

The Epistle of the Báb to Muḥammad Sháh: Revealed at Síyáh-Dihán

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Introduction and background:

This Epistle was revealed by the Báb sometime around April 1847 C.E.,² in the village of Síyáh-Dihán (present-day Takestān),³ as He journeyed under escort to the fortress of MáKú by order of Muḥammad Sháh and his Prime Minister, Ḥájí Mírzá Áqásí.

According to all known sources, the Epistle was composed in Síyáh-Dihán and entrusted to Muḥammad Beyk for delivery. However, there remains some ambiguity regarding its intended recipient. While some accounts assert that it was addressed to Muḥammad Sháh, others suggest that it may have been directed to Ḥájí Mírzá Áqásí—or possibly to both.⁴

It is not inconceivable that the Báb revealed two separate Epistles during His brief halt in the village, each intended for one of the two figures and both delivered by Muḥammad Beyk. Yet, the extant text contains no unequivocal internal evidence identifying its addressee. One passage, however, may imply that it was addressed to the Sháh himself:

“It beseemeth not thy station to neglect consideration for the hearts of thy kindred; extend then unto them, out of thy tenderness and mercy, thy regard.”

This appeal to royal responsibility and familial compassion appears more fitting when read as a direct admonition to the sovereign rather than to his minister.

Nevertheless, the question remains unresolved. Despite such historical ambiguities, the Epistle stands as a powerful testament to the Báb’s divine authority and the lofty character of His Revelation.

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² Following His departure from Isfahán under royal escort, the Báb arrived in Káshán on the evening of 21 March 1847 and remained there for three days, as recorded in *Tárikh-i-Jadíd* (pp. 214–215) and confirmed in *The Dawn-Breakers* (p. 245). As He approached Tíhrán, Muḥammad Sháh, concerned about public unrest, issued orders for the Báb not to enter the capital. Instead, He was diverted to the nearby village of Kalín (Kulyán), arriving there on 29 March 1847. This event is attested in *Tárikh-i-Jadíd* (p. 215) and referenced in Nabíl’s chronicle (*The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 247). The Báb remained in Kalín for several days before continuing His northward journey. Along this route, He halted briefly at the village of Síyáh-Dihán (modern-day Takestán), where He revealed an Epistle.

³ Síyáh-Dihán was a small settlement situated in the Qazvín region of northwestern Iran. It is identified with present-day Takestán, a small town located approximately 12 kilometers west of Qazvín.

⁴ Abu’l-Qásim Afnán, in *‘Ahd-i-A’lá* (pp. 262 and 460), and MacEoin (see [The Sources for Early Bābī Doctrine and History](#)) maintain that the Epistle was revealed solely for Muḥammad Sháh. Meanwhile, Fáḡil Māzandarānī—who cites a passage from this Epistle in *Asrār al-Āthár*, vol. 2, p. 189 (see [PDF](#))—states that it was addressed exclusively to Ḥájí Mírzá Áqásí. Interestingly, however, in *Ẓuhúru’l-Ḥaqq*, vol. 2, p. 139 ([image](#)), he suggests that it may have been addressed to either Muḥammad Sháh or his prime minister. Muḥammad-‘Alí Fayḏí also affirms (see [Hayātu’n-Nufús](#), p. 223) that the Epistle was directed to both Muḥammad Sháh and Ḥájí Mírzá Áqásí. My sincere thanks to Mr. Adib Masoumian for providing me with this valuable information.

What follows is a provisional English rendering of this sacred Epistle translated with utmost reverence and care. The original text is published in *‘Ahd-i A‘lá*, p. 262.

The Báb reveals:

”In His Name, the Most Blessed, the Most Exalted

All praise be unto God, Who bestoweth His grace upon whomsoever He willeth according to His wisdom. Glorified and exalted is He above that which they ascribe unto Him!

God verily knoweth, and God, indeed, is a witness unto My plight, and sufficient is He as a Witness. For I have borne no guilt that would warrant such a judgment as this.

Though, according to the purport of the utterance of the Commander of the Faithful,⁵ ‘I acknowledge Mine own existence to be a sin with which no other sin can bear comparison.’⁶

In any case, and in brief, if I be a believer—and assuredly I am, by the testimony of God and His chosen ones—then, in accordance with the purport of the noble ḥadīth, ‘Whosoever insulteth My friend hath verily declared war against Me,’⁷ such conduct is in no wise permissible.

