

## 2 The Long Journey to Baghdad

When Bahá'u'lláh returned to them, in the little house near the prison He was very ill, and was suffering badly from the cruel wounds inflicted by the cutting chains and the tortures He had endured. But it seemed to Bahíyyih Khánum that a brilliant new radiance was shining from her Father, and she could tell that something wonderful had happened to Him while in that dreadful Black Pit. Later she learned that in spite of the loathsome conditions in which He was suffering, Bahá'u'lláh had been communing with God. Although not understanding, Bahíyyih Khánum was aware of this beautiful, holy radiance which surrounded Bahá'u'lláh, and she loved Him even more.

Even now the Family was not out of difficulties. They were forced by the authorities to make a terrible journey through the snow-covered mountains in the middle of the winter, all the way from Tehran to Baghdad in Iraq. Their belongings had been stolen and nearly all their wealth taken. Little Bahíyyih's mother, Asíyih Khánum was expecting a baby in only six week's time, and Bahá'u'lláh was very ill and weak because He had suffered so much in the prison.



Everyone was heartbroken when it had to be decided that the youngest child, Mírzá Mihdí, was not strong enough to manage such a terrible journey. It was decided that he must be left behind with his great grandmother, where at least he would be safe. But in spite of all this, the Holy Family was forced to set off on the long, long journey across the mountains to Baghdad.

There was not much time for preparation. Only a few valuable things remained that had not been stolen. Asíyih Khánum managed to sell the little that was left, to buy some food

and allow them some money for the journey, but it was not really as much as they needed.

With great difficulty everything was packed onto mules. The family travelled on horseback, or walked. Some of the time the women and children were able to ride in howdahs, but these were very bumpy and uncomfortable, and although they gave a little shelter from the biting wind, they did not keep out the bitter cold. They had to camp at night in cold, rough places. Sometimes they were able to stay in the shelter of a caravan-serai, a kind of inn for travellers, but even here it was very uncomfortable and there were no beds. Almost always they were hungry and thirsty, and it was difficult to get food. Washing the clothes was very difficult, and drying them even harder, but Bahíyyih Khánum helped her mother as much as she could.

The journey took four long weeks. The month was December and there was snow on the ground. Bahá'u'lláh was still very weak from His imprisonment, and Asíyih Khánum tried to give Him the nourishing food that He needed. On one occasion she managed to get a little flour, and very pleased, started to make a sweet cake for Him. But there was no light, and at the end of the day's journey it was difficult for her to see properly. Instead of sugar, she accidentally put salt into the cake! No-one could eat it! And the flour had all been used up.

After struggling through the stony deserts and over the mountains, with great relief, they eventually arrived in Baghdad.

Here they were sometimes visited by Arabian ladies who had been told about the Báb by Táhirih, and who were coming to find out more from Bahá'u'lláh. Sometimes Bahíyyih would be asked to help serve their tea. With difficulty she would carry the heavy samovár (a large container for making the tea) up the stairs. On one occasion one of the ladies was so impressed at seeing her being so helpful, that she said, "One proof that the Bábi teaching is wonderful is that a very little girl served the samovár!"

