

The Tablet of Twenty Questions Revealed by the Báb and Addressed to Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Jalíl Urūmī

Mohammad Norozi¹

20.12.2025

Introduction and Background

Among the Tablets revealed by the Báb, the present work occupies a distinctive place, both for the variety of questions it addresses and for the light it sheds on the circumstances surrounding its revelation. Rather than arising from a single inquiry or correspondent, this Tablet responds to a convergence of letters, supplications, greetings, and doctrinal questions submitted by devoted believers during a period marked by spiritual expectancy, trial, and earnest devotion. In this respect, it stands as a luminous testimony to the Báb’s station as the Manifestation of God, exercising divine authority while attending with solicitude to the needs of a searching community.

The Báb Himself explicitly alludes to this context within the Tablet, bearing witness that numerous writings, diverse in purpose and intent, had reached Him. He declares:

“Yet Thou, O my God, answer Me regarding some of that which Thy servants have asked; verily Thou art near and responsive. Among them were those who asked concerning the Word of the Covenant, and among them were those who conveyed greetings unto Me, and among them were those who made mention of their obedience in My days, and among them were those who, in their writings, yearned for an encounter with Thee, and among them were those who asked diverse questions, and among them those who asked concerning certain ordinances.”

This passage is of signal importance. It establishes that the Tablet is neither a detached theological treatise nor a response to a solitary question, but rather a living and comprehensive reply to an active body of believers seeking assurance, clarification, and guidance in matters of doctrine, conduct, and spiritual discernment during the earliest and most delicate phase of the Dispensation.

Denis MacEoin, in *The Sources of Early Bābī Doctrine and History: A Survey* (pp. 50–53), identifies the Tablet under consideration as one of the writings of the Báb listed in His *Kitāb al-Fihrist* (Book of the Index). In this work, the Báb Himself enumerates His writings up to 21 June 1845, having compiled the work in Būshihir shortly after His return from the pilgrimage (ḥajj).

Within the present Tablet, two principal internal indicators provide important clues regarding its date of revelation. The first is the explicit reference to the imprisonment of Mullá ‘Alí Bastamí in Baghdád, where the Báb states: “And by the second word, Thy servant who was imprisoned in Baghdád by the decree of injustice.” The second is the Báb’s clear affirmation

¹ Contact email address: nsm_dist@hotmail.com.

that the Tablet was revealed during the month of fasting (Ramaḍán), as confirmed by His declaration: “I have answered, by Thy judgement, twenty questions from Thy servants, in that hour of the month of fasting.”

Historical sources establish that the trial of Mullá ‘Alí Bastamí in Baghdád took place on 13 January 1845 (Necati Alkan, presentation to the Clearwater Bahá’í community, 22 October 2023, slide 27). Moreover, in another Tablet revealed by the Báb in Muscat on 14 March 1845, He likewise refers to the imprisonment of Mullá ‘Alí Bastamí. Taken together, these data indicate that the present Tablet must have been revealed sometime after January 1845, or at the earliest after 14 March 1845.

Furthermore, since the Báb explicitly lists this Tablet among His writings in the *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, which was completed on 21 June 1845, the Tablet must necessarily have been revealed prior to that date. Accordingly, based on these combined historical and textual indicators, the most plausible chronological window for the revelation of this Tablet lies between January 1845 and 21 June 1845.

A difficulty nevertheless arises when this provisional timeframe is considered alongside the Báb’s explicit statement that the Tablet was revealed during the month of Ramaḍán. In the year 1845, Ramaḍán corresponded to the month of September, which falls outside the above-defined chronological window. In view of this apparent tension between internal textual evidence and established calendrical data, it is not presently possible to determine with certainty either the precise date or the place of revelation of this Tablet. Further corroboration from additional primary sources or manuscript evidence would be required to resolve this issue conclusively.

A related question concerns the mode of transmission and addressee of the Tablet. Within the text, the Báb states that He had received letters from several devoted believers. It is, however, entirely plausible—and consistent with contemporary practice—that these letters and questions were collected and transmitted by a single individual acting on their behalf. In support of this possibility, Steven Phelps, in *Partial Inventory*, vol. 1: *Catalogs*, version 5 (May 2025), under entry BB00102, identifies this Tablet as being addressed to Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Jalíl Urūmī,² based on additional sources available to him.

This provisional translation—based on a manuscript copy preserved in the [Iran National Bahá’í Archives](#) (INBA), Vol. 91, pp. 111-120—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.

² Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Jalíl Urūmī was one of the Letters of the Living and an early disciple of the Báb. He played an active role in the propagation of the Bábí Faith, particularly in Azerbaijan and Qazvín. He was later martyred during the siege of Shaykh Ṭabarsí in 1849.

The Essence of the Tablet

The Tablet embodies a profound synthesis of devotional invocation, doctrinal exposition, and spiritual guidance. Its essence may be articulated in the following dimensions:

- **Exaltation of Divine Sovereignty:** The Báb begins with an elevated testimony to God's oneness, omniscience, and omnipotence. All creation is fashioned according to His Will, nothing escapes His knowledge, and all things bear witness to His signs. The faithful are reminded that every moment is suffused with divine Manifestation and that all beings are recreated in accordance with God's command.
- **Intercession for the Faithful:** Interwoven with supplication, the Tablet continually petitions for the protection, guidance, and spiritual strengthening of the servants of God. The Báb prays that they remain steadfast, patient, and content with divine decree, and that they may be inscribed among the thankful and devout.
- **Clarification of Spiritual and Doctrinal Questions:** The core of the Tablet comprises responses to twenty inquiries posed by the believers. These questions span the Qur'ān, the Word of the Covenant, conduct in devotion, divine ordinances, and the stations of the chosen. The Báb responds with clarity and spiritual authority, invoking God's judgment and the precedents of Muḥammad and the Family of God.
- **Affirmation of Divine Command and Revelation:** The Tablet emphasizes that all existence proceeds from God's command, that His Word is supreme, and that the decrees of creation unfold continuously according to His Will. Certain spiritual realities remain known solely to the Family of God, while the followers of the Manifestation are entrusted with remembrance, worship, and steadfast obedience.

