

## Declaration of The Báb



Shrine of the Báb

The Declaration of the Báb on 8 'Azamat<sup>4</sup> is one of the most important dates in the Bahá'í calendar. On that day in the first year of the Bahá'í era, in 1844, a young Persian merchant known as the Báb (Arabic for 'the Gate') announced the birth of a new era in humanity's spiritual and social history. He declared that He was the bearer of a divine revelation and the herald of another Messenger of God soon to appear, who would bring teachings for

humanity's age of maturity. Bahá'ís believe Bahá'u'lláh to be that promised Messenger and celebrate the anniversary of the Báb's declaration as a Holy Day.

The Bahá'í scriptures tell us this is a time for 'rejoicing, happiness and gladness' and it is one of nine Holy Days throughout the year which Bahá'ís are encouraged to take off work. All over the world local communities hold commemorative gatherings two hours after sunset on the eve of the Holy Day, at the time when the Báb made His announcement to a guest in the intimacy of His home. Beyond this there is no ritual, and communities are free to organise their own commemorations as they see fit, typically including prayers, music, reading from the Writings of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, stories of the Báb's life and, of course, time for socialising, fellowship and refreshments.

The Báb made His declaration to Mullá Husayn, a young theological student. Aware of prophecies in Islamic traditions of 'One who shall arise', Mullá Husayn had set out in search of this prophetic figure. After a period of fasting and seclusion, he journeyed to Shiráz. Near the city gates he was approached by a stranger, the Báb, who invited him to His house to refresh himself. Over the course of the evening the pair conversed. As the Báb answered His guest's questions, He chanted prayers and gave a commentary on a chapter of the Qur'án. Mullá Husayn became the first to believe in Him and accept His station. 'These truths,' Mulla Husayn wrote, 'which I had never heard before, seemed to be endowed with refreshing vividness and power... I sat enraptured by the magic of His voice and the sweeping force of His revelation... Excitement, joy, awe, and wonder stirred the depths of my soul.'



Room where the Báb declared His mission

In a few short years the Báb's movement attracted tens of thousands of followers, spread throughout Persia and provoked severe persecution from the authorities, culminating in His execution in 1850. The Báb stressed that spiritual advancement rests on 'love and compassion', not on 'force and coercion'. He taught His followers to 'purge your hearts of worldly desires and let angelic virtues be your adorning'. Breaking with the orthodoxy of the time He encouraged scientific education and called on leaders of Persian society to adopt the technological advances of the West. Above all, He focused attention on the imminent appearance of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest' - a promise fulfilled when Bahá'u'lláh declared Himself to be the One foretold by the Báb.

<sup>4</sup> 23 May when Naw-Rúz is 20 March and 24 May when Naw-Rúz is 21 March.