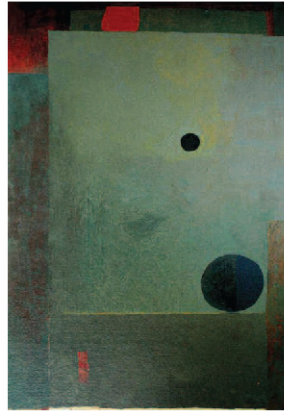


The following story is from the book

*The Central Figures*  
*The Báb*  
*Volume Two*



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*Yea, I swear by Thy glory;  
to Me the prison  
hath proved to be naught  
but the most delightful  
garden of Paradise  
and hath served as the  
noblest spot in the realm above.*

— The Báb, *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 184

Illustrated by Haydar Barnes



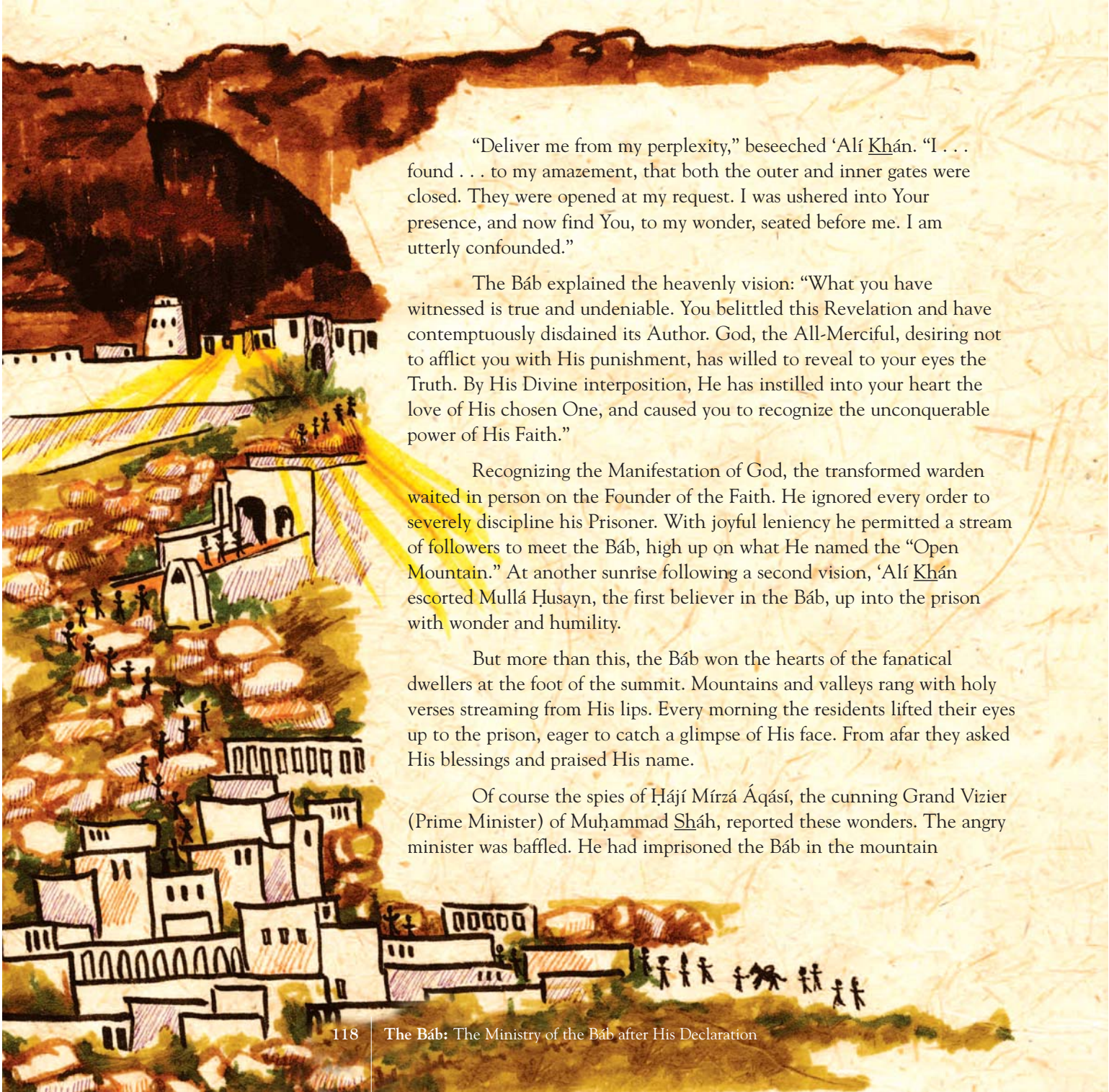
# Prisoner at the Dawn

Written by Kiser Barnes  
Illustrated by Cindy Pacileo

It was the silent time at dawn. The Báb was imprisoned in a castle atop the mountain rising above the town of Máh-Kú. The hostile officer in charge of the isolated prison, 'Alí Khán, was eager to humiliate the Prisoner. Even a candle to light His cell was denied. Now galloping his horse at sunrise towards the small town, the strong-willed warden would learn the Prophet's coming was the first glimmerings of a new morning for the world.

