

Epistle of the Báb to Ḥájí Muḥammad Karím Khān Kirmānī

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Introduction and background

This brief yet powerful Arabic Epistle of the Báb is addressed to Ḥájí Muḥammad Karím Khān Kirmānī (1810–1871), the prominent leader of the Shaykhí school in Kirmān, widely known by the honorific *Sarakār Āqā*¹.

Following the death of Siyyid Kāẓim in 1843 C.E., Ḥájí Muḥammad Karím Khān assumed leadership over his disciples, despite the fact that Siyyid Kāẓim had explicitly declared that no successor would be appointed after him. Karím Khān often signed his name as "the sinful servant" (al-‘abd al-athím), a gesture of feigned humility².

However, Bahá’u’lláh wrote of him in the Kitáb-i-Íqán:

“And as to this man’s attainments, his ignorance, understanding and belief, behold what the Book which embraceth all things hath revealed; ‘Verily, the tree of Zaqqúm (Infernal tree) shall be the food of the Athím.’ (Sinner or sinful—Qur’án 44:43–44) And then follow certain verses, until He saith: ‘Taste this, for thou forsooth art the mighty Karím!’ (Qur’án 44:49). Consider how clearly and explicitly he hath been described in God’s incorruptible Book! This man, moreover, feigning humility, hath in his own book referred to himself as the ‘athím servant’: ‘Athím’ in the Book of God, mighty among the common herd, ‘Karím’ in name!”³

This Epistle was delivered to him in Kirmān in 1845 C.E. by Muḥammad ‘Alī Barfurūshī—known as Quddús—the eighteenth Letter of the Living⁴. Despite receiving this sacred missive, Karím Khān Kirmānī remained adamant in his opposition, vehemently rejecting the Cause of the Báb and authoring numerous polemical treatises in refutation of His Revelation.

What follows is a provisional English translation of the Epistle. The original Arabic text is published in *Nasím-i Şaḥarī*, pp. 182–183, by Dr. Vahíd Rafatí.

¹ Ḥabību’lláh Hisámī, *Manābe’-i Muṭāla’ih-yi Amrī*, vol. 1, p. 33.

² Boris Handal, *Quddús: The First in Rank*, p. 85.

³ Bahá’u’lláh, *Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 190.

⁴ Boris Handal, *Quddús: The First in Rank*, pp. 88–89.

” In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful

Alif Lam Mim⁵. Remember thy Lord by the Crimson Leaf, at the right hand of the snow-white Ocean⁶. There is no God but Him.

Say: Then, for My sake, depart ye! Recite the Book of thy Lord, then prostrate thyself before His Command. And verily, there is no God but Him.

Say: Unto Me alone, then, bear witness. God Himself hath borne witness that there is no God but Him—the Almighty, the Ancient of Days.

I bear witness before God in that Book, and thereafter before His creation, as God hath loved for His servant, that there is no God but Him—the Almighty, the All-Knowing.

And indeed We have revealed a Book aforetime for those upon the earth: 'Enter the Gate in prostration, that perchance ye may prosper.'

Indeed, those who have followed Our verses in justice—these are they who have truly preceded in faith. But they who have followed their own desires—these are the wrongdoers. And verily, one single verse from among Our verses is equal, in the Book of God, to the verses of the former times.

And after it, all creation—even the very proofs of God—shall be called to account. Were all mankind to assemble to produce the like of the Book We have sent down unto thee, they would assuredly be powerless to do so, nor could they ever prevail. And were the Jinn⁷ to lend them their support in their weakness, yet God is the Almighty, the All-Wise.

O Muhammad, O thou Karīm⁸!, Follow the decree of thy Lord, then go forth in accordance with the Covenant of the Remnant of God—a manifest and just Imām.

He is the One in Whose hand is the dominion of all things. Naught escapes His knowledge—not even the least thereof. And verily, he is the servant of God, [recorded] in a well-guarded Book.

⁵ One of the mysterious disconnected letters (ḥurūf al-muqatta‘āt) that appear at the beginning of certain Qur’anic chapters. Their exact meaning is known only to God, serving as a profound symbol of divine mystery and revelation.

⁶ The “Crimson Leaf” likely refers to the Báb’s revelation, signifying divine utterance revealed through sacrifice and spiritual fire. The “snow-white Ocean” symbolizes the ocean of divine knowledge, while its “right side” evokes the Qur’anic imagery of Sinai and divine address. Together, the phrase alludes to the appearance of divine revelation from the world of unseen grace and calls the reader to remembrance and recognition of the new Dispensation.

⁷ In Islamic theology, jinn are supernatural beings, distinct from humans and angels. They possess free will, are accountable to God, and appear frequently in the Qur’an as part of the unseen world (‘ālam al-ghayb).

⁸ Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī.

And on this day, it is enjoined upon all who dwell in the east thereof and the west to go forth from their homes, emigrating unto the Land of Remembrance⁹, by the decree of the Remnant of God—a living and mighty Imám.

Verily, those who pledge fealty unto God—God’s hand is above all things. And verily, no God is there but Him, the Almighty, the All-Praised.

Indeed, We have ordained in the Book of Kings¹⁰ that the Remembrance of God should be mentioned after the mention of the Remnant of God in the Call to Prayer¹¹; for He is upon the Path of God inscribed on every Preserved Tablet.

