

revelry, in delight of the real presence of the divine, and he encouraged his followers to perceive the divine immanence in all things.

Near the end of his life, the Ba'al Shem Tov spent longer and longer periods of time in contemplative prayer and ecstatic devotion. He died in 1760 after an extended illness and was buried in the town of Miedzyboz. The grave of the Ba'al Shem Tov quickly became, and continues to be, the focus of annual pilgrimages by Hasidim and other spiritual disciples.

—June-Ann Greeley

See also: Devotion; Dov Baer of Mezhirech; Hasidism; Judaism and Holy People; Mysticism and Holy People; Reform and Reaction; Tzaddiq; Veneration of Holy People

References and further reading:

Green, Arthur. 1987. "Typologies of Leadership and the Hasidic Zaddiq." Pp. 127–156 in *World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest*. Vol. 14, *Jewish Spirituality from the Sixteenth-Century Revival to the Present*. Edited by Arthur Green. New York: Crossroad.

Hundert, Gershon David, ed. 1991. *Essential Papers on Hasidism: Origins to Present*. New York: New York University Press.

Rosman, Moshe. 1996. *Founder of Hasidism: A Quest for the Historical Ba'al Shem Tov*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Scholem, Gershom. 1991. "Tsaddik: The Righteous One." Pp. 88–139 in *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead: Basic Concepts in the Kabbalah*. Translated by Joachim Neugroschel. New York: Schocken.

Bab, The ("The Gate")

(1819–1850 C.E.)

Babi founder, prophet

The Bab was the founder of the Babi faith, a religious movement that shook Iran in the mid-nineteenth century. The Bab claimed to be the *mahdi* expected by all Muslims and the inaugurator of a new religious dispensation. His religion went on to form the foundation for the Baha'i faith.

Hajji Sayyid Ali Muhammad Shirazi was born in Shiraz, Iran (then called Persia), in 1819 to a merchant family that traced its descent from the prophet Muhammad. His father died when he was young and he was raised by his mother and maternal uncle. After a perfunctory primary education, he began to work as a merchant in the businesses of his maternal uncles. In 1841, he traveled to Karbala, where he attended for a short time the lectures of Sayyid Kazim Rashti, the leader of the Shaykhi school. After six months in Karbala, the Bab returned to Shiraz and was married to Khadijih Begum. The couple had one child who died shortly after birth.

In 1844, a number of the students of the recently deceased Sayyid Kazim Rashti, including Mulla Husayn Bushru'i and Ruh al-Quddus, came to Shiraz in search of a successor to their teacher. Here eighteen of them met the Bab and accepted his claim, thus becoming what he called the

"Letters of the Living" (they included Tahirih, who had not met the Bab but accepted him through correspondence). The Bab sent these Letters of the Living out to all parts of Iran and beyond to announce his claim. He himself set off for a pilgrimage to Mecca, where he proclaimed his mission, but without any response.

Upon the Bab's return from pilgrimage in 1845, he was arrested by the governor of Shiraz and kept under house arrest. In 1846, the Bab went to Isfahan, Iran, where he managed to gain the support of Manuchihr Khan, the governor. During this time, the number of his followers was growing throughout Iran (the number may have reached 100,000 adherents, out of a probable Iranian population of 5–7 million), and the Islamic religious leaders were becoming alarmed, not least because the Bab severely criticized them in his writings. After the death of Manuchihr Khan in 1847, the prime minister, fearful of the Bab's growing influence, prevented a meeting between the Bab and the shah and tried to isolate the Bab by imprisoning him, first in the fortress of Maku and then (because the Bab had won over his wardens there) in Chihriq, both in northwestern Iran. The prime minister tried to discredit him by putting him on trial in Tabriz, the provincial capital, in April 1848. The trial was a mockery, but the Bab used it to proclaim openly for the first time his claim to be the mahdi expected by both Shi'i and Sunni Muslims (prior to this he had worded his writings in such a way that many thought he was only claiming to be a representative of the mahdi).

