

... description: 1915, Abdu'l-Bahá in Abu-Sinan
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Sources

There are three main sources for study of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's life during the Abu-Sinan period: the diary of Dr Ḥabíbu'lláh Mu'ayyad, the memoirs of Mírzá Badi' Bushru'i, and the diary notes of Mírzá Aḥmad Sohrab.

Ḥabíbu'lláh Mu'ayyad (1888–1971) came to Haifa in 1907 on pilgrimage, and on 'Abdu'l-Bahá's instructions went to Beirut to study medicine. For the next eight years he often visited the Haifa-'Akká area, spending the summer months and holidays there. In the summer of 1914 he went to Germany on a mission for 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and there he learned to keep a diary. Upon his return from Germany he went to the Holy Land, where he arrived on 5 October, and stayed with 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Abu-Sinan until May 1915, when he returned to Írán . During this period he took careful notes of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's discourses. In early 1950s, on the instructions of Shoghi Effendi, these notes were organized and published under the title *Khátirát Ḥabíb* (Memoirs of Ḥabíbu'lláh).[4] A complete translation has been prepared by the present writer and will be published by George Ronald.

The second source, the unpublished memoirs of Mírzá Badi' Bushru'i, is of similar length, over 400 densely written pages, and represents Bushru'i's recollections of 'Abdu'l-Bahá during the years of the First World War, although it is titled 'Nuzdah Sal Shadimani' (Nineteen years of bliss).

The third set of notes, the daily diary of Mírzá Aḥmad Sohrab, who from 1912 to 1919 captured thousands of pages of notes on "Abdu'l-Bahá's activities and sayings, is perhaps the most useful for students of history.

Unless otherwise stated, Dr Mu'ayyad's diary is the source of the information in this paper and of the words of "Abdu'l-Bahá that are quoted. Page references for the published Persian edition of the diary are provided in brackets.

Departure for Abu-Sinan

Dr Ḥabíbu'lláh Mu'ayyad returned to the Holy Land from Beirut in October 1914, and thus he participated in the move to Abu-Sinan. He describes the conditions at that time as follows:

Day by day, the situation of the war grew worse and intensified. The means of acquiring daily necessities and provisions became correspondingly more difficult and restricted. With the passage of each day, worries and apprehensions grew more desperate. Power rested in the hands of a number of ruthless military men who did not consider themselves accountable to anyone. It was a time of mayhem and plunder by the Ottoman officials. They caused difficulties for whomever they chose and destroyed the innocent with the most trivial of charges. No one had the least control over his possessions or life. The government was under the control of a number of faithless, bloodthirsty and cruel men . . . Gallows were active in every town, and all prominent citizens were eliminated . . .

Jamál Páshá was an independent-minded military commander and a man of truly ruthless character. He would instantly kill anyone whom he discovered to have a prominent reputation. As one of the highest army generals, he had assembled an enormous force to attack and reduce Egypt and [capture] the Suez Canal. Tens of thousands of camels were arrayed solely for the transportation of the army's water rations. His agents had confiscated whatever food, clothing, weapons, money, surplus and stored grains they could find. Thoroughly desolate, the citizens were left without the most basic provisions while the realm was cleansed of everything useful for the needs of the military. If anyone protested, hanging was the immediate response. They would perpetrate whatever act of tyranny, oppression, injury, calumny, murder, treachery and sedition was needed to achieve their end under the umbrella of the Committee for National Defense.

Taking advantage of this most perilous situation, each passing day the spiteful Covenant-breakers came up with a new way to provoke Jamál Páshá against the Faith and further agitate him in this regard. Sometimes they went to Damascus and provoked the enemies of the Cause [into action]. On other occasions they sought the help of Jerusalem, presenting such extravagant gifts as the tent of the Blessed Beauty, which was the tabernacle of the Most Great Peace and a precious memento of Bahá'u'lláh's days. In addition, they offered such sacred [Persian] carpets as remained from his time.

When giving these gifts, they always registered a complaint against 'Abdu'l-Bahá, **representing themselves as the wronged and the victimized.** At times, they depicted 'Abdu'l-Bahá as a political mischief-maker and a religious rabble-rouser, thereby sowing seeds of sedition. At other times, they accused the Master of having designs to inaugurate a new monarchy and described his communications with the East and the West as a means for inciting political chaos; or they accused him of being a foreign agent. In other instances, the Shrines of Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb were represented as military forts, and at other times, as the [new] Mecca and Medina. To confuse and provoke [Jamál Páshá], they had painted the Greatest Name on a flag and

presented it as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s new Standard of Monarchy’.

In response, in a meeting of the ulama in Jerusalem, Jamál Páshá, being a ruthless and rash man, had promised to slay ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and to level the Shrines of both Bahá’u’lláh and the Báb. This had greatly excited the Covenant-breakers, giving them courage to redouble their efforts against the Master.

This time, they submitted another written complaint, outlining various charges against “Abdu’l-Bahá . . . Clearly, the friends of God needed to avoid troubles during such a time when the entire Ottoman Empire was in turmoil and revolution, the government in disorder and unsettled, when blood was being spilled at every turn, when no accountability or responsibility was assumed by anyone, and the Covenant-breakers unceasingly appealed to this ruthless man (Jamál Páshá) for action. [133–4]

By September, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had decided to accept the invitation of the Druze <u>Sh</u>ay<u>kh</u>s in Abu-Sinan to remove the Bahá’ís and their children to that peaceful village, out of reach of the potential bombardments and troubles in the Haifa-‘Akká area. In this village the limited resources of the Bahá’ís (who lived with the strictest economy), augmented by corn from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s stores, would be sufficient for their survival.

Shaykh Salih placed his house at the disposal of “Abdu’l-Bahá and his family and they were warmly welcomed, along with the entire Bahá’í community, who were distributed among other homes in the village. The number of Bahá’ís was about 140 adults and at least the same number of children.