Proclaim this decree openly, and go forth with those who have pledged allegiance to thee in the Cause, mounted upon the mighty steeds, equipped with weapons of requisite perfection, ere thine eye returneth unto thee¹²—for verily, this is indeed the All-Glorious, the Almighty.

Verily, We have bestowed upon thee the command of thy Lord before all mankind, that thou mayest be among the helpers. Arise from thy house and summon the people unto the Faith most pure; and send forth a similar Book unto the four quarters of the earth, to thy right and to thy left.

Fear none in the path of thy Lord, for verily, this is the grace of God upon thee; and God is a Witness, All-Knowing. The Book alone sufficeth as a proof—an admonition of the mention of thy Lord’s Name unto those in the heavens and those on earth. And God is All-Aware, All-Knowing.

And if He willed, We could reveal in every letter a revelation like unto the verses of the Qur’án. And God is Mighty, the Almighty.

Glory be to God, thy Lord, the Lord of the Throne, exalted above all that they ascribe unto Him. And peace be upon the emigrants¹³ (muhājirīn). And praise be to God, the Lord of all the worlds.”

⁹ This is a reference to Shiráz, the birthplace of the Báb. The directive to journey there signifies not merely a physical migration, but also a profound spiritual turning—an inward reorientation toward the primal locus of divine Revelation.

¹⁰ In this passage, the “Book of Kings” (*Kitāb al-Mulūk*) symbolically denotes a divine record or celestial decree, conveying the authoritative will of God as addressed to temporal rulers.

¹¹ The Báb, in another Tablet addressed to Mullá Muqaddas Khurásání, instructed him to incorporate the phrase “اشهد ان عليا قبل نبيل باب بقية الله”—“I bear witness that ‘Alí Muḥammad is the Gate of the Remnant of God”—into the Islamic Adhān (Call to Prayer). Here, ‘Alí Muḥammad refers to the Báb Himself. In the abjad system, the numerical value of **Nabíl** and **Muḥammad** is 92. By commanding this order in the Adhān, the Báb is asserting His own exalted station and His divine prerogative to ordain religious practices.

¹² Qur’án 27:40. It means: “In less than the blink of an eye.”

¹³ A reference to those who turned their faces toward the Cause of the Báb, forsaking their homes, possessions, and worldly attachments in pursuit of divine truth. Their outward journey represents an inner renunciation and spiritual migration toward the light of Revelation, embodying both sacrifice and steadfastness in the path of God.

Epistle of the Báb to Ḥájí Muḥammad Karím Khān Kirmānī — Based on a Typed Text

صورت توقيع مبارك خطاب به حاج محمد كريم خان كرمانى

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الم ذكر ربك للورقة الحمراء عن يمين بحر الأبيض لا اله الا هو قل فايأى فاخرجون اقرا كتاب ربك ثم اسجد لأمره وانه لا اله الا هو قل ايأى فاشهدون شهد الله لا اله الا هو العزيز القديم اشهد الله فى ذلك الكتاب ثم لخلقه كما قد احب الله لعبده انه لا اله الا هو العزيز العليم ولقد نزلنا كتاباً من قبل لمن على الأرض ان ادخلوا الباب سجدا لعلكم تفعلون ان الذين اتبعوا آياتنا بالعدل فالولئك هم السابقون و ان الذين اتبعوا اهوائهم فالولئك هم الظالمون و ان آية من آياتنا تعدل في كتاب الله آيات الاولين و ما بعده كل الخلق من حجج الله يسئلون لو اجتمع الانس على ان ياتوا بمثل الكتاب الذي نزلنا اليك لن يستطيعن و لن يقدرن و لو كان الجن ممدونهم على الضعف و الله قوى حكيم

يا محمد ايها الكريم ان اتبع حكم ربك ثم اخرج لعهد بقية الله امام عدل مبين هو الذي بيده ملكوت كل شيء و لا يعزب من علمه بعض شيء و انه عبد الله في كتاب حفيظ. و ان اليوم لمن على من غربها وشرقها ان يخرجوا من بيتهم مهاجراً الى بلد الذكر بحكم بقية الله امام حى عظيم. ان الذين يبايعون الله يد الله فوق كل شيء وانه لا اله الا هو لقوى حميد و لقد فرضنا في كتاب الملوك ان اذكروا ذكر الله بعد ذكر بقية الله في الأذان لأنه على صراط الله في كل لوح حفيظ. ان ارفع هذا الحكم جهرةً و اخرج نفسك مع الذين اتبعوك في الأمر على الفرس القوى بالآلات المكمله قبل ان يرتد اليه طرفك و ان ذلك لهو العزيز العظيم. و لقد مننا عليك بحكم ربك قبل الناس لتكونن من الناصرين. ان اخرج من بيتك و ادعوا الناس الى دين الخالص و ارسل بمثل ذلك الكتاب إلى شطر الأرض من يمينك و الشمال ولا تخف في سبيل ربك من احد فان ذلك فضل الله عليك و الله شهيد عليم و كفى بذلك الكتاب حجة ذكر اسم ربك لمن في السموات ومن في الأرض و الله خبير عليم. ولو يشاء لننزل في كل حرف مثل آيات القرآن و الله قوى عزيز و سبحان الله ربك رب العرش عما يصفون وسلام على المهاجرين و الحمد لله رب العالمين