

An Epistle of the Báb to Mullá Ḥusayn Bushrú'í, Revealed at Bushíhr: On the Cessation of Revelation and the Appointment of the First Believer

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Introduction and background:

This Epistle of the Báb to Mullá Ḥusayn Bushrú'í occupies a unique and pivotal position in the early history of the Bábí Revelation. Within the text itself, the Báb announces a momentous decision: the withholding of further revelation for a period of five years—a suspension of the descent of verses and of direct engagement with the wider body of believers. This declaration is not confined to the present Epistle alone, but is reiterated in several contemporaneous Epistles and articulated explicitly in the *Kitáb al-Fihrist* (Book of the Index), composed at the same juncture.

The *Kitáb al-Fihrist*, revealed in Bushíhr on Jumádí al-Thání 15, 1261 A.H. (21 June 1845), shortly after the Báb's return to Iran from Mecca, records both this divinely ordained withdrawal and the circumstances that precipitated it. Its importance lies not only in its function as the Báb's own catalogue of His writings—from the time of His Declaration on Jumádí al-Ūlá 5, 1260 A.H. (23 May 1844) to that date—but also in its allusions to decisive episodes in His life and mission. When read in conjunction with the internal evidence of the Epistle under examination, these sources allow the present Epistle to be dated with confidence to that same day and place. Together, they situate this Epistle at a critical turning point in the unfolding of the Báb's ministry, marked simultaneously by authoritative proclamation, deliberate withdrawal, and the reconfiguration of guidance for the community of believers.

In this work, the Báb addresses profound spiritual and theological concerns, affirming the steadfast faith of Mullá Ḥusayn in God and His signs and confirming his place upon the manifest path of truth. The Epistle is not merely a private exhortation but a public testament, intended as a remembrance for all who would recognize the Cause of God, follow His commands, and be numbered among the devout who prostrate themselves in adoration.

Central to the Epistle is the declaration of the five-year cessation of revelation, which serves both as a divine chastisement for the people's denial and as a period of spiritual trial. During this interval, Mullá Ḥusayn is appointed as the first believer and the designated intermediary: all inquiries and petitions regarding the Báb's writings were to be directed to him. By this measure, the Báb establishes Mullá Ḥusayn's authority as His representative among the believers, safeguarding the continuity of guidance during the period of His silence.

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The text itself is rich in Qur’anic allusions, drawing upon the imagery of Pharaoh’s obstinate rejection of Moses, the fire of hell as recompense for the denial of God’s signs, and the divine encounter on Mount Sinai. Notably, in a profound and evocative statement, the Báb declares that, by turning away from His judgment, the people are deprived of “*the signs of the Tree of Sinai*”—an allusion to the Burning Bush through which God spoke to Moses—implicitly identifying His own Revelation as the locus of divine utterance in this age. The suspension of revelation thus conveys the gravity of their spiritual loss, a consequence of rejecting the Manifestation of God.

Through its theological depth, moral exhortation, and historical specificity, this Epistle stands as a cornerstone in the unfolding of the Bábí Dispensation. It not only affirms the spiritual station of Mullá Ḥusayn but also establishes the framework for the believers’ relationship with the Manifestation during a critical period of withdrawal, ensuring that the guidance of the Cause remains accessible even in the absence of new revelation.

This provisional translation—based on a manuscript copy preserved in the [Iran National Bahá’í Archives](#) (INBA), Vol. 91, pp. 1-3—is attentive to the nuances of the original Arabic, seeks to render faithfully both the letter and spirit of the Báb’s words, preserving the elevated diction, scriptural tone, and profound theological insight characteristic of His revelation.

Thus, doth the Báb reveal:

“In the Name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

God testifieth in this Book unto His servant² that he hath believed in God and His signs, and hath remained steadfast upon a path of manifest truth. And this Book is a remembrance from the Remnant of God for whosoever desireth to believe in the signs of his Lord and follow His command, and be numbered among those who prostrate themselves.

