The Tablet of the Báb Revealed in Response to the Inquiry of Mullá Ibrāhím Maḥallātí[1]

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Introduction and background:

Among the more intricate and theologically charged Tablets revealed by the Báb are those composed in reply to formal inquiries submitted by learned questioners, wherein Qur'ānic verses—long the subject of exegetical contention—are re-read from within a revelatory horizon that transcends disputation while silently judging it. The present Tablet belongs to this category. It was revealed in response to a series of questions addressed to the Báb by Mullá Ibrāhím Maḥallātí—no information regarding the date or place of its revelation being currently available—concerning five Qur'ānic verses (*āyāt muḥkamāt*) which, in the Báb's own words, "many have gone astray" in understanding.

The Tablet opens, however, not with juridical clarification or polemical rebuttal, but with an extended supplicatory prelude of remarkable metaphysical density, cast in the form of a prayer revealed in the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the All-Compassionate. In this opening portion—*not included in the present provisional translation*—the Báb establishes, through a sustained meditation on divine unknowability, pre-eternity, and the incapacity of names, attributes, and created things to comprehend the Essence of God, the ontological ground upon which all subsequent judgments rest. This section affirms, with uncompromising clarity, that God is known only through God, that no description or designation can encompass Him, and that all prophetic, scriptural, and creational realities derive their meaning solely from His creative Will.

The intention of this opening is neither ornamental nor incidental. It serves to dislocate the questions themselves from the arena of dialectical theology, relocating them within a metaphysical framework wherein authority, knowledge, and obedience are understood as

[1] Mullá Ibrāhím Maḥallātí was a learned divine, distinguished alike for his erudition, his eloquence, and the austerity of his life. Having completed his studies in the religious sciences in Persia, he proceeded to 'Iráq, where he availed himself of the instruction of the disciples of Shaykh Aḥsā'í and pursued his studies under the guidance of Siyyid Kāẓim Rashtí. Endowed with a penetrating intellect and a compelling tongue, and noted for his devotion, piety, and intrepidity, he soon acquired wide renown among the learned. Through the instrumentality of Mullá 'Alí Bastámí he embraced the Faith of the Báb, and subsequently arose as one of the most devoted and resolute supporters of Ṭáhirih. Armed with an exceptional knowledge of Islamic doctrine and a remarkable power of exposition, he fearlessly proclaimed the new Revelation in every assembly he entered, often silencing its opponents and confounding its detractors. On one occasion he was commissioned by Ṭáhirih to engage in discussion with the 'ulamā of Hamadán; unable to refute his arguments and unwilling to submit to mutual imprecation, they vented their fury upon him and subjected him to grievous ill-treatment, leaving him severely injured. His steadfast and outspoken defense of Ṭáhirih, particularly after the assassination of Mullá Taqí Baraghání, provoked the hostility of her adversaries, headed by Mullá Muḥammad, her estranged husband. Arrested together with several of his companions, he was conveyed under conditions of extreme hardship to Ṭihrán, and later conducted to Qazvín, where an infuriated populace, incited to revenge, fell upon the captives and cruelly put them to death. Thus did Mullá Ibráhím Maḥallátí seal his testimony with his blood, attaining martyrdom in the path of the Cause he had so valiantly upheld (Adapted from Nusratullah Mohammad Hosseini, *Hazrat-i Báb* [Canada: Mawsese-ye Ma'āref-e Bahá'í, 1995], 683–684).

emanating from divine origination rather than human inference. Only after establishing this horizon does the Báb turn explicitly to the questions posed.

The present translation does not seek to render the Tablet in its entirety, but is confined to its latter portion, wherein the Báb addresses the five questions submitted to Him and the Qur'ānic verses to which they pertain—this section constituting the doctrinal and hermeneutical core of His response.

Within this central section, the Báb refrains from quoting the verses explicitly, a deliberate choice consistent with His stated resolve not to respond according to the paths of disputation. Instead, He treats the verses as axiomatic declarations whose true import becomes evident only when read in the light of divine authority and covenantal continuity. Nonetheless, the internal evidence of the Tablet permits the careful identification—either with certainty or with a high degree of probability—of the verses under discussion.

The first and second verses are identified by the Báb Himself as sharing a single and undivided judgment, which He seals with the Qur'ānic declaration: "We make no distinction among any of Thy Messengers, and unto Him are We submissive." This formula occurs, with near-identical wording, in Qur'ān 2:136 and Qur'ān 2:285, verses traditionally regarded as doctrinal counterparts affirming the unity of divine revelation and the indivisibility of prophetic authority. The Báb's explicit assertion that the judgment in the second verse is identical with that of the first leaves little room for doubt that these two verses constitute the first pair under consideration.