After this open proclamation, events moved quickly: A conference of the Bab's followers (called Babis) gathered at Badasht in northeastern Iran in July 1848 and proclaimed the inauguration of a new religious dispensation; the old shah died in September and a new shah came to the throne—his new prime minister proving to be just as antagonistic to the Bab as his predecessor had been; some of the Babis, under Mulla Husayn and Quddus, were besieged and eventually massacred at Shaykh Tabarsi between October 1848 and May 1849; clashes between the royal forces and the Babis at Nayriz in southern Iran in May–June 1850 and in Zanzan in May 1850–January 1851 ended in the massacre of large numbers of Babis; and in other places, including Tehran, leading Babis were executed.

In the end, the prime minister decided to try to put an end to the upheaval caused by the Babi movement by executing the Bab in Tabriz on July 9, 1850. However, even this attempt to quash the Babi movement backfired by giving the Bab, at the hour of his death, an aura of the miraculous. The British minister in Iran reported: "He was killed by a volley of musketry, and his death was on the point of giving his religion a lustre which would have largely increased its proselytes. When the smoke and dust cleared away after the volley, Bab was not to be seen, and the populace proclaimed that he

had ascended to the skies. The balls had broken the ropes by which he was bound" (Momen 1981, 78). He was found completing a dictation to his secretary and was then shot by a second volley.

The Bab was mild-mannered and had a very attractive and engaging personality that captivated many of those who met him. The only firsthand account by a westerner was given by Dr. Cormick, an Anglo-Irish physician: "He was a very mild and delicate looking man, rather small in stature and very fair for a Persian, with a melodious soft voice, which struck me much. . . . In fact his whole look and deportment went far to dispose one in his favour" (Momen 1981, 75). One of the most convincing proofs of his station was the rapidity with which he produced his writings. One evening in Isfahan, before a roomful of high-ranking Muslim clerics, he was asked to write a commentary on a chapter of the Qur'an. He immediately proceeded to write a work of some 80–100 pages (depending on which manuscript one consults) rapidly and without pausing or correcting anything.

In addition, in all of his writings his style was remarkable—according to some, "miraculous"—in that he was able to draw together, in new and striking ways, themes and motifs particularly germane to Islamic messianic expectations, enchanting and emboldening the reader through a unique combination of the symbols and sacred vocabulary of the Islamic religious tradition. One of his most important works, the *Qayyúm al-asmá* (Maintainer of the divine names), was received as nothing less than the "true Qur'an" thought by Shi'is to be held in safekeeping by the hidden imam, who, upon his return, would promulgate it to the faithful. The Bab's writings had a very powerful effect on those who were attuned to their themes and arguments. His holiness may be thought to reside, in large measure, in the very charismatic quality of these texts. Unfortunately, a large proportion of his writings fell into the hands of his enemies, and most of this has probably been destroyed. What remains, however, is still very extensive and comprises some thirty major works and numerous letters and other writings.

The Bab wrote of his claims that God had sent him with a mission and message in the same way that he had sent Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad in the past and would send others in the future. He stated that his coming was the Day of Judgment mentioned in all of the scriptures of the past. The prophecies concerning that day were to be understood as having been fulfilled spiritually and figuratively—not necessarily only literally. For example, the return of Jesus (prophesied in both the Bible and Qur'an) meant the appearance of a figure who had the same spiritual reality as Jesus—fulfilled the same function of being the representative of God on earth (that is, the Bab himself). The Bab also gave new laws that his followers were to obey, especially in his book the *Bayan* (Exposi-

tion). Above all, the Bab, especially in his later writings such as the *Bayan*, frequently referred to the future advent of "He whom God will make manifest."

The religion of the Bab survived despite the intense persecution it suffered and the thousands of its followers who were killed. In 1863–1868, Baha'u'llah claimed to be "He whom God will make manifest," and most of the Babis accepted this claim and became Baha'is.

