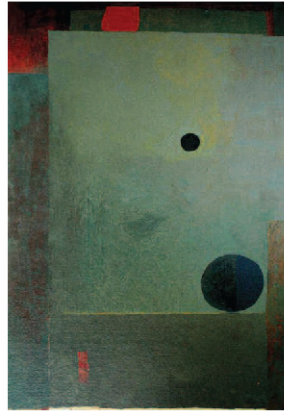


The following story is from the book

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



These stories are lovingly provided to download as a convenience to teachers or communities otherwise unable to acquire the book. Each book in this storybook series also includes an appendix with questions for discussion and reflection, a glossary of words and phrases used in the stories, a bibliography, and an index.

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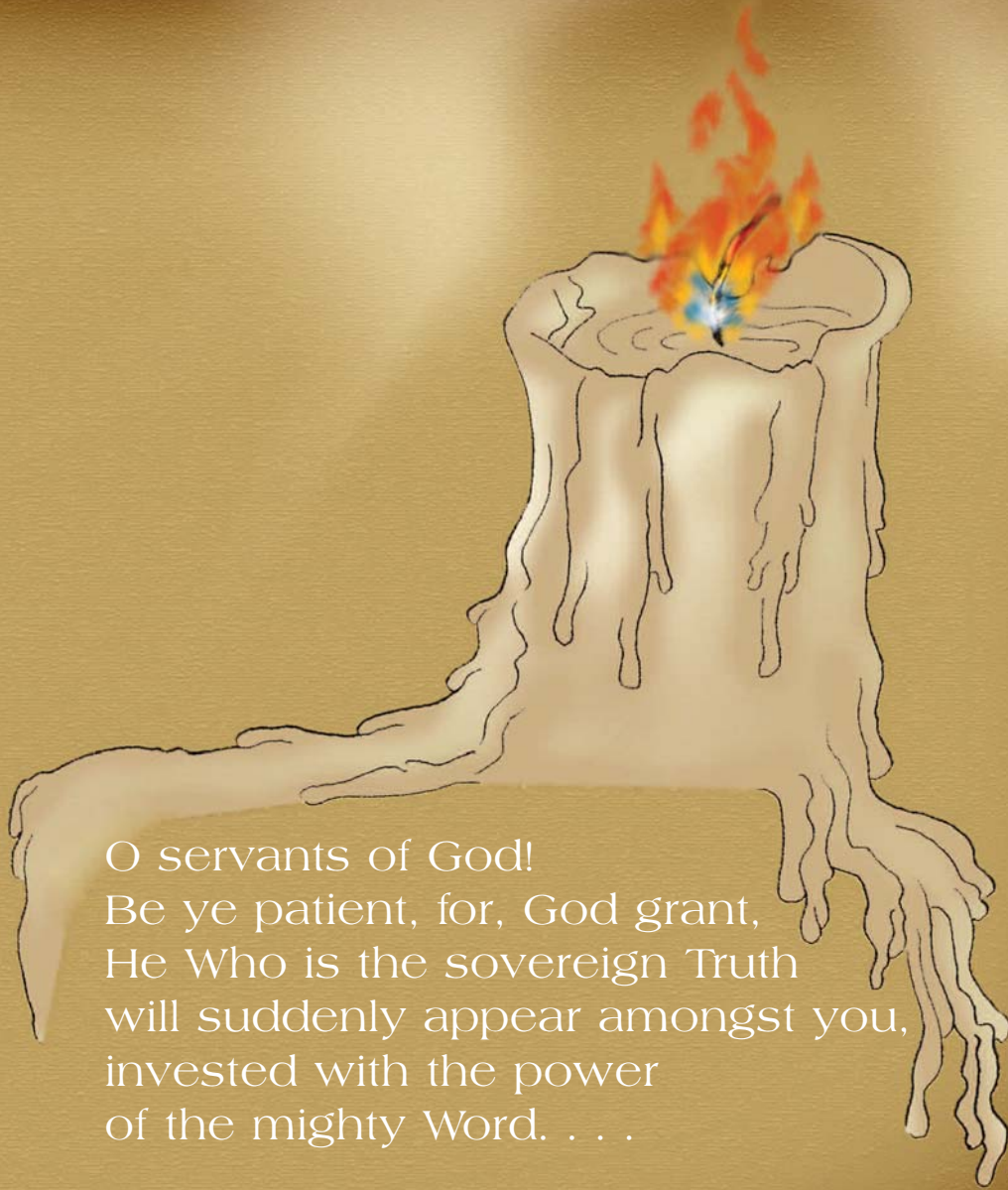
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O servants of God!  
Be ye patient, for, God grant,  
He Who is the sovereign Truth  
will suddenly appear amongst you,  
invested with the power  
of the mighty Word. . . .

