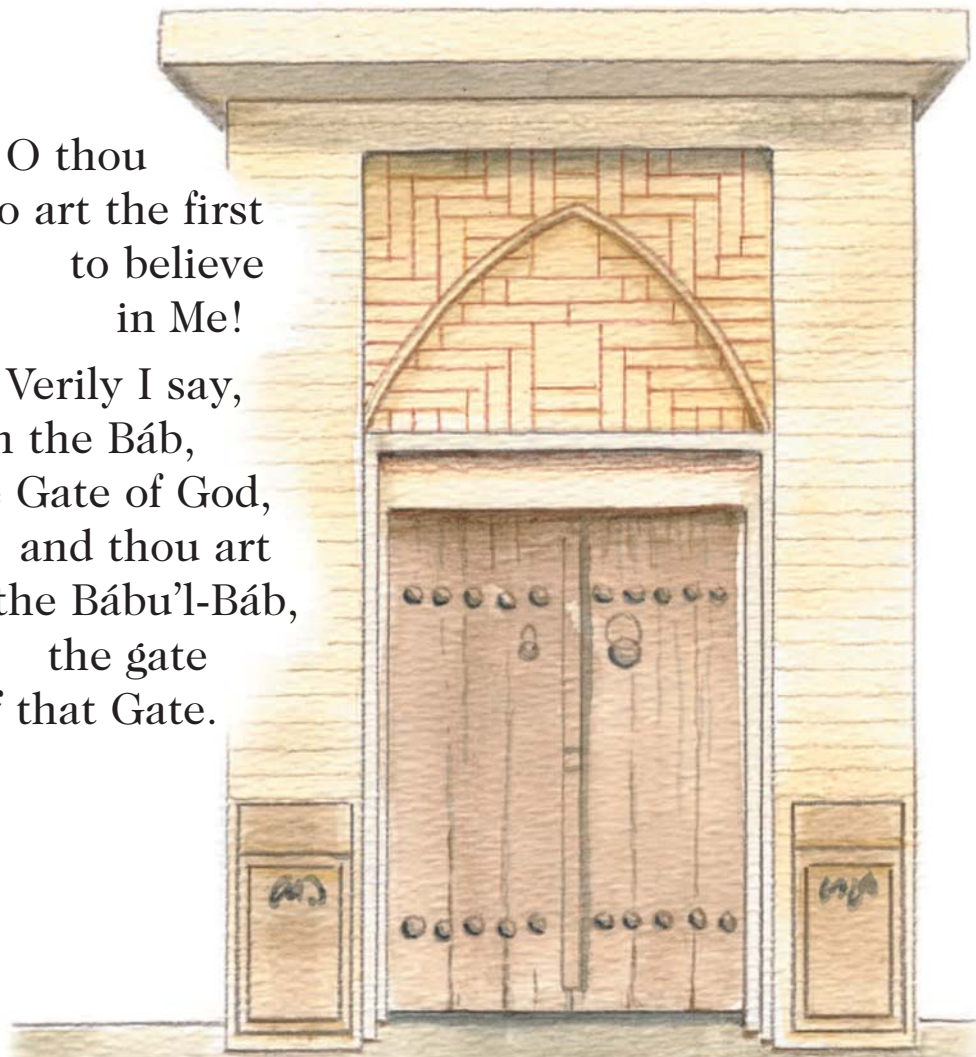
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Core Curriculum for Spiritual Education • Stories
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O thou
who art the first
to believe
in Me!
Verily I say,
I am the Báb,
the Gate of God,
and thou art
the Bábu'l-Báb,
the gate
of that Gate.

