

Nabíl of Qá'in

This distinguished man, Mullá Muḥammad-‘Alí,ⁱ was one of those whose hearts were drawn to Bahá'u'lláh before the Declaration of the Báb; it was then that he drank the red wine of knowledge from the hands of the Cupbearer of grace. It happened that a prince, who was the son of Mír Asadu'lláh Khán, prince of Qá'in, was commanded to remain as a political hostage in Ṭihrán. He was young, far away from his loving father, and Mullá Muḥammad-‘Alí was his tutor and guardian. Since the youth was a stranger in Ṭihrán, the Blessed Beauty showed him special kindness. Many a night the young prince was Bahá'u'lláh's guest at the mansion, and Mullá Muḥammad-‘Alí would accompany him. This was prior to the Declaration of the Báb.

It was then that this chief of all trusted friends was captivated by Bahá'u'lláh, and wherever he went, spread loving praise of Him. After the way of Islám, he also related the great miracles which he had, with his own eyes, seen Bahá'u'lláh perform, and the marvels he had heard. He was in ecstasy, burning up with love. In that condition, he returned to Qá'in with the prince.

Later on that eminent scholar, Áqá Muḥammad of Qá'in (whose title was Nabíl-i-Akbar) was made a mujtahid, a doctor of religious law, by the late Shaykh Murtadá; he left, then, for Baghdád, became an ardent follower of Bahá'u'lláh, and hastened back to Persia. The leading divines and mujtahids were well aware of and acknowledged his vast scholarly accomplishments, the breadth of his learning, and his high rank. When he reached Qá'in, he began openly to spread the new Faith. The moment Mullá Muḥammad-‘Alí heard the name of the Blessed

Beauty, he immediately accepted the Báb. “I had the honor,” he said, “of meeting the Blessed Beauty in Tīhrán. The instant I saw Him, I became His slave.”

In his village of Sar-Cháh, this gifted, high-minded man began to teach the Faith. He guided in his own family and saw to the others as well, bringing a great multitude under the law of the love of God, leading each one to the path of salvation.

Up to that time he had always been a close companion of Mír Álam Khán, the Governor of Qá’in, had rendered him important services, and had enjoyed the Governor’s respect and trust. Now that shameless prince turned against him in a rage on account of his religion, seized his property and plundered it; for the Amír was terrified of Náṣiri’d-Dín Sháh. He banished Nabíl-i-Akbar and ruined Nabíl of Qá’in. After throwing him in prison and torturing him, he drove him out as a homeless vagrant.

To Nabíl, the sudden calamity was a blessing, the sacking of his earthly goods, the expulsion into the desert, was a kingly crown and the greatest favor God could grant him. For some time he remained in Tīhrán, to outward seeming a pauper of no fixed abode, but inwardly rejoicing; for this is the characteristic of every soul who is firm in the Covenant.

He had access to the society of the great and knew the condition of the various princes. He would, therefore, frequent some of them and give them the message. He was a consolation to the hearts of the believers and as a drawn sword to the enemies of Bahá’u’lláh. He was one of those of whom we read in the Qur’án: “For the Cause of God shall they strive hard; the blame of the blamer shall they not fear.”ⁱⁱ Day and night he toiled to promote the Faith, and with all his might to spread abroad the clear signs of God. He would drink and drink again of the wine of

God's love, was clamorous as the storm clouds, restless as the waves of the sea.

Permission came, then, for him to visit the Most Great Prison; for in Tīhrán, as a believer, he had become a marked man. They all knew of his conversion; he had no caution, no patience, no reserve; he cared nothing for reticence, nothing for dissimulation. He was utterly fearless and in terrible danger.