— The Báb, *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 60

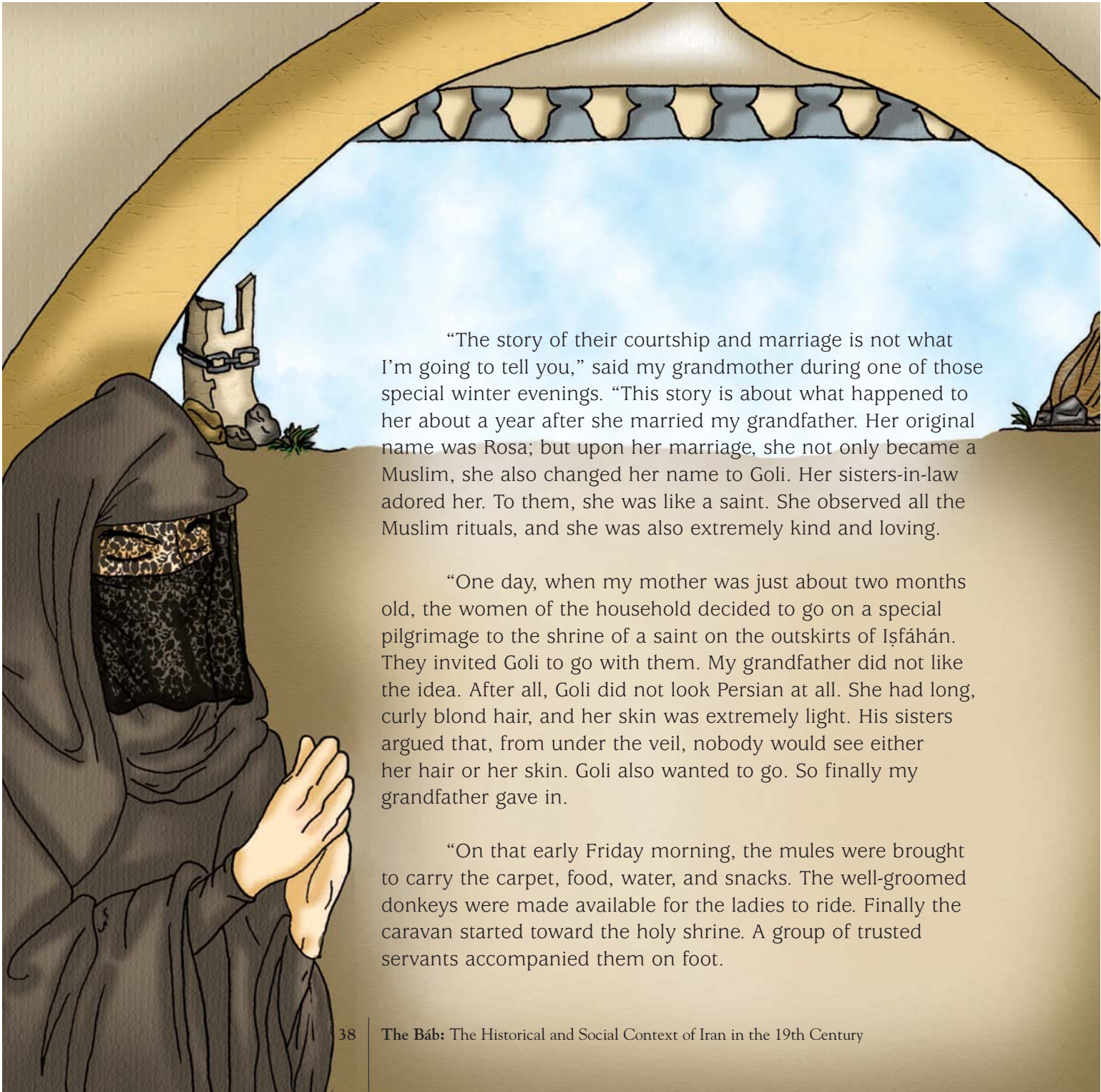
# The Miracle

*Written by Lily Ayman  
Illustrated by Omid and Majid Nolley*

On the longest night of the year, December 21, Persian families usually gather together. This gathering is to usher in the winter by eating pomegranate, melon, all sorts of nuts, and sweets. In my childhood, children preferred hot baked potatoes with sour relish. The highlight of the evening was stories told by the elders.

My favorite story was about my great-grandmother, Goli. She was an Armenian girl in her early 20s when she met my great-grandfather. He was a young lawyer who had just started his practice in the city of Işfâhân. His office had a window on the main boulevard from which he could see the passers-by. In those days, the only women who could walk around the cities of Persia without a veil were Christian women. That was how he saw her every day, passing in front of his office on her way to the hospital where she served as a nurse.

