The Story of Riḍván

*This story is written for 4 narrators but can be adapted for smaller or larger groups.*

*It is written in simple English for children ages 6-10. Many more details, images, props, and music can be added! If you come across any factual errors, please do let me know:* *juliamberger@gmail.com**.*

*Most of all enjoy!*

**Iran**

Narrator 1: One day, Bahá’u’lláh’s brother was being chased by a mean group of men who wanted to hurt him. He safely ran to a house of a Russian friend, who helped him to escape.

Narrator 2: Bahá’u’lláh’s brother found out that the Shah of Iran had sent Bahá’u’lláh to an underground prison. His friend went straight to the Shah and begged him to release Bahá’u’lláh. The Shah agreed but said Bahá’u’lláh couldn’t stay in Iran. He exiled him to Baghdad in the country of Iraq.

**Baghdad, Iraq**

Narrator 3: Bahá’u’lláh stayed in Baghdad for 10 years. He was wise, kind, generous and filled every heart with love and wonder. He was becoming very popular and everyone wanted to meet him and learn from him.

Narrator 4: He was becoming so popular that the government was Iran, which was a cruel government, was afraid that Bahá’u’lláh was becoming more popular than the Shah and that people would want to listen to Bahá’u’lláh and not the Shah.

Narrator 1: The government of Iran wanted to bring Bahá’u’lláh back from Baghdad so that they could put him into the most terrible prison. They wanted to kill him. They tried to get the other governments to kill Bahá’u’lláh but didn't succeed. Everyone stood by his side.

Narrator 2: The Governor of Baghdad admired and loved Bahá’u’lláh. When he received the message from Iran that Bahá’u’lláh had to be sent away he said, “I will not do this. Bahá’u’lláh has lived here for 10 years and he has never done anything wrong.” But this didn’t work and eventually he was forced to tell Bahá’u’lláh that he had to leave Baghdad forever.

Narrator 3: One day, a messenger arrived with an invitation to a meeting at the courthouse. Bahá’u’lláh accepted this invitation. But he didn’t want to meet at the courthouse but rather at the mosque just across the street from the Governor.

Narrator 4: When Bahá’u’lláh’s friends and followers heard that he was being forced to leave Baghdad, they were terribly sad. They refused to sleep or eat. They didn’t want him to leave. They loved him so much. But Bahá’u’lláh comforted them and told them that everything would be ok.

Narrator 1: When the time came to meet the Governor, Bahá’u’llah went to the mosque to meet him. But the Governor who loved Bahá’u’llah was too ashamed to tell him that he had to leave Baghdad. So the Governor sent a messenger to deliver this message instead. The Governor also sent a generous amount of money to help Bahá’u’lláh on his long journey to Turkey. Bahá’u’lláh took the money but instead of spending it himself, he gave it all to the poor.

Narrator 2: The next few weeks were extremely busy for Bahá’u’lláh and for his family. They were getting ready for a very long and difficult journey to Turkey. They would be travelling by caravan.

Narrator 3: So many people came to visit him to say goodbye. For each one of his friends in Baghdad, Bahá’u’lláh wrote a very special letter in his own handwriting. They treasured this very much.

Narrator 4: Instead of receiving his friends at his home, Bahá’u’lláh decided to gather everyone in a beautiful island garden across the river from his home. There, it would be quiet and beautiful, with the sun shining and the singing of birds all around.

Narrator 1: Everyone helped to get the garden ready. The tent was set in the center of the garden for Bahá’u’lláh. And other tents were arranged throughout the garden. It looked like a little village of tents.

Narrator 2: The garden was blooming with bright red roses, tulips, all kinds of colorful flowers and beautiful green trees. A pool of water stood in the middle of Bahá’u’lláh’s tent. Outside of the tent, streams of water flowed in all directions. Everyone tried to make the garden more beautiful then ever before.