The Twenty Questions

Before setting forth the questions contained in this Tablet, it is important to note that the Báb Himself expressly affirms that He has answered twenty questions posed by the believers during that hour of the sacred month of fasting. Near the conclusion of the Tablet, He declares in unmistakable terms:

“O God, I have answered, by Thy judgement, twenty questions from Thy servants, in that hour of the month of fasting.”

This explicit statement provides the authoritative framework for understanding the structure of the Tablet. The enumeration of questions presented below therefore does not represent a later analytical imposition upon the text, but rather follows the internal testimony of the Revelation itself.

What follows is a faithful reconstruction of the twenty questions, in the order in which they appear in the Tablet:

1. Concerning the Word of the Covenant.
2. Concerning the judgment of all things, and the apparent meaning of the two negations in the blessed verse.
3. Concerning the Companions of the Cave.
4. Concerning the Second Believer in the Bayán (Mullá ‘Alí Bastamí).
5. Concerning the believer who sought the Promised Talisman and the doors in Creation.
6. Concerning how created things know, signify, and relate to divine reality.
7. Concerning the relation of the Báb to the two Gates and their stations.
8. Concerning the sign of Beast of the Earth before God’s proof is established (the signs of the return of the Qá’im).
9. Concerning the best deeds in the Sacred month of fasting.
10. Concerning the sending down of the revealed verses unto Him (the Báb).
11. Concerning the judgment of the Night of Power.
12. Concerning the mention of the question itself, in whatever manner the questioner willed.
13. Concerning the Remembrance and the Family of God—Thy chosen servants—before the Manifestation of Thy sovereignty on earth.
14. Concerning the Remembrance of God as that by which heart is established upon the divine path.
15. Concerning the First Believer (Mullá Ḥusayn).
16. Concerning fasting in the Sacred Month and the stream of Divine Illumination on the fourth day.
17. Concerning the word of Quran: “Glory be to Him Who hath created all pairs, of what the earth produces, of themselves, and of that which they know not.”
18. Concerning the spiritual hierarchy among God’s servants (the pillars, the chiefs, and the nobles).
19. Concerning the ruling regarding what emerges from the chest of one who is fasting into the cavity of the mouth.
20. Concerning the vocal recitation of Friday noon prayer.

Core Message and Spiritual Significance

The Tablet conveys a harmonious and exalted vision of the believer's relationship to God and His Manifestation:

- The primacy of divine knowledge and command governs all creation and human understanding.
- Obedience, remembrance, and steadfastness constitute the essential pathways toward spiritual proximity to God.
- The stations of the chosen and the servants of God are delineated, establishing a hierarchy of spiritual responsibility and divine favor.
- The interconnection of the Qur'ān, the Word of the Covenant, and the revelations of the Manifestation demonstrates the continuity of divine guidance across generations.
- The Báb exemplifies the dual role of intercessor and revealer, answering inquiries while guiding hearts toward certainty, trust, and unwavering devotion.

Ultimately, the Tablet affirms that true understanding emerges not from outward appearances but from alignment with the divine Will, obedience to the Manifestation, and the cultivation of inner vigilance, spiritual insight, and heartfelt devotion.

Thus, doth the Báb reveal:

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

Praise be to God, Who has stood alone in might and been sanctified in majesty; there is no God but Him, the Almighty, the All-Wise.

I testify, O My God, that on this day of the month of fasting which Thou hast ennobled, and wherein Thou hast sent down the Qur’ān as guidance and distinguished it, making it a guidance unto all the worlds and a remembrance for the lowly—according to that whereunto Thou didst testify unto Thyself before all things—none knows the manner thereof save Thou alone; there is no God but Thee.

Thou hast appointed the paths of the affirmers of Thy unity unto the station of Thy most wondrous creation, and the utmost attainment of the knowers unto the might of Thy oneness, that all created things may receive, at every moment, their allotted decree from the Word of creation, from utter nothingness. Nothing escapes, even for the briefest instant, the Manifestation of Thy originating Will.

Every thing bears witness, at every moment, to the signs of Thy love and Thy theophany, without manner and without likeness, for Thou art God; there is no God but Thee.

Thou hast brought all into being according to the pattern of Thy Manifestation, without resemblance in form and without association in word. There is no God but Thee, the Mighty, the Most Exalted.

I bear witness, on behalf of all creation, to that which Thy knowledge encompasses, namely what Thou lovest for Thyself among all the people of creation, and whatsoever Thou dost bring forth anew at every instant—verily Thou art the Almighty, the All-Wise.

O God, Thou indeed knowest that which none besides Thee can know. Many writings have been gathered before Me from Thy servants, those devoted to Thy obedience and love, who recite the Book of God as it ought to be recited, and who fear the Day when all shall be gathered unto God.

O God, Thou knowest that no one possessed a right to reply once Thou hadst entrusted judgement unto those vested with the Book, and that My issuing of an answer was not in accordance with the customary manner of obligation among the people.

Yet since the month is Thy month and the servants are Thy guests, and sorrow has overcome Me, I commune with Thee regarding that which Thy servants have asked of Me, that My inmost being may be calmed and My heart unburdened, and that Thy loved ones among Thy servants may be content with Thy decree, trembling inwardly at Thy Remembrance, steadfast in patience toward Thy promise and firm upon Thy path, and thereby numbered among the thankful.