And We, verily, know that Thy proof is conclusive for all who dwell in the heavens and on the earth, and We, indeed, are witnesses thereto.

Assuredly, the Servant of God³ hath delivered that which hath been sent down upon His heart; and God is a knowing, all-witnessing Testifier.

The likeness of those who recite the verses of thy Lord and thereafter turn away from His judgment is as one who hath borne witness to all the verses of God and then turned aside from the judgment of his Lord. Say: Verily, such as these—they are numbered among the idolaters, inscribed in the Book of God.

Shall the verses of divine elucidation be equated with the judgment of a single verse from among that which We have sent down unto thee? Nay, by thy Lord! Most of those who bear witness understand not, nor do they believe, neither are they aware.

God confound them! They are more astray than all asses; for the ass knoweth how it eateth barley, whereas these perceive not, neither are they guided.

What hath befallen you, then, that ye openly disbelieve in the verses of God, openly and without perception? Is not God sufficient unto you for your own selves on the Day of Reckoning?⁴ Wait ye, then; for We, by God's leave, are verily waiting.

And God hath, at that hour, sent down among the well-known hosts a sign from thy Lord; and God is All-Knowing, All-Aware.

And when Pharaoh desired to deny his Lord, He manifested a deed born of Satan;⁵ and ye, without the least compulsion, purely through the inclination of your own souls, give the lie, and perceive it not.

² The term “servant” here refers specifically to Mullá Husayn Bushrú’í, the first to recognize and believe in the Báb. It emphasizes his spiritual station as the first Letter of the Living and the exemplar of steadfastness on the path of truth.

³ The capitalized “Servant of God” denotes the Báb Himself, the Manifestation of God. In this context, it highlights that He is the source and recipient of divine revelation, and that what is delivered to the heart of His followers originates from Him as the authorized channel of God’s Word.

⁴ Qur’anic allusion: *Al-Anbiyā’* 21:47; *Al-Mu’minūn* 23:101–103; *Al-Zalzalah* 99:6–8. These passages depict the Day of Judgment, when all souls are held accountable for their deeds. In this Epistle, the Báb employs this imagery to underscore the certainty of divine justice.

⁵ Qur’anic allusion: *Al-A’rāf* 7:103–137; *Yūnus* 10:75–92; *Tā Hā* 20:43–79. The passages recount Pharaoh’s persistent denial of Moses’ message and his arrogance before God. In this Epistle, the Báb invokes Pharaoh as the archetype of those who obstinately reject divine guidance.

Follow thou the judgment of thy Lord, O My servant, and be thou of the patient ones.⁶ Rely thou upon God and turn thou away from them, then leave them to wander in their vain disputation until they come unto the Day whereon unto God ye shall all be gathered.

And in the passing of that Day We have, by God's leave, forbidden you Our verses, until there had elapsed, of the days of God, five years, as a recompense for your denial; and We wrong no soul among you by so much as a mustard seed. God knoweth Our judgment, and ye perceive it not. Little do ye reflect upon the verses of God.⁷

Be patient, O My servant, and answer not any one of them. And say: Die ye in your rage, and enter the fire wherein ye shall be joined together;⁸ then become stones of piled, baked clay.

Say: Were ye to flee throughout the earth, and thereafter to hear but a single verse of that judgment, God would never accept from any one of you—and the withholding of even one letter of Our verses from you is, in the Book of God, greater for your own souls than the fire of hell, if ye would but remember by the judgment of God.

Evil indeed is that which your hands have earned in Our days, and grievous indeed is that which ye judge.

Say: O peoples of the earth! Fear ye God, and seek forgiveness from your Lord, and return unto the judgment of God, then recite Our verses—if ye have recognized the Cause of God—that ye may attain certitude; then ye shall proclaim, and then ye shall flee.

By God, Who created you and hath made Me a Proof over you! One single verse of Our verses establisheth the judgment of God for all who dwell upon the earth, one and all.⁹

Recite ye the Book of God in His presence, then deal justly with equity, that perchance through the verses of God ye may be guided.