The third verse, though not cited verbatim, is treated as establishing an obligation of obedience in the present age, culminating in the declaration that "today there is the Gate Whose obedience Thou hast made incumbent upon all." The language employed, together with the verse's historical role as a focal point of interpretive divergence, strongly suggests an allusion to Qur'ān 4:59: "Obey God, obey the Messenger, and those vested with authority among you," a verse central to debates concerning legitimate religious authority and succession.

The fourth verse is presented as governing practical recourse in matters of belief and action, particularly in circumstances of constraint or striving, and as pertaining to those divinely appointed as points of reference for the community. The description closely corresponds to Qur'ān 4:83, which enjoins referral of matters to the Messenger and to those endowed with authority, and which has long been read in conjunction with 4:59 in both Sunní and Shí'í exegetical traditions.

The fifth verse is treated more allusively. The Báb acknowledges its symbolic density and affirms His awareness of the intent underlying its indications, while directing attention toward the faithful exposition of divine judgment in accordance with the Book and the Sunnah.

Throughout His response, the Báb does not merely interpret these verses; He re-situates them. By affirming the unity of all Messengers, the inseparability of legislative and ontological authority, and the necessity of obedience to the divinely appointed Gate of the age, He

resolves the verses not through exegetical argumentation but through revelatory restatement. The five verses thus emerge not as isolated proof-texts, but as successive articulations of a single, continuous divine judgment now disclosed anew.

The present provisional translation—based on a manuscript copy preserved in the Iran National Bahá'í Archives (INBA), Vol. 91, pp. 139-145— renders only the second half of the Tablet into English, striving for fidelity to the Báb's intent and a style consonant with the elevated, scriptural register established by Shoghi Effendi. It is offered as a contribution toward a more precise understanding of the Báb's method of Qur'ānic engagement, and of His re-articulation of authority, obedience, and revelation at a decisive moment in sacred history.

From His supplication—peace be upon Him—revealed in response to the inquiry of Mullá Ibrāhím Maḥallātī [2]

Thus, doth the Báb reveal:

"…O God! Thou knowest indeed, that Thy servant, in what he hath mentioned concerning the first question, possesseth for himself neither benefit nor harm, and whatsoever beareth the name of 'Thing' is Thy creation and is held within Thy grasp, and none hath power to withhold or to bestow save by Thy will; and sufficient art Thou as witness over Me.

O God! Thou hast appointed unto every thing a limit, and whoso transgresseth Thy bounds meriteth that which Thy judgment decreeth, and Thou hast veiled the veil of Thy chosen Ones, nor is it permitted unto any to uncover that which Thou hast concealed for them.

And verily the questioner hath mentioned, in the first question, Thy hidden Mystery, Thy concealed Word, and Thy manifest and abiding Sign; and unto each there is an allotted portion of the Book. Blessed, then, is he who acknowledgeth Thy power as Thou art, in majesty and in grandeur, and beholdeth none beside Thee, O My God, as possessing independent existence; for such a station let the doers act.

And I bear witness that Thy judgment in the second verse is Thy judgment in the first: 'As for Us, We make no distinction among any of Thy Messengers, and unto Him are We submissive.'

And I bear witness that Thou hast not appointed anyone to a station of authority in legislation among Thy chosen Ones, without also appointing Him, in the realm of Creation, to the station of Thy Trustees; and verily the Two Bābs[3] are, in Thy sight, the manifestations of Thy light and Thy mystery in all worlds, and that they are among the Chiefs who circle around Thee; they were written in the Mother Book.

And I bear witness that Thy judgment in the third verse is Thy judgment in what Thou hast mentioned in the second, apart from that special grace wherewith Thou hast distinguished them; and that today there is the Gate Whose obedience Thou hast made incumbent upon all, and from Whose threshold all must take. Preserve, O God, him who turneth toward Him, and abase, O God, him who denieth Him; verily Thou art Witness unto all things.

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[2] Heading added by copyist or later compiler. While this line appears at the top of the manuscript, it is likely a descriptive note indicating the content of the Epistle rather than part of the Báb's original text.

[3] The reference to "the Two Bābs" (*al-Bābayn*) in this passage is both a historical and doctrinal allusion to Shaykh Aḥsā'í (d. 1826 CE) and Siyyid Kāẓim Rashtí (d. 1843 CE), the principal exponents of the Shaykhí movement in Persia. Within the Báb's cosmological and theological framework, these two figures are regarded as the "gates" (*bāb*) to the spiritual knowledge and esoteric truths that culminate in the Báb's own Revelation. Shaykh Aḥsā'í, the founder of the Shaykhí school, is recognized for having elucidated esoteric interpretations of the Qur'ān and the Imāmí Shiʿí heritage, while Siyyid Kāẓim, his appointed successor, continued this teaching and nurtured a circle of disciples receptive to the imminence of a new Manifestation. By employing the plural "Bābs," the Báb signals both the continuity of divine guidance through these figures and the hierarchical structure of spiritual succession, emphasizing their role as intermediaries between the transcendent realities of God and the emergent Bábí dispensation. Cf. Nabil-i-Zarandí, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 145–146.