O God, Thou knowest that I have sent some of the writings to him who was the First to Believe in Thy decree, that he might answer the people according to the judgement of the Qur'ān.

And We shall send those verses³ from the writings to him who was My teacher⁴ in certain days, that they⁵ together may reply to the servants concerning what they had asked. Yet Thou, O My God, answer Me regarding some of that which Thy servants have asked; verily Thou art near and responsive.

Among them were those who asked concerning the Word of the Covenant, and among them were those who conveyed greetings unto Me, and among them were those who made mention of their obedience in My days, and among them were those who, in their writings, yearned for an encounter with Thee, and among them were those who asked diverse questions, and among them those who asked concerning certain ordinances.

Thou, O My God, knowest the station of their souls, and what they intended thereby of their obedience to Thee and Thy good pleasure. So fulfill, O God, by Thy right over Muḥammad and the Family of Muḥammad, the needs of those who have asked concerning Thy Covenant, and convey Thou, O My God, by their right, Thy salutations unto them in the exalted stations.

Reward them, O God, for their obedience with that bounty and splendour of which Thou art worthy, and ordain, O God, for the yearning, the prostrate, and the devout, Thy Garden of Eden, together with such favours as Thy knowledge encompasses. Verily Thou art powerful over all things.

I beseech Thee, O God, to bestow Thy grace upon the people of hearts through Thy manifestation at every moment, and upon the people of obedience through Thy love and good pleasure; verily Thou art the Possessor of great bounty.

I ask Thee, O My God, by the right of those whom Thou hast made the repositories of Thy knowledge, the interpreters of Thy Will, the pillars of Thy unity, and the trustees of Thy command, endowed with the decree of Thy irrevocable purpose, with forbearance in the renewal of dispensation, to send blessings upon Muḥammad and the Family of Muḥammad, the treasures of knowledge and revelation, through whomsoever Thou createst and willeth, and to preserve Thy believing servants from doubt, irreligion, whisperings, and the malice of men.

³ The term “verses” should be understood as questions posed by a faithful servant.

⁴ The Báb refers to Siyyid Kāzīm Rashtī in several passages of His writings as “My teacher.” However, Siyyid Kāzīm Rashtī had already passed away at the time this Tablet was revealed. Nusratullāh Muḥammad Ḥusaynī, in *Ḥaḍrat-i A'lá* (p. 161), asserted that in this instance the reference may instead be to Mullá Muḥammad Mu'allim or to Mullá Šādiq Muqaddas-i Khurāsānī. It should also be noted that during the Báb's sojourn in Karbalá prior to His declaration, He attended the lectures of Siyyid Kāzīm only once or twice, and His designation of him—or of other learned figures—as “My teacher” appears to be an expression of courtesy and reverence rather than an assertion of pedagogical dependence. In Shaykhí usage, the term *mu'allim* denotes formal affiliation within a scholarly and symbolic lineage, not the source of revealed knowledge. This distinction is repeatedly affirmed in the Báb's own writings, wherein He explicitly characterizes His knowledge as divinely bestowed and not acquired through human instruction.

⁵ The plural pronoun “they” refers specifically to Mullá Ḥusayn—the First to Believe in the Báb—and to the individual designated as “My teacher,” indicating that the Báb entrusted both figures with responding jointly to certain inquiries.

Guard then, O God, by Thy greatest protection and Thy most exalted Word, that small company, from before them and behind them, from their flanks and from every quarter, inasmuch as Thy knowledge encompasses them.

Protect them from every evil known unto Thee, and from whatever comes to pass at every moment by Thy irrevocable purpose. O God, safeguard them and those who follow them among later generations, through Thy guardianship, Thy power, Thy watchfulness, and Thy Will.

Admit them, O God, into Thy stronghold, and strengthen them in every affair through Thy Remembrance, and inspire them, in the path of their love, with that whereby they may attain none but Thy good pleasure. Verily Thou art the Most Bountiful, the Lord of grace; nothing in the heavens or on the earth can overpower Thee. Thou doest whatsoever Thou willest, Thou erasest whatsoever Thou willest, and Thou confirmest whatsoever Thou willest, and with Thee is the Mother Book.

O God, Thou knowest the decree of all things, and Thou hast made plain the knowledge of everything, so that no one might need to mention anything to any among Thy creation, nor say: ‘Had God detailed the decree of that matter in the Book, I would have been among those who act.’

As for what was asked concerning the judgement of the two negations in the blessed verse, Thou, O My God, hast made its meaning clear through interpretation, that if the sea were ink for Thy words, the sea would be exhausted ere Thy words were exhausted, even were another sea added to it.

By the outward sense of that verse, Thou didst intend the tree of unbelief and its shadow; and in the setting forth of parables, its manifestations. Nothing whatsoever is hidden from Thee, and verily Thou art knowing of all things.

This servant was also questioned concerning the Companions of the Cave,⁶ and concerning the Second Believer in the Bayán,⁷ and Thou hast made their judgement clear in the first word, namely, the Imáms of justice, the companions of Thy Messenger Muḥammad, the Seal of the Prophets—may Thy blessings rest upon them all.

⁶ The “Companions of the Cave” (Aṣḥāb al-Kahf) are figures mentioned in the Qur’ān (Q 18:9–26), traditionally identified as a group of faithful youths who, fleeing persecution, sought refuge in a cave where God caused them to sleep for many years as a sign of His power and protection. In Islamic exegesis, they symbolize steadfast faith, divine preservation, and the triumph of spiritual fidelity over worldly opposition. In Bábí and Bahá’í hermeneutics, references to the Companions of the Cave often function typologically, alluding to believers who remain spiritually “asleep” or concealed until the appointed time of divine awakening, or to those whom God preserves during periods of religious decline and transition. The motif thus underscores themes of occultation, resurrection, and the renewal of faith through divine intervention.