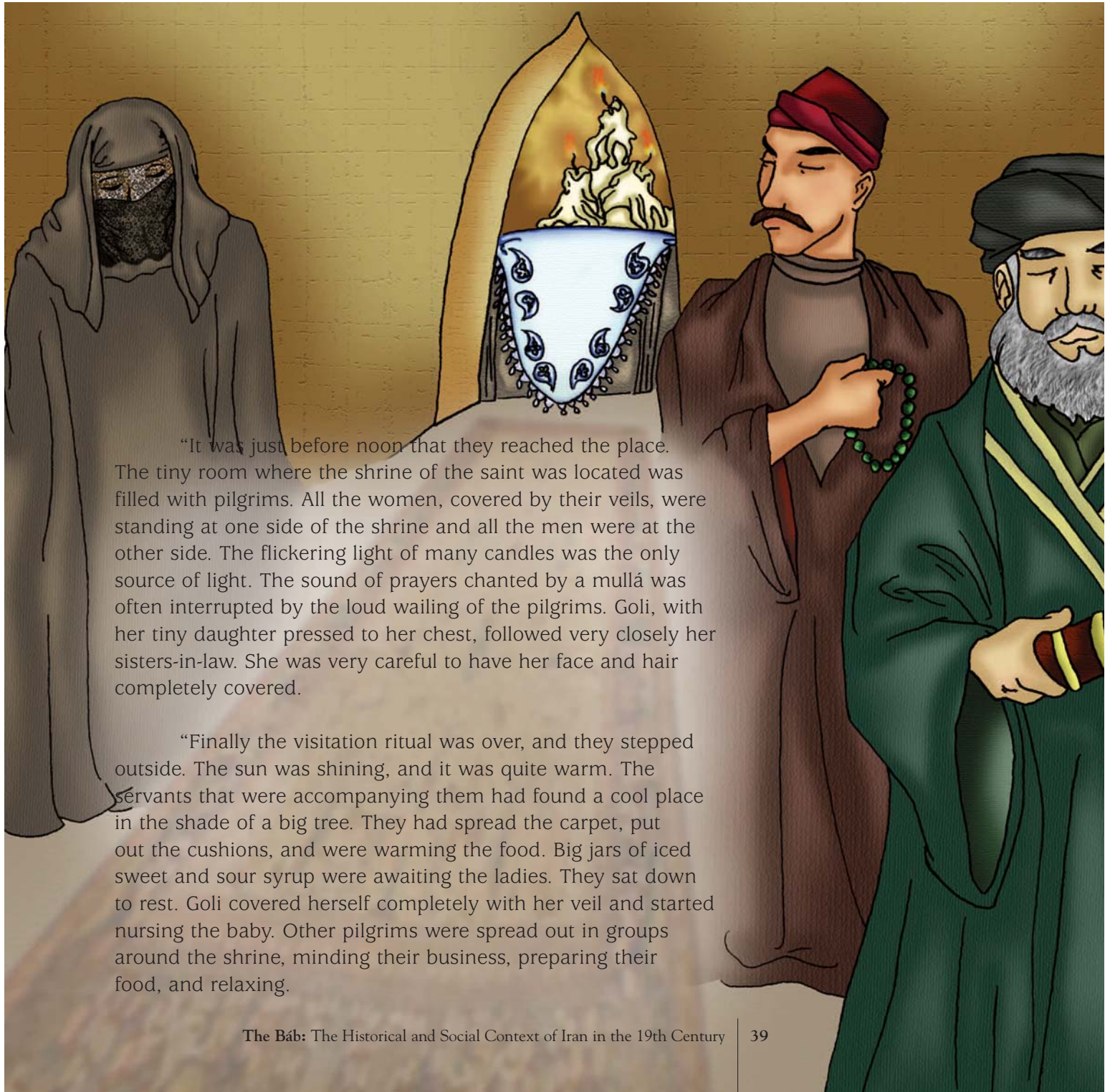




“The story of their courtship and marriage is not what I’m going to tell you,” said my grandmother during one of those special winter evenings. “This story is about what happened to her about a year after she married my grandfather. Her original name was Rosa; but upon her marriage, she not only became a Muslim, she also changed her name to Goli. Her sisters-in-law adored her. To them, she was like a saint. She observed all the Muslim rituals, and she was also extremely kind and loving.

“One day, when my mother was just about two months old, the women of the household decided to go on a special pilgrimage to the shrine of a saint on the outskirts of Işfáhán. They invited Goli to go with them. My grandfather did not like the idea. After all, Goli did not look Persian at all. She had long, curly blond hair, and her skin was extremely light. His sisters argued that, from under the veil, nobody would see either her hair or her skin. Goli also wanted to go. So finally my grandfather gave in.