—Moojan Momen and B. Todd Lawson

See also: Baha'u'llah; Founders of Religions as Holy People; Husayn Bushru'i; Islam and Holy People; Martyrdom and Persecution; Messiahs; Prophets; Quddus, Ruh al-; Shoghi Effendi; Tahiri; Teachers as Holy People; Veneration of Holy People

References and further reading:

- Báb, The. 1976. *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*. Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre.
- Balyuzi, Hasan M. 1973. *The Báb*. Oxford: George Ronald.
- Lawson, Todd. 1997. "The Dangers of Reading: Inlibration, Communion and Transference in the Qur'an Commentary of the Bab." In *Scripture and Revelation*. Edited by Moojan Momen. Oxford: George Ronald.
- Momen, Moojan. 1981. *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions, 1844–1944: Some Contemporary Western Accounts*. Oxford: George Ronald.
- Nabíl [Zarandí]. 1970. *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabíl's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahá'í Revelation*. Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust.

Babalola, Joseph Ayo

(1904–1959 C.E.)

Christian prophet, church founder

Joseph Ayo Babalola was born in 1904 at Odo Owa in Kwara, Nigeria, into an Anglican family. He had an elementary-school education and thereafter was trained as a mechanic. Receiving the call to preach in his mid-twenties, he abandoned his job as a steamroller operator with the Public Works Department of the colonial government and became a prophet. In the years that followed, he demonstrated extraordinary spiritual powers. In 1930, he joined Faith Tabernacle, one of the earliest independent churches in Nigeria. As an itinerant evangelist, he traveled far and wide in Yorubaland and also among the Akan people in Ghana. He had converts among kings and the masses, and his message permeated both rural and urban communities.

Babalola preached divine healing and emphasized the power of prayer. The rate at which people flocked to his meetings alarmed both the mainline churches and the colonial government, especially as mainline churches lost more and more members to his evangelistic campaigns. He encountered problems with the colonial authorities and was imprisoned for a period of six months in 1932 for launching a campaign against witches in Benin City. He came out of this ordeal even more determined to preach the gospel.

their bodies in memory of Husayn and his companions. Others reenact the events in Karbala with annual passion plays. Husayn's death injected a sense of passion for martyrdom into Islamic culture and inspired Shi'is to defy oppressive rulers.

Soon after his death, Husayn's followers in Kufa rose against Yazid. Even though they were defeated, the Penitents, as they came to be called, set the tone for further Shi'i uprisings against unjust rulers. Under Mukhtar b. 'Ubayd's (d. 687) revolt, many of those responsible for Husayn's death were captured and brought to justice. Husayn's death also inspired future Shi'i revolts against both the Umayyad and Abbasid regimes.

Because of the manner of his death and his close connection to the prophet, Husayn has been revered in both Shi'i and Sunni literature. He is exalted because of the motives that led to his sacrifice and for not compromising his principles against the threats of a dictator, preferring to die rather than live in humiliation. Shi'i hagiographic literature is replete with many legends about miracles performed by Husayn. His tomb in Karbala has become a pilgrimage site for the Shi'is, many of whom visit it to benefit from the miracles, blessings, and intercession reportedly available at his shrine.

—*Liyakat Takim*

See also: Ali ibn Abi Talib; Fatima bint Muhammad; Hasan b. 'Ali; Imams; Islam and Holy People; Martyrdom and Persecution; Muhammad; Politics and Holy People; Veneration of Holy People

References and further reading:

- Ayoub, Mahmoud. 1979. *Redemptive Suffering in Islam*. New York: Mouton.
- Jafri, Syed. 1978. *The Origins and Early Development of Shi'ite Islam*. London: Longman.
- Mufid, Muhammad b. Muhammad al-. 1981. *Kitab al-Irshad*. Translated by I. Howard. London: Balagha and Muhammad Trust.
- Schubel, Vernon. 1993. *Religious Performance in Contemporary Islam: Shi'i Devotional Rituals in South Asia*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.