⁷ The expression “the Second Believer in the Bayán” refers to Mullá ‘Alí Bastámí, one of the earliest disciples of the Báb and the second to openly embrace His Cause after Mullá Ḥusayn. He was dispatched by the Báb to Najaf and Karbalá to proclaim the new Revelation among the Shí‘í religious authorities. As a result of this mission, he was arrested, transferred to Baghdad, and subjected to interrogation by a tribunal composed of both Sunnī and Shí‘í clerics, after which he was imprisoned. Mullá ‘Alí Bastámí died in captivity and is thus regarded as the first Bábí martyr-confessor, his suffering marking the earliest instance of lethal persecution endured by a follower of the Báb. His case vividly illustrates the immediate and trans-sectarian opposition provoked by the advent of the Bayán and the public emergence of the Báb’s Cause beyond Persia.

And by the second word, Thy servant who was imprisoned in Baghdád by the decree of injustice. Deliver him, O God, by the right of Muḥammad and His Family, from the hand of the oppressor; in whatever manner Thou wilt and whenever Thou wilt; verily Thou art sufficient against all, and none can suffice against Thee. Indeed, Thou art powerful over all things.

This believer was further questioned concerning Thy verses, after Thou hadst answered, directly from before Thy Presence, concerning the Promised Talisman,⁸ and concerning the decree of that which exists within the realm of possibility, proceeding from the Word of the Gates; and Thou art Witness over all things.

And I know that Thou didst answer him regarding the first question with the Word of the Qur'ān: "Is not God sufficient for His servant?"

And regarding the second question: that a thing knows nothing save the decree of its own self, and points to nothing except the stations of its Lord, nor can it comprehend the stations of that which has been created in the realm of possibility greater than itself, save beneath the rank of its heart; nor does it perceive within it any remembrance, save the Remembrance of God that has Manifested above it.

There is no doubt, O My God, that all existence has been brought forth from the Letter of the Command. And were I to believe that the atoms came into being from the word of Thy servant, such an admission on My part would be a greater affirmation of Thy power, and a stronger confirmation of Thy Will in the station of the Most Great Command. Nothing has been, nor shall be, save Thy Supreme Command, and Thy greatest Word.

None knoweth the Family of God—peace be upon them—and their followers are naught but owned servants in their hands, unable to dispose of anything in the realm of command. They exist through their Remembrance, to remember and to worship. Thus, didst Thou, O God, confirm him in what Thou didst answer him from Thy Presence.

As for Me, I am Thy servant, less than a mote; were Thou to chastise Me with every affliction for all eternity, I would indeed deserve it. Glory be unto Thee; glory be unto Thee! Thy bounty is most exalted and Thy wisdom most perfect; I expect from Thee naught but forgiveness and concealment. Verily Thou art the All-Bountiful, the All-Wise.

Among them was one who asked concerning seven verses, and Thou, O My God, knowest concerning him the decree, the relation of the Servant to His two lords;⁹ the decree concerning the Beast of the Earth¹⁰ before the arising of Thy Proof upon the earth; the

⁸ "Talisman" renders the Arabic *ḥirz*, a term which, in Bábí usage, denotes a revealed and divinely empowered means of protection, rather than an object of folk magic. The Báb elsewhere refers to Himself as the "Supreme Talisman," thereby indicating the theocentric and revelatory nature of this concept.

⁹ The expression "The relation of the Servant to His two lords" refers to the Báb Himself, who here speaks in the Qur'ānic idiom of servitude, and to His spiritual relationship with Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsā'ī and Siyyid Kāzīm Rashtī, the two Shaykhī "Gates" whose teachings prepared the way for His Revelation. The term *lord* (*mawlā*) is employed in a relative sense, denoting their authority as divinely guided forerunners, not lordship in the absolute sense reserved for God alone.

¹⁰ The term "Beast of the Earth" (دابة الأرض) is drawn from the Qur'an (Súrat An-Naml 27:82), where it denotes a miraculous creature that God will bring forth from the earth as a decisive sign of the Day of Judgment (Qiyāmah). This being is charged with speaking to mankind, confirming the rejection of God's signs, and marking a point of no return for faith. It is described

Remembrance of that which has been mentioned, and the Family of God—Thy chosen servants in the days preceding the Manifestation of Thy sovereignty over the lands; and Thy judgement concerning the best of deeds in the month of fasting; and the sending down of the revealed verses unto Him; and the decree of the Night of Power among the nights of the month; and the mention of the question itself, in whatever manner Thou hast willed.¹¹ Verily Thou encompassed all things.

Verily, I bear witness unto Thee, O God, that Thou hast made clear the judgement of the first,¹² and the relation of the two Gates¹³ unto Him: that Thou art the Truth, and all else besides Thee is Thy creation, held within Thy grasp; they are Thy servants, created through the light Thy irrevocable purpose. The latter of the two preceded the former¹⁴ through the decree of Thy irrevocable purpose and the Letter of Renewal. Thou dost not fail in Thy promise.

I know that what Thou didst intend by the Beast of the Earth is that which moves within the land of creation before Thee; it is Thy servant who made clear the judgement of the two Gates by his decree, and confirmed their truth by his command. He is naught but a fearful, impoverished servant.

I bear witness that the Trustee of Thy Messenger—may Thy blessings rest upon them both—withholds nothing from any soul in any station, and that he is a Book wherein there is no doubt, a guidance, and a remembrance unto the worshippers.

I testify that what they have spoken is Thy Proof concerning the signs of the return of their Qá'im—may Thy blessings rest upon them—Manifesting prior to their dominion, exactly as they themselves have spoken. With Thee is the knowledge of all things: Thou erasest whatsoever Thou willest and confirmest whatsoever Thou willest, and with Thee is the Mother Book. Glory be unto Thee, O God, My God!