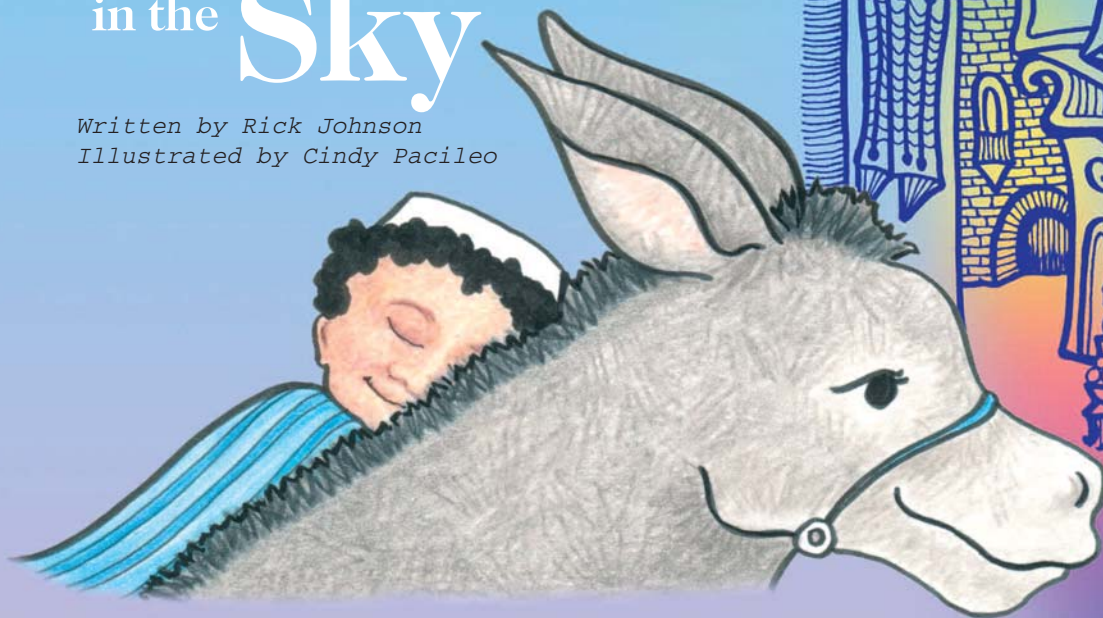


— The Báb, quoted in Nabíl-i-A'zam, *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 63



Like Stars in the Sky

*Written by Rick Johnson
Illustrated by Cindy Pacileo*

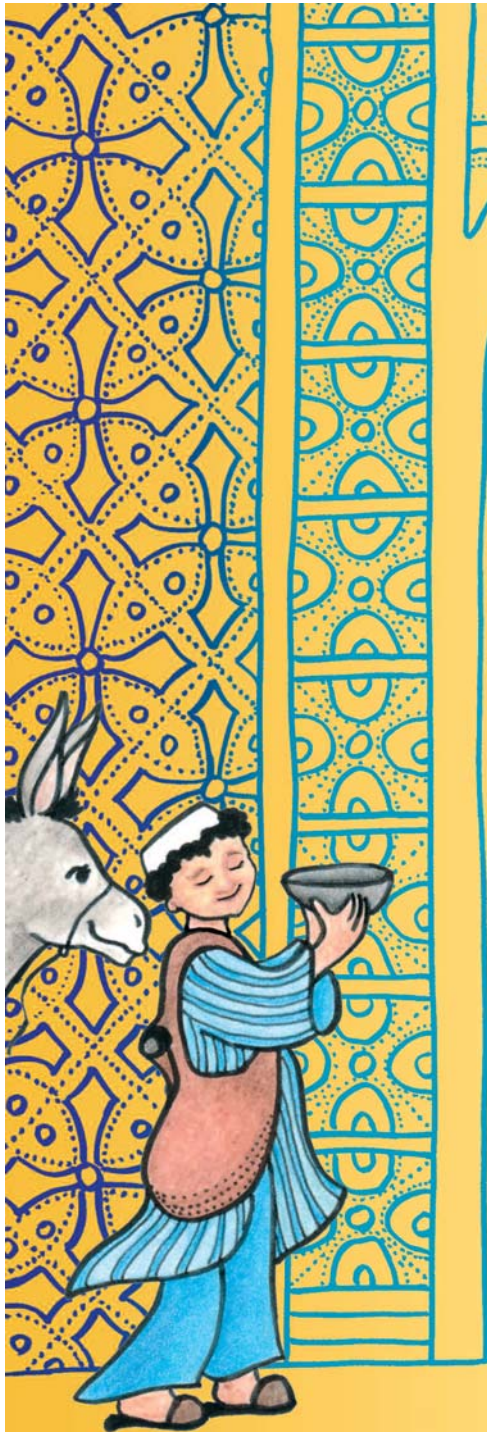


“Whoa, Khár! Slow down!” My donkey has a mind of his own. Tonight he’s running too fast through narrow alleys. My leg scrapes against the wall, and it hurts!

