

BIRTH OF A NEW REVELATION

Bahá'u'lláh first knew of His great Mission in the year 1852, when He was in prison in an underground dungeon in Tehran. He had been born into a rich and noble family whose ancestors had been kings of Persia. But Bahá'u'lláh did not want to accept an important job in the government and instead spent His time helping the sick and the poor. Everybody loved Him and He became known as "Father of the Poor".



In Europe and America, people knew from the prophecies in the Bible that the time was near when Jesus Christ would return to the world. In the Middle East people knew that the prophecies about the coming of the Promised One which were in their Holy Book, the Qurán, were also about to come true.

Everywhere people were waiting for something wonderful to happen.

When a young man called the Báb said that the time had come, people became very excited. The Báb said that the whole world would soon change and in the future children would be able to learn things which at the moment the most clever adults did not know. As well as giving new teachings, the Báb said that He had come to prepare people for the coming of Bahá'u'lláh, the One promised in all the Holy Books.

Some of the religious leaders did not like these new teachings and they killed thousands of followers of the Báb, and even killed the Báb Himself. It was then that Bahá'u'lláh was thrown into prison. He was put into a black pit, called the Síyáh-Chál, a heavy chain was locked around His neck, and the guards tried to poison Him.



Bahá'u'lláh described what it was like in that underground cell:

"The dungeon was wrapped in thick darkness, and Our fellow-prisoners numbered nearly a hundred and fifty souls: thieves, assassins and highwaymen. Though crowded, it had no other outlet than the passage by which We entered. No pen can depict that place,

nor any tongue describe its loathsome smell. Most of these men had neither clothes nor bedding to lie on. God alone knoweth what befell Us in that most foul-smelling and gloomy place."

Every day some of the prisoners were taken away to be killed. But it was in this dark dungeon that God first told Bahá'u'lláh about His great Mission:

"One night, in a dream, these exalted words were heard on every side: "Verily, We shall render Thee victorious by Thyself and by Thy Pen. Grieve Thou not for that which hath befallen Thee, neither be Thou afraid, for Thou art in safety. Erelong will God raise up the treasures of the earth -- men who will aid Thee through Thyself and through Thy name, wherewith God hath revived the hearts of such as have recognised Him."

Buddha, Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad all had similar experiences, but it was the first time that a Messenger of God has described exactly how He felt when God spoke to Him.

Bahá'u'lláh said it was like a mighty waterfall coming from a great height and flowing over Him, and that He spoke such wonderful words that no-one could bear to hear them.



Questions:

- a) When did Bahá'u'lláh first know of His great mission?
- b) Where was He at the time?
- c) What was one of the names Bahá'u'lláh was known by?
- d) What was everyone in the world waiting for?
- e) Can you name three things the Báb said?
- f) What happened to the Báb?
- g) What happened to Bahá'u'lláh?
- h) Can you describe what the Síyáh-Chál was like?
- i) What did God tell Bahá'u'lláh in the Síyáh-Chál?
- j) How did Bahá'u'lláh describe what it felt like when God spoke to Him?
- k) How do you think you would have felt if you were in that prison with Bahá'u'lláh?
- l) Why do you think the Messengers of God are always rejected and ill-treated at first?
- m) How can we help Bahá'u'lláh? How can we be one of the "treasures of the earth"?