How shall I mention the best of deeds in that month and the decree of the Night of Power therein, after Thou hast made clear in the Qur'ān that the Remembrance of God is the greatest? It is indeed the Remembrance of a noble Messenger. And Muḥammad, Thy Beloved—may Thy blessings rest upon Him and His Family—has made known the Night of

as a real, tangible creation, not merely symbolic, endowed with the authority to carry the staff of Moses and the seal of Solomon, thereby distinguishing the true believers from the disbelievers once the opportunity for repentance has closed.

¹¹ The passage concerning the “seven verses” in the Tablet may more accurately be understood as seven distinct questions posed by a faithful servant.

¹² “The first” refers to the initial inquiry mentioned above—namely, the question regarding the seven verses—which the Báb affirms God has made clear.

¹³ “The two Gates” (al-bābayn) refers to Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsā'ī (d. 1241/1826) and his successor Siyyid Kāzīm Rashtī (d. 1259/1843), the two foremost figures of the Shaykhī school. In Bábí usage, the term *Gate* designates those divinely guided heralds whose teachings prepared the way for the advent of the Báb and derived their true meaning and authority from Him.

¹⁴ The statement “The latter of the two preceded the former” refers to Siyyid Kāzīm Rashtī in relation to Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsā'ī. The precedence indicated here is not temporal but doctrinal and revelatory: the latter surpassed the former in the explicitness, immediacy, and clarity with which he alluded to the imminent advent of the promised Manifestation, this precedence being affected “through the decree of irrevocable purpose and the letter of renewal” (*imḍā' al-qaḍā' wa ḥarf al-badā'*).

Power as the third night of the final ten;¹⁵ there is no doubt concerning its decree. Verily Thou art the Possessor of great bounty.

Thou knowest the judgement concerning what remains of those verses: I desired naught but the good pleasure of Thy loved ones. Sufficient is Thyself this day as All-knowing.

Among Thy servants who affirm Thy unity was one who asked concerning Thy Remembrance, that which establishes the heart upon the Path, and concerning Thy decree regarding the servant unto whom Thou hast entrusted authority; and Thou art powerful over all things.

O God, the greatest Remembrance before Thee is the Word of the Family of God within their own beings. Bestow, O God, upon them the abundance of Thy grace, for Thou art the Lord of might over all creation.

Thou knowest, O My God, the decree concerning Thy believing servant in relation to Thy verses, who was foremost¹⁶ in the Fourth Pillar¹⁷ among those who follow Thy ordinances.

Convey, O God, Thy salutations unto him, and unto those who derive knowledge from him, through all Thy verses and Thy dispensations; verily Thou art the Possessor of ancient grace.

Some of Thy assured servants were asked concerning the fast of the Sacred Month, and its stream of divine illumination on the fourth day thereof. Inspire him, O God, with Thy Remembrance, and lead him unto Thy decree; for I did not intend the outward ruling, but rather the allusion to its inner meaning lies within My Remembrance.¹⁸ And Thou art witness unto all things.

Some of Thy sincere and confessing servants were asked concerning five verses: namely the word of the Qur'ān: 'Glory be to Him Who hath created all pairs, of what the earth produces, of themselves, and of that which they know not.' And what the Messenger of God—may Thy blessings rest upon Him and His pure Family has said concerning that whereof the pens have

¹⁵ The expression “the third night of the final ten” (ليلة الثالث من العشر الثالث) requires careful calendrical consideration. Ramaḍān, as a lunar month, consists of either twenty-nine or thirty days. The final ten days therefore correspond to days 21–30 in a thirty-day month, or days 20–29 in a twenty-nine-day month. The third night of this final ten thus falls on the 23rd night of a thirty-day month, or the 22nd night of a twenty-nine-day month. This specification accords closely with Shi'ite devotional practice, in which Laylat al-Qadr is traditionally sought on the odd-numbered nights of the final ten days of Ramaḍān, most commonly the twenty-third night. By identifying the Night of Power with this precise moment within sacred time, the Báb situates it not merely as a historical commemoration but as a spiritually charged locus in which revelation, divine judgment, and the Manifestation of the Remembrance converge. The passage thus functions simultaneously as a chronological indicator and an esoteric sign, underscoring the unity of sacred time and the disclosure of divine authority.

¹⁶ The term ‘foremost’ (al-sābiq) alludes to Mullá Ḥusayn, the first to recognize the Báb and chief among the Sābiqūn, later designated the Letters of the Living.

¹⁷ The term “Fourth Pillar” (دَرْ الرَّابِعِ, Rukn-i-Rabi') refers to a central concept within the Shaykhi school of Twelver Shi'ism, denoting a perfected intermediary or spiritual guide who serves as a living link between the Shi'a community and the Hidden Imam. This figure ensures the correct interpretation and transmission of divine guidance. In the present context, the Báb employs this term to indicate the pre-eminence of the individual among those who follow God's ordinances, situating him within this Shaykhi hierarchical framework.

¹⁸ The question “concerning the fast of the Sacred Month” and “the stream of divine illumination on the fourth day” is not answered by the Báb in juridical or calendrical terms. He explicitly states that He “did not intend the outward ruling,” thereby redirecting the inquiry from legal observance to inner meaning. The reference to the “fourth day” carries no specific standing in Islamic law and should therefore be understood symbolically rather than temporally. Within the Báb's revelatory framework, fasting signifies spiritual receptivity, and illumination is not tied to the mere passage of days but flows through orientation toward the divine *Remembrance*, a term which, in its elevated sense, denotes the living Manifestation of God. The Báb thus teaches that the true significance of fasting lies in inward transformation and recognition of the Divine Presence, rather than in numerical calculation or outward observance alone, reaffirming the primacy of inner meaning over formalism in His revelation.

