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The Central Figures

Bahá'u'lláh

Volume Three



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At Home in the Mansion of Delight

*Written by Jean Gould
Photography by Pepper Oldziej*

It had been two years since Bahá'u'lláh had passed beyond the prison gates of 'Akká. Now He lived at Mazra'ih and walked free on the earth. The followers and seekers of Bahá'u'lláh had begun to arrive in great numbers. It was clear that a much bigger place to live must be found.

It so happened that an epidemic broke out in the area at that time. Many people panicked and left their homes. Many died, among them 'Údí Khammár. He had built a magnificent mansion a few miles from 'Akká. It was enormous and foursquare. Its rooms were light and spacious and welcoming. He named it Bahjí—Delight. Bahá'u'lláh called it The Lofty Mansion, His earthly throne.

It was, of course, 'Abdu'l-Bahá Who bought the mansion for His Father and prepared it for His arrival.

Bahá'u'lláh was in 'Akká when it was time to depart for Bahjí. He left from the House of 'Abbúd in 'Akká, His former home. It was two hours after sunset when He rode past the Land Gate. Only His amanuensis, Mírzá Áqá Ján, accompanied Him.



Two Bahá'ís kept watch in a room above the gate. They were Hájí Muḥammad Ṭáhir and Nabíl-i-A'zam. Soon they saw Bahá'u'lláh approach. Perhaps He seemed to them uncommonly alone. They soon discovered that an extraordinary gathering waited for Him at the Mansion.

Bahá'u'lláh quickly passed from sight. Suddenly, Nabíl got the idea to follow Him on foot. When they reached Bahjí, they would circle the Mansion to honor their Lord. Then they would return home. Hájí Muḥammad Ṭáhir instantly agreed to this simple plan. Together they raced down the steps. Into the night they followed Bahá'u'lláh on the road to the Mansion of Delight. They kept their distance, though. They followed without permission. Bahá'u'lláh could send them hiking straight back to 'Akká. There were many who longed to be near Him.

Soon the Mansion came into view. Almost immediately, Bahá'u'lláh vanished through its doors. The two watchers in the dark began to carry out their plan.

Gardens surrounding the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh and the Mansion of Bahjí

An enormous oil lamp stood in one of the windows. By its light, they approached the footpaths that circled that place of Delight. But someone was there ahead of them. Looking closely, they saw a fearful and wonderful sight. An amazing multitude jammed the pathways around the Mansion. The two in the dark had never heard such murmuring in adoration.

They hardly dared to go on. But the true love for a Prophet can tame any fear. So they kept to their plan. They had to go back to the muddy wheat field some 30 steps away. There they struggled through the muck as best they could. At last, they managed to circle the huge Mansion. Still the shining multitude close to the Mansion murmured its praises to Bahá'u'lláh.

Finally, they arrived at a spot opposite the gate to Bahjí. There they bowed to the ground. It was one human way to honor their Lord. Slowly, they left the strange host to its adoration. Thoughtfully, they made their way to 'Akká. The guards were just closing the Land Gate to the city.



The Collins gate,
outside of the Shrine



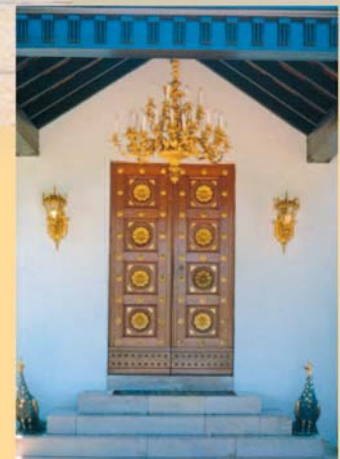
The inside of the top floor
of the Mansion of Bahjí



They kept watch through that entire night. Clearly, they had received an enormous gift. They alone had seen this amazing gathering. Somehow, they knew that all the Prophets and Messengers of the past had come to Bahjí that night. The Concourse of heavenly angels was there as well. They had come to circle their Lord as He took His earthly throne.

For 13 years, Bahá'u'lláh lived at Bahjí. He spent His last days in those beautiful rooms and the open countryside. But, He was seldom at rest with earthly comfort. He could often be found in 'Akká. Bahá'u'lláh said He longed for the trials and tribulations of the Most Great Prison. He said a thirsty one longs for water the same way.

Today, the followers of Bahá'u'lláh may walk in His footsteps at Bahjí. Wide and beautiful paths come together at His Shrine. Nearby, pilgrims can circle the foursquare Mansion of Delight. It was Bahá'u'lláh's last home, His earthly throne. Perhaps the pilgrims to this blessed spot will think of their Bahá'í brothers, Nabíl and Hájí Muḥammad Ṭáhir. Not so long ago, they had followed their Lord. Their hearts had been full of determination and good cheer. And they had seen amazing things. ★



The door to the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh