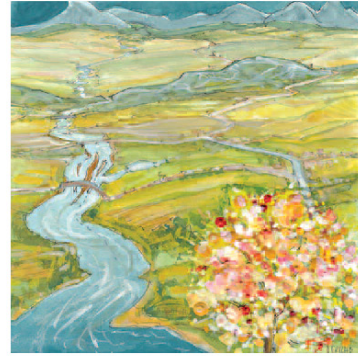


The following story is from the book

*The Central Figures*

*Bahá'u'lláh*

*Volume Two*



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**My captivity cannot harm Me.  
That which can harm Me  
is the conduct of those who love Me,  
who claim to be related to Me,  
and yet perpetrate what causeth  
My heart and My pen to groan.**

— Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, Notes, pp. 247–248



*Entrance to the Prison in 'Akká.*



# Fire in 'Akká

Soon after the arrival and imprisonment of the Holy Family and company in the barracks in the prison city of 'Akká, there came a day when the Ottoman troops in the vicinity needed their barracks for themselves. The gates of the barracks were opened, and Bahá'u'lláh and His retinue were sent to live elsewhere in the city. Though they were free in a way, their real troubles were just beginning. It was during this time that Bahá'u'lláh revealed the Fire Tablet.

*Written by Jean Gould  
Photography by Pepper Oldziej*



Bahá'u'lláh and His companions were eventually able to rent the house of 'Údí Khammár, a notable of 'Akká who had built a palatial home for himself outside the city. Ilyás 'Abbúd was his nephew. He owned the house that adjoined 'Údí Khammár's house in town. Ilyás 'Abbúd was not pleased when the exiles rented this house. He harbored as much ill will for the exiles as the other inhabitants of the city did. Any other neighbors would have suited him better.

Someone else was not pleased. Siyyid Muḥammad, whom Bahá'u'lláh called the Anti-Christ\*, burned with an unquenchable envy and hatred of Bahá'u'lláh. Crouched in his lair above the city gates, he kept watch for the hapless followers of Bahá'u'lláh. They walked countless miles to see their Beloved and were turned away by the authorities who listened to Siyyid Muḥammad's lies.

When the city gates were finally opened and the exiles allowed to live in the city, the lovers of Bahá'u'lláh began to arrive in a steady stream. Enraged and longing for vengeance, Siyyid Muḥammad continued to weave his lies and intrigues. He hoped to poison still further the hearts of the city's populace with the venom of his hate and envy.

He had help. Áqá Ján-i-Kaj-Kuláh, who shared the Siyyid's malice for Bahá'u'lláh, had been with Siyyid Muḥammad all along. They were soon joined by Mírzá Riḍá-Qulí, who had been expelled from the company of the Bahá'ís by Bahá'u'lláh for his bad behavior and his broken promises. Together the three men increased their web of lies and intrigues. As they grew bolder, Bahá'u'lláh counseled His companions to be ever more patient and forbearing.

Patience and forbearance weren't the only weapons of defense available to the Holy Family and their companions. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Master, the Son of the Blessed Perfection, would meet with the authorities and notables of the city time and again. At each meeting, their views, poisoned by lies, were cleansed by His gentleness and wisdom.

The Master's influence made Siyyid Muḥammad and his cohorts furious. Their fury stoked the fires of their malice. Their whispers grew and intensified. They collected some of the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh. They changed the text and twisted the meaning of

*The garden in the House of 'Údí-Khammár.*

\*Anti-Christ – see Glossary

**Bahá'u'lláh:** The Suffering and Sacrifices of Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'u'lláh's beautiful words. Then they circulated them throughout the town. The people were outraged, and their fear and ignorance grew. More and bolder torment of the exiles followed. Bahá'u'lláh wrote, "The whisperings of Satan have been breathed to every creature: Where is the meteor of Thy fire, O Light of the Worlds?"

It was then that some of those who claimed to love their Lord began to think of doing Him a great favor. They began to think of ridding the tiny, tormented community of Siyyid Muḥammad and his two cohorts. They began to think of murder.

