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Mulla Husayn Bushrul

Mulla Husayn Bushrui was the first to believe in the Bab and a member of the "Letters of the Living," the first and highest-ranking group of the Bab's disciples. As such, he helped to establish the Babi movement, an offshoot of Islam and forerunner of the Bahai faith.

Mulla Husayn was born in 1813 in a village near the small town of Bushruiyih in northeastern Iran. His father was a dyer and his mother a poet. During the course of his education in the cities of Mashhad and Isfahan, he became a follower of the Shaykhi teaching, and in 1835, he set off for Karbala in order to attend the lectures of the Shaykhi leader Sayyid Kazim Rashti. The latter regarded Mulla Husayn highly and chose him when he needed someone to go to Iran and canvass support from some of the senior clerics there for the Shaykhi teachings, which were at this time under attack.

Mulla Husayn returned successfully from his mission in January 1844 only to find that Sayyid Kazim had died shortly before. Mulla Husayn refused all efforts to install him as the new leader of the Shaykhis, and instead set off in search of a new leader, as Sayyid Kazim had suggested. This led him to Shiraz and a meeting with the Bab on May 23, 1844, at which the latter put forward a claim that Mulla Husayn accepted (an event commemorated annually by Bahais as a holy day). Mulla Husayn thus became the first of the Letters of the Living and was sent off to proclaim the teachings of the Bab. His subsequent journeys and activities brought Bahauallah and many others into the Babi fold. After meeting the Bab again in Shiraz in 1845, he returned to Mashhad, where he set up a center for the propagation of the Bab's teaching. In spring 1848, he made a journey to Maku on foot (1,200 miles) to see the Bab, who was imprisoned there.

In July 1848, he raised a Black Standard in Mashhad (a sign of the appearance of the *mahdi* [messiah] in Islamic prophecy) and set off eastward with some 200 Babis. They were surrounded at Shaykh Tabarsi in October 1848 and besieged by royal troops. Although most of the Babis had regarded Mulla Husayn as the foremost of the disciples of the Bab up to this time, Mulla Husayn deferred to Quddus, another of the Bab's disciples, during this siege. Mulla Husayn was shot during a battle on February 2, 1849, and died later that same day. He was 35. The Bab wrote a eulogy for him to be used when visiting his grave, and Bahauallah also praised him highly in his writings. His story as told in the early Bahai history *Nabil's Narrative* presents a picture of courage, humility, and intellectual brilliance that has made him a spiritual hero for successive generations of young Bahais.

Moojan Momen and B. Todd Lawson

Further Reading

Baha'u'llah. *Kitáb-i-Iqán*. Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1989; Mehrabkhani, Ruhu'llah. *Mulla Husayn: Disciple at Dawn*. Los Angeles: Kalimat, 1987; Nabíl [Zarandi]. *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabil's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahá'í Revelation*. Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1970.

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