When he arrived at the Most Great Prison, the hostile watchers drove him off, and try as he might he found no way to enter. He was obliged to leave for Nazareth, where he lived for some time as a stranger, alone with his two sons, Áqá Qulám-Husayn and Áqá 'Alí-Akbar, grieving and praying. At last a plan was devised to introduce him into the fortress and he was summoned to the prison where they had immured the innocent. He came in such ecstasy as cannot be described, and was admitted to the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. When he entered there and lifted his eyes to the Blessed Beauty he shook and trembled and fell unconscious to the floor. Bahá'u'lláh spoke words of loving-kindness to him and he rose again. He spent some days hidden in the barracks, after which he returned to Nazareth.

The inhabitants of Nazareth wondered much about him. They told one another that he was obviously a great and distinguished man in his own country, a notable and of high rank; and they asked themselves why he should have chosen such an out-of-the-way corner of the world as Nazareth and how he could be contented with such poverty and hardship.

When, in fulfillment of the promise of the Most Great Name, the gates of the Prison were flung wide, and all the friends and travelers could enter and leave the fortress-town in peace and with respect, Nabíl of

Qá'in would journey to see Bahá'u'lláh once in every month. However, as commanded by Him, he continued to live in Nazareth, where he converted a number of Christians to the Faith; and there he would weep, by day and night, over the wrongs that were done to Bahá'u'lláh.

His means of livelihood was his business partnership with me. That is, I provided him with a capital of three krans;ⁱⁱⁱ with it he bought needles, and this was his stock-in-trade. The women of Nazareth gave him eggs in exchange for his needles and in this way he would obtain thirty or forty eggs a day: three needles per egg. Then he would sell the eggs and live on the proceeds. Since there was a daily caravan between Akká and Nazareth, he would refer to Áqá Riḍá each day, for more needles. Glory be to God! He survived two years on that initial outlay of capital; and he returned thanks at all times. You can tell how detached he was from worldly things by this one fact: the Nazarenes used to say it was plain to see from the old man's manner and behavior that he was very rich, and that if he lived so modestly it was only because he was a stranger in a strange place—hiding his wealth by setting up as a peddler of needles.

Whenever he came into the presence of Bahá'u'lláh he received still more evidences of favor and love. For all seasons, he was a close friend and companion to me. When sorrows attacked me I would send for him, and then I would rejoice just to see him again. How wonderful his talk was, how attractive his society. Bright of face he was; free of heart; loosed from every earthly tie, always on the wing. Toward the end he made his home in the Most Great Prison, and every day he entered the presence of Bahá'u'lláh.

On a certain day, walking through the bázár with his friends, he met a gravedigger named Hájí Aḥmad. Although in the best of health, he addressed the gravedigger and laughingly told him: "Come along with me." Accompanied by the believers and the gravedigger he made for

Nabíyu'lláh Sálíh. Here he said: “O Hájí Aḥmad, I have a request to make of you: when I move on, out of this world and into the next, dig my grave here, beside the Purest Branch.^{iv} This is the favor I ask.” So saying, he gave the man a gift of money.

That very evening, not long after sunset, word came that Nabíl of Qá'in had been taken ill. I went to his home at once. He was sitting up, and conversing. He was radiant, laughing, joking, but for no apparent reason the sweat was pouring off his face—it was rushing down. Except for this he had nothing the matter with him. The perspiring went on and on; he weakened, lay in his bed, and toward morning, died.

Bahá'u'lláh would refer to him with infinite grace and loving-kindness, and revealed a number of Tablets in his name. The Blessed Beauty was wont, after Nabíl's passing, to recall that ardor, the power of that faith, and to comment that here was a man who had recognized Him, prior to the advent of the Báb.

All hail to him for this wondrous bestowal. “Blessedness awaiteth him and a goodly home... And God will single out for His mercy whomsoever He willeth.”^v

ⁱNabíl of Qá'in was his title.

ⁱⁱQur'án 5:59.

ⁱⁱⁱThe kran was 20 sháhís, or almost 8 cents. Cf. Webster, op. cit.

^{iv}Mírzá Mihdí, the son of Bahá'u'lláh who, praying one evening on the barracks roof, fell to his death. Cf. God Passes By, p. 188.

^vCf. Qur'án 13:28; 2:99; 3:67.