**1st Day in the Garden of Ridvan**

Narrator 3: On April 22, 1863, Bahá’u’lláh and `Abdu'l-Baha left home and set out for the beautiful garden. On his head, Bahá’u’lláh wore an elaborately adorned hat called a *taj.*

Narrator 4: All kinds of people gathered around Bahá’u’lláh’s home because they had heard the news that he would soon be leaving Baghdad. Men, women, young, old, friends, strangers, the poor—everyone was heartbroken. Many were crying because they had come to love Bahá’u’lláh and thought they would never see him again. “Don’t leave us!” they cried.

Narrator 1: So many people crowded into the streets and on rooftops that it was difficult for Bahá’u’lláh and `Abdu'l-Bahá’ to walk towards the garden. Finally, they reached the Tigris River.

Narrator 2: At the river, Bahá’u’lláh and `Abdu'l-Bahá got on a small boat that had been waiting for them.

Narrator 3: Just after they arrived in the garden, the Tigris River rose up. It was impossible for others to cross and reach the garden. Bahá’u’lláh’s family couldn’t join him for another 9 days.

Narrator 4: In the garden, delicious food was being prepared and tea was being made for everyone. For 12 days, Bahá’u’lláh stayed in the Garden of Riḍván. Each day, he spent in the greatest joy walking along flower-lined paths and amongst the trees.

Narrator 1: On the first day of Riḍván, Bahá’u’lláh made the most important announcement of his life. He said that God had sent him with a message for all the peoples of the world. He said he had come to make peace in the world, to end all wars, to end hatred, to end fighting, and to bring happiness to all people and all countries in the world. It was a message of joy and everyone’s hearts were filled with delight.

Narrator 2: Each day in the garden, before sunrise, gardeners picked up the roses that lay in the paths and gathered them into a pile in the center of Baha’u’llah’s tent. This pile grew so tall that visitors drinking their morning tea could not even see each other across the pile of roses!

Narrator 3: Sometimes in the evenings, nightingales would sing so loudly that it was difficult to hear people talking. Bahá’u’lláh said that the nightingales were so full of love for the beauty of the roses that they couldn’t sleep, and stayed awake singing all night.

**9th Day in the Garden of Riḍván**

Narrator 4: On the 9th day, the Tigris River settled down and Bahá’u’lláh’s family was able to join him in the garden. Once they joined him in the garden, the river overflowed again.

**12th Day in the Garden of Riḍván**

Narrator 1: On the 12th day, the flooding ended and everyone was able to cross the river to see Bahá’u’lláh. On this last day, Bahá’u’lláh announced that he was leaving Baghdad the next day to begin his journey to Constantinople, in Turkey.

Narrator 2: Bahá’u’lláh had one last very special visitor. The Governor of Baghdad had come to visit Bahá’u’lláh. He said he was deeply sorry that Bahá’u’lláh was being forced to leave Baghdad. He offered to do anything to help. He even wrote letters to Governors of other provinces asking them to help Bahá’u’lláh. He also gave his most beautiful horse to Bahá’u’lláh.

**Departure from the Garden of Ridvan**

Narrator 3: Finally, all of the mules were loaded with baggage for the long journey. The *howdas* were placed on the mules and closed up. The women and children took their seats inside. `Abdu'l-Bahá’ rode on a horse. Towards sunset, Bahá’u’lláh’s friends brought their finest Arabian horse for Bahá’u’lláh to ride.

Narrator 4: The Governor of Baghdad arranged for a cannon to fire at the moment that Bahá’u’lláh mounted his horse.

Narrator 1: In the late afternoon, on May 3, 1863, at the moment of a full moon, Bahá’u’lláh and his family began their long journey to Constantinople. They were accompanied by 26 friends. There was much sadness as people watched Bahá’u’lláh and his family depart. They didn’t know what would happen to Bahá’u’lláh. One friend even ran after Bahá’u’lláh for 3 hours. Bahá’u’lláh saw him, got off his horse, and with a gentle voice bade him farewell.

Narrator 2: But the friends and followers of Bahá’u’lláh also remembered his most important announcement. That he had been sent by God to bring peace and happiness to all people. And they knew that each one of them had been given a very important task: to follow Bahá’u’lláh and to help him to bring this peace and happiness to the world.