



OPENING THE TERRACES ON MOUNT CARMEL

It's dusk on 22 May 2001. Some 4,500 people, 3,300 of them Bahá'ís, representative of more than 200 countries and territories, are gathered at the foot of Mount Carmel in Haifa, Israel. They are there to witness the opening of the Terraces of the Shrine of the Báb, a project begun ten years ago that has transformed the ancient barren face of the mountain into 19 majestic terraced gardens cascading down the length of the mountain.

The Bahá'í Faith, founded in 1844, is the most recent of the world's monotheistic religions. Its founder, Bahá'u'lláh, spent the latter years of His life in the Holy Land as a prisoner of the Ottoman Turks, and the Faith's administrative and spiritual headquarters were established in what are today the twin cities of Acre and Haifa of modern Israel. The Bahá'ís have built world-class gardens to adorn the golden-domed Shrine of the Báb, the second most holy spot of their Faith. These gardens also provide thousands of visitors with a contemplative space in which ordered flowerbeds, fountains, and flowing water give way to natural perimeters of trees and shrubs. They are an oasis of tranquility in the heart of a bustling port city. Following the official opening during the week of 22 May, the gardens will be open to the public every day, free of charge.

To mark the opening of the Terraces, an oratorio and a symphony have been composed, respectively, by Norwegian composer Lasse Thoresen and Tajik composer Tolib Shahidi. The Israel Northern Symphony, Haifa, under the direction of Stanley Sperber, will accompany acclaimed instrumental and vocal soloists from Canada, Austria, and the United States, backed by the Transylvania State Choir from Cluj, Romania. The original orchestral works will climax with the spectacular inaugural lighting of the Terraces, building light upon light like strings of pearls draped around the illumined Shrine.

The evening's events will be available to television stations around the world via a satellite feed.

***For further
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