

CHAPTER THREE

THE BURNING BUSH

[p.41:10] It proceeded thus until finally the declaration of the Báb took place on the eve of Friday, the fifth day of Jamádiyu'l-Avval AH 1260 [23 May 1844], two hours and eleven minutes into the night.⁶⁰ There is a magnificent story of these wonderful events related by the wife of the Báb as follows:

The practice of His Holiness was that each day He would return home about an hour after the sunset and commence devotions, the chanting of the names of God, and writing. About three hours into the night He would have the evening meal and would retire about four hours past sunset. In the morning, He would rise one hour before the dawn and, after washing, would perform His ablutions and then proceed to the upper chambers of the House, which had been set aside as His formal guestroom and formed an outer apartment. There, He stood to recite tablets of visitation, prayers, supplications, and to repeat the names of God. When the sun had risen, Fiddih⁶¹ would fire up the samovar and prepare the tea in the chamber occupied by His mother. His Holiness would come down to that apartment and have the morning tea. After that, He would proceed to His merchant office to engage in His own business.

However, one night, unlike other nights, He came home at dusk, saying, "Tell Fiddih to prepare whatever we are having for the evening meal sooner than usual. Tonight I have a particular task to attend to." About an hour and a half into the night, the dinner was served, and He joined us for this purpose. Afterwards, Fiddih brought water for Him to wash His blessed hands, and, as usual in the evenings, she spread our bedding and retired to her own quarters. His Holiness retired for the night.

It was not long after that I saw Him rise from the bed and leave the room, going to the outer courtyard. At first, I thought He had gone to the lavatory. When considerable time had passed and He did not return, I was seized by apprehension. I rose from my bed and left the apartment. I looked in the lavatory but did not see Him. Checking the street door, I found it locked from within. I looked in the chamber of His mother and did not find Him there either. By then I was deeply bewildered and perplexed. I walked to the western part of the house and looked up towards the upper chamber, situated on the eastern wing of the House and serving as His private quarters, and

⁶⁰ The exact time and date of the Báb's declaration is given in the Persian *Bayán* 2:7.

⁶¹ Mírzá Habíbu'lláh adds parenthetically: Fiddih and Mubárák were two Black servants purchased in Búshíhr during His days of commerce.

saw that it was well lighted. It seemed as if a thousand lamps illumined the room. This added to my surprise, because there were no guests to require so many lamps. Therefore, full of astonishment, I went up the steps to the room. When I entered, I found that the room was so brilliantly lit that it dazzled my eyes, although there was only a single lamp.

I saw His Holiness standing, facing the Qiblah; His hands raised heaven-wards, intoning a prayer. As soon as my gaze fell upon His blessed Being, I beheld such majesty and resplendence as is beyond my powers to explain. Suddenly, such awe and trepidation enveloped me that I stood transfixed where I was, trembling uncontrollably like a leaf. I could neither retrace my steps nor stand. I was close to losing consciousness. All kinds of perplexities enveloped me. Suddenly He made a gesture with His blessed hand, telling me to go back. This movement of His sanctified hands released me from that state, and I returned to the apartment and bed. But I could not sleep, and I remained deeply disturbed. Every detail of the image of His blessed Person and that scene [in the upper chamber] added to my consternation. I felt like a wrongdoer who has fallen short and awaits the all-powerful sovereign to pass sentence on her. I did not sleep that night, until the mu'adhhdhin's⁶² call to morning prayers sounded from the mosque adjacent to the house. [p.45]

After the adhán [call to prayer] He came downstairs. As soon as my eyes alighted on His blessed Countenance, I was seized by awe and perplexity. He no longer seemed like the Person with whom I had lived for two and a half years. I did not have the courage to utter a word. In any case, the sun was rising and I rose, carried out my ablutions, and performed the obligatory prayer.

In accordance with our daily routine, our servant, Fiddih, had prepared the samovar and tea in the room of His mother and informed us that the tea was ready. Accompanied by Him, I proceeded there. In His mother's room, He drank some tea. Each moment added to my perplexity and conjecturing. With His blessed hand He poured a cup of tea, passed it to me, and with a heavenly smile said, "What is it that troubles you? You are distraught." I drank the tea, which eased my perturbation and anxiety to some extent. I said, "Áqá, what exalted state was it that I witnessed in Your chamber last night?" He replied, "At what an extraordinary time you arrived! That was untimely. But it was the will of God that you should see it with your own eyes. Know and be certain that at that very moment the One Exalted God appointed Me for the guidance of these servants. I am that Promised One whose advent they have been expecting. For the past twelve hundred and sixty years they have perpetually beseeched the Almighty for His appearance. I am the one appointed for the salvation of the people."

⁶² Each mosque has one or more mu'adhhdhin who announce the time for the obligatory worship (salát).