The Druze

Before going further, it may be useful to describe briefly the Druze, their beliefs and their presence in the Holy Land. The Druze religion has its genesis in Isma‘ilism, a religio-philosophical movement that founded the Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt in the 10th century. During the reign of al-Ḥakím (996–1021) the Druze creed came into being, blending Islámic thought with Greek philosophy and Hindu and Zoroastrian influences.[5] Active proselytizing of the new faith lasted for less than a century, and since about 1050 the community has been closed to outsiders.

first Druze community was formed in the region that is now southern Lebanon and northern Israel. By the time of the Ottoman conquest of Syria (1516), the Druze also lived in the hill country near Aleppo, and during the second half of the 19th century the centre of the community moved to Jebel-el-Druze (Mountain of the Druze) – the former name of Mount Lebanon – in Syria. The Druze in Galilee and on Mount Carmel have always maintained contact with the other branches of the community, especially with those of Mount Hermon and the Lebanon. During the British Mandate in Palestine they refrained from

taking part in the Arab–Jewish conflict, later emerging in support of Israel, and they are now recognized as a separate religious entity. Their language is Arabic. Worldwide there are about one million Druze, living mainly in Syria and the Lebanon ; over 100,000 live in Israel, and several thousand have emigrated to Europe and North and South America.

The Druze consider their faith to be an innovative interpretation of the three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islám. For them, Adam represents the first human being who believed in a single god. Since then, the idea of monotheism has been disseminated and embodied by prophets (guided by mentors). The mentors and prophets come from all three religions, and include Jethro, Moses, John the Baptist, Jesus, Salman the Persian, Muḥammad and al-Ḥakím – all reinforcing the same monotheistic teaching.

Although the Druze recognize the Judeo-Christian-Islámic religions, they believe that rituals and ceremonies have caused them to turn aside from the pure religion'. They perform their spiritual reckoning with God at all times, and consequently need no special days of fasting or atonement, nor ritualistic elements such as daily liturgy, holy days and pilgrimage. The Druze are forbidden to eat pork, use tobacco, or drink alcohol. They are taught to speak the truth, support their brethren, abandon the old creeds, accept the unity of God, and submit to the will of God. Druze religious books are accessible only to the initiates, the uqqál (knowers') who may be men or women – indeed, women are considered more suitable in some ways for this position. (The uqqál men have shaven heads which they cover with white turbans, and have moustaches and beards; the women wear white head scarves.) The juhhál ('ignorant ones') accept the faith on the basis of what is taught to them by the uqqál. Monogamy is enjoined on all. Both men and women are encouraged to guard themselves against immodest or impulsive behavior.

At the beginning of the 20th century most of the 20 Druze villages in Palestine were populated exclusively by Druze, though since then Christian and Muslim minorities have emerged in some of them. These villages are located in northern Israel, mainly on hilltops – historically as a defense against attack and persecution. Among those that are favorite shopping spots for Bahá'í visitors and others is Daliyat el-Carmel, the largest Druze village in Israel, which is located on Mount Carmel, south-east of Haifa (population 15,000). It has a large market in the centre of the town, selling traditional Druze and Arab goods, which draws both local and foreign tourists. The only all-Druze town in western Galilee, the historically important Yirkih (Yirka), is very prosperous, having well-established industries and a population of 11,000 (its population was 1,000 in 1914). From a Bahá'í perspective, this town is of great importance, since for three months, Bahá'u'lláh stayed there, in the home of <u>Sh</u>ay<u>kh</u> Marzuq. The sons of <u>Sh</u>ay<u>kh</u> Marzuq, <u>Sh</u>ay<u>kh</u> Said and Shaykh

Salman, had shown great devotion to him and dealt with Bahá'ís with utmost affection. They considered the room [used by] Bahá'u'lláh during his sojourn as a sacred shrine, illuminating it each Friday night with a candle. They never allowed anyone into that room, nor furnished it in any way; and indeed considered it a sanctified spot. During these three months, Bahá'u'lláh's tent was pitched in the hills of Yirkih.[6] Abu-Sinan, situated east of 'Akká (and west of Yirkih), is another large Druze town. It became important during the reign of the Druze Emir Fāhru'd-Din Mani, who built a palace there for his son 'Alí in 1617. Today, Abu-Sinan is home to about 10,000 persons – 35 per cent Druze and the rest Christians and Muslims. The tombs of the prophet Zechariah and of Shaykh Hanbali are located in the town. The following is a description of the village in 1914, recorded by Dr Mu'ayyad:

The village of Abu-Sinan was a hamlet on the eastern side of 'Akká, situated on a choice hill, with pleasant and vivifying air and water. The people cultivated fig and olive trees and grew grapevines. The inhabitants were mostly Druze, with a few Catholic or Jewish residents, all of whom were engaged in farming. The Druze are mostly robust people, adapted to mountain life. Though their religious convictions are not known with any degree of certainty, they consider themselves monotheistic; that is, they believe in a single, all-powerful Omnipotent One Who revealed Himself through His manifestations. One of these manifestations, al-Ḥakím, the sixth Caliph of the Fatimid dynasty, will appear once more at the end of time, when the world is filled with tyranny and oppression and believers are surrounded by repression and hardship and he will establish justice and equity throughout the world and his religion would then be triumphant. They believe he will then reassemble the dispersed Druze tribe in Syria and, when the standard of his faith is hoisted over Mecca and Jerusalem, he will bring the whole of the earth under his own rule and establish justice.

The Druze of Abu-Sinan had a particular affinity for and attachment to the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh and considered 'Abdu'l-Bahá as one of God's chosen ones. When one of them fell ill, they would circumambulate the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh with the sick person and give him or her some of the left-over food from the plate of the Master ['Abdu'l-Bahá]. They showed great consideration and attraction [to the Bahá'ís]. Since the old days, all their chiefs and shaykhs have had profound affection [for Bahá'ís] because, from the time of the Blessed Beauty, they had only experienced love, sincerity and spirituality. With great devotion and sincerity they sought the presence of the Master. [135–6]

