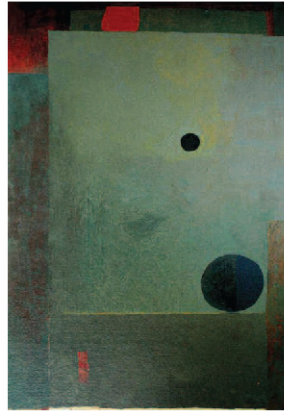


The following story is from the book

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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Amidst them all,
We stand, life in hand,
wholly resigned to His will;
that perchance,
through God's loving-kindness
and His grace,
this revealed and manifest Letter
may lay down His life
as a sacrifice in the
path of the Primal Point,
the most exalted Word.

— Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 252



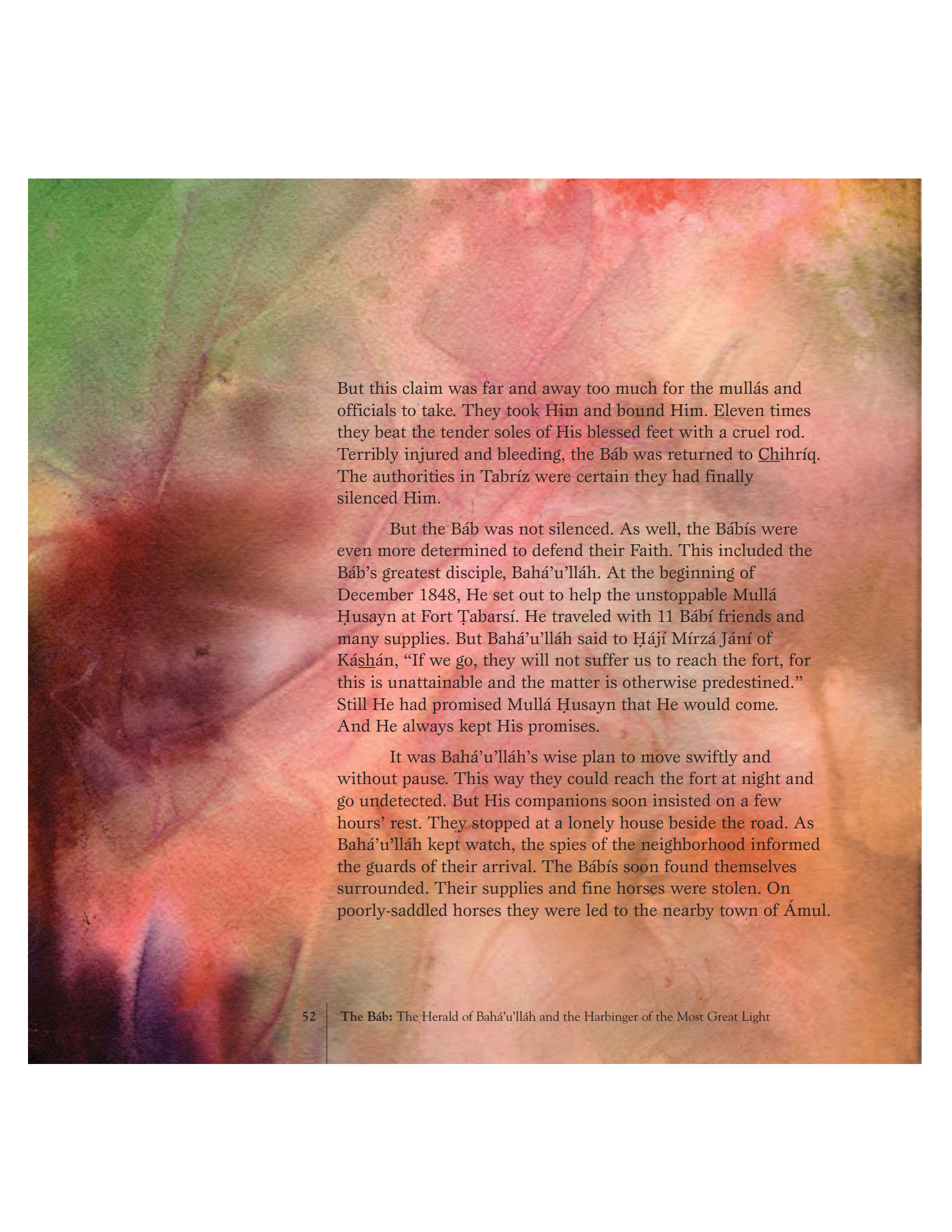
The Balance of Pain

*Written by Jean Gould
Illustrated by Barbara Trauger*

Bahá'u'lláh's love for the Báb knew no boundaries. At all times, it was His wish that He suffer whatever the Báb suffered. The dreaded bastinado was just such a hardship.