And if I be a disbeliever—though, by the sanctity of God’s Essence and the loftiness of the station of the Immaculate Souls, I am not—and yet, while even the disbeliever abideth under the shadow of the sovereign’s bounty and aboundeth in every land, such a decree can in no wise be deemed justifiable.

⁵ “Commander of the Faithful” (Amīr al-Mu‘minīn): An honorific title most commonly associated with Imām ‘Alī, the first Imām of Shī‘ah Islam and the fourth caliph in Sunni tradition.

⁶ The saying «ويحك يا ولدي، وجودك ذنب لا يُقاس به ذنب» (“Woe to thee, my son! Thy very existence is a sin beyond comparison to any other sin”) is attributed to Rābi‘a al-‘Adawīyya, spoken in response to a man who claimed he had never sinned. A similar version appears in verse and is ascribed to Junayd al-Baghdādī: «قلتُ ما أنذبتُ؟ قالتُ مجيبةً: وجودك ذنبٌ لا يُقاس به ذنب» (“I said: ‘I have not sinned.’ She replied: ‘Thy existence is a sin that cannot be measured by any sin.’”) This aphorism is frequently cited in later Sufi texts, including works by Ibn ‘Ajība, Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, and al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, to illustrate the mystical view that selfhood veils the soul from God.

⁷ This noble ḥadīth—«من أهان لي ولياً فقد بارزني بالمحاربة» (“Whoever insults My friend has indeed declared war against Me”)—is attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad and widely cited in both Sunni and Shī‘i collections. It emphasizes the sanctity of the *awliyā’* (friends or saints of God), affirming divine protection over them. The phrase appears in canonical ḥadīth compilations such as *Jāmi‘ al-Tirmidhī* (Hadith no. 2616) and is frequently quoted in Islamic mystical and theological literature to underscore the spiritual gravity of offending God’s elect.

Be that as it may, such a judgement is unworthy of One (i.e., the Báb) who is of the lineage of the Messenger⁸. While the ordinance of God is manifest: ‘Say, I ask of you no recompense for it, save love for My kindred.’⁹

And the judgment concerning him who judges not according to that which God hath revealed is likewise manifest in the Most Holy Sight.¹⁰

And if, in truth, a matter had appeared obscure unto Me, even then was it incumbent upon you to serve as a means of guidance. And yet, by the grace and bounty of God, I behold not in Mine own self a sin, even to the extent of a mustard seed.

And shouldst thou but behold the signs made manifest by virtue of the Divine Will, these shall assuredly dispel every vestige of suspicion.

And should I, notwithstanding all this, be accounted worthy of death—by the Sacred Essence of God!—how fervently do I yearn for martyrdom,¹¹ more ardently than the suckling babe yearneth for the breast of his mother!

In the Name of God and by His leave; I await the decree, resigned unto the judgment of My Lord. And this judgment is, in Mine eyes, sweeter than honey and more exalted than all else.

This is but a brief account of My condition, declared from the station of poverty and glory. And this Station too is now made manifest: that the very pebbles of the earth, commissioned by the divine Will,¹² do recognize My Name, albeit bereft of true understanding.¹³

It beseemeth not thy station to neglect consideration for the hearts of thy kindred; extend then unto them, out of thy tenderness and mercy, thy regard.

⁸ “Messenger” (Rasoul) is one of the principal titles of Prophet Muḥammad, signifying his role as God’s divinely appointed conveyor of revelation and guidance to humanity.

⁹ Qur’an 42:23.

¹⁰ Qur’an 5:44, 5:45, and 5:47.

¹¹ Although the original term *mawt* (death) is employed in this passage, it has here been rendered as *martyrdom* in keeping with the theological context and the Báb’s own self-understanding as a Manifestation of God. In the sacred writings of the Báb and Bahá’u’lláh, the death of a Manifestation at the hands of an unjust people is not merely a biological event, but a sanctified sacrifice in the path of God. Hence, when the Báb declares His longing for *mawt*, it is to be understood as a yearning for martyrdom in the cause of God—a spiritual consummation imbued with divine significance, rather than an ordinary demise.

