# Bahá'í Holy Places in Haifa and the Western Galilee

## ARCHITECTURAL STUDY

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## Introduction

The Bay of Haifa, defined by Mount Carmel in the south and the Old City of Acre in the north, is one of the most prominent geographical features of the eastern Mediterranean coastline. Along the shores of this bay are clustered the sites of the Bahá'í religion that have been nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List. The sites are related to one another in a functional and emotional manner, as well as geographically, and they constitute a singular texture in which the physical and the historical memory of the Bahá'í religion is preserved.

A description of the principal features of each site focusing on its architectural characteristics will be followed by a discussion of the cultural values which are common to all of them. These include an original architectural language that weaves several different styles into a harmonious fabric, which is both esthetically striking and charged with meaning, communicating a great deal about the Bahá'í community and its beliefs and practices, as well as its development during its most formative period. In the second part of the study, attention will be given to certain specific Bahá'í values, beliefs and cultural traditions, such as pilgrimage, and the ways they are reflected in the architectural design and physical attributes of the properties that have been described in the first part.

## The Gardens

In the architectural analysis of these sites, great importance is given to the gardens, which contribute no less than the structures to the unique character of the properties. Indeed, in these sites, the gardens have several essential functions:

a. The gardens serve as a medium to insulate the buildings and certain outdoor spaces of particular importance from the noise and frenetic activity of the surroundings, which are mainly urban. The same insulating effect could be achieved by a structure, such as a high wall, but gardening is softer and less divisive. The quiet atmosphere of the protected inner spaces creates a sense of calm serenity which is conducive to contemplation, prayer and spiritual gatherings, without any feeling of being confined or cloistered.

b. The gardens also constitute the way to approach places which are considered sacred. As such, they contribute to the spiritual experience, transforming a simple path into a process that enables the pilgrim to prepare him or herself to enter the holy place. In most cases, the gardens allow the visitor to choose among different routes, and some offer the option of circling around the sacred spot without necessarily entering it, an act which has its own spiritual significance.



c. Finally, the gardens are the fabric that connects the different buildings located in them. While the structures are built in different styles based on the period of construction and their usage, the gardens have a unique and clear planning language, both within each garden and among the different gardens.

The gardens designed by the Bahá'ís have common characteristics: interplay of light and shade; usage of water elements and geometrical shapes like circles and eight-pointed stars that repeat themselves; symmetrical designs yielding to asymmetrical elements out of respect for nature or history; and juxtaposition of very intensive areas and extensive areas, often with a gradual merging that softens boundary lines within the garden and at the perimeter of the site, creating a transition area or buffer which promotes harmony between the site and its surroundings.

Many of these common elements can be traced to the Persian influences which are visible in all the gardens.

> The origin of Persian gardens may date back as far as 4000 BCE; the presence of water grew increasingly important. This trend manifested itself in garden design with greater emphasis placed on fountains and ponds in gardens.
>
> Sunlight and its effects were an important factor of structural design in Persian gardens. Textures and shapes were specifically chosen by architects to harness the light.
>
> Shade is also very important in the garden, without which it could not be a usable area. Trees and trellises are used to create resting areas for gathering and seclusion that are especially needed in the Persian summer heat.
>
> (Khonsari et al, 1998)
>
> The Persian style often attempts to integrate that which is "indoors" with the "outdoors". This is often achieved through the connection of a surrounding garden, with an inner courtyard. (Newton, 1979)

## The Buildings

It is useful to distinguish two kinds of buildings, (i) those that were purchased by the Bahá'ís and adapted to a greater or lesser extent to their needs, and (ii) those that were designed and built by the Bahá'ís themselves. The buildings purchased by the Bahá'ís are mostly Ottoman and Arab and serve primarily the need to preserve the historical memory of the development of the religion and its founders, although they are not without architectural value.

Ottoman architecture has been described as a synthesis of the architectural traditions of the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

> The Ottomans achieved the highest level architecture in their lands hence or since. They mastered the technique of building vast inner spaces confined by seemingly weightless yet massive domes, and achieving perfect harmony between inner and outer spaces, as well as light and shadow. (Goodwin, 2003)

Structures that were built by the Bahá'ís are also divided into two main periods of time. Those erected at the beginning of the 20th century – the buildings of the Persian neighborhood in Haifa and the first stage of the shrine of the Báb –were built in a local oriental architecture. The buildings constructed after 1950, including the superstructure of the Shrine of the Báb, are mostly neo-classic in style, although they incorporate oriental elements. This style was chosen due to the consensus that it represents a form of "perfect beauty" that preserves its values even when architectural fashions change.

Many architectural principles repeat themselves in the Ottoman buildings purchased over the years, in the local/oriental structures erected by the Bahá'ís in the beginning of the 20th century and in the neo-classical buildings that were built by the Bahá'ís from the 1950's until today. The connections established between outside and inside through interior courtyards, balconies and wide windows, which bring greenery and sunlight into the structures, lead to a feeling of disconnection from the immediate environment, on the one hand, and to a merging with the global space, on the other. The aspiration toward universality finds expression in the blending of classical and oriental styles and the assimilation of elements from other cultures. The human scale of the buildings is striking. While religious structures are often designed and constructed in a way that makes the believers feel small and insignificant in the presence of the overwhelming grandeur of the divine, the Bahá'í structures provide a sense of comfort, simplicity and human warmth.

# North Slope of Mount Carmel (Map J)




Coordinate: E: 686046 N:36324682
Area (ha): 25.2
Statutory protection: Protected by the National outline plan (tama 35)

| | Architectural Elements | Year of Erection | Historically | Today | Physical Condition | Planner / Architect |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Shrine of the Bab | Phase 1 -1909<br>Phase 2 - 1953 | Burial of the Bab (1909) | Shrine of the Bab | Excellent | William Sutherland Maxwell |
| 2. | Terraced Gardens | Phase 1 -1930<br>Phase 2 - 2001 | The concept of Abdu'l-Baha (1910) | Framing & approach to the Shrine of Bab | Excellent | Fariborz Sahba |
| 3. | Arc Path & Monument Gardens | 1932 - 1939 | Burial of Baha'u'llah's Family | | Excellent | Shoghi Effendi |
| 4. | International Archives Building | 1957 | Houses the original manuscripts & sacred relics | | Excellent | Concept by Shoghi Effendi |
| 5. | Seat of the Universal House of Justice | 1983 | Office of the elected international governing body instituted by Baha'u'llah in his writings | | Excellent | Husayn Amanat |
| 6. | Centre for the Study of The Texts | 1999 | Houses the center of scholarly research and library | | Excellent | Husayn Amanat |
| 7. | International Teaching Centre Building | 2000 | Coordinates a worldwide network of counsellors to the elected institutions | | Excellent | Husayn Amanat |
| 8. | Haifa Pilgrim House | 1909 | A lodge for pilgrims from the Orient | Preperation place before visiting the shrine of the Bab | Very Good | Unknown |
| 9. | Tent Land | | Where Baha'u'llah pitched his tent in 1890 | A garden | Good | |

Mount Carmel has historical and geographic significance for the Bahá'í religion as well as other religions. This is reflected in the design of the terraces and the different architectural elements related to them. The basic site layout is founded on the vision of 'Abdu'l-Bahá from 1910 and was partially implemented by Shoghi Effendi in the 1950s. Many architectural features of this site are directly related to the basic principles on which the Bahá'í religion is based, to the historical story of the religion's development and to the traditional practice of Bahá'í pilgrimage, which has been an important factor in its formative period and continues to this day.

