

An Epistle of the Báb Addressed to Mullá Muḥammad ‘Alí-i-Bárfurúshí, the Peerless Quddús

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26 August 2025

Introduction and background:

The text of the following Epistle, revealed by the Báb and addressed to Quddús, is preserved in *Miftáh Báb al-Abwáb* (pp. 208–209), a work compiled by Mírzá Muḥammad Mahdí Khán Ṣa‘ím al-Dawla. In this book, the author reproduces the texts of several of the Báb’s Epistles, all dating from the period of His sojourn in Isfahán (September 1846 to March 1847). Denis MacEoin, in *The Sources for Early Bábí Doctrine and History* (1992, p. 97), observes that although the original manuscripts are no longer extant, the published texts appear to be authentic, albeit in a somewhat corrupt state.

I am inclined to concur with MacEoin’s assessment on two counts. First, the style and content of the present Epistle are wholly consistent with the Báb’s distinctive manner of expression. Notably, a prayer contained herein also appears in the [Epistle of Qā’imiyyat](#), which is addressed to Shaykh ‘Alí Turshízí. The prayer contains the following Divine Words:

‘God testifieth that there is none other God but Him. His is the creation and the command. He giveth life and causeth death, then causeth death and giveth life, and verily He is the Ever-Living Who dieth not. In His grasp is the dominion of all things; He createth whatsoever He willeth by His command, and verily, He hath power over all things.’

Secondly, upon close examination, I have observed that the printed Arabic text contains several minor typographical errors, which I have corrected and indicated in red in the version reproduced on the final page of this document.

What follows is a provisional English rendering, translated with utmost reverence and care, of this luminous Epistle, originally revealed in Arabic.

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The Báb Reveals:

“Verily, O Muḥammad-before- ‘Alí!² The number of the negation³ hath been decreed in the negation—There is no God—And by the Truth of ‘Alí,⁴ it behoveth every soul to affirm the affirmation a thousandfold in that wherein ye stand. And that, on that Day, in the sight of God, the whole Cause belongeth to those who have attained certitude therein. So let the Negation be negated, and let the Affirmation be established upon the Truth, over which ye are empowered.

Say: Faith, after Faith,⁵ is none other than the recognition of God, His Oneness, the acknowledgment of Him, and the acceptance of whatsoever hath been sent down from His Presence.

And let every rein be cast aside from the court of His Holiness; for all things besides Him have been brought into being for His sake. Say: Verily, O My creation! Fear Me.

And whatsoever God hath created of anything is contained within the Book; and all that is therein is encompassed in the First Verse; and all that the First Verse containeth is treasured within the Mighty Basmala;⁶ and all that the Basmala embraceth is folded within its First Letter;— and verily, there is no God but I, the Lord of all the worlds. And I am that Point beneath the Bā.⁷

² The cryptic appellation “*Muḥammad-before- ‘Alí*” refers to Mullá Muḥammad ‘Alí-i-Bárfurúshí, the last to embrace the Cause among the Letters of the Living and the one whom the Báb exalted to a station second only to His own. Known universally by the title *Quddús*, his identity is here allusively veiled, the Báb perhaps intending, through this oblique designation, to shield him from premature recognition.

³ The expression “the number of the negation” alludes to the opening half of the Islamic testimony of faith, *lā ilāha* (“there is no God”), which in the Writings of the Báb is consistently employed as a mystical symbol of the age of concealment, of denial, and of expectation that precedes the advent of a new Manifestation. By declaring that this number hath been “decreed in the negation,” the Báb affirms that the span allotted to this cycle of denial had reached its divinely appointed term. The passage, breaking deliberately upon the words *lā ilāha* without proceeding to the affirmation *illā Allāh* (“but God”), signifies that the long era of negation had drawn to its close, and that the hour of affirmation—of recognition of the Manifestation of God—was now at hand. In this weighty utterance, addressed to Quddús, He foreshadowed the termination of the age of expectation and the dawning of the Day of Fulfilment.

⁴ “‘Alí” is a reference to Imām ‘Alí (c. 600–661 CE), cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muḥammad, regarded in Shī‘ī Islam as the first Imām and the rightful successor to the Prophet. He is renowned for his piety, knowledge, and justice, and his sayings and writings are foundational in Islamic theology and ethics.