A believer named Ḥájí 'Abbás came from Beirut, determined to silence the hateful trio. Bahá'u'lláh commanded him to go back. "Return to thy place" He said, "then commemorate thy Lord." Ḥájí 'Abbás was obedient. He returned to Beirut.

There were seven others, though, who refused the counsel of Bahá'u'lláh to shun all violence and retaliation. They joined ranks, and they began to plot and plan. Bahá'u'lláh demonstrated His abhorrence of their scheming ways. He withdrew not only from the seven would-be assassins but also from the entire company. Still the seven persisted in their way.

Áqá Husayn-i-Ashchí was among the seven. He had grown up in the household of Bahá'u'lláh. His devotion was nearly impossible to match. But the pressures and hardships caused by these enemies were too much for him. He was headstrong and self-willed, and now he was furious beyond words.

One day, the sound of pistol shots rang out in a certain house fronting the Seraye, or government house. So ended the lives of Siyyid Muḥammad, the Anti-Christ; Áqá Ján-i-Kaj-Kuláh, his right-hand man; and Mírzá Riḍá Qulíy-i-Tafrishí, the fickle-hearted.

But the silencing of these three foul mouths unleashed the roaring of a mob. The people of 'Akká, that hellish city, had feasted on lies long enough. Now they were bent on blood. They rose up against a handful of helpless prisoners as if the city were under attack by a powerful army. The mob grabbed stones, sticks, swords, rifles—anything to mash or pierce or tear the flesh of the prisoners they had been taught to hate.

*The door to Bahá'u'lláh's room*

Bahá'u'lláh: The Suffering and Sacrifices of Bahá'u'lláh





***Bahá'u'lláh's room***

Photograph of Bahá'u'lláh's room courtesy of the Audio-Visual Department of the Bahá'í World Center

They set off, swarming like drones. The authorities arrested whomever they met along the way. Everyone went along—the mutasarrif, or governor, the chief of police, the notables and common people alike. It was late in the afternoon when the mob circled the house of 'Údí Khammár. There Bahá'u'lláh was intent on revealing His verses, as was His custom at that time of day.

Sa'íd Big, an army officer, and the fearful Ilyás 'Abbúd, now on an important, very satisfying mission to oust his neighbors, entered the outer quarter of the house of 'Údí Khammár and

came face to face with 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The belligerent command died on their lips as they gazed on His stern, still face. It was replaced by a request. Would He accompany them to the Seraye? Would Baha'u'llah come as well? The Master passed through to the inner quarter and presented their request to Bahá'u'lláh. Of course, it was granted. He must ever bear and endure, but the anguish of the King of Kings had long since grown beyond the bounds of human understanding.

"Bahá is drowning in a sea of tribulation: Where is the Ark of Thy Salvation, O Savior of the worlds? . . . The lamps of truth and purity, of loyalty and honor, have been put out: Where are the signs of Thine avenging wrath, O Mover of the worlds? . . . The barking of dogs is loud on every side: Where is the lion of the forest of Thy might, O Chastiser of the worlds?"

Bahá'u'lláh, the King of Kings, was rendered frail by poison and exile. Yet, when He stepped out of the darkness and into the light of the lantern, those who could see Him were silenced by the power emanating from this Lion of God. It was the power He could summon at will to silence the ignorant and the misled. The mob fell back and let Him pass. One man who saw Bahá'u'lláh instantly dropped his weapon and his hate and joined the holy company.

Once at the Seraye, those who were to pass judgment stood to pay homage to the King of Kings with their silence. He walked before them and took His seat at the top of the room, the seat of honor which was, unquestionably, His. At last, the commandant of the garrison broke the silence with a feeble question: "Is it meet that your men should commit such a heinous deed?"

Bahá'u'lláh replied, "Should a soldier under your command break a rule, would you be held responsible and punished for it?" What answer could be found for this?

