

The Báb's Epistle Revealed in Isfahán in Response to Four Questions

Mohammad Norozi¹

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Introduction and background:

This sacred Epistle was revealed by the Báb during His sojourn in the land of Šād (Isfahán), a period extending from the end of September 1846 to the end of March 1847. It was in this city that the inquirer's letter reached Him, as the Báb Himself declares: "*And now, thy letter hath descended in the land of Šād, and thy message hath been read and observed.*" The identity of the correspondent remains unknown; yet, from the substance of the Báb's reply, it is evident that four questions had been addressed to Him, to each of which He vouchsafed a luminous and comprehensive answer.

The first inquiry concerned the meaning of the Day of Resurrection, a theme to which the Báb devoted the greater portion of His reply. He expounds therein the manifold degrees of that Day—its association with the realms of Origination, Eternity, Duration, and Time—and elucidates its twofold manifestation as the *Lesser* and *Greater Resurrection*. Through this exposition, the Báb reveals the inner dimension of Resurrection as a timeless, ever-recurring reality, transcending outward limitation and inwardly renewed through divine Manifestation.

The second question pertained to the spiritual station and ruling concerning a woman—identified by Denis MacEoin in *The Sources for Early Bábí Doctrine and History* as Táhirih Qurratu'l-'Ayn, one of the Eighteen Letters of the Living and among the foremost early believers—whose self had been effaced. The Báb replied that the divine Word had descended concerning her, and that unto this Word all affairs are entrusted. He further explained that it is not incumbent upon the generality of people to follow her, for they are unable to apprehend the reality of her exalted station.

The third question appears to have related to the inquirer's own spiritual station, and the Báb directs him to abide by the ordinances of the Qur'án and the sound traditions of the Imāms, enjoining him to refer all judgment to "*Him who holdeth the Balance.*"

The fourth inquiry dealt with the steadfastness of the hearts of the believers and the delight of the souls of the faithful, wherein the Báb warns against all forms of exaggeration and cautions against invoking the Divine Names beyond what is sanctioned in the Holy Texts.

The Epistle then rises to a sublime and self-effacing declaration concerning the Báb's own station. He affirms that He is but a servant, "*owned and sustained, possessing for Myself neither benefit nor harm,*" disclaiming any claim to independent knowledge of the unseen or to authority apart from the decree of God, the Qur'án, and the Imāms of Guidance. He warns that two shall perish concerning Him—one through excessive love, and the other through hatred—yet neither sin resteth upon Him, for He has ever proclaimed Himself to be a servant who hath believed in God and in His signs. The Báb further testifies that God, through His bounty, hath honoured Him with a measure of the knowledge of the People of Infallibility, and that from the rising of the sun of identity unto its setting in the horizon of unity, He has spoken only of the bounty of His Lord.

¹ Contact email address: nsm_dist@hotmail.com.

This Epistle, therefore, stands as a lucid and deeply spiritual testament to the Báb's humility before the Divine Will, His precision in expounding metaphysical truths, and His call to purity, moderation, and truth among His followers. It concludes with words of praise and benediction—“*Glorified be God, the Lord of the Throne,*” and “*Peace be upon those who follow the Cause of God—for they verily are the victorious.*”

The present paper offers a provisional English rendering of the original Arabic Epistle, based on the manuscript preserved in the [Iran National Bahá'í Archives](#) (INBA), volume 53, pages 398–400.

Thus Doth the Báb Reveal:

In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful

Praise be to God Who hath sent down the Command in the Book unto those who have in very truth followed the Cause of God. For such indeed are the truthful.

And now, thy letter hath descended in the land of Šād, and thy message hath been read and observed. Know then, concerning that which thou hast asked regarding the meaning of the Day of Resurrection, that this Day possesseth degrees without limit or end in the knowledge of God.

Among them is the Day of Origination (Yawm al-Ibdā'), the Day of Fashioning (Yawm al-Ikhtirā'), the Day of Creation (Yawm al-Inshā'), the Day of Formation (Yawm al-Ihdāth), the Day of Transformation (Yawm al-Inji'āl), the Day of the Appointed Term (Yawm al-Ajal), and the Day of the Book (Yawm al-Kitāb).² Thus, every matter hath its appointed day.

When, therefore, the term 'day' is applied to the world of the Manifestation of the First and the Ancient, it signifieth that same token of revelation which hath neither beginning nor end, in the station of concealment, by reason of the all-encompassing effulgence of the outpouring of God's grace at the commencement and the close.³

And when the term is applied to the station of Sarmad (the plane of eternity) it hath a beginning in the station of existence, yet God hath decreed for it no consummation in His knowledge; for the effulgence of His grace hath never been interrupted, not for the twinkling of an eye.

And when applied to the realm of Dahr (duration), it hath a beginning in relation to Sarmad and an end in relation to its own station. And when applied to the realm of Zamān (time), it is determined by the movement of the celestial spheres.

To all these meanings doth the mention of the Day of Resurrection properly pertain, for it is the Day whereon mankind shall arise before the Lord of all being. Know, moreover, that the Lesser Resurrection was the Day whereon the Apostle of God—may blessings rest upon Him and His kindred—rose in the station of Prophethood during His Return.