In the aerial photograph, it is possible to see the direct geographical and visual connection between this site and the Old City of Acre across the bay. This is of primary importance because Acre was the residence of Bahá'u'lláh during the last 24 year of his lifetime and is now the location of his shrine. Thus, this axis links the twin holy cities of Haifa and Acre and the shrines of the twin prophets, the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh.

In the following analysis it will be explained how each element was planned separately while internalizing the principles of the religion and referring to the historical and geographic location of the site. The analysis focuses on design elements including the treatment of the seen and the unseen, the exposure to "landscape windows", the approach to the shrine, which enhances the anticipation of the pilgrims and their spiritual feelings while deepening the sense of connection to the historical narrative of the pilgrimage.



# Shrine of the Báb

The shrine was built on the location chosen by Bahá'u'lláh as the resting place for the remains of his precursor, the Báb. It stands on the central terrace, with nine terraces above and nine below. The garden surrounding it is the oldest, and has a character of its own, with mature trees that shade and hide the shrine. The flora in the garden, the wind blowing through the leaves and the shading create a quietness insulated from the busy street nearby, and a sense of calm. Openings in the vegetation reveal the Haifa Bay, the sea and Old Acre in the distance. Here, as well, the historical story connects with the spiritual experience.

The original tomb of the Báb was one-storey stone structure built in the beginning of the previous century. A colonnade surrounding the structure was added in 1953. A new slab resting on the columns and the walls of the original structure forms the base for an octagonal element with windows, surmounted by a drum with a round dome covered in gilded ceramic tiles.

With its square, octagonal and circular elements, all four facades of the structure are identical. It is built in the neo-classic style, with its universally admired proportions, symbolizing a standard of beauty transcending particular styles, periods or cultures.







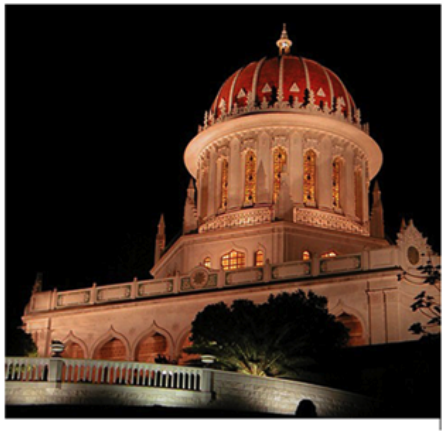
The choice of this style mirrors the accent on aesthetics and completeness that is an integral part of the Bahá'í religion.

The golden dome that shines in the sunlight and the lighting that illumines the shrine at night reflect the principle of optimism and the meaning of light in the religion. While in prison, the Báb was refused even a candle so that he would not be able to write his writings. The element of light repeats itself in almost all the structures.

The portico that was created between the original building and the pillars that support the new structure surrounds the shrine on all four sides and provides a covered walkway for the pilgrims who wish to circumambulate the shrine. This practice of circumambulation, which is also found in other religions like Islam and Buddhism, is an act of meditation, relaxation, personal connection and alignment toward the holy place. The circling here also symbolizes the completeness because the circle is the most complete shape in nature and it is equal on all sides.









# Terraced Gardens, Arc Path & Monument Gardens, Tent Land



The terraced gardens extend almost a kilometer up the northern slope of Mount Carmel with a vertical rise of 225 meters. In order to create continuity over the full length of the gardens, one of Haifa's main roads was lowered and covered with a bridge which is so wide that the presence of the road underneath is hardly noticeable from the garden above. The 19 terraces that comprise the garden symbolize the establishment of the religion by the Báb and his 18 apostles. The terraces above the shrine are concave in shape, while those below are convex. If these curved lines were connected, they would form multiple circles surrounding the shrine of the Báb, like waves spreading from a pebble dropped in a calm pool of water.

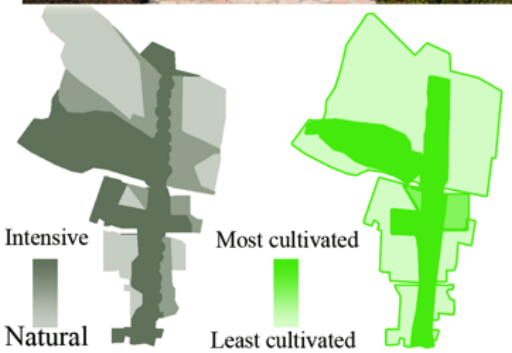
The gardens on the northern slope of the Carmel create the connection between the different architectural elements in the garden and are the "way to reach" the shrine, as well as the administrative buildings. The approach to the shrine of the Báb, like the way to the shrine of Bahá'u'lláh, has great meaning because it transforms the path into a process that intensifies the spiritual

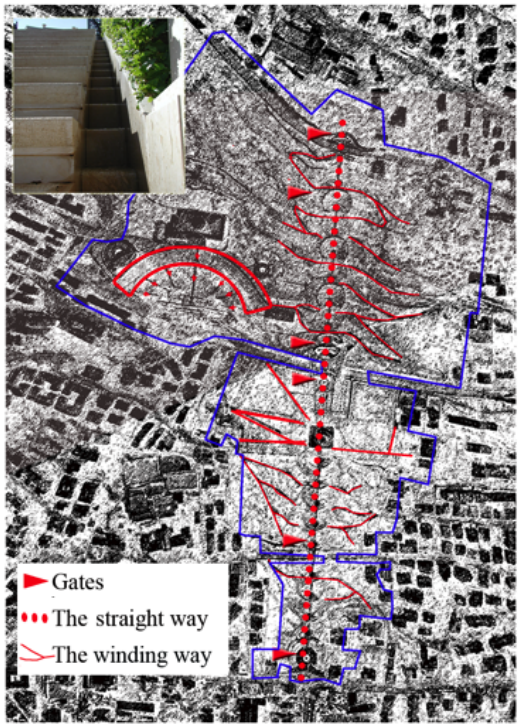


feeling and enables the pilgrims to prepare for the religious experience when they reach the shrine. The usage of the mountain's steep topography, with the shrine situated in its center, creates an experience similar in its principles to the way that leads to the Hellenistic shrines, such as the Parthenon in Athens.

The experience in the terrace garden begins already in the distance. While the golden dome of the shrine is seen from almost everywhere in Haifa and the sea, it hides and reveals itself from different directions and different angles. The pilgrim is exposed to the dome from afar, but it is not within reach and the way is still hidden from him. Only when standing at the bottom of the gardens or at the top of them is the shrine clearly revealed, together with the way to reach it.