The Bahá'ís in Abu-Sinan

By September 1914, 'Abdu'l-Bahá had sent most of the Bahá'ís to Abu-Sinan while he went back and forth between Haifa-'Akká and that village. During this time, he avoided association with non-family members, keeping only one Bahá'í in 'Akká, and permitting Ḥájí Mírzá Haydar-'Alí to remain in the Haifa pilgrim house (chiefly on

account of his advanced age and ill health). All other Bahá'ís remained far from the turmoil, and this precaution proved necessary since, in addition to other considerations, it silenced the enemies of the Bahá'í Faith.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's family, which included BahíyyihKhánúm (his sister), MunírihKhánúm (his wife), his daughters and their respective families and the Americans Miss Edith Sanderson and Lua Getsinger, settled in the residence of the village head. Shaykh Salih, who displayed enormous respect towards 'Abdu'l-Bahá and his family, and his two sons, Shaykh Salman and Shaykh Yusuf, eagerly and warmly welcomed the Bahá'ís. They considered ['Abdu'l-Bahá's] presence in their midst a profound source of bounty, honor and distinction, and his shadow, the fount of their everlasting happiness and salvation.' [7] Once every few days "Abdu'l-Bahá would come to Abu-Sinan to visit the Bahá'ís and oversee their affairs. After a stay of one or two nights, he would return to 'Akká or Haifa. Most of the dwellings in the village were dilapidated farmhouses, which the Bahá'ís rented.

'Abdu'l-Bahá instructed Mírzá Badi' Bushru'i, who had recently completed his college training in Beirut, to set up a school for the children. It consisted of 25 pupils, mainly the children of "Abdu'l-Bahá's household, of the Bahá'í residents and of the Druze chiefs.

Dr Ḥabíbu'lláh Mu'ayyad, recently graduated from the Beirut medical school, was asked to set up a dispensary. This latter step was particularly important as most of the Ottoman physicians had been sent to the battle-fronts and there was an acute shortage of medical personnel. Lua Getsinger served as anaesthetic technician to Dr Mu'ayyad (or occasionally Badi' Bushru'i would assist in this regard). The room that served as Mu'ayyad's infirmary also served as the Bahá'í pilgrim house, where visitors would stay.

The Bahá'í community lived most modestly and the strictest economy was the rule. Their food was simple: lentils, dried beans, olives and olive oil, and sometimes millet, eggs and even some goat meat. 'Abdu'l-Bahá had taught the Bahá'ís to grow vegetables, which, with the wheat and corn from his village of Adasiyyih, kept many from dying of hunger. The air was pure and fresh, and the community quickly settled into a new routine.

On his regular visits, 'Abdu'l-Bahá brought any news from the outside world that was available, and would first visit his family, asking about the health of each member separately. There were some American guests in the early days, but 'Abdu'l-Bahá thought it unwise for them to remain. Most left by the last boat that sailed from Haifa to Alexandria in January 1915, and everyone was relieved when the American Bahá'ís had succeeded in reaching safety.

The Shaykh and his sons would gather in the divan. This was the reception room, vast and comfortable, of the male portion of the family. Here, with their friends and guests, they waited to hear any news "Abdu'l-Bahá might bring.

They loved, trusted and honored him with all their hearts, feeling and believing that his wisdom grasped the future as well as the present. Prayers were chanted at these gatherings, the Druze joining with the Bahá'ís. For five months there was no word from any part of the outside world.

Sometimes the governor of 'Akká, or the Commandant, the Chief Magistrate, the Mufti, or other high officials, would come to visit "Abdu'l-Bahá, staying at the village as guests for one or two nights. All consulted him on many questions regarding feeding or otherwise caring for the population during this time of difficulty, and many other problems were discussed. Great was his wisdom. He answered many questions and explained many incidents.

What follow are a glimpse into the daily life of "Abdu'l-Bahá during this period and some of his discourses, mainly as captured by Dr Mu'ayyad. They are presented in chronological order.

30 October–1 November 1914

For three days 'Abdu'l-Bahá and several Bahá'ís tarried at Bahjí, staying at a building connected to the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh that served as the Bahjí pilgrim house. In the morning and evening, 'Abdu'l-Bahá led the Bahá'ís on a visit to the Shrine, where he chanted the Tablet of Visitation. Also, twice daily, for 20 minutes each time, he pumped water for the trees and plants in the gardens surrounding the Shrine.

On November 1, early in the afternoon, 'Abdu'l-Bahá instructed everyone to leave for Abu-Sinan aboard his carriage. En route they were greeted by the locals, who would recognize the carriage and immediately show great humility and respect towards 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and approach him and kiss his hands with reverence and affection. The carriage stopped at a military camp, where 'Abdu'l-Bahá went to meet the commander, who recounted the army's defeat in the Battle of Sarab even though it numbered 70,000 strong. When 'Abdu'l-Bahá returned to the carriage, he spoke about the history of the Bahá'í community's relations with the Druze, as a means of preparing the group for their long stay at Abu-Sinan:

The Blessed Beauty journeyed to the village of Yirkih three times. On the first visit, I walked at the side of Bahá'u'lláh's steed until [reaching] the proximity of Abu-Sinan. Those days were marvelously pleasant! The Turks have a saying, 'The memory and reminiscence of those days are worth the world!'

At one time, after eight or nine years of confinement in 'Akká, [my uncle,] the late Mírzá Muḥammad-Qulí and I came out to explore the countryside. The trees had only recently blossomed, the countryside was most enchanting, and we enjoyed the scenery immensely. There, the late [Mírzá Muḥammad-Qulí] encountered a friend and enquired as to his destination. The friend responded, I am going to Abu-Sinan and Yirkih'. My late [uncle] sighed in

sadness and I said to him, Do not be sad, for one day we shall do the same'. Now, every time I visit this village, I think of him. [131-2]

Upon his arrival, 'Abdu'l-Bahá joined his family as a guest of <u>Sh</u>ay<u>kh</u> Salih. [8] That evening, <u>Sh</u>ay<u>kh</u> Salih organized a large feast in the main hall of his residence at which a number of Bahá'ís and others were present. 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke about the need of wise and sound policies' [132] in political affairs, noting that the European leaders were not prudent and their actions had led to the raging World War. He gave the example of MírzáAbú'l-QásimFarahani, known as the Qá'im-Maqam (d. 1835), who, as Fath-'Alí Sháh's Prime Minister, had prevented serious bloodshed during the Russo-Iranian War.