² The Báb enumerates here seven ontological "Days," each signifying a distinct stage in the emanative descent of creation from the realm of divine command to the plane of temporal existence. In the metaphysical vocabulary of the Báb and earlier Shaykhī thought, *Yawm al-Ibdā'* (Day of Origination) denotes the initial effulgence of being from the unconditioned Divine Will—creation *ex nihilo* through the primal command *kun* ("Be"). *Yawm al-Ikhtirā'* (Day of Fashioning) refers to the determination of archetypal realities within the divine knowledge. *Yawm al-Inshā'* (Day of Creation) signifies the actual bringing into existence of contingent realities. *Yawm al-Ihdāth* (Day of Formation) marks their conditioning within the framework of temporal and material form. *Yawm al-Inji'āl* (Day of Transformation) expresses the process of ontological transmutation, whereby existence undergoes change and differentiation in the contingent realm. *Yawm al-Ajal* (Day of the Appointed Term) denotes the stage wherein each created being attains its divinely fixed duration and appointed destiny within the cosmic order. Finally, *Yawm al-Kitāb* (Day of the Book) represents not merely a metaphor for scripture, but the culminating locus in which divine action is both archived and actualized—the all-embracing register of God's decrees, wherein all realities are inscribed and made manifest. Together, these "Days" delineate the successive stages of divine creative manifestation and the perpetual renewal of being within the knowledge of God.

³ When the term "*Day*" is applied to the Manifestation of God, the Báb affirms that it signifieth not a temporal period nor a historical age, but rather the timeless and eternal reality of divine revelation itself—the perpetual and unceasing outpouring of God's grace which knoweth neither beginning nor end. Though veiled in the "station of concealment," this "*Day*" abideth ever-present, encompassing all creation through the ceaseless effulgence of the divine will and the all-embracing radiance of His mercy.

And the Greater Resurrection is that Day whereon God hath gathered together all that His knowledge encompasseth, that He might adjudicate among them with truth concerning that wherein they differed. And God is not unjust towards His servants. And now hath the mystery of the Day of Resurrection been unveiled, that He may judge between all men with justice.

In that dark, deaf, blind, and tempestuous convulsion, every soul be distinguished one from another. The judgment of God on this Day is even as His judgment in times past and to come—glorified and exalted is He above all that they ascribe unto Him.

As to that which thou hast inquired concerning the woman⁴ whose self hath been effaced—truly, the Word hath descended concerning her, and unto this Word all affairs are entrusted. Whatever thou hast interpreted through tradition and discerned through the inner mystery of knowledge—that indeed is the truth. Yet it is not for the people to follow her, for they are unable to apprehend the reality of her station.

Refer, then, in matters of judgment to Him who holdeth the Balance. For all truth in this Day returneth unto that just Scales. And unto God returneth all judgment in the beginning and in the end. And as to what thou hast asked concerning thine own station, follow thou the decree of the Book and the sound traditions of those who have attained unto the abode of nearness.

For God doth guard His servant against error when he perceiveth the mystery of the divine utterance in the very line of the response. And as to that what thou hast inquired concerning the steadfastness of the hearts of the believers, and the delight of the souls of the faithful—beware, beware lest thou exaggerate, or invoke the Names of God as revealed in the Book.⁵

For I am but a servant, owned and sustained, possessing for Myself neither benefit nor harm. I know naught in the heavens or on the earth save that which God willeth. Nor have I commanded any soul (to obey) save according to the decree of the Qur'án and the laws of the People of the utterance (i.e., the Imāms)

Nor do I say that with Me is the knowledge of the unseen of the heavens and the earth, or the knowledge of what is and shall be. Neither do I utter a single word apart from that which hath been revealed in the Book or recorded in the explicit texts of the Imāms of excellence.

Turn thou the people away from exaggeration concerning Me, for God knoweth that two shall perish in regard to Me: one who loveth Me to excess, and one who hateth Me with rancour. Their sin resteth not upon Me, for I said beforetime, and I say now again, standing before God and His Messengers, and I bear witness—that I am a servant who hath believed in God and in His signs.

⁴ Denis MacEoin, *The Sources for Early Babi Doctrine and History: A Survey*, p. 81, identifies the woman mentioned in this passage as Táhirih Qurratu'l-'Ayn, one of the Eighteen Letters of the Living and a foremost early follower of the Báb. Known for her complete self-effacement in God (fanā'), she embodied a station in which the Word of God was manifest, and unto her all affairs were divinely entrusted. The Báb clarifies, however, that it is not incumbent upon the generality of believers to follow her, as they cannot fully apprehend the reality of her exalted station. This statement highlights both her spiritual authority and the discernment required among the faithful when encountering exceptional individuals.