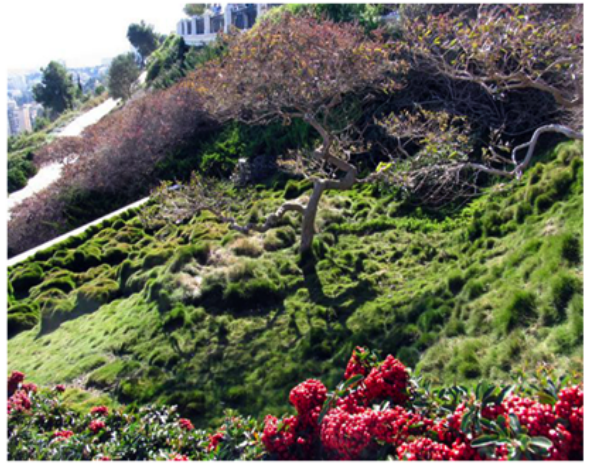

At this point, the pilgrim or other visitor is presented with two options:

- The direct and apparently simple way, which involves climbing or descending several hundred steps, or
- The more gradual winding way, which prolongs the experience and connects the terraces by a serpentine path along which the views of the shrine keep changing

Although the direct path looks short, the climb is long and difficult. Even when going downhill, the walking is not continuous and there are steep slopes that need to be by-passed in order to return to the direct route. Even on the direct path, one occasionally looses sight of the shrine.

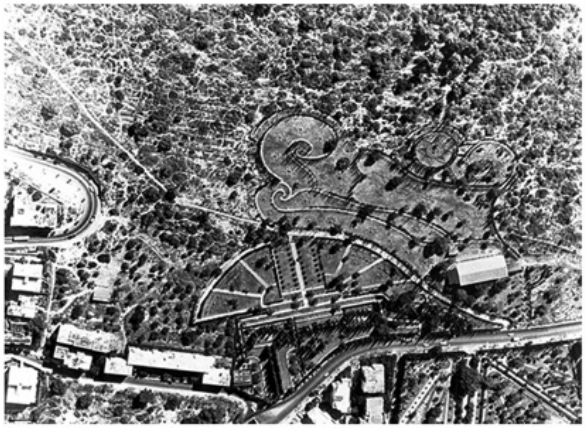
In contrast, choosing the indirect way enables relaxation and meditation. The way passes through intensively manicured areas of the garden, similar in style to French gardens, through transition areas that mimic nature with its variety of plants and colors in an organized disorder, like the English gardens, and even through areas of natural Mediterranean grove, which reaches the garden and is integrated with it. This respect for and integration with nature is an important principle in the Bahá'í religion, and it appears in all the gardens.

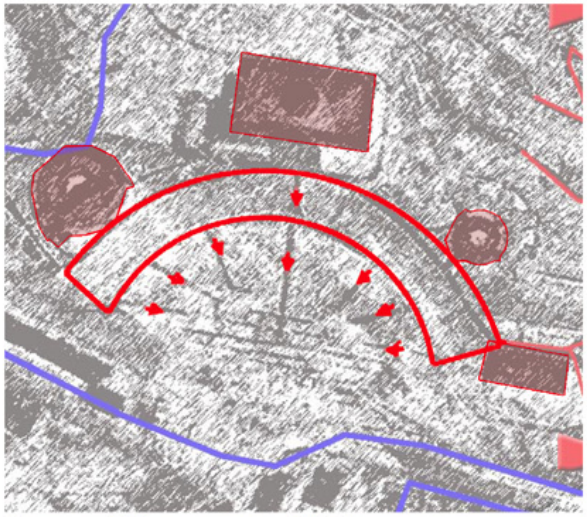
Both ways are punctuated with gates that need to be passed in order to reach the holy place. The "wayfarer" is accompanied by running water which masks the urban noise from the surroundings while reinforcing the feeling of calmness and connection to nature. Both routes pass through terraces with water fountains that provide places to rest and relax while listening to the sound of the running water and taking in the panoramic views of the City of Haifa, the Mediterranean Sea and, in the distance, Acre and the hills of the Galilee. The terraces also create the same hiding and revealing of the shrine as the topographic differences and the trees do along the twisted path. These glimpses of the shrine along the way intensify the feelings of anticipation connected with reaching the end of the journey. As a result of the garden's design, any path the pilgrim chooses is a significant part of the spiritual experience.













## The Structures on the Arc

The administrative buildings are located along an arc laid out on the slope of the mountain to the east of the terraces, which are connected by two foot paths to the western end of the arc.

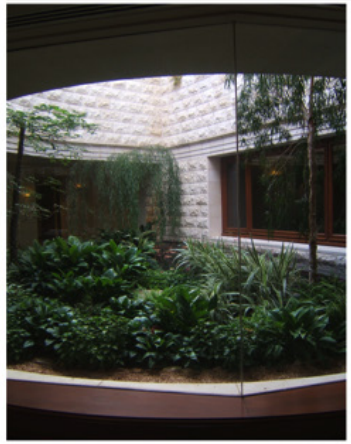
Although the buildings are arranged in the arc shape and each structure has its own symmetry, they appear as if they were scattered according to topography and other landscape elements. The special design is reminiscent of the Parthenon and other structures on the Acropolis, which were planned to be seen in a different perspective from each direction during the climb up the mountain and not from the direct frontal position that would reveal their perfect symmetry. In the same way, the indirect views of these structures create a sense of anticipation for the visitors.

The structures around the Arc are characterized by precise clean lines, well-planned proportions and almost perfect symmetry. As with the other structures built by the Bahá'ís since 1950, the choice of the neo-classical style reflects Bahá'í beliefs concerning the connection between aesthetics and the human spirit, as well as the importance of striving for excellence in this world.

The interior of the structures is filled with sunlight and large windows face the view of Acre and the bay, as well as the golden dome of shrine of the Báb. The admission of light through roof openings is a recurring element in different Bahá'í structures. Even the floors that are excavated under ground receive sunlight through light shafts or interior courtyards.

The most recent buildings achieve a nearly seamless degree of integration with nature and their surroundings, whether experienced from within or from outside. Both are wrapped in flora on the exterior and feature courtyards and gardens at different levels that seem to be an integral part of the interior spaces.









# Place of Revelation of "Tablet of Carmel" (K), Baha'i Cemetery (K) & Persian Quarter (J)






Coordinate 1: E: 684888 N:3633323 C 2: E: 684552 N:3634096 C 3: E: 686418 N:3633323
Area (ha)1: 3.6 Area 2: 0.55 Area 3: 3.0

1. Statutory protection 1: the National outline plan (tama 35): Urban Complex for Preservation
2. Close to Place of Revelation - will be considered as part of complex
3. Adjacent to North Slope and German Colony - will be considered as part of complex

| | Architectural Elements | Year of Erection | Historically | Today | Physical Condition | Designer / Architect |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Obelisk & Gardens | 1971 | Baha'u'allah wrote the charter of the Baha'i world administration | Pilgrimage Site & garden | Very Good | Shoghi Effendi |
| 2. | Cemetery | 1911 | Cemetery | Cemetery | Very Good | |
| 3. | Abdu'l-Baha's Residence | 1908 | Official residence of the head of the community | Pilgrimage Site & Museum | Good | Abdu'l-Baha |
| 4. | Old western Pilgrim House | 1910 | Accommodation for pilgrims from the west | Pilgrimage Site & Museum | Very Good | Unknown |
| 5. | 10 Haparsim Street | 1929 | Seat of the International Baha'i Council & Universal House of Justice | International Community Secretariat | Very Good | Mason Remey |
| 6. | 11 Haparsim Street | ~1908 | Accommodation for pilgrims from the Orient | Private Residence | Very Good | Unknown |
| 7. | Resting Place of Ruhiyyih Khanum | 2001 | Garden | Garden & Resting place | Excellent | Husayn Amanat |

## Place of Revelation of the Tablet of Carmel



The site is situated on the western Carmel ridge, roughly one kilometer southeast of Stella Maris, the point where the Carmel meets the sea. The site overlooks the sea to the west and the north, offering a panoramic view encompassing the entire Haifa Bay area, all the way to Acre and even further north to Rosh Hanikra and Mount Hermon.

