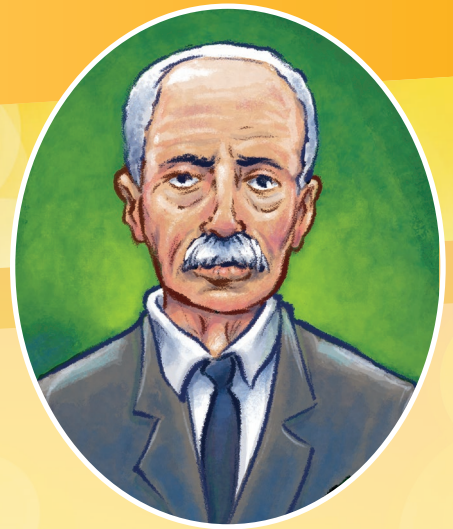


SHINING LAMP

A Bahá'í who served humanity with radiance

Hájí Mírzá Habíbu'lláh Afnán (1875–1951)



Can you imagine living next door to Bahá'u'lláh for nearly nine months? That was Hájí Mírzá Habíbu'lláh's incredible experience when he was young!

Mírzá Habíbu'lláh was actually *related* to another Messenger of God—the Báb, Who prepared people for the coming of Bahá'u'lláh. Mírzá Habíbu'lláh was born in 1875 in the House of the Báb in Persia (now Iran). He went to the same school that the Báb had attended as a child in Shíráz. He was even cared for by the Báb's wife, *Khadíjih* Bagum, who was his aunt.

A Memorable Pilgrimage

When Mírzá Habíbu'lláh was about 15 years old, Bahá'u'lláh invited his family to visit Him in Haifa (now in Israel). They left in September 1890 and faced storms, intense heat, dangerous mountains, and illness. They finally reached Haifa in July 1891. Bahá'u'lláh greeted them with love and kindness. Mírzá Habíbu'lláh wrote, "Beholding His blessed Figure and His luminous Visage overwhelmed us . . . Our tears were out of control."

Mírzá Habíbu'lláh's family stayed in a house close to Bahá'u'lláh for several weeks. "The sweetness of living and the spiritual ecstasies that we experienced in those days lie beyond description," Mírzá Habíbu'lláh said.

But as their visit drew to a close, an epidemic of a dangerous disease called cholera swept through nearby countries. To avoid spreading it, travel was not allowed. The family felt blessed to be able to spend more time with Bahá'u'lláh.

When Bahá'u'lláh went to Bahjí, His home in the countryside, Mírzá Habíbu'lláh's family moved into a house next door. They were so close that they could see Bahá'u'lláh's room. Some mornings, they watched Him pace back and forth as He said prayers and revealed holy verses.

At Bahjí, the children of Bahá'u'lláh's family attended classes taught by distinguished Bahá'í scholars. Bahá'u'lláh invited Mírzá Habíbu'lláh and his siblings to join these classes.

One extraordinary blessing of their extended pilgrimage was when Bahá'u'lláh visited them at their home. Mírzá Habíbu'lláh said this "made us weep with joy." The family hurried out to greet Him, and Mírzá Habíbu'lláh had the honor of serving Him tea. Bahá'u'lláh even gave him some prayer beads, a gift that Mírzá Habíbu'lláh said was "as dear to me as life." After nine blissful months, Mírzá Habíbu'lláh and his family left Akká in March 1892.

Preserving History

As an adult, Mírzá Habíbu'lláh returned to the holy land several times to visit 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'u'lláh's son and the head of the Faith after His passing. Mírzá Habíbu'lláh wrote about the history of the Bahá'í Faith to share with future generations.

In 1902, 'Abdu'l-Bahá appointed him to serve as the custodian of the House of the Báb. He took care of the sacred place for nearly half a century before passing away in 1951. This important role was a highlight of his remarkable life.