Suddenly he saw the Báb praying by the river outside the town gate. "Impossible!" he must have thought. "How could the Inmate be there?" Hadn't he ordered Him strictly confined? Furious, the startled jailer spurred forward, bent on chastising the Captive for leaving prison without permission.

All at once a great fear gripped 'Alí Khán. So powerful were the Báb's devotions he dared not interrupt. He turned his fury onto the guards at the outer post. He thought they had let the Prisoner escape. No one had passed through the gates, he discovered. Determined to verify that the Inmate had not gained His freedom, the agitated warden sped up across Máh-Kú, up the twisting hillside, up into the castle. Gaining the Báb's presence, he flung himself at His feet.



“Deliver me from my perplexity,” beseeched ‘Alí Khán. “I . . . found . . . to my amazement, that both the outer and inner gates were closed. They were opened at my request. I was ushered into Your presence, and now find You, to my wonder, seated before me. I am utterly confounded.”

The Báb explained the heavenly vision: “What you have witnessed is true and undeniable. You belittled this Revelation and have contemptuously disdained its Author. God, the All-Merciful, desiring not to afflict you with His punishment, has willed to reveal to your eyes the Truth. By His Divine interposition, He has instilled into your heart the love of His chosen One, and caused you to recognize the unconquerable power of His Faith.”

Recognizing the Manifestation of God, the transformed warden waited in person on the Founder of the Faith. He ignored every order to severely discipline his Prisoner. With joyful leniency he permitted a stream of followers to meet the Báb, high up on what He named the “Open Mountain.” At another sunrise following a second vision, ‘Alí Khán escorted Mullá Ḥusayn, the first believer in the Báb, up into the prison with wonder and humility.

But more than this, the Báb won the hearts of the fanatical dwellers at the foot of the summit. Mountains and valleys rang with holy verses streaming from His lips. Every morning the residents lifted their eyes up to the prison, eager to catch a glimpse of His face. From afar they asked His blessings and praised His name.

Of course the spies of Ḥájí Mírzá Áqásí, the cunning Grand Vizier (Prime Minister) of Muḥammad Sháh, reported these wonders. The angry minister was baffled. He had imprisoned the Báb in the mountain

stronghold, thinking this seclusion would end the speculations that the Inmate was the Promised One of a new Age. In the smugness of power, he transferred the Báb to the castle of Chihríq.

The Grand Vizier thought this cruel sentence would arrest the Dawn. He warned Yahyá Khán, the cocky chieftain in charge, not to allow anyone to visit the Báb nor to permit what had happened at Máh-Kú. It was all up to the harsh official to prove his loyalty by imposing severe security measures.