Husayn Bushru'i

(1813–1849 C.E.)

Babi disciple, martyr

Mulla Husayn Bushru'i was the first to believe in the Bab (1819–1850) and a member of the "Letters of the Living," the first and highest-ranking group of the Bab's disciples. As such, he helped to establish the Babi movement, an offshoot of Islam and forerunner of the Baha'i faith.

Mulla Husayn was born in 1813 in a village near the small town of Bushru'iyyih in northeastern Iran. His father

was a dyer and his mother a poet. During the course of his education in the cities of Mashhad and Isfahan, he became a follower of the Shaykhi teaching, and in 1835, he set off for Karbala in order to attend the lectures of the Shaykhi leader Sayyid Kazim Rashti. The latter regarded Mulla Husayn highly and chose him when he needed someone to go to Iran and canvass support from some of the senior clerics there for the Shaykhi teachings, which were at this time under attack.

Mulla Husayn returned successfully from his mission in January 1844 only to find that Sayyid Kazim had died shortly before. Mulla Husayn refused all efforts to install him as the new leader of the Shaykhis, and instead set off in search of a new leader, as Sayyid Kazim had suggested. This led him to Shiraz and a meeting with the Bab on May 23, 1844, at which the latter put forward a claim that Mulla Husayn accepted (an event commemorated annually by Baha'is as a holy day). Mulla Husayn thus became the first of the Letters of the Living and was sent off to proclaim the teachings of the Bab. His subsequent journeys and activities brought Baha'u'llah and many others into the Babi fold. After meeting the Bab again in Shiraz in 1845, he returned to Mashhad, where he set up a center for the propagation of the Bab's teaching. In spring 1848, he made a journey to Maku on foot (1,200 miles) to see the Bab, who was imprisoned there.

In July 1848, he raised a Black Standard in Mashhad (a sign of the appearance of the *mahdi* [messiah] in Islamic prophecy) and set off eastward with some 200 Babis. They were surrounded at Shaykh Tabarsi in October 1848 and besieged by royal troops. Although most of the Babis had regarded Mulla Husayn as the foremost of the disciples of the Bab up to this time, Mulla Husayn deferred to Quddus, another of the Bab's disciples, during this siege. Mulla Husayn was shot during a battle on February 2, 1849, and died later that same day. He was thirty-five. The Bab wrote a eulogy for him to be used when visiting his grave, and Baha'u'llah also praised him highly in his writings. His story as told in the early Baha'i history *Nabil's Narrative* presents a picture of courage, humility, and intellectual brilliance that has made him a spiritual hero for successive generations of young Baha'is.

—*Moojan Momen and B. Todd Lawson*

See also: Bab, The; Baha'i Faith and Holy People; Baha'u'llah; Kazim Rashti, Sayyid; Violence and Nonviolence

References and further reading:

- Baha'u'llah. 1989. *Kitab-i-Iqan*. Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust.
- Mehrabkhani, Ruh'u'llah. 1987. *Mulla Husayn: Disciple at Dawn*. Los Angeles: Kalimat.
- Nabíl [Zarandi]. 1970. *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabil's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahá'í Revelation*. Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust.

Q

Qasim, Muhammad b. 'Abdallah al-

(r. 934–946 C.E.)

Isma'ili Muslim imam, caliph

Muhammad b. 'Abdallah al-Qasim was the twelfth Isma'ili Nizari imam (thirteenth imam for the Musta'li Isma'ilis) and the second Fatimid ruler. He was born in Salamiya while his father, al-Mahdi, was still living in secrecy to escape Abbasid persecution. His name was similar to that of his ancestor the prophet Muhammad (Muhammad b. 'Abdallah Abu'l-Qasim al-Mustafa). Since Babylonian times, the number twelve has been of great significance in the traditions of the Near and Middle East. For many, it is no coincidence that there are twelve signs of the zodiac, twelve months of the year, twelve tribes of Israel, and twelve disciples of Jesus. The Ithna Ash'ari Shi'as have a total of twelve imams. Thus, al-Qasim's position as twelfth imam is of great significance in Islam.