In July 1848, the Báb was in prison in the faraway castle of Chihríq. The authorities had put Him there to keep Him quiet. But they were alarmed by the Báb's influence in even this remote place. His guards came to love and honor Him. So did the people in the surrounding countryside. This happened wherever they put the Báb. To the authorities, this meant big trouble. They ordered the Báb to Tabríz. There He was to stand trial in public before a group of mullás and government officials. They hoped to silence the Báb for good. They were even prepared to use torture if necessary.

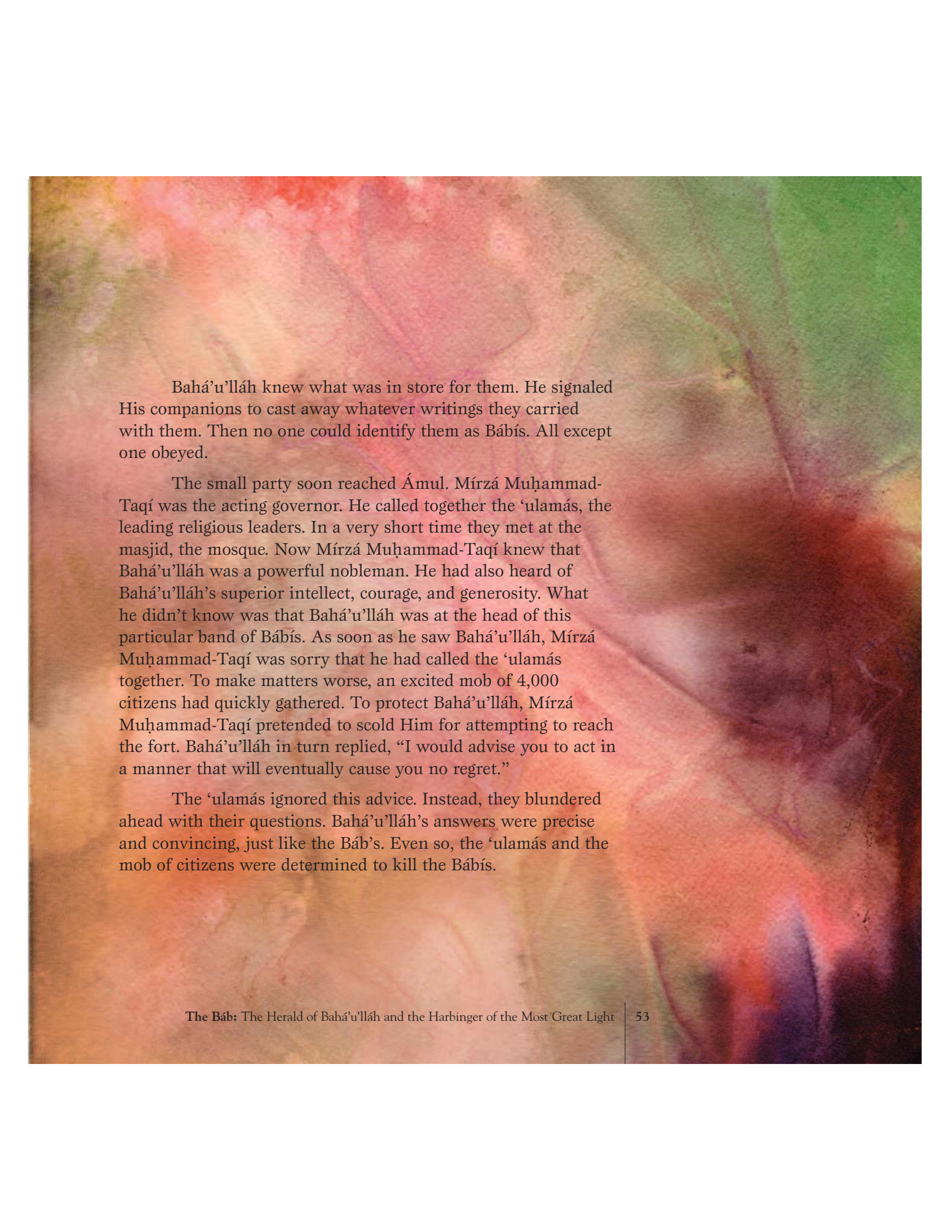
In Tabríz, the Báb said the most alarming thing of all. He claimed to be the Qá'im, the Promised One of the House of Muḥammad, the very One to herald this new Day. The Báb put forth His claim with unquestioned authority and majesty.