An obelisk was erected on the site to mark the location where Bahá'u'lláh composed the "Tablet of Carmel", one of the most significant writings in the Bahá'í Faith. The planning of the garden and obelisk where supervised by Shoghi Effendi. The obelisk is surrounded on all four sides by a garden composed of simple geometrical shapes, which are meticulously maintained. Local vegetation, such as olive and cypress trees, is integrated in the garden.

## Haifa Bahá'í Cemetery

The cemetery is located at the western foot of Mount Carmel. Bahá'í followers from Haifa and Acre have been buried in this cemetery since 1911. After a decision of a court in Egypt declared that the Bahá'í Faith was an independent religion, completely detached from Islam, Shoghi Effendi decided that the tombs should henceforth face the shrine of Bahá'u'lláh in Bahjí, breaking with the local custom of burying the dead facing Mecca.





Bahá'u'lláh's tent in Haifa







The cemetery is bisected by a central avenue of palm trees and divided into sections by terraces. Most of the plantings within these clearly defined sections appear random and natural and include mature trees of a variety of species creating an interplay of light and shadow.

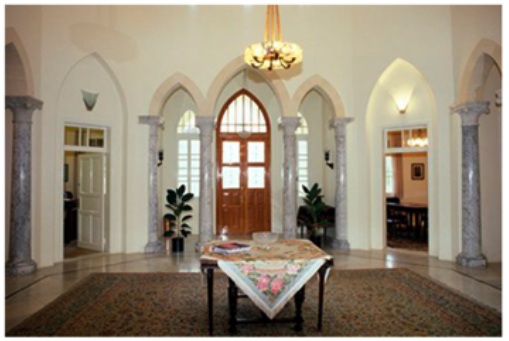
## Persian Quarter

The Persian Quarter in Haifa is situated on the eastern edge of the German Colony. It consists of a small park and five buildings that were designed and built by the Bahá'ís in the early decades of the 20th century.

'Abdu'l-Bahá designed his own residence, which features an imposing entrance, a spacious central hall, high ceilings and basements. 10 Haparsim Street was designed as a hostel for pilgrims by an American architect under 'Abdu'l-Bahá's supervision. It includes a large central hall in the shape of a cross, two round rooms with arched ceilings at either end of the central hall, and an exterior balcony. The other structures are ordinary residential buildings that housed members of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's family and visiting pilgrims from both east and west.

All these buildings are stone structures in the local oriental style, which are recognizable as Bahá'í properties primarily because of the characteristic groomed gardens which surround them. The plantings include fruit trees, ornamental plants and extensive lawns and gravel paths leading to the entrances to the structures. The gardens are enclosed with high walls, fences or hedges, but they are not fully hidden from the passer-by, who can always catch a glimpse though a gap in the vegetation or an open grillwork gate. The garden design is typically Persian, with symmetrical shapes and straight lines, but without ornaments or sculptures as seen in the larger gardens. There are no sitting corners in these gardens, which serve essentially as decoration of the facade of the house.

The quarter as a whole has maintained its historic character and constitutes an island of tranquility and beauty in a noisy urban environment.

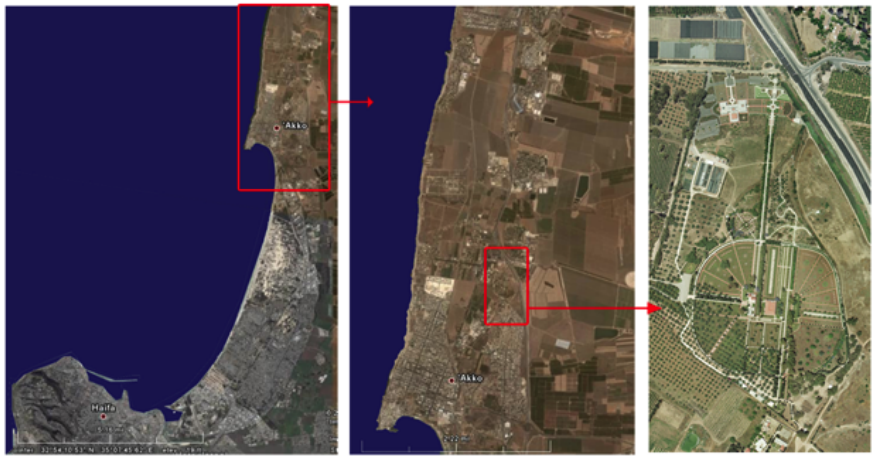








# Bahji (A)




Coordinate: E: 695551 N:3646979
Area (ha): 12.9
Statutory protection: Protected by the National outline plan (tama 35)

| | Architectural Elements | Year of Erection | Historical Usage | Usage Today | Physical Condition | Desinger / Architect |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Mansion of Baha'u'llah | Phase 1- 1821, Phase 2 -1868 | Baha'u'llah's last home | Museum | Excellent | Unknown |
| 2. | Shrine of Baha'u'llah | 19th Century | | Baha'u'llah's final resting place | Excellent | Unknown |
| 3. | Gardens | 1950-1980 | Open fields | Gardens | Excellent | Several |

## The Mansion of Bahá'u'lláh

The shrine and mansion of Bahá'u'lláh are in the category of structures purchased by the Bahá'ís. Decades of Bahá'í use and maintenance, combined with the common architectural language expressed in the surrounding landscape development, have blended the different sites and structures into a harmonious whole.

The mansion of Bahá'u'lláh is an Ottoman structure from the beginning of the 19th century. Its stone walls are plastered and painted white, and the roof is covered with red tiles. The ground floor, built in 1821, is surrounded by pillars and is used for operational needs and storage. The upper floor, which was added in 1868, is built around a large central hall covered with a clerestory that brings sunlight into the structure. This hall is surrounded by residential rooms of different sizes that look out on a covered balcony.

In the center of the southern façade, the balcony widens inward to create an outdoors living space protected from the wind and bright sun by moveable panels of colored glass. At the centre of this area is an octagonal fountain (howz) made of marble. The balcony looks out over the olive grove with a view all the way to Old Acre and the Mediterranean Sea.

The house is well preserved and maintained, and today it serves as a museum. Bahá'u'lláh's room, in the southeast corner of the upper floor, has been furnished as it was during his life time. Around the structure is a garden surrounded by a high wall. The wall has two gates, one faces south toward the olive grove, and the other faces west toward the tomb of Bahá'u'lláh.













## The Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh

Architecturally, the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh is a typical Ottoman house – a one-storey structure built around an interior courtyard (sahn) covered by a clearstory, onto which all the rooms of the house open. The courtyard is characteristic of the Persian as well as Ottoman architecture. The original usage of the sahn was a private garden for a family during the day and a living room during the summer evenings.