Khár knows Shíráz well. Although I’m blind, I can find my way. But I rely on Khár.¹

We travel the streets constantly. We do jobs for my “grandmother,” B**í**b**í** Miriam. She’s not really my grandmother, but she raised me.

¹The use of all kinds of animals as “seeing eye” guides is an ancient practice. The amazing capacity of such animals to provide this service to blind people is well-documented.



My parents died from cholera.² Bībí's husband died also. She took me in, and I called her Bībí.³ Her son, Salím, became my big brother. Even orphans can have a real family.

In Shíráz, poor people are left to beg, but Bībí will not allow us to beg. Each day, Salím and I offer free water to travelers at the city gate. They often give us coins. We also carry baggage and guide people.

Being blind, my other senses are especially sharp. I'm also very sensitive to the feel of my surroundings. Although I cannot see with my eyes, I can see feelings in others.

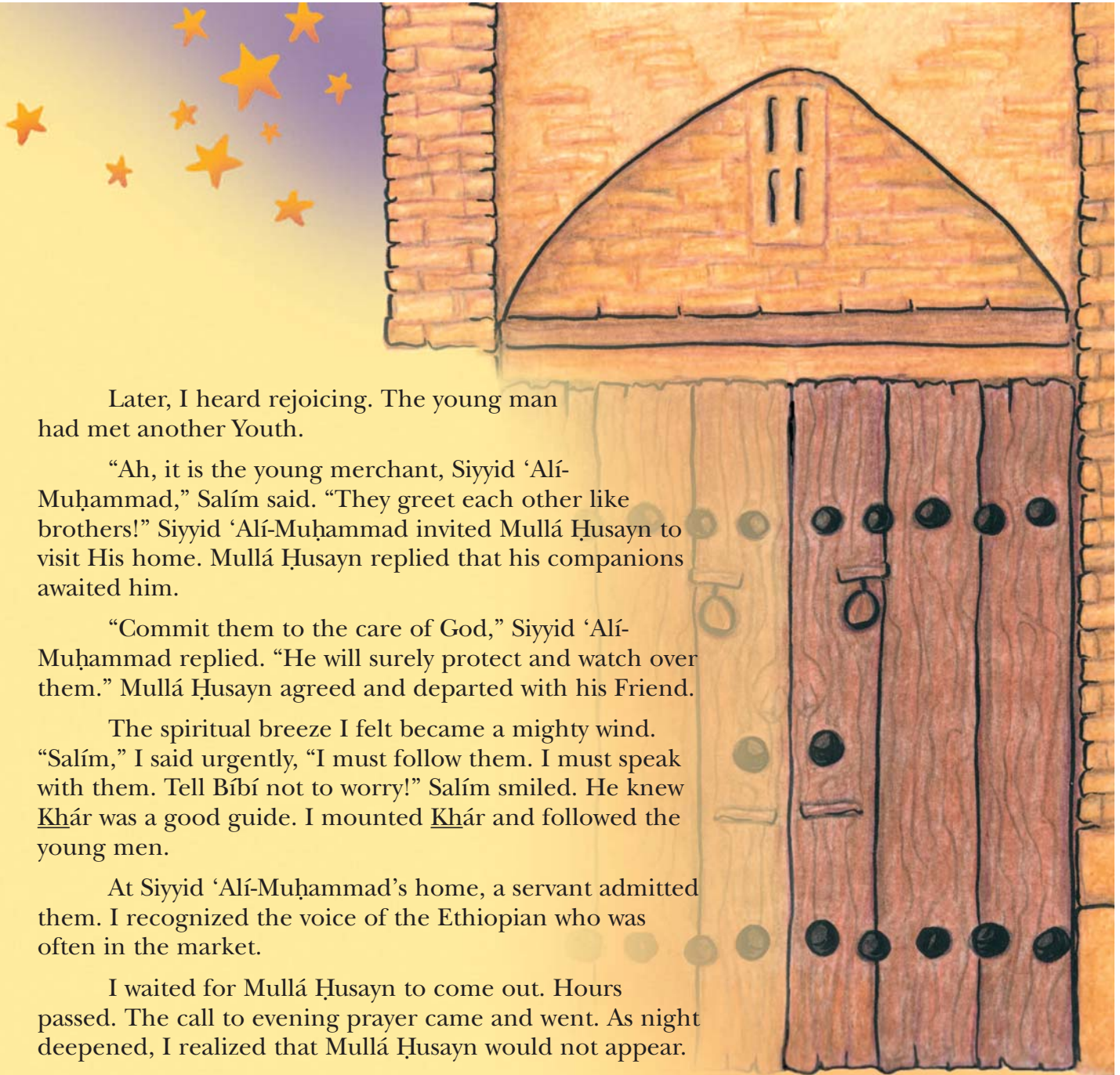
Recently on a hot May afternoon, we were giving water to travelers. I overheard a young man say to some companions, "Go to the inn, and remain there until I arrive. God willing, I will arrive there in time to join you for evening prayers."