In the long silence that followed, Bahá'u'lláh rose and left the gathering. He waited in the adjoining room while the authorities made their feeble decisions. Soon He learned that He was to be locked into quarters with three of His company. He Who had the power of command submitted once again to such an indignity. 'Abdu'l-Bahá and 25 of the other companions were shackled and thrown into prison. Outside, the whole of 'Akká still screamed for a blood-letting.

"The door leading to the Divine Presence is locked through the tyranny of Thy foes: Where is the key of Thy bestowal, O Unlocker of the worlds? . . . This Youth is lonely in a desolate land: Where is the rain of Thy heavenly grace, O Bestower of the worlds?"

After three days, Bahá'u'lláh was returned to the gathering in the office of the mutasarrif. Would He state His name and the country from which He came? "It is more manifest than the sun," He said. The question came again. "I deem it not proper to mention it," was the second reply. With increasing respect and uncertainty, they dared to ask their question a third time.



"My name is Bahá'u'lláh and My country is Núr," He said. My name is Light of God and My country is Light. He said more. His majestic Words echoed through the hall until, once again, they were silent and submissive. Before this Prisoner, they were unable to speak. Once more, Bahá'u'lláh left the gathering at will and waited patiently for their hearts to turn.

Soon, of course, the mutaṣarrif himself apologized and gave Him liberty to return home. The local authorities were also humble and apologetic. The Most Great Branch and two other innocent ones were released from their chains and allowed to return home. The 23 other Bahá'ís who were arrested along with Bahá'u'lláh had to remain imprisoned. Then seven schemers were thrown into the dreaded Límán, or prison. They were truly in the dark now, away from the light, away from their Sun, surely wishing they had been obedient.

Though Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and two of Their companions were released from prison that day, the Holy Family and company were once again confined to quarters. They sustained life only with the greatest difficulty. Worse, the remaining population, still fired by lies and murder, left the company no peace. Horrible words and accusations were thrown in their faces. The children of the exiles were pursued and stoned. Those who were set to watch them were suspicious of every move, and they were harsh and mean.

Perhaps it was then that the answer to His own questions came to Him: "O Supreme Pen, We have heard Thy most sweet call in the eternal realm: Give Thou ear unto what the Tongue of Grandeur uttereth, O Wronged One of the worlds!

"Lament not because of the wicked. Thou wert created to bear and endure, O Patience of the worlds.

"By Thine aloneness the Sun of Oneness shone, and by Thy banishment the land of Unity was adorned. Be patient, O Thou Exile of the worlds.

*Inside the House of 'Abbúd*





"Thou seest the hearts are filled with hate, and to overlook is Thine, O Thou Concealer of the sins of the worlds.

"When the swords flash, go forward! When the shafts fly, press onward! O Thou Sacrifice of the worlds.

"Dost Thou wail, or shall I wail? Rather shall I weep at the fewness of Thy champions, O Thou Who hast caused the wailing of the worlds.

"Verily, I have heard Thy Call, O All-Glorious Beloved; and now is the face of Bahá flaming with the heat of tribulation and with the fire of Thy shining word, and He hath risen up in faithfulness at the place of sacrifice, looking toward Thy pleasure, O Ordainer of the worlds. . . ."

Eventually, inevitably, the mob learned it could not sustain its anger and hysteria against a handful of seemingly helpless exiles who met them again and again with patience and love. Eventually, the soldiers who had been forced to jail the remaining 23 exiles refused to stand guard over them any longer. They went to the authorities and

*The House of 'Abbúd*

*Eventually Bahá'u'lláh was able to walk along this porch around his room on the other side of the House of 'Abbúd.*

demanded the release of these courteous prisoners who, of all things, cleaned their prison and planted flowers. Even Ilyás 'Abbúd, who had barricaded his house against his neighbors, tore down the barriers, apologized to his new friends, and eventually put his whole house at their disposal.

Bahá'u'lláh and His company had once again quenched the fire of tribulation. ★