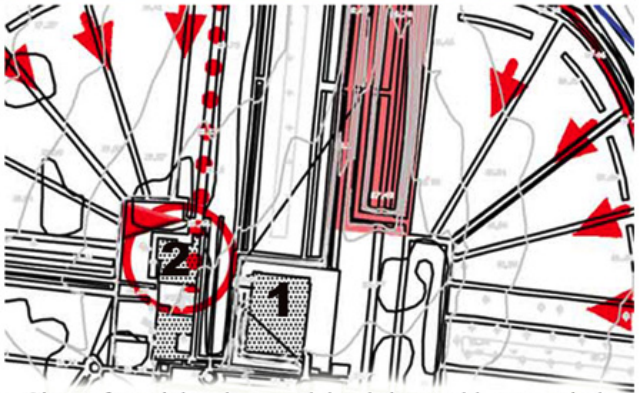
Bahá'u'lláh's tomb is located in the room that forms the northwest corner of the building. The cultivated area of the courtyard is planted with small trees and ferns and surrounded by a paved area covered with fine oriental carpets. The carpeted area serves as a place for silent prayer and meditation for the pilgrims and other believers, many of whom who show their respect by kneeling at the open door of the room where Bahá'u'lláh is buried and laying their heads on the threshold.

Here, as well, elements that are important to the Bahá'í religion are seen: natural light from the roof, the garden design, and the attention to details. The feeling that is given by the overall design of the structure and its garden elements is detachment and protection from the outside world, on the one hand, and openness and integration with the natural world that surrounds and permeates the building through the roof and the courtyard, on the other.










Circumferential path around the shrine enables to encircle it before or after entering. (1-Mansion, 2-Shrine).

## The Gardens

The Bahjí gardens are designed in the Persian Meidan style, which uses natural elements to create formal, geometric patterns. Thus, we find arches made from trimmed bushes, avenues and straight lines defined by trees, and surfaces that are given specific shapes and textures by the vegetation used. Other distinctive design elements include pools and water fountains and wide lawns separated by paths paved with crushed red roofing tiles. The most striking geometrical features are the long, straight path leading from the site entrance to the door of the shrine and the circular path that surrounds the shrine and mansion at a distance of about 100 meters.

Although the style of the garden is based on the Persian gardens, the diversity of vegetation testifies to the disengagement of the Bahá'í religion from its oriental roots and its exposure to other cultures. The flower beds are arranged according to colors, styles and types of flora and include exotic elements like cactus and bonsai trees, as well as garden ornaments from Western Europe and the Far East.









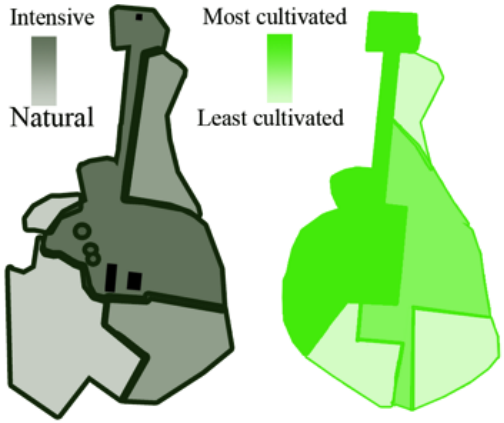






In certain areas of the garden, the neatly arranged garden beds and manicured lawns are framed with trees and bushes precisely trimmed to define the desired axes and geometrical shapes. This exemplary order is in sharp contrast with other areas of the garden, where nature rules and the maintenance is extensive. These areas are populated with spacious orchards and fields for which the only maintenance is cleaning and a light trimming that enable people to walk through the trees. The combination of the two styles – the intensive and the extensive – creates the most interesting and diverse effects in the garden.

For example, the olive grove, which was on the site since it was first purchased, remained in its place and penetrates the precise garden. The olive trees are scattered randomly on the meticulously mowed lawn in a way that does not harm the completeness of the garden but rather respects the nature and the trees that were in the area. The principle of integration with the environment, which is the same as in the gardens in Haifa, is so strong that a Sycamore Ficus tree, which is on one of the main axes of the most formal area of the entire garden, was left in its place and the path was widened around it in order to enable passage toward the shrine.







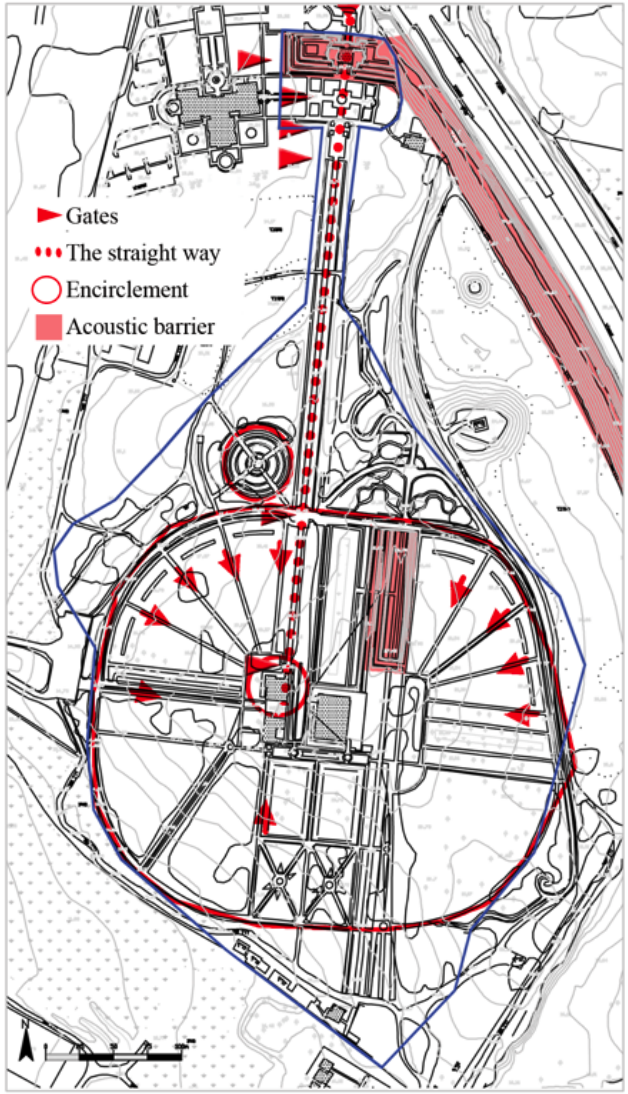










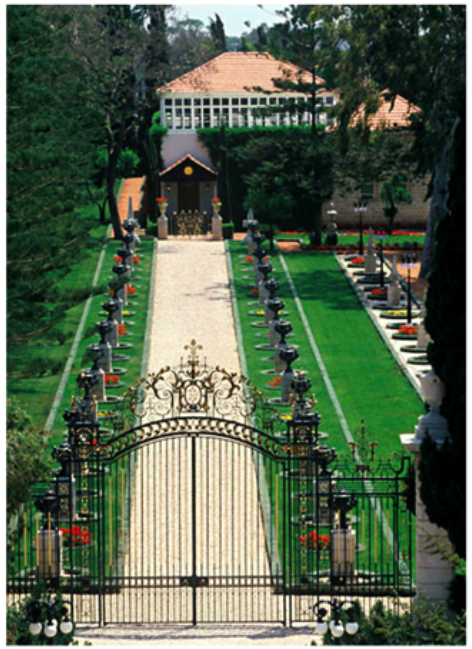










As in Haifa, the garden functions as an approach the shrine and constitutes an important part of the spiritual experience of the pilgrims on their way to visit the sacred spot. The approach avenue is a straight path about 500m long. The walking is not easy and the way changes both in the paving of the path and the kinds of vegetation that border it. As in Haifa, the progress toward the holy place is marked with gates. Some are physical gates, like the large ornamental wrought-iron gate where the straight approach path intersects the circular path. Others points of passage are created by changes in topography and vegetation that narrow or widen the path, and elements like the tree-arches and a tunnel under an acoustic barrier that blocks noise from the city and the adjacent highway. Along the path, one also comes upon areas for rest and contemplation that help the pilgrim or other visitor prepare himself for or digest the spiritual experience. The quiet of the gardens seems to become stronger and stronger as one nears the shrine.