The young man's name was Mullá Ḥusayn. His brother and nephew were with him. After we offered them water, the brother and nephew left.

I wanted to know more about Mullá Ḥusayn. I sensed something special about him. Yet, I could not intrude. He seemed to be beseeching God with each step he took. I could not see him, but his presence felt like a refreshing breeze. Love is like a gentle breeze. You don't need eyes to feel it.

²Cholera is a deadly disease spread by unclean water and poor sanitation. It especially affects poor people. There were frequent outbreaks in 19th century Persia and the surrounding region.

³Bībí means grandmother in Arabic. More generally in Persian, it is a term of respect for an older woman of the household.



Later, I heard rejoicing. The young man had met another Youth.

“Ah, it is the young merchant, Siyyid ‘Alí-Muḥammad,” Salím said. “They greet each other like brothers!” Siyyid ‘Alí-Muḥammad invited Mullá Ḥusayn to visit His home. Mullá Ḥusayn replied that his companions awaited him.

“Commit them to the care of God,” Siyyid ‘Alí-Muḥammad replied. “He will surely protect and watch over them.” Mullá Ḥusayn agreed and departed with his Friend.

The spiritual breeze I felt became a mighty wind. “Salím,” I said urgently, “I must follow them. I must speak with them. Tell Bíbí not to worry!” Salím smiled. He knew Khár was a good guide. I mounted Khár and followed the young men.

At Siyyid ‘Alí-Muḥammad’s home, a servant admitted them. I recognized the voice of the Ethiopian who was often in the market.

I waited for Mullá Ḥusayn to come out. Hours passed. The call to evening prayer came and went. As night deepened, I realized that Mullá Ḥusayn would not appear.



Khár was restless and wanted food and water. He bolted for home. As I hung on tight, I thought about the powerful new spirit that had moved me at the city gate. It seemed inseparable from Mullá Ḥusayn and Siyyid ‘Alí-Muḥammad. I wanted to know more.

For some days after that night, I abandoned my water service. I spent days at the Masjid-i-Ílkhání⁴ where large crowds gathered to hear Mullá Ḥusayn speak. Great prayer meetings were held. Siyyid ‘Alí-Muḥammad attended, but Mullá Ḥusayn did not seem to show Him any special attention.