2 November 1914

In the morning a group of Druze and their chiefs came to meet with 'Abdu'l-Bahá. <u>Sh</u>ay<u>kh</u> Salih expressed his fear of the war, to which 'Abdu'l-Bahá responded:

You have not experienced genuinely difficult times, for if you had, such occurrences would not perturb you. One night we owned a vast estate and possessed all manner of comforts, but in the morning we were evicted and deprived of all belongings. Not even a coat was left to us. In the midst of the most agonizing cold, we were banished from one country to another. I went to my mother, asking for some food, but she had none to give. I asked for some flour and ate it in place of food. En route, in the hope of a good meal, I purchased syrup, flour and oil [to make halvah]. Instead, they mistakenly added a large quantity of pepper, which severely burned our mouths and insides. One of our friends was branded seventy times. Others had their noses cut off. Yet others were hanged upside down, until all their intestines fell out. We have weathered such storms. I pray that everything goes well and that God will protect all. [137][9]

At lunch-time Shaykh Salih gave a large feast with a variety of dishes. He had invited fifteen of Arab chiefs and had exerted much effort for this event beforehand.

4 November 1914

The remaining Bahá'ís of Haifa came to Abu-Sinan on this date and 'Abdu'l-Bahá left for 'Akká. Also, it was at this period that a box containing Tablets and holy relics was sent to Abu-Sinan for safe-keeping. The contents of this box formed the nucleus of the future International Bahá'í Archives.[10]

11 November 1914

'Akká: Dr Mu'ayyad reports that 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke about certain ancient Arab tribes. Afterwards 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Mu'ayyad walked to

the House of ‘Abdu’lláh Pá<u>sh</u>á, where an Arab beggar with filthy clothes and dirty, uncombed hair came to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. With utmost affection ‘Abdu’l-Bahá caressed his face and beard and spoke many words of encouragement and humor to him: May God grant you bounties. May God gladden your heart. What a wonderful chin! How is your health?’ After the beggar had left, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said:

When it is revealed, ‘Consort with all the religions’, [11] the intention is association with such people. Although there is no connection between us, I have served him for twenty years. [The intention of Bahá’u’lláh’s exhortation] is not to associate with a Covenant-breaker or those who curse the Blessed Beauty, or the likes of Hájí Muḥammad-Karim Khán who wrote in refutation of His Holiness the Exalted One [the Báb].

The intention is to consort with such people as are not antagonistic, or two-faced, or conniving, or hypocritical. [12] Such people [as this poor Arab] are not believers, and there is no harm in that; let him believe in his own convictions. It is exhorted that if we disfavor someone, it should not be over his religion. For instance, we should not avoid a Christian because of his beliefs. However, we should eschew people with abhorrent behavior, such as a thief, or a philanderer, or a murderer. ‘Consort with all the religions’ does not apply to such people. That is, if you know that someone sows the seeds of rebellion and enmity against the Blessed Beauty, then you should not associate with him. We have no relations with these people and leave them to their own devices. [265–6]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá and several friends continued to stroll to the sea-shore. When they first reached the shore, portions of the sea-wall looked in complete disrepair. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said:

This world is the plane of creation and disintegration. The process never stops: on one hand it creates new people, and on the other it destroys what it has created. The world will not grow tired. How numerous are the days witnessed by the world! They had buildings along this section [of the walls] and in front of them they built a bath house. With these rocks they made a natural pool and would wash their clothes there . . . [266]

While in Europe, I always proclaimed, ‘The Cause of Bahá’u’lláh embraces all the past Dispensations and manifests all their benefits to human society. It is like a tree that has many strong branches. The Faith of Bahá’u’lláh contains all the teachings beneficial to the world of humanity and will profit every segment of society. For instance, the New Testament speaks of compassion, kindness, forgiveness and clemency. These same teachings exist in the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh. The Qur’án speaks of justice and punishment, and these same concepts are preserved in the Cause of Bahá’u’lláh. In short, whatever good and productive precepts exist among the diverse groups of humanity, all are present in the Cause of God. In addition, the Faith offers certain principles, which others lack. For instance, [the principle of] the oneness of humanity; religion must be the cause of love and fellowship; religion must be in accord with reason and science; the

proclamation of universal peace; the equality of men and women; the promotion of learning and spirituality, and many others.' [268]

The group continued walking in the company of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the cemetery, where a number of the early Bahá'ís were buried. 'Abdu'l-Bahá stood by the graves and, with hands raised heavenwards, whispered prayers and supplicated divine mercy for those resting in their eternal abode.

The group strolled on further, to the railway station, where 'Abdu'l-Bahá sat down and said to Dr Mu'ayyad, Now that you have become a physician, come and take my pulse.' When he checked 'Abdu'l-Bahá's pulse he was shocked, and reported, Your pulse is very slow, but regular. The arteries seem to have the proper flow.' 'Abdu'l-Bahá remarked, From the age of 30 I have had a slow pulse. All others have a pulse rate of about 75 to 80 [per minute] and therefore greatly wonder about my pulse rate. What rate did you measure?' Mu'ayyad said, I did not count the rate, but suspect that it is about 40 [per minute]. He replied, No, it is 45 to 46. Count for yourself.' Mu'ayyad reports that he counted closely, using his watch, and it was 45. So he reported the result. 'Abdu'l-Bahá stated, If I have a fever, it goes up to 50'. [13] [269]

The friends proceeded to stroll through the streets of 'Akká in the company of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Along the way, wherever the people of 'Akká were congregated or sitting, at the sight of 'Abdu'l-Bahá they would rise to full height and greet him affectionately. Whoever they passed by, that person would instantly bend low, with hands reaching the ground, then bringing them up over the head, thereby offering the customary expressions of submissiveness, reverence and humility. Children playing in the streets would quit playing and run up to him and kiss his hands, and then return to their games.

19–20 November 1914

During this time Prince Shaykhu'r-Ra'is arrived in the Holy Land, and the Birth of the Báb was observed on 19 November [14] at Bahjí. With utmost joy and excitement, all the Bahá'ís residing in Abu-Sinan walked to Bahjí, where a feast was given by ÁqáMírzáSiyyid Ḥusayn. The friends visited the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh twice, and before dusk they returned to the village of Abu-Sinan. "Abdu'l-Bahá and Shaykhu'r-Ra'is returned to 'Akká.