And I bear witness that Thy Judgment in the fourth verse is decisive: that inquiry therein pertaineth to those branches which Thou hast appointed for the people, and that they are the nearest of all unto the believers, encompassing them all.

Yet there have arisen those who are unable to take from them in the days of striving, and whose course toward them is to act according to the Book and the Sunnah with the utmost circumspection; and God hath ever been forgiving and merciful unto those who are certain.

O God! Thou knowest the fifth verse and that which was intended in the allusions of its discourse. Grant success, O God, unto him who desireth to convey Thy judgment and to manifest Thy Cause in accordance with the Book and the Sunnah, and assist, O God, him who seeketh to aid Thy faith and to exalt Thy word; verily Thou art the All-Bountiful, Possessor of great bounty, and Thou art the Most High, the Most Great.

O God! Thou knowest that, in what was asked in beholding the Face of Majesty clothed in Beauty, I stand fearful and expectant in the station of testimony; yet Thou, O My God, hast established these similitudes in both His Concealment and His Manifestation. Hasten, O God, our days toward the Presence (of the Manifestation), before Thy well assured servants, for their hearts tremble at beholding Thy light; and verily Thou art the Possessor of great bounty.

There is no power and no strength save in God, the Most High, the Most Great. Exalted is God above what the wrongdoers say—Immeasurably Exalted. And praise be unto God, the Lord of all worlds."

The Tablet of the Báb Revealed in Response to the Inquiry of Mullá Ibrāhím Maḥallātí (According to a Typed Copy of the Manuscript)

و من دعائه علیه السّلام فی مسئلة ملا ابراهیم محلاتی

...اللّهمّ و انّك لتعلم ان عبدك فیما ذکر فی مسئلة الاوّل لا املك لنفسی نفعاً و لا ضراً و کلّما وقع علیه اسم شیئ خلقك و فی قبضتك و لا لاحد قبض و لا بسط الاّ بمشیتك و کفی بك علیّ شهیداً * اللّهمّ قد جعلت لکلّشیء حداً و من یتعدّ من حدودك یستحق بما کان عندك من الحکم و انك قد سترت ستر اولیائك و لا یجوز لاحد کشف ما سترت لهم و لقد ذکر السائل فی مسئلة الاولی سرّك المستسر و کلمتك المستتر و آیتك الظاهرة المستقر و انّ لکلّ نصیب من الکتاب فیا طوبی لمن اعترف بقدرتك علی ما انت علیه من العزّ و العظمة و لایری غیرك یا الهی موجوداً بالاستقلال و انّ مثل ذلك فلیعمل العاملون و اشهد ان حکمك فی الآیة الثانیة حکمك فی الآیة الاولی و اما نحن لا نفرق بین احد من رسلك و انا لهم مُسلمون * و اشهد انّك ما جعلت احداً فی التشریع مقام اولیائك الاّ و قد جعلته فی مقام التکوین مقام امنآك و انّ البابیین لدیك مظهر نورك و سرّك فی کل العوالم و انهما من النقبآء الطائفین حولك قد کانا فی امّ الکتاب لمکتوب و اشهد ان حکمك فی الآیة الثالثة حکمك فیما ذکرته فی الثانیة دون ماخصصتهما من الکرامة و انه الیوم باب قد فرض علی الکلّ طاعته و الاخذ من جنابه فاحفظ اللهم من اراده و اخذل اللّهمّ من جحده و انك علی کلّشیء شهید و اشهد ان حکمك فی الرابعة حتم بان یسئل فیها یحتاج فی الفروع من اللذان قد نصبتها للنّاس و انها اولی النّاس بالمؤمنین جمیعاً و لقد حل من لایقدر الاخذ منهما فی ایام المجاهدة و المشی الیهما العمل بالکتاب و السنة علی محض الاحتیاط و کان الله بالموقنین غفوراً رحیماً * اللّهمّ انك تعلم آیه الخامسة و ما اراد فی اشارات کلامه فوفّق اللّهمّ لمن اراد ابلاغ حکمك و اظهار امرك علی طبق الکتاب و السنة و انصر اللّهمّ لمن اراد نصرة دینك و اعلاء کلمتك انك منان ذو الجود و انك انت العلی الکبیر اللّهمّ و انك لتعلم فیما سئل من تلقاء الجلال بالجمال بانی خائف مترقب فی مقام الاشهاد و لکنك یا الهی قد جعلت تلك الامثال فی غیبته و حضرته و قرّب اللهم ایّامنا بالحضور بین یدی عبادك الموقنین فانّ قلوبهم وجلة لمشاهدة نورك و انك ذو منّ عظیم و لا حول و لا قوة الاّ بالله العلی العظیم و تعالی الله عما یقول الظالمون علواً کبیراً و الحمد لله ربّ العالمین*