*dried; and Thy decree concerning the relation between the pillars among Thy servants, then the Chiefs, then the Nobles; and the ruling regarding what emerges from the chest of the fasting person into the cavity of the mouth; and the ruling concerning the noon prayer on Friday being recited aloud.*¹⁹

*All this was among what Thy servant asked of Me in his letter. Thou, O My God, hast answered—through the word of the Qur’ān—the decree of duality in the realm of divine Will and within the souls of creation, and of that which they know not, through the word of the Hidden One, and Thy concealed Covenant in the station of knowledge.*²⁰

And in that whereof the pens have dried lies the decree of Thy most wondrous creation at every moment, for creation has never been except through that by which it was created, and they were created only through that which they enact.

Thou hast sent down the entire command in Thy Book: ‘Act!’ Thus, everyone is eased toward that for which he was created.

*And Thou didst make manifest the threefold relation in the presence of the Command, even as the relation of Spirit, Soul, and Body before Thee in the Mother Book; and Thou didst assign the name al-awtār to the chiefs, and the name al-abdāl to the nobles.*²¹ *Thy judgment in every matter is explicit and fully expounded, requiring no explanation from Thy servants; and Thou encompassed all things.*

Thou knowest, O My God, My judgement, and Thou bearest witness to My secret, and knowest My conscience. I have made clear the ruling concerning what passes from the chest to the mouth during fasting: namely, that it must be expelled from the mouth,

¹⁹ The “five verses” (*āyāt*) mentioned here are not five Qur’ānic verses in the narrow textual sense, but rather five revealed matters or doctrinal questions presented for elucidation. The Báb cites Qur’ān 36:36 (“Glory be to Him Who hath created all pairs...”) as the first and foundational āyah, employing it as an ontological key through which the remaining issues are to be understood.

²⁰ In this passage the Báb offers a meta-hermeneutical clarification of His response to the five questions posed by the correspondent, indicating that they are answered not as discrete legal or theological problems but through a single, unifying Qur’ānic principle. By invoking the verse “Glory be to Him Who has created all pairs, of that which the earth produces, of themselves, and of that which they know not” (Q 36:36), the Báb situates issues as varied as divine decree, spiritual hierarchy, juridical rulings, and ritual practice within the ontological and epistemological principle of duality (*zawjiyyah*). This duality encompasses the manifest and the hidden, the known and the unknowable, outward law and inward meaning, and the relation between divine Will and created souls. The reference to “the word of the Hidden One” underscores that certain dimensions of these questions pertain to realities inaccessible to speculative reason and are disclosed only through revelation. Finally, the allusion to the “concealed Covenant in the station of knowledge” frames the entire response within a covenantal epistemology, whereby true understanding of law, hierarchy, and divine decree depends not merely on juridical or rational inquiry but on recognition of divinely ordained authority. The Báb thus resolves the servant’s inquiries by revealing their common metaphysical ground rather than by issuing isolated rulings, integrating jurisprudence, cosmology, and spiritual knowledge within a single revelatory vision.

²¹ The Arabic terms *al-awtār* and *al-abdāl* are technical titles found in mystical and devotional literature. *Al-awtār* (literally “the cords/strings”) has been used symbolically to denote singular, pivotal figures in a spiritual hierarchy — often translated in Bahá’í English as “*the Single Ones*” — because the singularity of the role echoes a central axis or connecting cord in the framework of divine authority. *Al-abdāl* (plural *abdāl*, singular *badāl* or *badīl*) historically referred to those who serve as God’s trusted representatives or substitutes; classical sources describe them as noble, righteous figures whose station is such that if one passes away, another appears in his place to uphold the order and continuity of spiritual service. The term thus conveys both *rank in a spiritual order* and *continuity of divine service* through appointed successors. In Bahá’í vocabulary these terms have been transliterated and retained in their original form to preserve their technical sense within the revealed hierarchy, rather than being paraphrased into English equivalents.

*and that it is not valid if done deliberately. Yet Thou pardonest him who is unable to restrain himself, for Thou art compassionate and merciful toward the believers.*²²

And I bear witness that Thy loved ones have stated, concerning the noon Prayer on the day of Friday, that reciting aloud is a sunnah;²³ and that Thou recompensest every soul according to that which it has done. Verily, Thou encompassest all things.

O God, I have answered, by Thy judgement, twenty questions from Thy servants, in that hour of the month of fasting. I confess before Thee My inadequacy, arising from brevity of expression, due to the presence of others. Yet I beseech Thee at Thy gate, O My God, to forgive Me for that which Thy knowledge encompasses, and to inspire Thy servants with what they require of Thy ordinances in the days of Thy Festival.

Thou bestowest Thy grace upon whom Thou willest, as Thou willest, and Thou withholdest from whom Thou willest, as Thou willest. There is none who can repel Thy command, and none who can reverse Thy decree. Thou art powerful over all things. And praise be to God, the Lord of all worlds.”

²² In this passage, the Báb clarifies a juridical ruling concerning fasting: if bodily matter rising from the chest reaches the mouth, it must be expelled, and the fast is invalidated only if it is swallowed deliberately. Where such an act occurs involuntarily or beyond one's capacity to restrain, no blame is incurred. The ruling thus hinges upon intention and ability, affirming the principle—recurrent throughout the Báb's writings—that divine accountability is inseparable from human capacity. By concluding with an appeal to God's compassion and mercy toward the believers, the Báb situates legal obligation within a framework of divine clemency, underscoring that the purpose of the fast is spiritual refinement rather than punitive exactitude. This passage exemplifies the Báb's distinctive synthesis of juridical clarity, ethical discernment, and theological mercy.

