**Story from Grade 4 Lesson 3**

**Historical Episode:**

*As you know, the period of Baha’u’llah’s stay in Baghdad culminated in the declaration of His Mission in the Garden of Ridvan. Today you will relate the events surrounding His declaration to the children. In doing so, you will* ***enhance their understanding that Baha’u’llah is the Promised One of All Ages, Who has come to unify all people in one universal Cause.***

You know that during His stay in Baghdad, Baha’u’llah revived the fortunes of the Babi community through His love and wisdom, and the power of His Words. The hearts of those near to Him were afire with the love of God, and His companions felt as if they had entered paradise. But the joy of those days was not to last. The enemies of the Cause did not give up their schemings against Baha’u’llah, and eventually they achieved their aim.

About ten years had passed since His arrival in Baghdad , and Baha’u’llah began to speak of the tests and difficulties that lay ahead. A dream He once related to the friends caused them great distress. “I saw,” He wrote in a Tablet, “the Prophets and the Messengers gather and seat themselves around Me, moaning, weeping and loudly lamenting. Amazed, I inquired of them the reason, whereupon their lamentation and weeping waxed greater, and they said unto me: ‘We weep for Thee, O Most Great Mystery, O Tabernacle of Immortality!’ They wept with such a weeping that I too wept with them. Thereupon the Concourse on high addressed Me saying: ‘…Erelong shalt Thou behold with Thine own eyes what no Prophet hath beheld…Be patient, be patient.’ …They continued addressing Me the whole night until the approach of dawn.”

The spring of 1863 had just opened when one day a messenger delivered to Baha’u’llah a communication requesting an interview between Him and the governor of Baghdad. On the following day, Baha’u’llah was presented with a letter from the Prime Minister of the Ottoman Empire to the governor, worded in a courteous manner, inviting Baha’u’llah to travel to the Ottoman capital, Constantinople. (you can show a map- available at: https://bahai-library.com/map\_travels\_bahaullah) A mounted escort was ordered to accompany Him for His protection. Baha’u’llah agreed to the request at once but refused to accept the money that the government was offering for His travels. The governor’s representative insisted, saying that the authorities would be offended if He did not accept the money. So Baha’u’llah took the sum and immediately distributed it among the poor of the city.

News of Baha’u’llah’s exile from Baghdad shook the Babi community. The friends were overwhelmed with sadness, and at first, no one was able to eat or sleep. Gradually, however, they were calmed through Baha’u’llah’s kind and comforting words. As a sign of His love, He wrote in His own handwriting a Tablet for each of the friends who lives in the city- every man, woman and child.

Close to Baghdad there was a beautiful garden known today as the Garden of Ridvan. On the afternoon of April 22, 1863, Baha’u’llah left the city and entered the garden. This was to be the first stage of the journey that would carry Him to Constantinople. The Babi community was grief stricken. What would be the future of this young religion now that Baha’u’llah was being exiled once again? The heartbroken Babis who gathered to bid Baha’u’llah farewell did not know what happiness God actually had in store for them.

Baha’u’llah stayed in the garden for twelve days. His enemies had tried to strike a fatal blow at the Cause by separating Him from the majority of the believers. God, however, turned the farewell into an occasion of immense gladness. During those memorable days, Baha’u’llah proclaimed to those present that He was the One promised by the Bab, that He was the Promised One of All Ages. The banner of the oneness of humankind was now being raised for everyone to see.

The declaration of His Mission created new life in the souls of His companions. This was the Day of Days for which the Bab had prepared them. Baha’u’llah Himself has said that on that Day “all created things were immersed in the sea of purification”.

Unfortunately there is little known of the details of the conversations Baha’u’llah held with the many visitors He received in the Garden of Ridvan. The following words of the historian Nabil give us only a glimpse of the glory of those days:

“Every day ere the hour of dawn, the gardeners would pick the roses which lines the four avenues of the garden, and would pile them in the center of the floor of His blessed tent. So great would be the heap that when His companions gathered to drink their morning tea in His presence, they would be unable to see each other across it. All these roses Baha’u’llah would, with His own hands, entrust to those whom He dismissed from His presence every morning to be delivered, on His behalf, to His Arab and Persian friends in the city…One night, the ninth night of the waxing moon, I happened to be one of those who watched beside His blessed tent. As the hour of midnight approached, I saw Him issue from His tent, pass by the places where some of His companions were sleeping, and begin to pace up and down the moonlit, flower-bordered avenues of the garden. So loud was the singing of the nightingales on every side that only those who were near Him could hear distinctly His voice. He continued to walk until, pausing the midst of one of these avenues, He observed: ‘Consider these nightingales. So great is their love for these roses, that sleepless from dusk till dawn, they warble their melodies and commune with burning passion with the object of their adoration. How then can those who claim to be afire with the rose-like beauty of the Beloved choose to sleep? For three successive nights I watched and circled round His blessed tent. Every time I passed by the couch where one He lay, I would find Him wakeful, and every day, from morn till eventide, I would see Him ceaselessly engaged in conversing with the stream of visitors who kept flowing in from Baghdad.”

Today, the Bahais of the world celebrate the twelve days from April 21-May 2 as the Festival of Ridvan, the holiest and most significant of all Bahai festivals.

\*If Ridvan is near, you can engage the children in planning an appropriate celebration of this holiest of festivals!\*

**Facts:**

* Baha’u’llah was exiled to Constantinople, after…staying in Baghdad for 10 years.
* Before departing for Constantinople, Baha’u’llah…spent 12 days in the Garden of Ridvan.
* The Garden of Ridvan was…located outside the city of Baghdad.
* In the Garden of Ridvan…Baha’u’llah declared His Mission.
* The period of April 21-May 2 is celebrated by Bahais every year as… the Festival of Ridvan.
* The Festival of Ridvan is…the holiest and most significant Bahai festival.