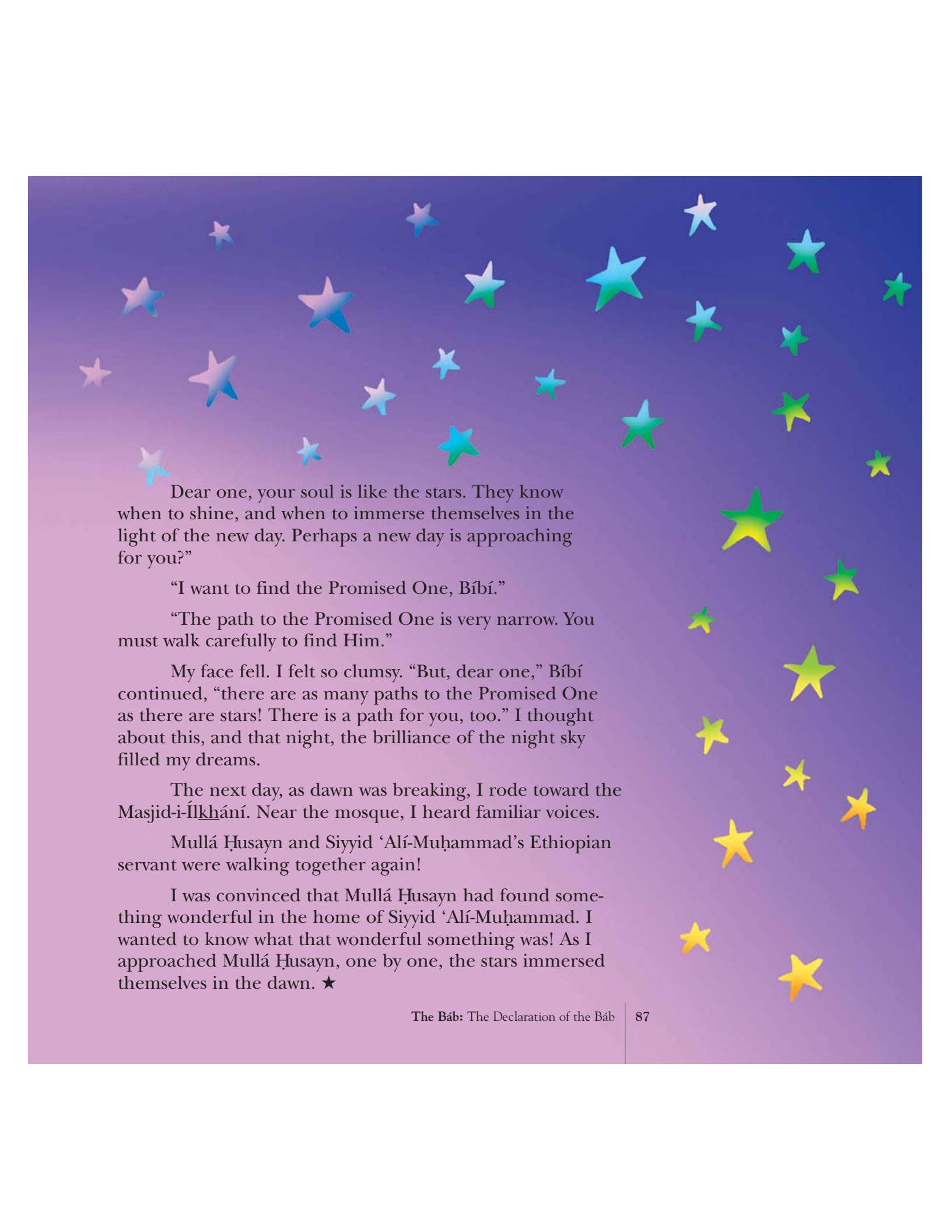
Mullá Ḥusayn offered classes. People of all kinds came. Each day, his talks became more passionate. “Arise, O peoples of the world! The portal of His grace is open wide; enter therein!” He invited each person to seek the Promised One. If he knew Who it was, he would not say. Could even I find Him? I wondered.

One night, I sat leaning out the window, enjoying the gentle breeze.

“Dear one, the sky is dazzling with stars tonight. How many do you count?” Bībí asked.

“Oh, Bībí, you know that there are too many to count!” I laughed.

⁴A mosque in Shíráz.



Dear one, your soul is like the stars. They know when to shine, and when to immerse themselves in the light of the new day. Perhaps a new day is approaching for you?"

"I want to find the Promised One, Bábí."

"The path to the Promised One is very narrow. You must walk carefully to find Him."

My face fell. I felt so clumsy. "But, dear one," Bábí continued, "there are as many paths to the Promised One as there are stars! There is a path for you, too." I thought about this, and that night, the brilliance of the night sky filled my dreams.

The next day, as dawn was breaking, I rode toward the Masjid-i-Ílkhání. Near the mosque, I heard familiar voices.

Mullá Ḥusayn and Siyyid 'Alí-Muḥammad's Ethiopian servant were walking together again!

I was convinced that Mullá Ḥusayn had found something wonderful in the home of Siyyid 'Alí-Muḥammad. I wanted to know what that wonderful something was! As I approached Mullá Ḥusayn, one by one, the stars immersed themselves in the dawn. ★