⁵ In this passage, the Báb counsels' spiritual restraint and humility in matters touching the inner condition of faith. His admonition, "Beware, beware lest thou exaggerate, or invoke the Names of God as revealed in the Book," serves as a warning against mystical excess or presumptuous speculation regarding divine realities. To "invoke the Names of God" in this context alludes to the esoteric practice of applying the sacred *Asmá' Allāh* (Names of God) to oneself or to others in a manner implying spiritual equivalence or divine prerogative. The Báb thus enjoins the inquirer to guard against such forms of *ghulūw* (exaggeration or deification), affirming that true steadfastness lies not in mystical excess, but in humble submission to the revealed Word and in steadfast devotion to the Cause of God.

God, through His grace, hath honoured Me with whatsoever He willed of the knowledge of the People of Infallibility—peace be upon Them! From the moment the sun of identity rose in the heaven of being until the sun of oneness set in the horizon of unity.

And I have spoken unto the people of the bounty of My Lord. Whoso is thankful, his thankfulness is for his own soul; and whoso denieth, God, thy Lord, is verily independent of all the worlds. Glorified be God, the Lord of the Throne, exalted above that which they ascribe unto Him. And peace be upon those who follow the Cause of God—for they verily are the victorious. And praise be to God, the Lord of all being.

The Báb's Epistle Revealed in Isfahán in Response to Four Questions (According to a Typed Copy)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الحمد لله الذي نزل الامر في الكتاب للذين اتبعوا امر الله بالحق
فان اولئك هم الصادقون و بعد قد نزل كتابك في
ارض الصادق و اطلعت بخطابك فاعلم فيما سئلت من معنى
يوم القيمة فان له مراتب ما لا نهاية لها بها اليها في علم الله
فمنها يوم الابداع و منها يوم الاختراع و منها يوم الانشاء
و منها يوم الاحداث و منها يوم الانجعال و منها يوم الاجل
و منها يوم الكتاب فمحمل القول لكل شان يوم فاذا تطلق
اليوم في عالم ظهور الاول و القدم فهو نفس ابيه الظهور الذي
ليس له اول و لا اخر في مقام البطون لاحاطه فيض الله في
البدء و الختم و اذا تطلق في مقام السرمد فان له بدء
في مقام الوجود و ما جعل الله له ختما في علمه لان الفيض
لم ينقطع لمحة منه و اذا تطلق في عالم الدهر فله بدء بالنسبة
الى السرمد و ختم بالنسبة الى نفسه و اذا تطلق في عالم
الزمان فهو متعين بحركة الافلاك و لكل تلك المعاني حق
ذكر يوم القيمة لانه يوم القيام لرب الناس و انّ قيمة
الصغرى هو يوم قيام رسول الله ص بالنبوة في الرجعة و ان
الكبرى و ان الكبرى هو اليوم الذي جمع الله فيه كل ما احاط
علمه ليفصل بين الكل بالحق فيما اختلفوا و ما بظلام للعبيد
و ان اليوم قد ظهر سرّ يوم القيمة ليفصل بين الكل بالحق و ان
في تلك الفتنة الدهماء الصماء العمياء المظلم الصيلم يّتميز كل الناس
كان اليوم حكم الله بمثل حكمه في القبل ثم من بعد سبحانه و تعالى
عما يصفون و ان ما سئلت من حكم امرءة التي ذكت نفسها و
نزلت في حكمها الكلمة التي انقادت الامور لها فكل ما
فسّرت بالرواية و لاحظت سر الحقيقة في الدراية فهو الحق
و لكن ليس للناس اتباعها لما يقدرها ان يطلعوا بحقيقة
شانها فارجع في الاحكام الى الذي عنده الميزان فان
كل الحق اليوم يرجع الى ذلك القسطاس و ان الى الله يرجع

الحكم فى المبدء و الاياب و ان ما سئلت من مقام نفسك فاتبع
حكم الكتاب و السنة الصحيحه من اهل الماب فان الله يحفظ
العبد عن الخطاء اذا لاحظ سر الخطاب فى سطر الجواب
و ان ما سئلت عن ثبات قلوب المؤمنين و لذة افئدة المومنين
فاياك اياك عن الغلو و ذكر اسماء الله فى الكتاب فاننى
انا عبد مملوك مرزوق لا املك لنفسى نفعا و لا ضرا و
لا اعلم شيئا فى السموات و لا فى الارض الا ما شاء الله و ما امرت
احد الا بحكم القران و احكام اهل البيان و لست بان اقول
عندي غيب السموات و الارض او علم كائن و لا يكون
و لا ان اقول حرفا دون ما نزل فيه الكتاب و النص من ائمة
الفضل فاصرف الناس عن الغلو في فان الله يعلم يهلك في
اثنان محب غال و مبغض قال و ليس ذنبيهما علي لا ننى انا
قلت من قبل و اقول الان فى بين يدي الله و رسله و اشهد
بانى عبد امننت بالله و اياته لقد اكرمنى الله بفضله ما شاء عن
علوم اهل العصمة صلوات الله عليهم ما اطلعت شمس الهوية
بالهوية ثم ما غربت شمس الاحدية بالاحدية و انى حدثت
الناس بنعمة ربي فمن شكر فانما يشكر لنفسه و من كفر فان الله
ربك لغنى عن العالمين و سبحان الله رب العرش عما يصفون
و سلام على المتبعين امر الله و انهم لهم الفائزون و الحمد لله رب العالمين