⁵ The phrase “Faith, after Faith” (الدين بعد الدين) embodies the Báb’s esoteric understanding of progressive revelation, a central principle in Bábí and Bahá’í cosmology. The first term, “Faith,” denotes the manifestation of divine law and guidance in any given cycle, while the second, “after Faith,” indicates the successive stages of spiritual authority and illumination that unfold with the advent of a new Manifestation of God. In other words, each dispensation is both a continuation and a transcendence of its predecessors, revealing God’s truth in ever-expanding clarity and power.

⁶ The opening invocation, *Bismi’llāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm* (“In the Name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful”), known as the Basmala, inaugurates nearly every chapter of the Qur’ān save one (Súrih 9, *al-Tawbah*), and is here employed by the Báb in conformity with Islamic scriptural convention.

⁷ This passage draws upon a mystical tradition rooted in the sayings of the Prophet Muḥammad, according to which all that God has created is contained within the Qur’ān, and all that is in the Qur’ān is encompassed in its first verse (*al-Fātiḥah*, beginning with the Basmala). The *Basmala*—بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ (*Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*) “In the Name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful”—encapsulates all that is in that verse, and the spiritual essence of the *Basmala* is concentrated in its first letter, the ب (*Bā*). Within this symbolic cosmology, ‘Alí, the first Imām in Shī‘ī Islam, is identified as the metaphysical “point beneath the ب,” representing the concentrated, primordial reality of divine authority and spiritual guidance. This hierarchical and mystical encoding reflects the Báb’s

This is the very foundation of Religion: in the beginning, glorify God; in the end, praise God; in the outward, affirm the Oneness of God; in the inward, magnify God.

And on that Day, so long as the sun shineth, the essence of all Religion is: ‘There is no God but God’ — outwardly and inwardly, from first to last.

Then: ‘Muḥammad is the Messenger of God’—that is, He Himself is the First Messenger, and Muḥammad is His Messenger. Then follow the Imáms and the Heirs, the Proofs of God, and thereafter the Gates,⁸ for the outward manifestation of ‘Alláh-u-Akbar.’⁹

This is a Word all-embracing, and the measures of the branches revolve around it.

Enter ye into the Faith, and ye shall be made victorious over the earth and all that it containeth. And purify ye the lands of Negation by God, your Lord, the All-Merciful, manifestly.

And observe ye the Names of the Signs, and salute them with peace from thy Lord. Then upon the Most Beautiful Names, the Lofty Similitudes, the Prophets, the Truthful, the Martyrs, and the Righteous.

And whosoever desireth to enter beneath the Shade of Affirmation—these, verily, are the Inheritors.

And if ‘Alí¹⁰ be there, then make mention of him from thy Lord, and say: ‘Thou, verily, on the Day of Resurrection, art among the Victors.’

Shouldst, thou desire that they be brought into thy presence from whence thou knowest not, and that the people of sorrow in Fārs¹¹ be comforted, this would be more pleasing unto Me.

intricate esoteric reinterpretation of Qur’ānic symbols, where letters, words, and verses serve as vessels for profound spiritual truths.

⁸ In this passage the Báb alludes to the fourfold hierarchy of the divine Covenant: the Apostle, the Imáms and their Heirs, and the Gates. In the writings of the Báb, these four levels are not separate in essence but are successive mirrors of the same primal Reality. In this respect, the Apostle, the Imáms, their Heirs, and the Gates are but diverse expressions of the one Truth; in another respect, they are distinct individuals occupying their own historical stations. Thus, the Báb, as the Point of the Bayán, is simultaneously the Apostle, the Imám, their Heirs, and the Gate, even as His radiance is reflected through the mirrors below Him. This mystical principle pervades the entirety of His Revelation.

⁹ The exclamation *Allāhu Akbar* (“God is the Greatest”), known as the *Takbīr*, occupies a central place in Islamic devotion, being the opening formula of the daily prayers and the perpetual refrain of the call to prayer (*adhān*). Beyond its liturgical usage, the phrase conveys the transcendent majesty and utter incomparability of God, affirming His exaltation above all human conception.

