**Historical Episode from Grade 4 Lesson 1:**

*Once the children have finished singing a few songs, ask them to sit quietly while you* ***explain to them how Baha’u’llah first received God’s Revelation****. Remember that you can modify the narrative according to your students’ level of comprehension.*

The summer of 1852 brought intense suffering to the followers of the Bab. The Bab Himself had been martyred two years before, and many of His most outstanding disciples had already given their lives for their Faith. A small group of Babis were so saddened by the martyrdom of their beloved Bab that they decided to take revenge. Although Baha’u’llah told them to let go of their foolish ideas, they would not listen to Him and plotted against the life of the King. Their pitiful attempt failed, but it aroused such anger in the King that he ordered yet another massacre of the gentle followers of the Bab. The cruel acts that were committed during those months against the Babis are so shocking that to describe them would bring too much sadness to your hearts. You will certainly read about them later in your lives and will wonder how any government could have promoted such savagery amongst its people. For now what you need to know is that this wave of persecutions brought great suffering to Baha’u’llah who, until then, had enjoyed relative freedom because of His position in society. An order was issued for His immediate arrest.

On the day the King gave the order, Baha’u’llah was staying in a village some kilometers away from the city of Tihran. The news that He was soon to be imprisoned did not disturb Him in the slightest, and He faced His arrest with His usual courage. The prison chosen for Him was called the “Siyah-Chal”. This is a word you need to learn and remember. It means the black pit. The Siyah-Chal was originally a reservoir of water for a public bath in Tihran and was, at the time, used as an underground dungeon in which criminals of the worst type were held. On His way to the Siyah-Chal, Baha’u’llah was forced to walk barefooted and bareheaded under the burning rays of the midsummer sun. The crowd that stood along the road treated Him with extreme rudeness. Yet His face showed His inner calm and His heart was filled with love even for those who wished Him harm.

As He was nearing the Siyah-Chal, an old and decrepit woman came out of the crowd with a stone in her hand. Her eyes glowed with determination and fanaticism. She had been so convinced that Baha’u’llah was a wrongdoer that she was totally unaware of the nobility and love shown forth by this extraordinary Prisoner. Her whole body shook with rage as she stepped forward and raised her hand to hurl the stone at Him. “Give me a chance to fling my stone in His face!” she pleaded as she approached Baha’u’llah. “Suffer not this woman to be disappointed,” were Baha’u’llah’s words to the guards as he saw her hastening behind Him. “Deny her not what she regards as a meritorious act in the sight of God.” Even in the midst of intense suffering, Baha’u’llah was not concerned with Himself. So great was His love for every human being that He would accept such abuse in order to bring happiness to the heart of a misguided but sincere old woman.

Baha’u’llah finally reached the Siyah-Chal. There He was imprisoned with several of the Bab’s followers. Their feet were placed in stocks, and around their necks were fastened chains so heavy that they were known by a special name throughout all of Persia. The air they breathed had the foulest of smells, and the floor on which they sat was covered with filth. No ray of light entered that dark dungeon or warmed its icy coldness. Yet the followers of the Bab were illumined by His teachings and their hearts were aflame with the fire of God’s love. They gladly accepted their sufferings and hoped to be among those who, each day, were taken out of the prison to be martyred.

Baha’u’llah and His companions were placed in two rows, each facing the other. Baha’u’llah had taught them certain verses which every night they would chant until the early hours of the morning. You probably remember the verses from the story you heard in our classes last year. “God is sufficient unto me; He verily is the All-Sufficing!” one row would sing, while the other would reply, “In Him let the trusting trust.” With such courage and joy did they chant that their voices would reach the palace of the King. “What means this sound?” the King once asked with agitation. “It is the anthem the Babis are intoning in their prison,” was the reply. The King kept silent and said no more.

Baha’u’llah was held a prisoner in the Siyah-Chal for four months. The conditions of the prison did not improve, but He endured His sufferings with peace and calm. For while His body was in chains, His spirit was free soaring in the heavens of nearness to God. Indeed, it was in these conditions of intense physical suffering that Baha’u’llah began to receive God’s Revelation, a Revelation that would continue to fill His soul for nearly forty more years. Baha’u’llah Himself has described those days: “During the days I lay in the prison of Tihran, though the galling weight of the chains and the stench-filled air allowed Me but little sleep, still in those infrequent moments of slumber I felt as if something flowed from the crown of My head over My breast, even as a mighty torrent that precipitateth itself upon the earth from the summit of a lofty mountain. Every limb of My body would, as a result, but set afire. At such moments My tongue recited what no man could bear to hear.”

One night, in a dream Baha’u’llah heard these glorious words: “Verily, We shall render Thee victorious by Thyself and by Thy Pen. Grieve Thou not for that which hath befallen Thee, neither be Thou afraid, for Thou art in safety. Erelong will God raise up the treasures of the earth- men who will aid Thee through Thyself and through Thy Name, wherewith God hath revived the hearts of such as have recognized Him.”

How great is the Cause of God. How extraordinary are His power and might. The glorious Revelation of Baha’u’llah which is destined to change the fortunes of humankind had its beginning a most desolate prison at a most turbulent time. The Sun of Truth rose behind the clouds of the darkness of the Siyah-Chal, shedding its light on the whole of mankind.

**Facts:**

* The term “siyah-chal” means…the black pit.
* The Siyah-Chal was…an underground prison in Tihran.
* Baha’u’llah was taken to the Siyah-Chal in…the summer of 1852.
* Baha’u’llah was kept in the Siyah-Chal for…four months.
* While imprisoned in the Siyah-Chal, Baha’u’llah received…the first stirrings of God’s Revelation in His soul.