“On that early Friday morning, the mules were brought to carry the carpet, food, water, and snacks. The well-groomed donkeys were made available for the ladies to ride. Finally the caravan started toward the holy shrine. A group of trusted servants accompanied them on foot.



“It was just before noon that they reached the place. The tiny room where the shrine of the saint was located was filled with pilgrims. All the women, covered by their veils, were standing at one side of the shrine and all the men were at the other side. The flickering light of many candles was the only source of light. The sound of prayers chanted by a mullá was often interrupted by the loud wailing of the pilgrims. Goli, with her tiny daughter pressed to her chest, followed very closely her sisters-in-law. She was very careful to have her face and hair completely covered.

“Finally the visitation ritual was over, and they stepped outside. The sun was shining, and it was quite warm. The servants that were accompanying them had found a cool place in the shade of a big tree. They had spread the carpet, put out the cushions, and were warming the food. Big jars of iced sweet and sour syrup were awaiting the ladies. They sat down to rest. Goli covered herself completely with her veil and started nursing the baby. Other pilgrims were spread out in groups around the shrine, minding their business, preparing their food, and relaxing.



“After lunch a hush fell on the countryside. The tired pilgrims were falling asleep. Goli looked around and noticed that everybody’s eyes had closed. She was feeling very warm under the thick black veil. So she dared to let go of her veil with which she had covered herself, and leaned back to the big cushion behind her. The baby was fast asleep on her lap. It was so good to feel the gentle summer breeze on her face . . .

“Suddenly she became aware of a group of people standing over her. She briskly brought the veil up over her hair. But it was already too late. They had seen her blond hair and fair skin and had decided that a ‘Farangi,’ a foreigner, was amongst them! ‘She is a “Káfar,” a heretic,’ they screamed. ‘She has soiled the sacred shrine and must be stoned to death.’ Poor Goli was scared, and so were her sisters-in-law. The servants who were guarding them could not appease the angry crowd.

“Finally the noise brought the shrine-keeper to the group. ‘Quiet!’ he ordered. ‘Tell me what has happened.’

“An older woman spoke with hatred in her voice, pointing at Goli. ‘She is a “Farangi”—a foreigner, a heretic. She has come here to soil this sacred place, so she must be stoned to death.’

“The oldest sister of my grandfather explained that Goli was a convert to Islám and had come for pilgrimage like all the other devout Muslims. The angry crowd would not believe her. They were ready to start throwing stones when they heard the shrine-keeper say, ‘Listen very carefully. I have a solution to the problem.’ Then he picked up a large pebble and, turning toward Goli, said, ‘Take this stone and throw it at that big rock over there. This is a holy rock. If it will accept the pebble, it will stick to the rock. That will prove that you are a true Muslim. If it doesn’t stick, this will be the sign for your condemnation.’

“In the quiet, blazing afternoon, all became still. Goli took the pebble, and kissed her daughter farewell. She knew that a stone would never stick to another stone. In her heart she prayed, ‘Dear God, you know that I have become a Muslim. So please, help me!’ Then with all her force, she threw the pebble and closed her eyes, awaiting the shower of stones.

“Instead she heard a loud sigh from the crowd. In an instant, all the women were crushing her in their embrace, tearing her veil, and trying to cut a lock from her hair, as if they were relics from a saint. Now she was a saint to them! Her sisters-in-law were explaining happily that a miracle had happened, and true enough, the pebble had stuck to the rock!



“Goli tried very hard to free herself from the ‘friendly’ crowd, begging them to leave her veil for her so that she could be covered. Servants brought tea and sweets for the ladies who had a difficult time calming down. Finally the crowd dispersed. Goli drank the tea, thinking all the time of the strange incident. She was an educated person. She did not believe that a miracle had rescued her. She wanted to know the reason behind it all.

“A little later, she wandered toward the rock as if she were taking a walk. When she came quite close to it, all became clear. Apparently the rock was covered by wax from the candles that were burnt on it throughout the years. So the ‘miracle’ was the sticking of the pebble to the waxed surface of the rock! Goli smiled under her veil and returned quickly to her group, not wanting to attract anybody’s attention to the ‘holy’ rock.

“That evening, she told the family about what had happened and gave the scientific explanation for the ‘miracle.’ The oldest sister-in-law said, ‘My dear Goli, the fact that the pebble hit the rock was a miracle. It could have gone astray, and then . . .’

“‘It’s enough,’ came the husband’s strong voice. ‘That’s the last time you are going to take my wife to these kinds of places.’”

Listening to this kind of story made me realize how our lives have changed! Most members of our family are now Bahá’ís. Bahá’u’lláh has taught us to look for scientific explanations of events. We respect everybody’s belief and we welcome everyone who would want to visit our holy places. ★