The following day, the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh was celebrated in Abu-Sinan, where 19 Bahá'í children sang songs and engaged in a game of questions and answers, as a means of deepening and character training. [15]

24 November 1914

ÁqáMírzáNuri'd-Din Zayn came from 'Akká to Abu-Sinan and reported the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoken earlier in the day: If the Covenant-breakers had not frustrated my efforts, I would have assembled some of the

Muslim and the Christian chiefs and exhorted them to disallow internal conflict [in the nation]. However, the violators of the Covenant resisted and blocked me.' [297]

30 November 1914

It was a clear, bright day with a calm sea. From afar, the Zeeb underwater reefs, which were typically covered by the waves, could now be seen, and the people of 'Akká mistook them for warships. Therefore the entire population of 'Akká fled in fear, leaving behind only a few handicapped people. The whole city was evacuated. Doors and windows were left open. Under these conditions, "Abdu'l-Bahá stayed in 'Akká, with ÁqáAsadu'lláhKashi in his service. The Mutasarrif of 'Akká had cabled Beirut that four enemy warships were fast approaching the city, and this news had further perturbed the citizens of 'Akká.

Dr Mu'ayyad was in Abu-Sinan while all this was happening. Mrs Sanderson arrived in Isfandiyar's carriage and informed him that "Abdu'l-Bahá had summoned him. He immediately left for 'Akká and arrived as people were beginning to return to the city.

In the evening, a number of the Bahá'ís were present at the House of Abbúd. **Because of the disturbances,** 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke at length and most fervently about the storm of persecution that had occurred after the failed attempt on the life of Náṣiri'd-Dín Sháh in 1852. He concluded his remarks by saying: 'The point is, that I told these people of 'Akká what days we had witnessed, and that the threat of warships, in comparison, is like the sweetness of halvah. Indeed one cannot even call them threats.' [279-80]

4 December 1914

Dr Mu'ayyad was summoned to "Abdu'l-Bahá's presence alone in 'Akká. He gave him a mission that required his going to Beirut by way of Damascus.

31 December 1914

In the morning "Abdu'l-Bahá was pacing in the garden and Dr Mu'ayyad was in attendance.

'To what should I devote my time in Abu-Sinan?' Mu'ayyad asked.

I wish for you to go to Írán ,' 'Abdu'l-Bahá replied. 'For now, however, remain in Abu-Sinan and, for the good pleasure of God, cure the ailing. Also, read from the treatise on proofs as well as Ishráqát, Kalimát [Firdawsiyyih] and Ṭarázát, and memorize them.'

'Should I also tend to the non-Bahá'ís?' Mu'ayyad asked.

Yes, indeed,' 'Abdu'l-Bahá remarked, 'We too are devoted to the poor. By all means, attend to all, particularly the needy.'

Mu'ayyad remarked, 'Áqá Shaykh Badriú'd-Din has said, "The Shaykhu'l-Islám wants to proclaim jihad!"'

'Abdu'l-Bahá replied, Shaykhu'l-Islám is a simple, common man with no religious convictions. He is utterly ignorant of the religion of God. Jihad had an effect at a time when people were devoted to God's Faith, but now that spirit is completely gone. They themselves do not believe what they say. They claim this issue is a global war and jihad must be a matter of national concern. If in truth these people believed in religion, by now the world would have become the Abhá paradise. If you offered them a bribe, they would say the exact opposite of what they ruled earlier. No trace of spirit, sincerity, faith, certitude or firmness has remained in Islám. Only mere words have survived.' [307-8][16]

9 January 1915

After several days' absence, "Abdu'l-Bahá returned to Abu-Sinan. At night, a number of Bahá'í and Arab friends met with him and his discourse concerned the situation of the war. He stated:

This war is indeed ruinous and devastating in its effects. However, afterwards, the number of peace-loving people will grow considerably, and the commotion, uproar and the mighty tumult will precipitate [universal] peace. For the West, the most important thing is the war. If Germany is victorious, then the Ottoman Empire will be triumphant as well. Otherwise, if the Ottoman army advances into Egyptian territory, their victory will be temporary.

God deal justly with those who caused these wars and conflicts, who have caused so much bloodshed and trouble. Indeed, they have undermined the prosperity of the people. [145]

10 January 1915

In the morning a number of non-Bahá'ís met with 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He spoke formally and on a variety of topics. In the afternoon, <u>Sh</u><u>ay</u><u>kh</u> Salman asked about the education of children and 'Abdu'l-Bahá replied:

It is universally recognized that evil is stronger than good. Evil has a rapid effect, whereas good is slow in its impact. If a trustworthy person and a thief were together, the thief would never become righteous, but the converse might occur. Because of their association, a truthful person may become a liar, but it is rare for the perjurer to become truthful, or for the parsimonious to become generous by reason of his association with the charitable, or for the wicked to become virtuous, and so forth. This is because evil is stronger and its influence is more penetrating. This issue does not require proof, it is as evident as the noon-time sun. If there were a thousand healthy men, but one among them had a contagious disease, the thousand would have no effect on the ill, but the illness of that one would spread to the remaining thousand. For instance, if a person

is afflicted with smallpox and comes into contact with many healthy children, all will be infected, while it is not possible for the healthy to influence the sick. It is similar with the black plague or leprosy, where the healthy may be affected but the converse would not hold.

Consider how much time it takes to raise a building, but dynamite can destroy it in the blink of an eye. It takes five years to build an armored ship, but only a minute for a torpedo to sink it to the bottom of the ocean. It takes twenty years to raise a person to maturity, but he perishes in an instant by the assassin's bullet.

Therefore, if you desire for your children to be raised properly and remain protected, they must be cared for adequately. You must ensure that they do not meet or associate with ill-mannered persons. Either establish your own schools or do as we are doing. We have many students in the University [of Beirut]. Last year there were thirty of them. They associate only with each other [i.e. other Bahá'ís] and at the time of instruction they attend classes. Therefore they are well protected. However, there are other [Muslim] Iranians in Beirut and they are all vagabonds. Even the teachers despise them, to the point that they are expelled from the school. It is amazing! Most bewildering!