But this claim was far and away too much for the mullás and officials to take. They took Him and bound Him. Eleven times they beat the tender soles of His blessed feet with a cruel rod. Terribly injured and bleeding, the Báb was returned to Chihríq. The authorities in Tabríz were certain they had finally silenced Him.

But the Báb was not silenced. As well, the Bábís were even more determined to defend their Faith. This included the Báb's greatest disciple, Bahá'u'lláh. At the beginning of December 1848, He set out to help the unstoppable Mullá H̄usayn at Fort Ṭabarsí. He traveled with 11 Bábí friends and many supplies. But Bahá'u'lláh said to H̄ají Mírzá Jání of Káshán, "If we go, they will not suffer us to reach the fort, for this is unattainable and the matter is otherwise predestined." Still He had promised Mullá H̄usayn that He would come. And He always kept His promises.

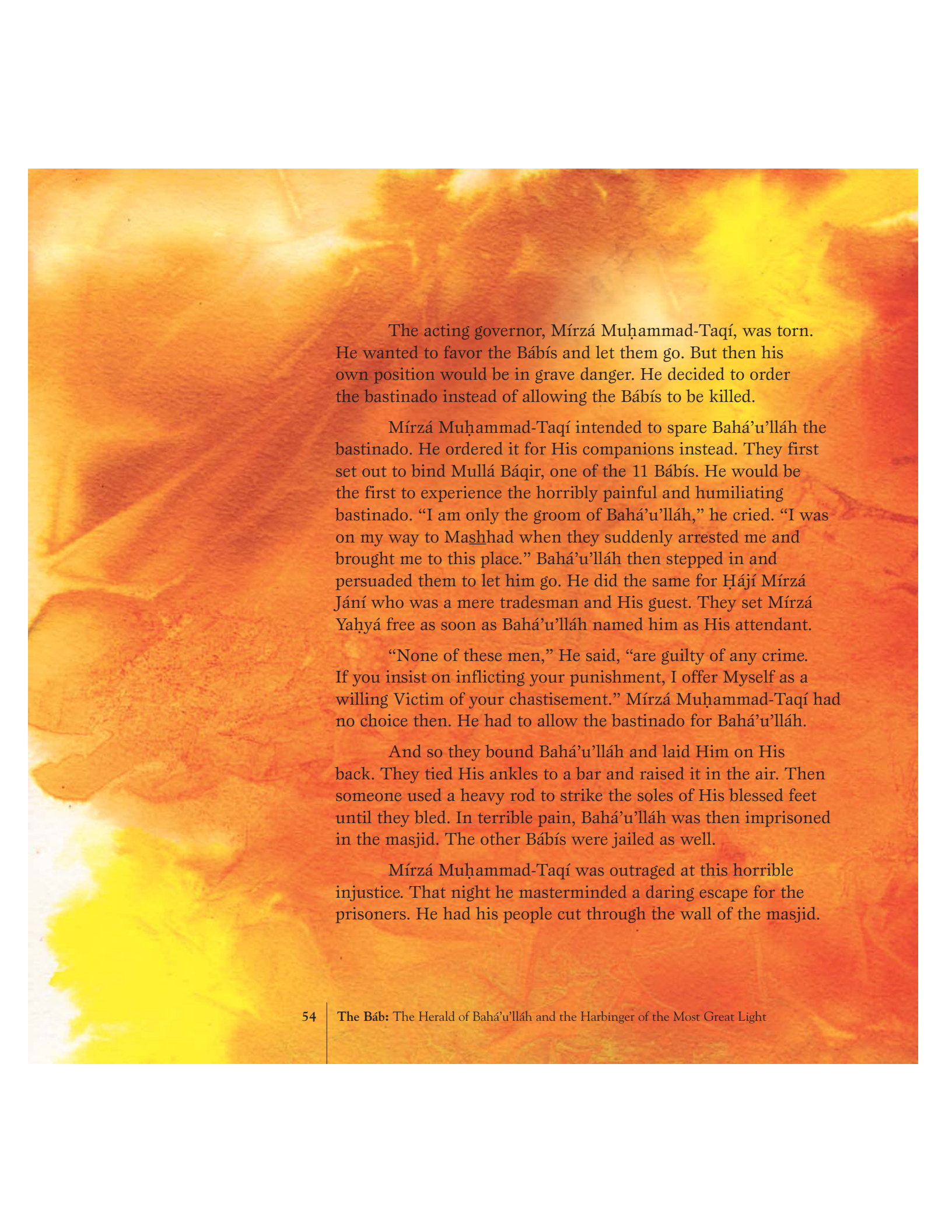
It was Bahá'u'lláh's wise plan to move swiftly and without pause. This way they could reach the fort at night and go undetected. But His companions soon insisted on a few hours' rest. They stopped at a lonely house beside the road. As Bahá'u'lláh kept watch, the spies of the neighborhood informed the guards of their arrival. The Bábís soon found themselves surrounded. Their supplies and fine horses were stolen. On poorly-saddled horses they were led to the nearby town of Ámul.