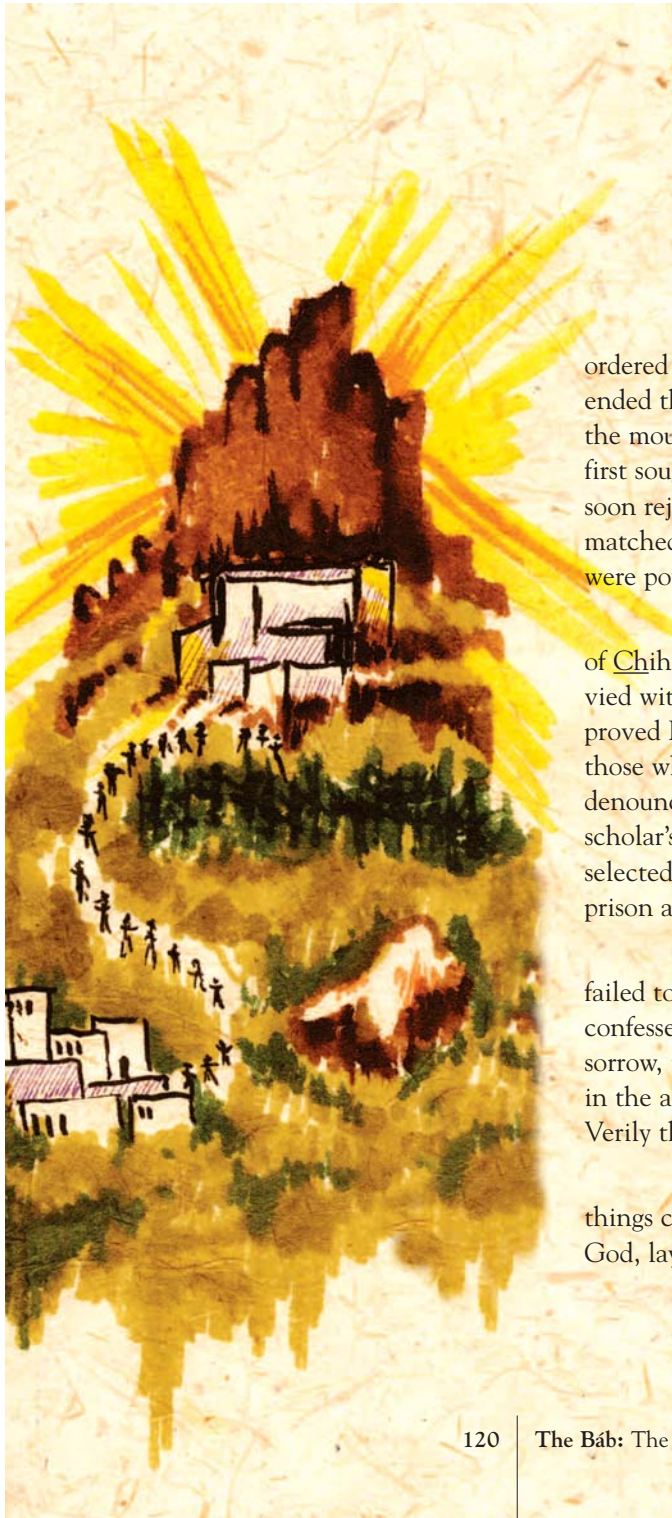
But Yahyá Khán, like ‘Alí Khán, could not obey those orders. Soon the Báb captured his heart. Once again those who had persecuted the Prophet had achieved the exact opposite of what they had intended.

How the Prisoner’s heavenly power subdued the domineering officials! With no thought of surrender, He would not accept conditions reserved for criminals. He would not submit. Each jailer outdid the other trying to stifle the Revelation. So much so that the Báb named Chihríq the “Grievous Mountain” because of the severe confinement there. In some of His Epistles to Muḥammad Sháh, He revealed the certitude of His influence:

Art thou not ashamed in the presence of God for the consignment to a fortress of Him Who is the Testimony of God and His being made captive in the hands of the faithless? Woe betide thee and them who rejoice . . . in inflicting so dire a humiliation upon Me.

Were he who hath been willing to treat Me in such a manner to know Who it is Whom he hath so treated he, verily, would never in his life be happy . . . it is as if he hath imprisoned all the Prophets, and all the men of truth and all the chosen ones.





And elsewhere He announced:

**Of My own will have I chosen to be afflicted by My enemies, 'that God might accomplish the things destined to be done.'**

Both jailers had matched determination to injure the Báb. Both ordered a total blackout on the outside world for Him. But they soon ended the hardships of His captivity. Both let believers go up and down the mountains. Both, with ambition and an instinct for self-protection, first sought only the Grand Vizier's favors in mistreating the Báb. They soon rejoiced in pleasing their Guest. In the beginning they were matched in their ignorance of the Revelation's force. At the end they were powerless to resist the Báb's authority.

The Báb also kindled love for Him in the hearts of the people of Chihríq. Gazing up at the castle they asked for His blessings. They vied with each other in telling of His glory. They recounted dreams that proved His power. A prominent official, Mírzá Aşadu'lláh, was among those whose arrogance was mellowed by divine wisdom. He had bitterly denounced the Prophet. But when the Báb interpreted the proud scholar's dream and disclosed verses from the Qur'an he had secretly selected to test Him, he hastened over the stony path up into the prison and declared his belief.

So at the spiritual Dawn, every attempt at Máh-Kú and Chihríq failed to imprison the rising Sun of the new religion. For the Prisoner confessed unto mankind: "In this mountain I . . . find Myself free from sorrow, inasmuch as I abide within the good-pleasure of My Lord . . . I am in the all-highest Paradise, rejoicing at My communion with God. . . . Verily this is a bounty which God hath conferred upon Me."

The Báb taught His captors, in ways full of wonder, that all things connected with the breaking of the morning light of the Day of God, lay prisoned within His will. ★