¹⁰ The name “‘Alí” here is most likely a reference to the Báb’s maternal uncle, Hájí Mírzá Siyyid ‘Alí, known within the Bábí-Bahá’í writings as *Kálú the Greatest Uncle* (*Kálū-yi A‘ẓam*). He was among the earliest to recognize the station of the Báb, offered Him steadfast support during the opening phase of His ministry in Shíráz, and was later martyred in Tíhrán in 1850.

¹¹ The original Arabic reads “*in the Fā*” (*fī al-fā*), a classical abbreviation denoting Fārs, the province of Iran whose chief city is Shíráz, the birthplace of the Báb. In the Báb’s writings, individual Arabic letters are frequently employed either as symbolic designations for geographic regions or as mystical allusions imbued with esoteric significance.

And We have sent the Tablets unto him, and God shall, by His command, unite Me with those who have believed in the Truth from My presence; for He, verily, is All-Knowing, All-Powerful

Wondrous indeed is the Name of the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden!¹² From the night of thy recognition of thy Lord¹³ hath it been decreed that the span of negation in ‘There is no God’ should endure fifty thousand years,¹⁴ until the days of affirmation dawned.

And until that hour, nothing befitting could be proclaimed save the negation of negation and the affirmation of affirmation.

This is the whole of religion on that Day—not that wherewith the people had rejoiced. Watch ye, then, Our Most Great Name, and recite the Book of the Bestower. For verily, unto each one are likenesses of that Temple treasured with God.

O ye, recite this verse, one and all, Three Hundred sixty-one times¹⁵ in the course of every day and night:¹⁶

‘God testifieth that there is none other God but Him. His is the creation and the command. He giveth life and causeth death, then causeth death and giveth life, and verily He is the Ever-Living Who dieth not. In His grasp is the dominion of all things; He createth whatsoever He willeth by His command, and verily, He hath power over all things.’

¹² The Báb, as the very embodiment of successive degrees of spiritual reality and the supreme Manifestation of the divine attributes, stands as the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden.

¹³ In the statement, “*From the night of thy recognition of thy Lord*,” the Báb is addressing Mullá Muḥammad-‘Alí-i-Bárfúrúshí, surnamed Quddús, reminding him of the very night when he recognized His Lord and was thereby numbered among the Letters of the Living—the last to be so designated.

¹⁴ The Báb’s reference to the “fifty thousand years” is an unmistakable allusion to Qur’ān 70:4 (Sūrat al-Ma‘ārij): “*The angels and the Spirit ascend unto Him in a Day whose measure is fifty thousand years.*” Traditionally interpreted in eschatological terms, this “Day” is understood as denoting the immeasurable span of divine reckoning, symbolizing the vastness of God’s judgment beyond human time. In the Báb’s mystical recasting, this imagery is interwoven with the dual halves of the Islamic testimony of faith (*lā ilāha illā ‘llāh*). The first clause—*lā ilāha* (“there is no God”)—is associated with negation, veiling, and the age of non-recognition, while the second—*illā ‘llāh* (“but God”)—signifies affirmation, unveiling, and the recognition of divine truth through the advent of the Manifestation. In this light, the “fifty thousand years” signify not a literal chronology but a symbol of the long era of negation, now brought to its close with the dawning of affirmation in His Revelation. In declaring this, the Báb situates His Dispensation within the very horizon of the Qur’ānic “Day of God,” resonating with Shī‘ī mystical traditions that interpret cosmic numbers as metaphors for hidden cycles of divine disclosure.

¹⁵ The instruction to recite the verse three hundred and sixty-one times carries profound symbolic meaning. In Islamic mysticism and Bábí-Bahá’í numerology, 361 represents the square of the sacred number nineteen, which, as the numerical value of Wáḥid (“One”), signifies divine unity. Symbolically, nineteen reduces to one—emblematic of God’s oneness—and thus $19 \times 19 = 361$ reflects the perfection and wholeness of divine reality manifest in multiplicity. The Báb deliberately structured works such as the *Persian Bayán* around this same cosmological matrix of nineteen squared, embedding “361” as a numerical emblem of celestial completeness and spiritual authority.