Al-Qasim actively participated in the governing of his father's domains. Toward this end he helped subdue the Berber uprisings and twice attempted to capture Egypt. During his reign he concentrated on his naval strength, which became a formidable Mediterranean power, and made successful raids on the ports of Sardinia, Genoa, and Circassa, among others. Al-Qasim's reign also ushered in an era of great challenges for the Fatimid dynasty. For several years, his reign was plagued by the Kharijite opposition led by Abu Yazid, who belonged to the Zanata tribe. Al-Qasim was engaged in subduing this rebellion until his death in 946. The rebellion was finally subdued after the succession of al-Mansur, his son, who ruled for seven years. Al-Qasim passed away after twelve years of rule both as imam and as ruler, and he was buried in the capital city of Mahdiyya.

—*Habibeh Rahim*

See also: Imams; Islam and Holy People; Mansur, al-; Rulers as Holy People

References and further reading:

Daftary, Farhad. 1990. *The Isma'ilis: Their History and Doctrines*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. 1998. *A Short History of the Ismailis*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

———, ed. 2000. *Intellectual Traditions in Islam*. London: I. B. Tauris and the Institute of Ismaili Studies.

Qonawi

See **Kunawi, Sadr al-Din al-**

Quddus, Ruh al-

(1821–1849 C.E.)

Babi disciple, martyr

Ruh al-Quddus (the Holy One) was the last of those who joined the ranks of the Bab's Letters of the Living, the earliest and highest-ranking group of the Bab's disciples, but the Bab ranked him first spiritually. He led the Babis at the Shaykh Tabarsi upheaval in 1848. The Bab (1819–1850), founder of the Babi faith in Iran, established a following that eventually developed into the Baha'i faith.

Mulla Muhammad 'Ali Barfurushi, later given the name Ruh al-Quddus by the Bab, was born in Barfurush (Babul in northern Iran) to a farming family in 1821. During the course of his education in Barfurush and Mashhad, he became a shaykh. He set off in about 1837 for Karbala to study under Sayyid Kazim Rashti and returned to Barfurush in 1843. He arrived in Shiraz and accepted the Bab in 1844, becoming the last of the Letters of the Living. He accompanied the Bab on his pilgrimage to Mecca in 1844–1845. Quddus and two other Babis were arrested in Shiraz in 1845 because they had changed the Islamic call to prayer in accordance with the Bab's instructions. Their captors burned their beards and pierced their noses and paraded them through the streets. After his release, Quddus traveled on to Yazd, Kirman, Isfahan, and Tehran, finally returning to Barfurush. At each place he announced the Bab's claims.

In early 1848, Quddus joined Mulla Husayn Bushru'i in Mashhad and the two preached the new religion at that shrine city. Later that year, Quddus was one of the main participants at the Conference of Badasht, at which the Bab's inauguration of the new religious dispensation was made clear to all. After this conference, Quddus was arrested and confined in the house of the senior cleric of Sari but was soon freed. He joined the Babis besieged there. Up to this time, Mulla Husayn had been regarded as the foremost disciple of the Bab, but at this time, he showed the other Babis that, following the guidance given him by the Bab, they were to regard Quddus as his spiritual superior. When Mulla Husayn was killed in fighting, Quddus led the Babi forces alone. Eventually, the prince leading the royal army swore on the Qur'an to allow free passage out of the fort to the Babis. Once they emerged, however, he seized and killed all of them. Quddus was handed over to the senior religious leader of Barfurush, who, on May 16, 1849, paraded him through the streets, tortured and killed him, and then instigated the mob to tear him to pieces. He was twenty-eight.