The existence of the circular path offers a choice of indirect routes to the shrine passing through all the areas of the garden from the most styled and cultivated quarter to the areas of the orchard and plantations. This path allows the pilgrim to walk in a large circle around the shrine at a respectful distance, which is conducive to meditation and untying knots of tension. Shortly before the last gate to the shrine, there is another path, which enables the pilgrim to circumambulate the shrine at an intimate distance, much like the arcade around the shrine of the Báb in Haifa.



# Old Acre Sites (I) - House of Abdu'llah Pasha, Prison & House of Abbud





Coordinate 1: E: 693362 N:3644733 C 2: E: 693462 N:3644725 C 3: E: 693298 N:3644462
Area (ha)1: 0.79 Area 2: 0.07 Area 3: 0.06
1.Statutory protection: the National outline plan (tama 35):Urban Complex for Preservation

| | Architectural Elements | Year of Erection | Historically | Today | Physical Condition | Designer / Architect |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | House & Courtyard | 1810 | Residence of Abdu'l-Baha & Shoghi Effendi as a child | Museum & Pilgrimage Site | Very Good | Unknown |
| 2. | Prison cell | 1797 | The place where Baha'u'llah, his family & followers were held imprisoned | Museum & Pilgrimage Site | Very Good | Unknown |
| 3. | House & Courtyard | 19th Century | Residence of Baha'u'llah (1871 – 1877) where he revealed the Baha'i Book of Laws | Museum & Pilgrimage Site | Very Good | Unknown |

## House of Abdullah Pasha

This is a grand courtyard structure of three stories built by one of the Ottoman rulers of Acre in about 1810. The inner yard displays meticulous gardening, much like the intensive design seen in the larger gardens, and has a central water element, as customary in typical Ottoman and Persian structures. The connection between the inside and outside is made by multiple courtyards, a large balcony and generous windows.

This house served as the residence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá at the time when the first pilgrims arrived from Europe and North America. Shoghi Effendi was born here in 1897 and the remains of the Báb were kept here until they could be buried in the mausoleum in Haifa.





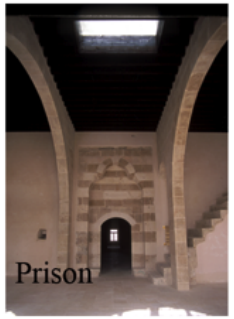
## Prison

The northwest tower of the Acre Citadel was built by the Ottomans in 1797. The area occupied by Bahá'u'lláh and his family has a verandah (ayvan) with a skylight and arched openings overlooking the central courtyard of the citadel where the garrison drilled, as well as an inner apartment comprised of eight rooms opening onto a central hall. During the British Mandate, the fortress was transformed into a prison, but the area included in the nomination has been restored to its condition at the time of Bahá'u'lláh's incarceration based on extensive research and documentation.










## House of Abbud and Udi Khammar

The House of Abbud is a typical Ottoman courtyard structure of noble proportions situated in the western section of Old Acre, adjacent to the sea. The building was owned by two Christian families, but during the time of Bahá'u'lláh's occupancy, the two units were merged into one. There are three internal courtyards open to the sky, one at ground floor level and two on the third floor, where the living quarters are located. All three courtyards are lit and adorned with planters. In addition to the courtyards and many large windows, the structure features a balcony overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. Bahá'u'lláh resided in this structure from 1871 to 1877, during which time he penned the book of laws of the Bahá'í Faith.

# Ridvan Gardens (Map C)



Coordinate: E: 695440 N:3643916
Area (ha): 10.9
Statutory protection: Protected by the National outline plan (tama 35)

| | Architectural Elements | Year of Purchase | Historically | Today | Physical Condition | Planner / Architect |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | The Gardens | 1875 | Frequently visited by Baha'u'llah | A garden | Good | Unknown |
| 2. | The House on the Island | 1875 | Overnight resting place of Baha'u'llah | Pilgrimage Site & Museum | Very good | Unknown |
| 3. | Ancient flour mill | | Flour mill | Part of the garden | | Unknown |

Ridván Garden, whose name means "paradise", is located about one kilometer from the walls of the Old City of Acre. It was originally built on a small island between channels of the Na'aman River that were dug to power a complex of flour mills. The island was rented by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1875 as a beautiful, quiet and restful place for his father, Bahá'u'lláh.

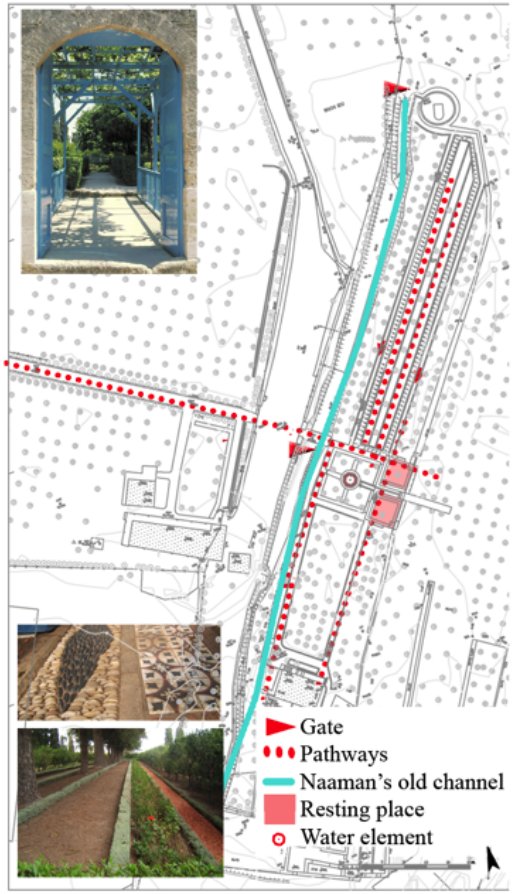
The road that leads to the island is covered with gravel and passes through two lines of cypress trees, agricultural fields and orchards. The entrance to the island garden itself is a massive stone gate with wooden doors, which open onto a little bridge covered with an arbor that crosses the channel where the Na'aman used to flow. The central garden is long and relatively narrow, and it is surrounded by orchards of pomegranate and citrus trees.