¹⁶ In the text reproduced by Mírzá Muḥammad Mahdí Khán Za‘ím al-Dawla (p. 209), there appears a line in Persian embedded within the Arabic text: “این آیه همگی شب و روز ۳۶۱ مرتبه تلاوت فرمائید”

I have rendered this as: “O ye, recite this verse, one and all, Three Hundred sixty-one times in the course of every day and night.” While its insertion within the Epistle may seem stylistically abrupt, it serves as a clear directive pointing to the subsequent passage, which functions as a prayer revealed by the Báb within this very Epistle. It is plausible that this Persian line was added later as an explanatory note for the prayer. For the sake of textual fidelity and consistency, I have preserved the Persian line exactly as it appears in the printed version.

And whoso believeth in God, and thereafter in His Verses—these are they who are the victorious.

Say: God is the Lord, and whatsoever is save God is but a servant; and unto each are worshippers, some consciously, and some unconsciously.

Verily, the affairs of commentary belongeth unto the Prophet; the matters of supplication belongeth unto the Guardian; and knowledge belongeth unto the Gates.

We have indeed made manifest these stations, and thereafter have We attributed them to the Manifestations of the Living God, and have assigned unto them the signs of God, the Glorious, the Exalted. Verily, none shall comprehend them save through His Signs alone.

And naught after God and His Verses hath there been, nor shall there be any Ḥadīth,¹⁷ whereupon the people might rely, except that revealed by Him.

Say: What ‘Alī¹⁸ hath said is true: His proof is His signs; His very existence is His affirmation. And God is All-Knowing, All-Powerful.

And I have indeed sent forth the Temples of the Companions of Three Hundred Thirteen¹⁹ in Two Hundred and Twenty-Four Forms. Had one of them been with anyone with Faith, he would have prevailed over all the worlds.

And verily, the number of the Báb in the Supreme Temples hath been made subservient therein to the ranks of the earth in five divisions of the Oneness. Hasten, for verily, by it ye shall be victorious.”

¹⁷ *Ḥadīth* (Arabic: حديث) literally signifies “utterance” or “saying.” In Islamic and Bábí usage, it refers specifically to the collected reports, narrations, or discourses of the prophets and the Imams. These comprise statements transmitted by human agents, as distinguished from the direct revelation of God Himself. In the present context, the Báb underscores that after God and His Verses, no such ḥadīth — however revered — can serve as a reliable guide or source of certainty for the people. Only that which proceeds directly from God’s revelation possesses the authority to enlighten the hearts and souls of mankind.

¹⁸ “‘Alī” is a reference to Imām ‘Alī (c. 600–661 CE), cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muḥammad, regarded in Shī‘ī Islam as the first Imām and the rightful successor to the Prophet.

¹⁹ The term “Temples of the Companions” (هَيْكَلُ أَصْحَاب) designates the exalted stations and sanctified realities of the Báb’s foremost disciples. In the idiom of the Writings, *haykal* (temple) connotes at once an outward form and an inner essence, symbolizing both the manifest embodiment of divine attributes and the hidden reality of spiritual capacity. Thus, the phrase does not point to physical forms, but rather to the consecrated beings of His chosen ones—those whose lives became the living expression of His Cause. The number 313 alludes to this select company, in symbolic parallel with the three hundred and thirteen supporters of the Qā’im in Shī‘ī eschatology.

The Epistle of the Báb Addressed to Mullá Muḥammad ‘Alí-i-Bárfurúshí, the Peerless Quddús — Printed Arabic Text