²³ The term “sunnah” denotes a recommended and exemplary practice established by authoritative religious precedent, particularly the normative conduct of the Prophet Muḥammad and the Imams, as preserved in Shi‘i jurisprudence. While not obligatory (*farḍ*), adherence to the *sunnah* is considered meritorious and spiritually efficacious. In this context, the audible recitation during the noon (*zuhr*) prayer on Fridays reflects a transmitted devotional practice affirmed by the Imams and recognized within Islamic legal tradition. By invoking this ruling, the Báb situates His response within the inherited framework of Shi‘i jurisprudence while simultaneously affirming the divine principle of moral recompense—that each soul is rewarded in accordance with its deeds—thereby linking outward observance with inward accountability.

The Tablet of Twenty Questions Revealed by the Báb and Addressed to Mullá 'Abdu'l-Jalíl Urūmī

(Based on a Typed Copy Transcribed from a Reproduced Copy of an Extant Manuscript)

جواب بیست مسئلة

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الحمد لله الذى قد توحد بالعزة و تقدس بالكبرياء لا اله الا هو العزيز الحكيم اشهد انك اللهم يا الهى فى ذلك اليوم من شهر الصيام الذى قد شرفته و انزلت فيه القرآن هدى و فضله و جعلته هدى للعالمين * و ذكرى للخاصين * بما قد شهدت لنفسك قبل كل شئ و لا يعلم كيف ذلك الا انت وحدك لا اله الا انت قد جعلت سبل الموحدين الى مقام ابداعك و منتهى حظ العارفين * الى عز وحدانيتك ليأخذ كل الموجودات نصيب حكمهم من كلمة الانشاء فى كل حين لا من شئ و لا يفوت من شئ فى اقل من حين ظهور مشيتك المبدعة و يشهد كل شئ آيات محبتك و تجليك فى كل آن من دون كيف و لا مثال اذ انت الله لا اله الا انت قد ابدعت الكل على مثال تجليك من دون شبه فى المثال * و لا كلمة فى الاقتران لا الله الا انت العزيز المتعال * و اشهد لكل خلق ما احاط علمك ما تحب لنفسك من اهل الابداع اجمعهم و ما تبدع فى كل آن انك انت العزيز الحكيم * اللهم و انك تعلم ما لا يعلم احد سواك و لقد جمع لدى كتب عديدة من اهل طاعتك و محبتك عبادك الذين يتلون كتاب الله حق تلاوته و يخافون من يوم كل الى الله يحشرون * اللهم و انك تعلم ما كان لاحد على حق للجواب بعد ما فوضت الحكم الى اولى الناس بالكتاب و ما كان حكمى كلمة الجواب على سبيل القوم فى الاجاب و لكن لما كان الشهر شهرك و العباد ضعيفك و قد غلب على الحزن اناجيك فيما سالوا عبادك منى ليسكن سرى و يفرغ فؤادى وليكون الاحباء من عبادك راضين بحكمك و وجلين انفسهم بذكرك و صابرين على وعدك و ثابتين على صراطك و كانوا بذلك من الشاكرين * اللهم و انك لتعلم ما قد ارسلت الى من كان اول مؤمن بحكمك بعضاً من الكتب ليجيب الناس على حكم القرآن و سوف نرسل تلك الآيات من الكتب الى من كان معلمى فى بعض الايام و اليه ليجيبان العباد عما هم كانوا سائلون و لكنك يا الهى اجبنى فى بعض ما سالوا عبادك انك قريب مجيب * فمنهم قد سالوا كلمة العهد و منهم قد سلموا علي و منهم قد ذكروا طاعتك فى ايامى و منهم قد رغبوا فى كتبهم الى لقائك و منهم قد سالوا من مسائل شتى و منهم من بعض الحكم و انك يا الهى تعلم مقام انفسهم و ما ارادوا فى ذلك الباب من طاعتك و رضاك فاوف اللهم بحقك على محمد و آل محمد للذين قد سالوا من عهدك و سلم اللهم يا الهى بحقهم ان تسلم عليهم فى درجات العلى و اجزههم اللهم اهل طاعتهم مما انت اهلك من العطاء و البهاء و اكتب اللهم للراغبين و الساجدين و القانتين جنتك عدن و الا انك ما قد احاط علمك انك على كل شئ قدير و اسالك اللهم ان تمنى على اهل افندتهم بتجليك فى كل آن و على اهل طاعتهم بمحبتك و رضاك انك ذو فضل عظيم * و اسئلك اللهم يا الهى بحق من قد جعلتهم محال معرفتك و تراجم مشيتك و اركان توحيدك و ولاة امرك و ذات قضاء فى الامضاء و ذوانة فى البداء ان تصلنى على محمد و آل محمد خزائن العلم و الوحي لما تخلق و تشاء و ان تعصم عبادك المؤمنين من الشك و الالحاد و الوسوسة و شر العباد * فاحفظ اللهم بحفظك الاكبر و كلمتك الاعلى تلك الفئة القليلة من بين ايديهم و من خلفهم من شمائلهم و من كل شطر قد احاط علمك بهم من شر قد احاط علمك و ما يحدث فى كل آن بالامضاء اللهم احرسهم و من اتبعهم من الآخرين بحراستك و قدرتك و كلاتك و مشيتك و ادخل اللهم فى حصنك و ايدهم فى كل شأن بذكرك و الهمهم فى سبيل محبتهم ما يبلغوا به الا رضاك انك جواد ذو المن لا يتعاطمك شئ فى السموات و لا فى الارض و تفعل ما تشاء و تمحوا ما تشاء و تثبت ما تشاء و عندك ام الكتاب اللهم و انك تعلم حكم كل شئ و بينت علم كل شئ لئلا يحتاج احد الى ذكر شئ باحد من خلقك و لا يقول احد لو فصل الله حكم ذلك الامر فى الكتاب لكنت من العاملين * و ان الذى سئل من حكم النفين فى الآية المباركة فانك يا الهى قد بينت حكمه بالتفسير بان لو كان البحر مداداً لكلماتك لنفد البحر قبل ان تنفد كلماتك و لو جنت بمثله مدداً * و اردت فى ظاهر تلك الآية شجرة الكفر و ظلها و من الضرب فى الامثال مظاهرها و لا يخفى عليك شئ و انك بكل شئ عليم * و لقد سئل هذا العبد من اصحاب الكهف و ثانى مؤمن بالبيان و انك قد بينت حكمه فى كلمة الاول ائمة العدل اصحاب رسولك محمد خاتم النبيين صلواتك عليهم اجمعين * و من كلمة الثانية عبدك الذى حبس بحكم الظلم فى البغداد فاخلص اللهم بحق محمد و آله عن يد الظالم كيف شئت و انى شئت انك تكفى من كل احد و لا يكفى منك احد و انك على كل شئ قدير * و لقد سئل هذا المؤمن بآياتك من بعد ما احببت تلقاء وجهك من الحرز الموعود و حكم ما توجد فى الامكان من كلمة الابواب و انك على كل شئ شهيد و انى لا علم انك قد اجبته من مسئلة الاول كلمة القرآن اليس الله بكاف عبده و من مسئلة الثانية بان الشئ لا يعرف الا حكم نفسه و لا يشير بشئ الا مقامات ربه و لا يدرك مقامات ما

