

Four months after I arrived to serve in the Holy Land, I went to the airport with some Bahá'ís to greet a new arrival, all of whom returned to Haifa while I remained at the airport. Other Bahá'ís were coming by car several hours later to pick up a second new arrival, for whom I was waiting, and I would be travelling back to Haifa with this second group. Meanwhile, I sat in the waiting room for three hours, and was experiencing my first exit into the world. I felt a deep severance from the security of the heart of the Bahá'í world where I had been living for several months. Alone and lonely, the culture shock was enhanced, took on new dimensions and the contrast between the Bahá'í standard of life and the rest of the world became intensely clear for the first time.

The Waiting Room

In the world without
People mumble and jumble
Noise and smog
Force their way into
This unwilling heart.
With haggard looks
And blood-shot eyes,
Misfed souls stare
From nothingness into nothingness
Two-legged forms pass to and fro
Hustling and bustling
Swelling to a thirsty crowd
Each in turn queueing for a fill
Of liqueur, downing yet another drop
To drown steered disphoria
Lustful eyes snatch satisfaction
On passing prey ...
... emptiness permeates the air
The travellers have lost their way.

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