ان يا محمد قبل علي قد قضي عدد **النفي في النفي لا اله***، وحق علي كل نفس ان تثبتن الف الاثبات فيما انتم فيه و ان ذالك يومئذ عند الله كل الامر للذين هم به يؤقنون، فلينفين النفي و لتثبتن الاثبات علي حق انتم عليه مقتدرون، قل انما الدين بعد الدين معرفة الله و توحيده و الاقرار بعد له و اتباع ما نزل من عنده و نفي العنان عن ساحة قدسه فان ما دونه من كل شيئي خلق له، قل ان يا خلقي اياي فاتقون، و ما قد خلق الله من شي في الكتاب و ما فيه في الاية الاولى و ما فيها في البسمة العظيمة و ما فيها في الحرف الاول و انه لا اله الا انار رب العالمين هذا اصل الدين في الاول سبحانه الله و في الاخر حمدوا الله و في الظاهر وحدوا الله و في الباطن كبروا الله و ان يومئذ ما دامت الشمس مشرقة كل الدين لا اله الا الله ظاهرا و باطنا اولاً و آخر اثم محمد رسول الله ثم الائمة و الورثة حجج الله ثم الابواب لظاهر التكبير ذالك كلمة جامعة و ان مقادير الفرع في حولها لتطوفون فلتدخلن في الدين و كنتم علي الارض و ما عليها قاهرين و لتطهرن اراضي النفي بالله ربكم الرحمن ظاهرين، و لتراقبن اسماء الاية و لتسلمن عليهم من ربك ثم علي الاسماء الحسني و الامثال العليا و النبيين و الصديقين و الشهداء و الصالحين، و من يردان يدخل في ظل الاثبات فان اولئك هم الوارثون و ان كان عليا هناك فاذكره من عند ربك و قل انك انت يوم القيمة من الفائزين، لو تحب ان تحضر كن من حيث لا تعرف و ان تسلي اهل الحزن في الفاء احب الي و ارسلنا الالواح اليه و سيجمع الله بيني و بين من صدق الحق من عندي بامر انه عليم قدير و انما العجب باسم الاول و الاخر و الظاهر و الباطن قد قضي من ليلة عرفانك ربك ما قد

طال عدد النفي في لا اله خمسين الف سنة و طلع ايام الاثبات و ان الي حينئذ ما ذكر ما ينبغي في النفي النفي و اثبات الاثبات هذا كل الدين يومئذ لا ما كان الناس به يفرحون، فلتراقبن اسمنا العظيم و لتتلون كتاب الوهاب فان لكل واحد امثال ذالك الهيكل عند الله لمخزون

اين آيه همگي شب و روز ۳۶۱ مرتبة تلاوت فرمائيد شهد الله انه لا اله الا هو له الخلق و الامر يحيي و يميت ثم يميت و ، يحيي و انه هو حي لا يموت في قبضته ملكوت كل شيئي يخلق ما يشاء بامر انه كان علي كل شيئي قديرا و من يؤمن بالله ثم بآياته فاولئك هم الفائزون، قل الله رب و ان ما دون الله عبد و كل له عابدون بعض من حيث يعلمون و من حيث لا يعلمون، و ان شئون التفسير شأن النبي و المناجات شأن الولي و العلم شأن الابواب قد اظهرنا ذالك الشئون ثم قد نسبنا الي مظاهر الحي و اختصاصنا لايات بالله عز ذكره العالي اذ لا عليها احد الا اية و لم يكن من بعد الله و آياته حديثا كان الناس بديؤمنون قل ما قال علي: دليله آياته وجوده اثباته و الله عليم قدير و لقد ارسلت هياكل اصحاب ۳۱۳ في ۲۲۴ عدد لو كان واحد منه عند احد مع الايمان يغلب علي العالمين، و ان عدد الباب في هياكل الكبرى قد سخر فيها مراتب الارض في خمس قطع التوحيد فاسرعوا فانكم بها غالبون

*In the text printed by Mírzá Muḥammad Mahdī Khān Ṣā‘im al-Dawla (p. 208), the sentence appears erroneously as: [adad al-nafar fī al-nafy lā Allāh; “the number of the men in the negation: ‘no God’”]. The correct reading is: [adad al-nafy fī al-nafy: lā ilāh...; “the number of the negation in the negation: ‘There is no God...’”]. The misprint substitutes *النفرة* (*al-nafar*, “men/company”) for *النفي* (*al-nafy*, “negation”) and corrupts *لا اله* (“There is no God...”) as *لا الله* (“no God”), thereby obscuring the intended sense (an allusion to the opening of the *kalimah*: لا اله الا الله).