The Iranian children in 'Akká were like angels, but alas, some of them associated with the Arabs or with ill-mannered children. When they argued, all their speech was in Persian, but then they would curse in Arabic, as they were not taught similar words in Persian. When they became youth, they associated with non-Bahá'ís and became totally corrupt. Soon I had no choice but to expel them all.

There is a story of a Shaykh meeting a Bektash and saying to him, Why do you continue causing mischief and spending your time gratifying your carnal desires? Come with me and pray, meditate, fast for forty days, fear God and become righteous. Once you have become accustomed to praying and fasting, then you will no longer commit unseemly acts.' The Bektash responded, There is no need for forty days of prayer. You stay with me for just one night and all religion will be forgotten to you!

Therefore, I exhort you to protect your children from the evil influence of the wayward. [145-7]

11 January 1915

In the afternoon 'Abdu'l-Bahá went to Umqih, and returned near dusk. He was in great spirits, laughed frequently and shared humorous stories. "Abdu'l-Bahá related a dream that he had had some years earlier, about the arrival of the Commission of Investigation and its activities. He described at length the collusion of the Commissioners with his half-brothers, the failure of their opposition to him and their eventual bitter end. After this fervent presentation

he arose and left, his visage excited and filled with joy and energy.

12 January 1915

A number of Bahá'ís boarded “Abdu'l-Bahá's carriage and went to Haifa to accompany Mrs Edith Sanderson to her departure on board an Italian ship. The group remained in Haifa on 13 and 14 January.[17]

14 January 1915

Dr Mu'ayyad reports that he had earned a small sum from his medical practice in Abu-Sinan and contributed this to ‘Abdu'l-Bahá so that flour could be purchased and distributed among the village poor. At first, the Druze <u>Sh</u><u>ay<u>kh</u></u>s refused the offering, but after ‘Abdu'l-Bahá had pressed them, they consented and the entire amount, which included a sum contributed by “Abdu'l-Bahá, was given to the Catholics.

19 January 1915

It was Dr Mu'ayyad's birthday. A small festivity was organized and several gifts were presented to him. Faḍlu'llah Khán [Banan] Shírází[18] came [from Írán] with great difficulty to obtain some news of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá and the Bahá'ís. This was the last outside Bahá'í that they saw for a long time. Some days later Faḍlu'llah took the last Tablet from ‘Abdu'l-Bahá to Cairo, which was copied and dispersed to other communities – then there were no more communications.

22 January 1915

A group of Bahá'ís went for a visit to the village of Yirkih.

30 January 1915

A number of notables and affluent citizens of ‘Akká came to Abu-Sinan, including Nazmy Bey Bashi, Alay Amini, Jawdat Bey, Yuzbashi Nazmy Effendi Bey and the city's physician, Dr Tahir Bey. The Druze Shaykhs prepared a dinner feast, and Badi'Effendi and Ḥabíbu'lláh Mu'ayyad were invited as well. Before dinner, the ranking officer, Nazmy Bey Bashi Effendi, had mentioned that earlier in the day a feast had been given in ‘Akká by MírzáBadi'u'llah, the half-brother of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, who had invited the military commanders of the region, the guest of honor being Haydar Bey, the chief of gendarmes. The guests were entertained with great quantities of food and alcoholic drinks and by Sadhijih, MírzáBadi'u'llah's daughter. She had planned to provoke Haydar Bey, who had complete authority over the region's military, into imprisoning, exiling or murdering ‘Abdu'l-Bahá. This scheme had

backfired however, and a huge uproar against MírzáBadi‘u‘llah had ensued in ‘Akká.

7 February 1915

Dr Mu‘ayyad reports that on this day he went to Haifa and in the streets of the city he met “Abdu‘l-Bahá, who, after a short conversation, assured Mu‘ayyad of a second meeting that day and went to the home of one of the Turks. Soon, he returned and they boarded his carriage. Mírzá Aḥmad Sohrab was also summoned, and together they went sight-seeing.

‘Abdu‘l-Bahá said, I go to dangerous places by myself, but for sight-seeing, I like to take the friends with me. Today I want to take you on this excursion. Tell me, how do you spend your time in Abu-Sinan?’

Mu‘ayyad replied, Holding surgeries, and at night replying to polemics and reading books. I spend the afternoons doing operations and the evenings outlining [responses to] the polemics of [Muḥammad-]Javád Qazvini. He has translated Azam as Great’ and Akbar as the Most Great’, whereas it should be the reverse.[19] (‘Abdu‘l-Bahá smiled.) Among his base accusations is that instead of bringing unity, ‘Abdu‘l-Bahá separated men from their wives, fathers from sons, and daughters from their mothers.’

‘Abdu‘l-Bahá said, I never caused their separation. They separated themselves. The Blessed Beauty established a Covenant and they broke it, therefore, separation took place. If they obey and remain firm, there will be unity. The Cause of God has united easterner, westerner, southerner, northerner, Turk, Arab, Indian and American. All are united and would give their lives for one another. The ones that were far became near; the enemies became brothers. But he who violates the Covenant, be it one’s brother, sister, father or mother, naturally a firm believer will sever relations with him.’

The conversation continued. At that point ‘Abdu‘l-Bahá’s carriage reached the cave of Elijah, and about 200 needy women and children were near by. At ‘Abdu‘l-Bahá’s instruction, Isfandiyar, his coachman, distributed money among the poor. After a short walk, the group returned to ‘Abdu‘l-Bahá’s residence. That night, about 30 Bahá’ís were assembled at his house and ‘Abdu‘l-Bahá remarked: ‘Praised be God that out of the favors of the Blessed Beauty, I am well and healthy. Indeed, I am very well. After such an arduous journey [to Europe and America], I needed a repose. Now I am forced to rest a little, otherwise I would not relax.’ [164–7]

8 February 1915

‘Abdu‘l-Bahá was sitting in the sun by the entrance of his residence in Haifa. ÁqáMírzáFaḍlu‘llahBanan <u>Sh</u>írází was also present. ‘Abdu‘l-Bahá said, The call of the Supreme Concourse and the fame of the

Cause of God have enveloped the whole earth, but the Iranians have not yet awakened to it.' A Christian entered, carrying a basket. When he saw 'Abdu'l-Bahá he was overwhelmed and dropped the basket, saying, 'There was no porter, so I was forced to carry the basket myself'. A person must be proud of his labour,' 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, and only ashamed of his sins, not of his work and service.'