We have indeed sent down in the Book the judgment of all things, ere they asked of those who had believed aforetime—all people—through the verses of their Lord, the judgment of God—if ye suffice yourselves this day with a judgment like unto the verses, though ye know it not.

⁶ Qur'anic allusion: *Al-Baqarah* 2:153; *Āl 'Imrān* 3:200; *Al-'Asr* 103:1–3. These passages emphasize patience (ṣabr) as a central virtue for believers facing trials and opposition. In this Epistle, the Báb exhorts Mullá Ḥusayn to embody this principle.

⁷ During His stay in Búshihr, the Báb became aware of the mounting opposition of the Muslim clerics to His writings, a rejection which He later described as a form of spiritual martyrdom more grievous than physical death. In response to this opposition and the people's refusal of the divine bounty conferred through His Revelation, the Báb wrote several Epistles—including the present one—declaring that He would withdraw from direct contact with the believers, refrain from answering their questions, and withhold further revelation for a period of five years, beginning on 15 Jumádí al-Thání 1261 A.H. (21 June 1845). This decision was formally recorded in the *Kitāb al-Fihrist* (Book of the Index), composed in Búshihr shortly after His return from Mecca, which recounts key events of His life, enumerates the works revealed up to that date, and informs the believers of this five-year period of withdrawal (Nader Saiedi, *Gate of the Heart* [Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008], 22, 32).

⁸ Qur'anic allusion: *Al-Hajj* 22:19–22; *Al-Mulk* 67:6–10; *Al-Baqarah* 2:81–82. These passages depict the punishment of the wicked in the Fire, as recompense for those who reject God's signs. In this Epistle, the Báb invokes these images to admonish disbelievers.

⁹ Qur'anic allusion: *Al-Baqarah* 2:2; *Yūnus* 10:57; *Al-An'ām* 6:91. These verses repeatedly refer to God's signs (آيات) in creation and scripture, encompassing both textual guidance and miraculous evidence. In this Epistle, the Báb underscores the spiritual significance of these signs, in accordance with Qur'anic usage.

And the nature of that which hath been revealed in supplication standeth as a witness unto the judgment of that Cause.

Say: I have indeed appointed, in this present hour until the Day whereon God permitteth Me, the first believer—Mine own Self—as a witness over you, and a helper.¹⁰

Say: Fie upon you! Ye have turned away from Our judgment, and thereby God hath deprived you of the signs of the Tree of Sinai.¹¹

Unto God do I complain of My sorrow—unto Thee, O My God! Take Thou vengeance upon them, for Thou art the best of those who judge with justice; and verily Thou art the Mighty, the All-Powerful.

And this is the recompense of that which God hath sent down unto thee: that thou endure patiently My Cause, and say: Praise be to God, the Lord of all the worlds.”

¹⁰ In this passage, the Báb identifies the “*first believer*” (the first of the Letters of the Living), Mullá Ḥusayn, as His appointed representative among the people. He designates him as a witness and helper, entrusting him with the responsibility of conveying the Báb’s message and serving as the principal point of reference for questions concerning His writings during this period.

¹¹ Qur’anic allusion: Al-A‘rāf 7:143; Tā Hā 20:12–14; Al-Baqarah 2:63–66. This statement follows the Báb’s announcement of His withdrawal and the temporary cessation of revelation because of the people’s denial. By declaring that they have been deprived of “*the signs of the Tree of Sinai*,” the Báb alludes to the Burning Bush through which God addressed Moses on Mount Sinai, thereby implicitly identifying His own Revelation as the locus of that divine utterance in this age. The deprivation thus signifies the suspension of access to the divine Word during the appointed five-year period, marking a profound spiritual loss resulting from the rejection of the Manifestation of God.

