

Amazing Stories from the Dawn-Breakers

Adapted by Jackie Mehrabi and illustrated by Malcolm Lee

The Shepherd Boy



A shepherd boy sat dreaming on the hillside. Every now and then he looked up to watch the sheep searching for herbs and sweet, green grass among the stones and bushes.

When he was born, the shepherd boy was named Yár-Muhammad, after the Prophet. Later he became known as Nabíl-i-A'zam, which means "The Great Nabíl". His father had been a nomad, moving from place to place in the north of Persia. But now Nabíl and his parents and

brothers and sisters lived in the village of Zarand. The family was not rich, and Nabíl had to leave school to work as a shepherd and earn some money.

Nabíl was a clever boy and wished he could have studied longer. But at least he had learnt to read the Qur'án, the Holy Book

of Muhammad. And as he followed the sheep over the hills, he chanted the verses of the Qur'án he had learnt by heart and thought about their meaning. He loved to be alone in the wilderness and gazed with wonder and delight at the millions of stars shining in the sky at night. At these times he prayed to God and asked Him to guide him to find the Truth. He felt that something important had happened in the world and he wanted to find out what it was.



Nabíl searched everywhere trying to find someone who could tell him the answer to all the questions he had in his head. He listened to talks given by learned religious leaders, but he did not agree with what most of them said. They sounded very muddled. And some of the priests seemed to have forgotten Muhammad's teachings about being good and humble and sincere.

When he was sixteen years old, Nabíl was visiting his uncle when he overheard a conversation between two men.

"Have you heard?" said one of them. "The Báb is on His way to Tihrán!"

The second man said he had not heard this news, so the first

man began to tell him the story of a youth called 'Alí Muhammad, whom everyone called the Báb: how He had come from the town of Shíráz in the south of Persia and said He was the Promised One and then been arrested!



Nabíl listened in excitement. He knew this was the Truth he was looking for. He could not rest. He could not sleep at night. He was not hungry and could not eat. All He could think about was the Báb, and he longed to meet Him. But the Báb only stayed near Tihrán for a few days before being imprisoned in a castle far away in the north-west corner of Persia.

Although Nabíl never met the Báb, he did meet many of the Bábís. He listened to the exciting tales of their adventures, and later on Bahá'u'lláh encouraged him to write these stories down. That is how he came to write a thick book called *The Dawn-Breakers*, which is about the Báb and His followers.

(To be continued)