In the afternoon some friends had tea in the company of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He said, 'Bring my overcoat so we can walk to the Shrine of the Báb.' A number of friends accompanied him. His carriage followed behind. En route, he rested in two places. Upon reaching a bend in the road, he spoke of the benefits of paved roads, noting, 'This is indeed an amazing mountain and now it has good roads as well'. (He meant that the large boulders had been removed.) Hájí Siyyid Javád asked, 'Will there be a time that electricity will be available on this mountain?' 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, 'Without a doubt! But not so soon. Eventually this mountain will be filled with light.'

[168]

The group reached a particular spot, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, 'I purchased this parcel of land in order to make the road wider. The wretched Matran seized it and fenced it with a wall; but now he has lost that as well.'

[168]

Half-way to the Shrine, his carriage arrived and 'Abdu'l-Bahá boarded it. He spoke most appreciatively of the almond blossom, saying how it had adorned the mountain. After he had chanted the Tablet of Visitation the group retired to the pilgrim house, where he remarked to the resident Bahá'ís, 'Plant fruit trees, since they are productive. I am very fond of fruit trees, though I never eat fruits, except an occasional sweet tangerine. Nevertheless, I love for the tree to bear fruits. Similarly I like people who produce goodly results. Otherwise it is of no use.'

[169]

That night, when some of the friends were gathered at "Abdu'l-Bahá's house, he said:

Cleanliness has a profound effect on the spirit. Even though cleanliness is related to worldly affairs, yet its effect is manifested in the soul. Now the Cause of God is not established, but when it is, you will see that cleanliness and refinement is one of the foundations of God's religion. Sometimes I am invited to places that serve wonderful food, but since it is not made in sanitary ways, I partake of it with hesitation. And actually there is no choice but to eat it . . .

Even though some things are earth-bound, they have a great effect on the soul, such as cleanliness or a good voice. The voice is no more than airwaves that reach one's ear and cause the vibration of the eardrums. Yet, consider its profound effect on the spirit. Similarly, cleanliness affects the soul. [169-70]

9 February 1915

The German Mr Rothschild was a competent artist and had skillfully drawn a portrait of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. He presented this drawing to him and asked that a few words be inscribed below the picture so that a German translation of them would further adorn the portrait. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wrote:

Humanity is created in the image of the Merciful [God], that is to say with Divine attributes. And so, the physical form will perish, but the heavenly character will endure. The soul is an effulgence of the divine, while the human body is composed of earthly elements. Therefore may a heavenly form be thine. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá‘Abbás. [172]

15–17 February 1915

Because of the humidity and the cold of Haifa, Ḥájí Mírzá Haydar-‘Alí, who was 85 years old, contracted a severe fever and unrelenting cough. When one of the friends suggested to him that a doctor should visit, he refused. Instead, he indicated his desire to be examined by Dr Mu’ayyad. On 17 February, one of the Afnáns informed ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and instructions were issued for Mu’ayyad to leave for Haifa on the following day to attend him.

18–20 February 1915

Dr Mu’ayyad arrived at the Haifa pilgrim house, where a number of the friends were gathered around the Ḥájí’s bed. On examination, he was found to have pneumonia and heart disease. Mu’ayyad began to treat him, and for the next six days he remained in the pilgrim house, attending to him.

21 February 1915

Ḥájí had become well enough to bathe. All day he related many virtuous stories, one example being: MírzáBadi‘u’llah gave a promissory note of 1200 liras to Yaḥyá Bey, the Damascene, known as TaburÁqási, for him to arrange ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s exile to Fizan. However, after their plans fell apart Yaḥyá Bey enforced the payment of the note. MírzáBadi‘u’llah was compelled to sell two pieces of land for six hundred liras and to sell the ownership of one-third of the Mansion of Bahjí to TaburÁqási for the remainder of the debt. [20] Dr Mu’ayyad notes that, paradoxically, shortly thereafter ‘Abdu’l-Bahá traveled, with the utmost majesty, to Europe and America to demonstrate that ‘God is the best of plotters.’ [21]

23 February 1915

Mu'ayyad reports that in the morning he was in Haifa with Ḥájí Mírzá Haydar-‘Alí. Afterwards, he left for ‘Akká with ÁqáMírzáJalil and ÁqáMírzá Ḥusayn Yazdí and came into the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. An Egyptian youth had come from Switzerland and was with him, discussing the World War. “Abdu’l-Bahá stated:

In the loudest voice, I cried out in all the synagogues, and churches: O people! The world of humanity is in peril and Europe is like a barrel of gunpowder waiting for a single spark for it to explode. You must endeavor to prevent this occurrence. You must protect humanity. For six thousand years people have been afflicted with ills and prejudices in the religious, temporal, national and political realms. Have you not discerned that it has come to naught? Come, embrace divine politics, that is, the politics of love. This is an easy matter. Is it not better for us to embrace divine teachings above human conceptions? If God was indeed heedless of man, then He would not have created him in the first place, provided nourishment for him or educated him. Therefore, God loves man.

Similarly, I announced: Religion must be the promoter of science and civilization. Otherwise, its absence is preferable. Why do we have inequality of the sexes? We all are children of the same father and the same mother.