Bahá'u'lláh knew what was in store for them. He signaled His companions to cast away whatever writings they carried with them. Then no one could identify them as Bábís. All except one obeyed.

The small party soon reached Ámul. Mírzá Muḥammad-Taqí was the acting governor. He called together the 'ulamás, the leading religious leaders. In a very short time they met at the masjid, the mosque. Now Mírzá Muḥammad-Taqí knew that Bahá'u'lláh was a powerful nobleman. He had also heard of Bahá'u'lláh's superior intellect, courage, and generosity. What he didn't know was that Bahá'u'lláh was at the head of this particular band of Bábís. As soon as he saw Bahá'u'lláh, Mírzá Muḥammad-Taqí was sorry that he had called the 'ulamás together. To make matters worse, an excited mob of 4,000 citizens had quickly gathered. To protect Bahá'u'lláh, Mírzá Muḥammad-Taqí pretended to scold Him for attempting to reach the fort. Bahá'u'lláh in turn replied, "I would advise you to act in a manner that will eventually cause you no regret."

The 'ulamás ignored this advice. Instead, they blundered ahead with their questions. Bahá'u'lláh's answers were precise and convincing, just like the Báb's. Even so, the 'ulamás and the mob of citizens were determined to kill the Bábís.



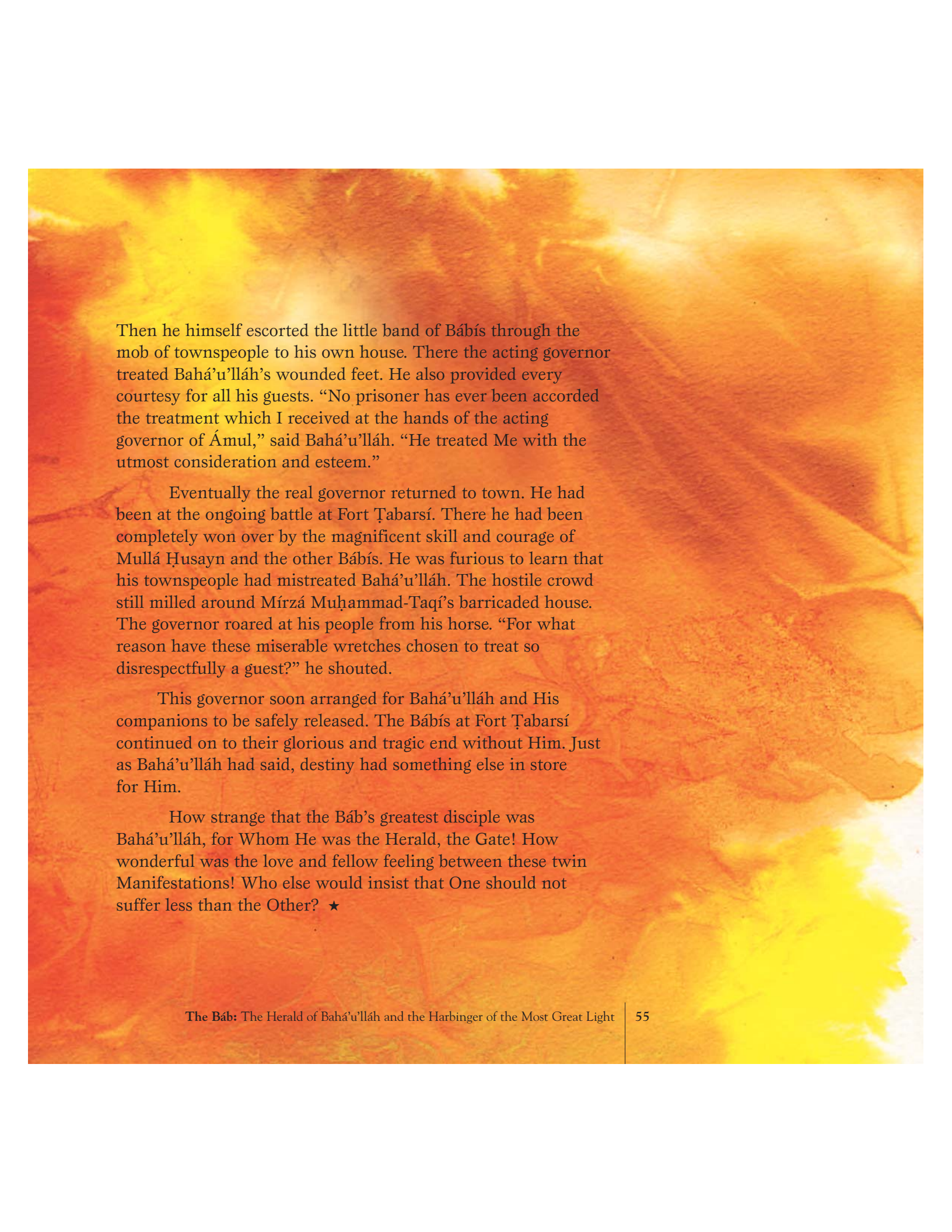
The acting governor, Mírzá Muḥammad-Taqí, was torn. He wanted to favor the Bábís and let them go. But then his own position would be in grave danger. He decided to order the bastinado instead of allowing the Bábís to be killed.