¹² The Arabic phrase *mā’mūr bihā* (Persian: مأمور بها, lit. “commissioned thereby”) connotes a divinely ordained mandate or charge. In this context, the phrase reflects the mystical notion that all created things—even the pebbles of the earth—are made, through the operation of the divine Will, to acknowledge the Manifestation of God. I am sincerely grateful to Mr. Adib Masoumian for his insights into this phrase and for kindly guiding me on its correct Persian pronunciation, including its phonetic rendering.

¹³ The phrase “bereft of true understanding” renders the Persian «اگر چه برسم عارف نباشند», implying that even though the pebbles acknowledge the Báb’s Name, they do so not through mystical awareness (*irfān*), but by virtue of divine command. This idea echoes statements in Bahá’í scripture that creation bears witness to divine truth, though lacking conscious perception (e.g., *Gleanings*, pp. 27, 55).

And should thy purpose be to bar this door forever, thou hast, indeed, appointed a worthy spot.¹⁴ Yet, by the power of God, I cherish the hope that it shall never again be opened."

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(Original Persian with Arabic Passages, Transcribed from a Typed Copy)

بسمه تبارک و تعالی

الحمد لله الذی یمن علی ما یشاء بحکمه سبحانه و تعالی عما یصفون الله یعلم اول خدا شاهد است بر حال من و کفی به شهیداً که ذنبی متحمل نشده ام که باعث چنین حکمی شده باشم اگر چه بر مضمون کلام امیر المؤمنین وجودی ذنب لا یُقاس به ذنب معترفم در هر حال و مجمل آنکه اگر مؤمنم و حال آنکه هستم به شهادت خداوند و اولیا او که حکم آن به مضمون حدیث شریف من أهان لی ولیاً فقد بارزنی بالمحاربة این نوع سلوک جائز نیست و اگر کافرم و حال آنکه به ذات مقدس خداوند و علو مقام اهل بیت عصمت که نیستم و حال آنکه کافر هم در ظل عنایت شاهنشاهی در هر ارض بسیار است باز این نوع حکم جائز نیست علی ای حال با یکنفر ذریه رسول این نوع حکم لایق نیست و حال آنکه حکم الله مشهود است قل لا اسئلكم علیه أجراً الا المودة فی القربی و حکم من لم یحکم بما انزل الله هم در نظر اقدس ظاهر است و اگر فی الواقع امری بر من مشتبّه آنهاست فرض است بر شما که سبب هدایت گردید و حال آنکه بفضل الله و منه بقدر خردلی ذنب از خود گمان ندارم و هرگاه مشاهده آثاری که از سر مشیت الهی ظاهر شده ملاحظه نمایند رافع سوء ظن خواهد شد و هرگاه با وجود این مستحق قتل بذات مقدس الهی که مشتاقم بموت اشد اشتیاق طفل به تدی أمش بسم الله و بالله منتظر حکم و راضی بقضاء خداوندم و این حکم احلی است در نزد من از عسل از ید غیر این مختصری از حال خودم در مقام فقر و فخر که اظهار نمودم و این مرحله هم امروز ظاهر است که سنگ ریزه های ارض مأمورٌ بها اسم مرا میشناسند اگر چه برسم عارف نباشند لایق بر حضرتت نیست ملاحظه قلوب اقربا را هم از رأفت و رحمت خود نموده و هرگاه مقصود درب خانه بستن بر خود است امر بمحل نیکویی فرموده بحول الله امیدوارم اینکه مفتوح نگردد

¹⁴ the phrase "أمر بمحل نیکویی فرموده"—literally, "thou hast decreed a goodly place"—is used by the Báb with deliberate irony to refer to the fortress of MáKú, the remote citadel to which He had been banished. The term "نیکویی" (nīkū'ī), meaning *pleasantness, fairness, or goodness*, typically connotes comfort or beauty. Here, however, it is employed with restrained sarcasm, underscoring the stark contrast between the barren, inhospitable conditions of the fortress and the official narrative that it constituted an appropriate or honorable site of confinement. In rendering this phrase as "thou hast, indeed, appointed a worthy spot," the translation seeks to preserve both the literal sense of a "fitting" location and the subtle irony with which the Báb acknowledged His exile—highlighting His forbearance and divine dignity even in the face of isolation and hardship. This tone echoes the elevated and nuanced language used by Shoghi Effendi when describing similar episodes of banishment in the lives of the Central Figures of the Bahá'í Faith.