The garden is typically Persian, in the style of Hayat gardens, and like them it provides a place for spiritual and social relaxation. In the centre of the garden is a fountain, fed by gravity from an elevated tank attached to a well from which the water was lifted by a pump operated by a donkey. From the fountain, the water cascaded down into a marble channel which drained into the river. On both sides of the marble channel, the ground is paved with tile alternating with rounded river stones set on edge. Two large mulberry trees provide shade for this area, which is framed with carved wooden benches, some of which projected out over the river. The area has been preserved in its original form and has been visited for over a hundred years by the Bahá'í pilgrims, who recall the gatherings held there in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh, who loved the garden and the tranquility it gave and called it his "verdant paradise" and even the "New Jerusalem".





The main difference between this garden and the others is the tall trees that give shade and enable the enjoyment of the garden during the hot summer days. The garden lacks open views to the landscape and even the views to the other parts of the garden are limited. The only structure that is located in the garden is also hidden among the trees.



# Mansion of Mazra'ih (Map D) & Junayn Garden (Map H)





Coordinate1: E: 696194 N:3651834 C2: E: 695758 N:3652615
Area (ha): 4.7 Area 2: 0.81
Statutory protection: National outline plan (tama 35) Rural & Urban Complex for Preservation

| | Architectural Elements | Year of Purchase | Historically | Today | Physical Condition | Planner / Architect |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | The Mansion | 19th Century | Residence of Baha'u'llah 1877-1879 | Musuem | Very Good | Unknown |
| 2. | Farmhouse | 19th Century | Farmhouse | Pilgrimage Site | Very Good | Unknown |

## Mansion of Mazra'ih

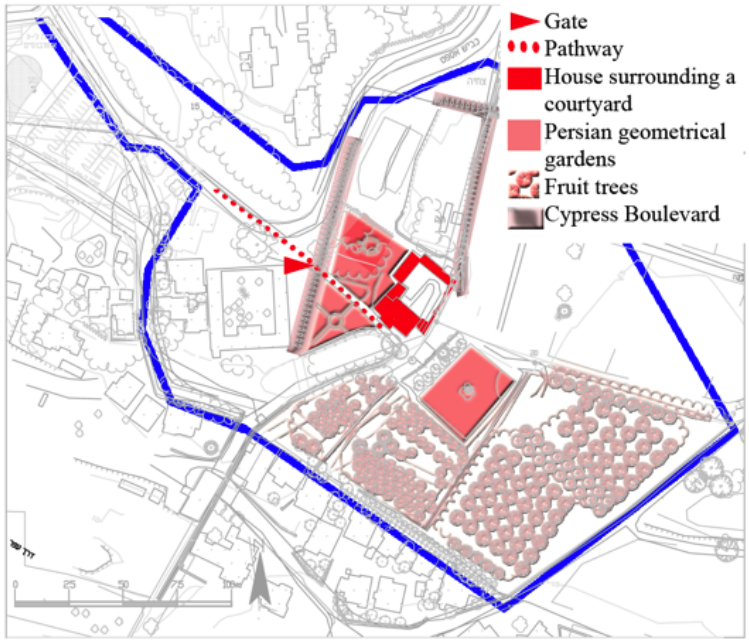
The Mansion of Mazra'ih was the first home of Bahá'u'lláh after he was allowed to leave the walls of Old Acre. It is situated on a limestone ridge adjacent to the aqueduct which transported water to Acre and commands an impressive long-distance view to the east out over the valley to the Galilee Hills. Traditional terraces planted with fruit trees flank the mansion on the south and east. Distinct elements of Persian garden design appear, but most of the gardening is extensive and dissolves into the surrounding orchards. There is no use of ornaments, sculptures, etc. in these gardens.

After passing the entrance gate, one is greeted by a modest garden comprised of several flowerbeds arranged in a characteristically Persian geometrical layout. On the east side of the house, there is a large pool and a patio paved with marble through which runs the channel of the old aqueduct. The pool used to draw water from the aqueduct and store it for use in irrigating the fields and orchards on the slopes below the house. Directly east of the house is another square of lawn with a geometrically shaped flower bed in the centre of which stands a tall palm tree. On the north side of the house is a large planted courtyard surrounded on the other three sides by service buildings and high stone walls, access being provided by arched gates with heavy wooden doors.

The building is an Ottoman dwelling built in several stages. The first stage was constructed from exposed limestone, and the original entrance to the house may have been from the south due to a row of Cypress trees leading from the garden to the wall of the structure, which displays a large arch blocked by a later construction. The ground floor of the house consists of high arches, which outline the spaces. It was used for kitchens and other services, with a large room for receiving guests, while the family living space was on the upper floor, which had the best views and ventilation.








## Junayn Garden

This is a modest one-storey farmhouse situated between Acre and Nahariya, not far from the Mansion of Mazra'ih. The house belonged to Bahá'í followers, and Bahá'u'lláh stayed there as a guest. Of simple, rustic construction, the house is in the form of a hollow square with a central courtyard open to the sky. It has recently been restored to its historical condition and the landscaping of the plot will be undertaken in the near future.

# Cultural Values

As noted in the review of the sites, the architecture is not only a highly esthetic and harmonious blending of various styles. It is also charged with meaning and communicates a great deal about Bahá'í values, beliefs and cultural traditions, such as pilgrimage, as well as the development of the Faith in its most formative period.

## The Connection between the Architecture and Bahá'í Cultural Values and Beliefs

Several principles and traditions that are at the basis of the Bahá'í religion have clearly influenced the design characteristics of the sites as a whole. These include:

**Universalism:** The diversity among the cultures is perceived as the source of harmony in human relations, as expressed in this statement of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

> *If in a garden the flowers and fragrant herbs, the blossoms and fruits, the leaves, branches and trees are of one kind, of one form, of one color and of one arrangement, there is no beauty or sweetness, but when there is variety, each will contribute to the beauty and charm of the others and will make an admirable garden, and will appear in the utmost loveliness, freshness and sweetness. Likewise, when difference and variety of thoughts, forms, opinions, characters and morals of the world of mankind come under the control of one Supreme Power and the influence of the Word of the One True God, they will appear and be displayed in the most perfect glory, beauty, exaltation and perfection.*
> ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Baha'i World Faith, p. 295)

This appreciation of diversity is expressed in the assimilation of elements of architecture and design from different cultures in the structures and the gardens.

**Esthetics and the human spirit:** Bahá'ís believe that physical beauty and refinement in man's surroundings promote inner qualities of spirituality, as expressed in the following statement:

> *My meaning is this, that in every aspect of life, purity and holiness, cleanliness and refinement, exalt the human condition and further the development of man's inner reality. Even in the physical realm, cleanliness will conduce to spirituality, as the Holy Writings clearly state. And although bodily cleanliness is a physical thing, it hath, nevertheless, a powerful influence on the life of the spirit. It is even as a voice wondrously sweet, or a melody played: although sounds are but vibrations in the air which affect the ear's auditory nerve, and these vibrations are but chance phenomena carried along through the air, even so, see how they move the heart.*
>
> *A wondrous melody is wings for the spirit, and maketh the soul to tremble for joy. The purport is that physical cleanliness doth also exert its effect upon the human soul.* ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 146)

This understanding finds expression in the striving toward order and beauty which affects maintenance as well as design and gives a common feel to all the gardens and structures, regardless of function and whether purchased or built by the Bahá'ís.