Now, different groups of people in the world have made claims to various portions of the earth and have drawn lines around each, considering it to be solely theirs. They say, ‘This is my nation and that is yours!’ On this side of one line is a friend, on the other they see an enemy. We behave like dogs, considering a corner of a street to be ours, and, as soon as another dog approaches our territory, we attack. The only earth that belongs to man is the one that will ultimately be poured over him. Is it not a waste, so much bloodshed for this unworthy soil? . . . [178–9]

28 February 1915

‘Abdu’l-Bahá returned to Abu-Sinan. In his company were a number of military officers, such as the Qumandan [Commandant?], Nazmi Bey and Jawdat Bey. In another carriage rode Dr Fingelstein, who was a German and the principal of the German Polytechnic in Haifa, [22] his sister and three other Germans. As soon as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s carriage came into view, the Druze took four horses for the guests to ride. Out of deference to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and with his permission, the Qumandan preferred to walk. However, he insisted that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá should ride as it was uphill and difficult for him. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá mounted a donkey and slowly came from behind, ordering all the others to accompany the Qumandan. That night, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá spoke in the gathering of the villagers and Dr Mu’ayyad served as the translator. Some of that discussion is as follows:

Dr Finkelstein: ‘We are exceedingly happy and joyous that we have gained the bounty of being in the Master’s presence, which is the ultimate desire of so many people. I too have always longed for a day such as this and for beholding an assemblage like this.’

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Such gatherings are only possible through the divine bounties and favors. Otherwise, how could the two of us ever hope to meet? A gathering such as this, in such a location, at a time when no one draws a breath of comfort, is not possible unless decreed through God’s benevolence.’

Dr Finkelstein: ‘Throughout all of Europe, a meeting similar to this, with such depth of love and spirituality, is never seen. Even among members of the same family, such affection is not experienced. We have much to learn from the East, especially culture, humanity and spirituality. In its place, we can offer science, technology and industry.’

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Yes, indeed. The relationship between the East and the West must be like that, otherwise it is of no benefit. . . . the Germans were very kind to us. I am well pleased with the Germans. The spiritual future of Germany is very glorious. The word “German” in Persian means “Our kinsmen”. I was happier in Germany than anywhere else.’ [180–2]

At night, the German visitors stayed in Abu-Sinan; the following day they had lunch with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and then returned to Haifa. At the time of his departure, Dr Finkelstein said to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, ‘These two days in your august presence were the sweetest time of my life.’ [182]

1 March 1915

In Abu-Sinan, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá instructed Dr Mu’ayyad to travel in his carriage to Haifa and visit Hájí Mírzá Haydar-‘Alí, and then to return the following day. At dusk, Dr Mu’ayyad was summoned to his presence. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá spoke about Dr Finkelstein and the other guests, remarking:

Consider what an immense love and devotion governs our relationship and how devotedly we cherish them. They have no prejudice; they eat everything, unlike the Jews in this land. The Jews in America have similar traits and listen attentively. [183]

That night, in the home of Shaykh Salih, “Abdu’l-Bahá remarked:

Piety is the mother of all goodly characters, and its absence is the mother of all evil . . . One time in ‘Akká, fifty Christians were imprisoned. Their [Muslim] gaoler would beat and torture them, considering this a meritorious deed before God. Through [inflicting] various injuries, he would also exact money from the prisoners, and when they did not pay, would beat them even more severely, claiming, **This is jihad!**’ Eventually one of them came to me. I complained to the governor, **Though the prisoners are Christians, such treatment is unwarranted. If any Muslim wishes to wage jihad, let him go**

to the battlefield and war against the Russians. Otherwise, what is the point of beating defenseless prisoners?’ The governor summoned the gaoler and ordered that he receive fifty strokes of the cane. Eventually, the situation of the gaoler deteriorated so that he would come to me, asking for alms for his needy wife and children. He became a beggar. [183–4]

2 March 1915

Dr Mu’ayyad was summoned to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s presence early in the morning and had tea with him. He remarked, When you go to Haifa [today], give my greetings to that Egyptian youth and tell him that his letter was received. However, for his protection, I will not reply, as they search all the papers closely. Through divine bounties, without need for paper and pen, our spiritual communion will be everlasting.’ He added: I use hyssop. Is it used in modern medicine?’ Mu’ayyad responded: I do not know its chemical composition.’ “Abdu’l-Bahá said:

It has a diuretic effect, and therefore it is beneficial. It is also very useful for curing shortness of breath. It has an indirect influence. The root of corn and cherry bark are also diuretic. But all healing resides with God. These are all instruments.

For healing, two causes are necessary: physical and spiritual. For a material remedy, physicians and medicine are needed. And for the spiritual cure, confirmations and divine healing are required.

Similarly for commerce, two causes have been decreed. The material cause is having capital and expertise, and the spiritual cause requires divine confirmation. If the material means are not available, then all efforts are squandered. And should the divine confirmations accompany a deed, then its benefits will be immense and universal. If both are present, then it will be light upon light. Otherwise, efforts will be wasted. Confirmation and divine affirmation must surround all undertakings – this is true even in war . . . [186]

3 March 1915

Shaykh Yusuf and Mírzá Tarazu’llah, son of Mírzá Maḥmúd Kashi, came to meet with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Abu-Sinan and reported, The governor is preparing for defensive measures and predicts that warships will bombard the city’. “Abdu’l-Bahá remarked:

In these days, it is time for calmness and dignity; it is time for confidence and assurance. We must rely upon God. Be most vigilant, so that you do not grow perturbed and perplexed. They say that [one day] when Napoleon was writing a letter, an enemy artillery shell exploded near his tent and dirt fell over the letter. He was not perturbed in the least, and paused for a minute to say, ‘I am thankful to our foes for helping me in my work. I was going to pour some sand over this letter to dry the ink, but now our enemy has helped, so that I can finish

this task and issue the command for attack.' With that, he ordered his men into the field with trumpet blasts. It so happened that they were victorious.

May God provide means for our succor. At present the situation is very troublesome. Some things can be tolerated, but others cannot. For instance, when we arrived in 'Akká, the situation was very difficult. We were imprisoned, and two of our friends passed away. No money was available for their burial. There was one small carpet which we sold for a few qurush and gave to the Imám Jum'ih, who placed those two in a ditch and scattered a little dirt over them. We had to feed one hundred and fifty people.

Thinking about troubles is more difficult than the actual experience. How wonderful it would have been if human beings were like the birds of the air, which are carefree and never save for their next meal. I hope that soon God will fling open His gate of mercy upon His servants. It has been very difficult for people. Before my journey to America, I knew two or three hundred of the poor. But now, save for a handful, they have perished. [190-1]

5 March 1915