The few writings of Quddus that remain display a close similarity to that of the Bab in both form and content. It is clear that the Bab and Baha'u'llah (1817–1892, the Bab's successor) regarded Quddus as second only to the Bab in importance in the Babi religion. The Bab and Baha'u'llah identified him as "The Last," a name of God, and Baha'u'llah also referred to him as "The Last Point"—as distinct from the Bab, who was "The First Point." 'Abdu'l-Baha (1844–1921, Baha'u'llah's son) states that Quddus and the Bab were the two witnesses prophesied in the Book of Revelation (11:6–12; Shoghi Effendi 1974, 49).

—*Moojan Momen and B. Todd Lawson*

See also: 'Abdu'l-Baha; Bab, The; Baha'i Faith and Holy People; Baha'u'llah; Husayn Bushru'i

References and further reading:

- Nabil [Zarandi]. 1970. *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabil's Narrative of the Early Days of the Baha'i Revelation*. Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust.
- Shoghi Effendi. 1974. *God Passes By*, rev. ed. Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust.

Quetzalcoatl Topiltzin

(843–895 C.E.)

Amerindian god-hero

Though Quetzalcoatl (Feathered Serpent) is an important divinity in the Mesoamerican pantheon, according to Aztec history he also existed in human form as the ruler of the ancient city of Tollan or Tula in the Mexican highlands. Ce Acatl Quetzalcoatl Topiltzin was born in the year One Reed (Ce Acatl), the equivalent of 843 C.E. His father, Mixcoatl, was a valiant warrior who defeated the female warrior Chimalman

before impregnating her. She died during Quetzalcoatl's birth. In 873, the Toltecs sought Quetzalcoatl to make him their ruler and their priest, according to the pre-Columbian *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* (Annals of Cuauhtitlan). To validate his role as ruler of Tollan, Quetzalcoatl sought the bones of his deceased father, an act that reflected the practice of receiving a divine and inherited right to rule from the ancestors. When he retrieved the bones, Quetzalcoatl performed an auto-sacrifice of blood from his genitals to revive the departed warrior. In the pre-Columbian *Leyenda de los Soles* (Legend of the suns), Quetzalcoatl conquered many cities as ruler of Tollan.

During his rule, Quetzalcoatl reportedly eliminated the practice of human sacrifice and presided over the flourishing of Toltec culture. Under his reign, a cultivation of the arts, including poetry, feather-working, painting, music, and other *toltec* or civilized activities, gained prestige. By eliminating human sacrifice, Quetzalcoatl also greatly decreased the need for the military complex, which had provided human sacrifices for the city. The military complex was devoted to the divinity Tezcatlipoca, Quetzalcoatl's divine opposition. The warrior classes became dissatisfied with the ruler's choices and sent representatives to end Quetzalcoatl's rule.

Quetzalcoatl, tricked by Tezcatlipoca's magic obsidian mirror into thinking he was ugly, imbibed *pulque*, an intoxicant made from the maguey cactus. This caused him to seduce his sister, Quetzalpetatl (Feathered Mat). Upon awakening the next morning, the *tlatoani* (speaker) was so ashamed of his actions that he left Tollan. As a result of this flight, the historical Quetzalcoatl established a link between the Maya and the Mexican highland cultures and became a key figure in the encounter between the Aztec ruler Moctecuzoma Xocoyotzin and the Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés. Archaeological evidence supports a connection between the Mexican culture at Tollan and the Maya presence in the Yucatan and Chiapas. Textual references in the Quiche Maya creation story, the *Popol vuh*, explain the arrival of the Quiche from the west, and many of their practices also reflect those of the Mexican groups.

In the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan*, the ruler fled to the sea (the Gulf Coast), where he set himself on fire to become the morning star (Venus) and the Lord of the Dawn. Quetzalcoatl died in the year Ce Acatl, that is, 895—fifty-two years after his birth. His life span thus corresponded to the fifty-two-year cycle of the Mesoamerican calendar. Because of this coincidence, Ce Acatl became an auspicious date; in some accounts, the ruler vowed to return in the year Ce Acatl at some point in the future.