**Egalitarianism/Simplicity/Humility**: There is no clerical hierarchy in the Bahá'í community, which is governed by a system of councils composed of laymen elected by the community for fixed terms. The equality of men and women is one of the key principles, and no distinction is made among believers on the basis of gnostic knowledge or seniority in the Faith. These egalitarian principles are mostly expressed in the human scale of the structures, including even the most important shrines and administrative buildings.

**The love of light and the beauty of nature**: In addition to the cultural background from which the Bahá'í architecture arose (Persia and Turkey), the Báb's long stay in prison without even a candle for writing, as well as the imprisonment of Baha'u'llah inside the walls of Old Acre, intensified the "need" of sunlight and the strong affinity to nature and to the outdoors.

*"...Bahá'u'lláh ... was greatly attracted by the beauty of nature. In spite of their meagre resources, the believers of His days tried wherever possible to create simple yet beautiful surroundings for Him. They even brought flowering trees and shrubs from lands as far away as Persia and planted them in the Garden of Ridvan outside 'Akká, that Bahá'u'lláh loved to visit after so many years of incarceration within the walls of the City.* (Adib Taherzadeh, The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 328")

*Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali recalls many scenes in which 'Abdu'l-Bahá was seen to be carrying heavy vessels of water on His shoulder for watering the flowers and shrubs in the garden around the Shrine. So strenuous was this task for the Master that sweat could be seen pouring from His face as He carried this heavy burden. The same chronicler has recounted that on several occasions, He was seen gathering soil, placing it inside His cloak and carrying the load on His shoulders to where He was making some flower-beds in the small garden He had created with His own hands in order to beautify the approaches to the Holy Shrine.* (Ibid., p. 190)

As previously detailed, these elements are prominent in all the structures and gardens.

**Acceptance of the other and integration with surroundings:** Although the gardens are unique and prominent in relation to their surroundings, a significant effort has been made to integrate them into the natural and built environment that existed prior to the development of the sites. Many visible features of the design testify to this philosophy. An olive grove and an ancient Sycamore tree, which existed prior to the development of the garden in Bahji, were left in place although they do not match the lines according to which the garden was planned. In the Haifa gardens there is gradual blending from the manicured and symmetrical core to the natural Carmel forest. These principles are also expressed in the management of the sites, which has shaped their physical properties. The fact that the most important sites are designed to welcome the public without charge affects the planning of entrances, walking routes and visitor facilities. Likewise, the understanding, patience and flexibility shown by the Bahá'ís in their negotiations with the local authorities and neighbors has affected the planning and the measures taken for the protection of the sites.

## The Connection between the Architecture and Bahá'í Pilgrimage

All of the sites included in the nomination are significant to Bahá'í pilgrimage because they are visited by the pilgrims of today and/or because they are connected with the history of pilgrimage as experienced by previous generations. Although the pilgrims draw specific lessons about their religious identity and the history of their Faith from specific sites, the emotional aspect of the pilgrimage experience as a whole is strongly influenced by the common design language and messages referred to above. In addition, there are particular design elements that are directly connected with the function of the sites, and the shrines in particular, as places of pilgrimage

**The Haifa-Acre axis:** Bahá'ís see the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh as the "twin prophets" of their religion and Haifa and Acre as the twin holy cities comprising the spiritual and administrative centre of their Faith. The strong visual axis connecting the shrine of the Báb and its terraced gardens with Acre and the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh is thus of primary importance.

**Approaches to the shrines:** The matter of the approaches to the shrines, which is discussed in detail in the text dealing with the gardens in Haifa and at Bahjí, is highly significant for the Bahá'í pilgrim who has traveled halfway around the world for a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to approach the most sacred spots, the places toward which he or she has been directing his or her prayers since childhood. For such a person, the process of approaching the shrine stirs thoughts and feelings which may be no less important than those experienced while visiting it.

**Circumambulation:** Similarly, the use of circular elements in the gardens is highly symbolic, while offering, to the pilgrims and other believers, the possibility of giving practical expression to the profound spiritual attitude reflected in the following passage:

> *Circumambulation of the holy places is an act of devotion and love. It is an expression of the individual's humility, submissiveness and adoration toward the Holy Ones. It is also a sign of one's utter dependence on them. We note that the same act takes place in nature. A satellite circles around a planet and is held in orbit by the force of attraction. It originates from, and its very existence depends upon, the planet.* (Adib Taherzadeh, The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, v 4, p. 108)

Naturally, the act of circling the shrines on foot at different distances has other levels of meaning and offers special views as well as opportunities for relaxation and contemplation.

**Distinction among sites and areas:** The strength of the geometrical elements and the formality of the garden design increase with the level of sacredness, providing important cues to the pilgrim and visitor alike regarding the character of the space he or she is entering.

## The Connection between the Architecture and the Historical Development of the Bahá'í Faith

In the beginning, the Bahá'í religion sprang from Islam, and Baha'u'llah's affinity to the culture from which he was exiled is clearly seen. With the detachment of the Bahá'í religion from Islam and its evolution into an independent world religion, it was exposed to other cultures and assimilated architectural elements from the East and the West. This development can be traced in both the gardens and the buildings, as the strong Islamic and Persian influences found in the early properties become combined with elements from other cultures in the more recent buildings and gardens.

For example, the Persian elements are dominant in the Ridván Garden, which was the first to be developed by the Bahá'ís. The gardens at Bahji are mixed gardens,

essentially Persian but with neo-classic elements, such as marble pillars and ornamental urns, local flora, such as olive, citrus and pomegranate trees, and exotic elements such as cactus gardens and bonsai trees. In the terraced gardens in Haifa, which are the newest, the diversity and the influence of western elements are even stronger, and one can see neo-classic steps, elements of English gardens and widespread usage of local flora.

Likewise, the first structures that were purchased by the Bahá'ís in Acre were typical Ottoman buildings with a strong affinity to Persian architecture. The first structures built by the Bahá'ís in Haifa (the shrine of the Báb and the buildings in the Persian Quarter) adopted local oriental architecture, a choice which reflects practical considerations while manifesting a degree of detachment from the Persian sources. In the final stage, the choice of an international neo-classical style integrating diverse elements, including some signs of fidelity to oriental roots, reflect the independence of the religion and its world-wide spread.

Clearly, this shift in perspective, or at least the boldness in expressing the detachment from Islam and the yearning toward independence and universality, finds its most obvious expression in the cemetery in Haifa, where the graves of believers buried before 1925 are oriented toward Mecca, while subsequent graves face toward the shrine of Bahá'u'lláh in Acre.

# Conclusion

As an ensemble, the Bahá'í sites in Israel represent a complete narrative of the development of the religion during its most formative period. The eleven sites grouped in seven protective units take the visitor through historical events from the beginning of the Baha'i religion as a current of Islam, through its detachment from these roots to its opening to the world and becoming an independent religion.

The physical features of these properties are living testimony to the values, traditions and customs that are the foundation of the religion, and they hold within them ideas and beliefs that are internationally significant and important. Despite the differences in age and style, these properties give visual expression to the most basic concepts of the Bahá'í philosophy, and through the architecture, the placement of the sites in their surroundings and their historical background, one can discover the main values and principles of the religion, as well as its cultural and historical roots. In addition, these sites constitute the physical setting and frame of the traditional practice of pilgrimage that has existed since the earliest days of the religion.

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