Mírzá Muḥammad-Taqí intended to spare Bahá'u'lláh the bastinado. He ordered it for His companions instead. They first set out to bind Mullá Báqir, one of the 11 Bábís. He would be the first to experience the horribly painful and humiliating bastinado. "I am only the groom of Bahá'u'lláh," he cried. "I was on my way to Mashhad when they suddenly arrested me and brought me to this place." Bahá'u'lláh then stepped in and persuaded them to let him go. He did the same for Ḥájí Mírzá Jání who was a mere tradesman and His guest. They set Mírzá Yaḥyá free as soon as Bahá'u'lláh named him as His attendant.

"None of these men," He said, "are guilty of any crime. If you insist on inflicting your punishment, I offer Myself as a willing Victim of your chastisement." Mírzá Muḥammad-Taqí had no choice then. He had to allow the bastinado for Bahá'u'lláh.

And so they bound Bahá'u'lláh and laid Him on His back. They tied His ankles to a bar and raised it in the air. Then someone used a heavy rod to strike the soles of His blessed feet until they bled. In terrible pain, Bahá'u'lláh was then imprisoned in the masjid. The other Bábís were jailed as well.

Mírzá Muḥammad-Taqí was outraged at this horrible injustice. That night he masterminded a daring escape for the prisoners. He had his people cut through the wall of the masjid.



Then he himself escorted the little band of Bábís through the mob of townspeople to his own house. There the acting governor treated Bahá'u'lláh's wounded feet. He also provided every courtesy for all his guests. "No prisoner has ever been accorded the treatment which I received at the hands of the acting governor of Ámul," said Bahá'u'lláh. "He treated Me with the utmost consideration and esteem."

Eventually the real governor returned to town. He had been at the ongoing battle at Fort Ṭabarsí. There he had been completely won over by the magnificent skill and courage of Mullá Ḥusayn and the other Bábís. He was furious to learn that his townspeople had mistreated Bahá'u'lláh. The hostile crowd still milled around Mírzá Muḥammad-Taqí's barricaded house. The governor roared at his people from his horse. "For what reason have these miserable wretches chosen to treat so disrespectfully a guest?" he shouted.

This governor soon arranged for Bahá'u'lláh and His companions to be safely released. The Bábís at Fort Ṭabarsí continued on to their glorious and tragic end without Him. Just as Bahá'u'lláh had said, destiny had something else in store for Him.

How strange that the Báb's greatest disciple was Bahá'u'lláh, for Whom He was the Herald, the Gate! How wonderful was the love and fellow feeling between these twin Manifestations! Who else would insist that One should not suffer less than the Other? ★