Ce Acatl occurred in 1519—the same year that the Europeans arrived on the coast of Mexico. When Cortés landed on the Gulf Coast, Montezuma reportedly wondered if the

T

Tagami Michi

See Kikusha-ni

Tahirih (Qurratu'l-'ayn)

(1817–1852 C.E.)

Babi disciple

Tahirih (The Pure One), also known as Qurratu'l-'ayn (Consolation of the Eyes), was a leading figure in the Babi movement, the only woman among the “Letters of the Living” (the first and highest-ranking group of the Bab’s disciples).

Tahirih was born in the Iranian city of Qazvin to a family of leading Islamic clerics in 1817. From her earliest years, she showed extraordinary abilities, memorizing the Qur’an and grasping abstruse points of religious law and theology. She was also very beautiful and a talented poetess. She was married to her cousin and had four children. She became an enthusiastic supporter of the teachings of Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsa’i, despite the fact that her husband and father-in-law were virulent enemies of the shaykh. Eventually, in 1843, Tahirih left for Karbala to meet with Sayyid Kazim Rashti, the successor to Shaykh Ahmad. Unfortunately, Sayyid Kazim had died by the time Tahirih arrived, but, with his wife’s permission, she set up in Sayyid Kazim’s home and continued his teaching circle, teaching the men from behind a curtain.

In 1844, news reached her of the claims of the Bab and she immediately accepted these, becoming one of the eighteen Letters of the Living. She began to teach this message in Karbala. At the end of 1847, she was arrested and sent to Baghdad, where she resided at the home of the mufti of Baghdad. The Ottoman authorities decided to expel her and she returned to Qazvin. Here, she was involved in further confrontations with her father-in-law and husband, which ended in their divorce. When in October 1847 her father-in-law was murdered, her husband accused Tahirih of complicity

in the crime, and her life was in danger until Baha’u’llah, founder of the Baha’i faith, arranged for her removal from Qazvin.

Tahirih attended the Conference of Badasht in summer 1848, at which most of the leading Babis were present. Here she proclaimed the advent of a new religious dispensation by appearing unveiled. Shortly after this conference she was arrested and held at the home of the *kalantar* (mayor) of Tehran. She captivated her captors and succeeded in converting to Babism some women from the highest reaches of society, including a royal princess. In 1852, Tahirih, at the age of thirty-five, was strangled and her body thrown into a well.

Tahirih is considered the outstanding woman of the Babi religion and was regarded by the Babis as the return of Fatima, the daughter of the prophet Muhammad, from whom she was descended through her mother. Her holiness may be thought to reside, at least partly, in the compelling manner in which she interpreted the sacred role of Fatima. She has become for many Iranian women a symbol and icon of the women’s movement. For Baha’is she has come to symbolize their concern for the equality of women and social action, and girls are frequently named after her.

—*Moojan Momen and B. Todd Lawson*

See also: Ahmad al-Ahsa’i, Shaykh; Bab, The; Baha’i Faith and Holy People; Baha’u’llah; Fatima bint Muhammad; Gender and Holy People; Kazim Rashti, Sayyid

References and further reading:

Hatcher, John, and Amrollah Hemmat. 2002. *The Poetry of Tahirih*. Oxford: George Ronald.

Lawson, Todd. 2001. “The Authority of the Feminine and Fatima’s Place in an Early Work by the Báb.” Pp. 94–127 in *The Most Learned of the Shi’a: The Institution of the Marja’ Taqlid*. Edited by L. Walbridge. New York: Oxford University Press.

Nabil [Zarandi]. 1970. *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabil’s Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahá’í Revelation*. Wilmette, IL: Bahá’í Publishing Trust.

Root, Martha. 1981. *Tahirih the Pure*, rev. ed. Los Angeles: Kalimat.