**An Epistle of the Báb to Mullá Ḥusayn Bushrú'í, Revealed at Bushíhr (According to a
Typed Copy of the Manuscript)**

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

شهد الله لعبده فى ذلك الكتاب انه قد آمن بالله و آياته و كان
على صراط حق مبين و ان ذلك الكتاب ذكر من بقية الله لمن اراد ان يؤمن
بايات ربه و يتبع امره و كان من السّاجدين * و انا لنعلم ان حجتك
بالغة لمن فى السمّوات و الأرض و انا لنحن لشاهدون * لقد بلغ عبد الله
ما نزل على قلبه و الله شهيد عليهم * مثل الذين يقرؤن آيات ربك ثم
يعرضون من حكمه كمن شهد كل آيات الله ثم اعرض من حكم ربّه قل ان أولئك
لهم المشركون فى كتاب الله لمسطور * افيعدل آيات التّبيان بحكم اية
مما نزلنا اليك لا و ربك انّ الشّهدان اكثر النّاس لا يعقلون و لا
يؤمنون و لا يشعرون قتلهم الله كانهم اضل من كل حمير و ان الحمير
يشعر كيف ياكل الشعير و انهم لا يشعرون و لا يهتدون فمالكم كيف تكفرون
بايات الله جهرة و لا تشعرون اليس الله بكاف يوم الحساب لانفسكم ان
ارتقبوا فانّا كنّا باذن الله مرتقبون و ان الله قد نزل فى القوات المعروفه حينذاك
باية من ربك و الله عليّ خبير * و ان فرعون لما أراد أن يكفر بربه فاطهر عملا
* من الشّيطان و انتم بلا من شئى محض بميل انفسكم تكذبون و لا تشعرون
ان اتبع حكم ربك يا عبدى و كن من الصّابرين * ان اتكل على الله و اعرض عنهم
ثم ذرهم فى خوضهم حتى ياتوا يوم الذى كل الى الله تحشرون * و ان فى
زوال ذلك اليوم قد حرمنا عليكم باذن الله آياتنا الى ان انقضت من ايام
الله خمسة سنة جزاء لجحدكم و انا لا نظلم على احد منكم قدر خردل و الله
يعلم حكمنا و انتم لا تشعرون بايات الله قليلا ان اصبر يا عبدى و لا تجب
لاحد منهم و قل موتوا بغيظكم و ادخلو النّار يشرككم ثم كونوا حجارة
سجيل منصود قل لو تفروا من فى الأرض ان تسمعوا بعد ذلك الحكم آية
لن يقبل الله من احدكم و ان منع حرف من آياتنا عنكم اكبر فى كتاب الله
لانفسكم من نار جهنم ان كنتم بحكم الله تتذكرون * بئس ما اكتسبت ايديكم
فى آيائنا و ساء ما انتم تحكمون * قل يا اهل الأرض ان اتقوا الله و استغفروا
ربكم و ارجعوا الى حكم الله ثم اتلو آياتنا ان عرفتم امر الله لتوقنون ثم لتبلغون

ثم لتقرون * فوالله الذى خلقكم و جعلنى حجة عليكم ان آية من آياتنا
تثبت حكم الله لمن على الأرض اجمعهم ان اتلوا كتاب الله بين يديه ثم انصفوا
بالعدل لعلمكم بايات الله لترشدون * و لقد نزلنا حكم كل شئى فى الكتاب من
قبل ان اسالوا ممّن امن من قبل كلّ النّاس بايات ربه حكم الله ان كنتم وكفى بأنفسكم اليوم فى حكم مثل آيات
لا تعلمون * و شان ما انزل فى الدعاء على حكم ذلك الامر شهيداً قل و لقد
جعلت فى ذلك الان الى يوم ما اذن الله لى اول مومن بنفسى هذا عليكم شاهداً
و نصيراً قل اف لكم قد اعرضتم من حكمنا و بذلك قد حرم الله عليكم ايات شجرة
الطور * انا لله اشكوا حزنى اليك الهى فانتقم منهم فانك خير عادل فى الحكم
و انك أنت العزيز القوى و ان ذلك اجر ما انزل الله اليك ان اصبر على امرى
* و قل ان الحمد لله رب العالمين