خلق في الامكان اكبر منه الا تحت رتبة فؤاده و لايعرف فيه ذكر ذكر الله الذي ظهر في اعلى منه و لا شك يا الهى بان كل الوجود قد وجدت من حرف الامر و انى لو اعتقد بان الذرات قد وجدوا من كلمة عبدك لقد كان الاعتراف منى في محل قدرتك اعظم و اثبات مشيتك في محل الامر الاكبر و ما كان و لا يكون الا امرك اكبر و كلمتك اعظم و لايعرف آل الله سلام الله عليهم احد و ما كان شيعتهم الا عباد مملوك بين ايديهم لا يستطيعون بشيء من الامر و هم من ذكرهم ليذكرون و يعبدون فتبت اللهم نفسه فيما اجبته من عندك و انى عبدك اقل من ذر لو تعذبى بكل نعمتك سرمد الابد لكنت مستحقاً به فسبحانك سبحانك جودك اعلى و حكمك اتم و ما اظن بك الا عفوك و سترك انك انت الجواد الحكيم و ان منهم قد سئل من سبعة آيات و انك لتعلم يا الهى حكمه و هى نسبة العبد الى مولاها و حكم دابة الارض قبل قيام حجتك على الارض و ذكر ما ذكر و آل الله عبادك المصطفين فى ايام قبل ظهور سلطنتك على البلاد و حكمك فى احسن الاعمال فى شهر الصيام و ارسال الآيات المنزلة اليه و حكم ليلة القدر فى ليالى الشهر و ذكر السؤال فى كل ما شاء انك بكل شيء محيط فاشهدك اللهم يا الهى بانك قد بينت حكم الاول و نسبة البابين اليه بانك الحق و ما سواك خلقك و فى قبضتك و انهم عبادك قد خلقوا بنور الامضاء و الاخر منهم قد سبق حرف الاول منهما بامضاء القضاء و حرف البداء و انك لا تخلف الميعاد و انى اعلم ان مرادك من دابة الارض هو المتحرك فى ارض الانشاء عندك و انه عبدك الذى قد بين حكم البابين بحكمه و ثبت حقهما بامرهم و ما هو الا عبد خائف فقير و اشهد ان وصي رسولك صلواتك عليهما لا تحجب من نفس فى شان و انه كتاب لا ريب فيه هدى و ذكرى للعابدين * و اشهد ان ما قالوا حجتك فى علامات رجعة قائمهم صلواتك عليهم يظهر فى قبل دولتهم بمثل ما نطقوا فيهم و عندك علم كل شيء تمحو ما تشاء و تثبت ما تشاء و عندك ام الكتاب فسبحانك اللهم يا الهى كيف اذكر احسن الاعمال فى ذلك الشهر و حكم ليلة القدر فيه بعد ما بينت فى القرآن ان ذكر الله اكبر و انه لذكر رسول كريم و بين محمد حبيبك صلواتك عليه و على آله ليلة القدر فى ليلة الثالث من العشر الثالث و لا شك فى حكمها و انك ذو فضل عظيم * و انك تعلم حكم ما بقى من آياته بانى ما اردت الا رضاء اوليائك و كفى بنفسك اليوم عليك خبيراً * و ان من عبادك الموحدين قد سئل من ذكرك الذى يثبت قلبه على الصراط و من حكمك فى عبد الذى قد فوضت الامر اليه و انك على كل شيء قدير * اللهم ان اعظم الذكر لديك كلمة آل الله فى انفسهم فصل اللهم عليهم بفضل نفسك انك رب العزة على الخلق اجمعين و انك يا الهى لتعلم حكم عبدك المؤمن بآياتك والسابق فى ذر الرابع من اتباع احكامك فسلم اللهم عليه و على من يأخذ العلم من نفسه بكل آياتك و شئونائك انك ذو من قديم * و ان من عبادك الموقنين بامرك قد سئل من صوم شهر الحرام ونهره فى يوم الرابع منه فالهم اللهم ذكرك وبلغه الى حكمك فانى ما اردت ظاهر الحكم ولكن الاشارة الى بطنها واقعة فى ذكرى و انك على كل شيء شهيد * و ان من عبادك المخلصين المعترفين بحقك قد سئل من آيات خمسة وهى كلمة القرآن سبحان الذى خلق الأزواج كلها مما تنبت الارض و من انفسهم ومما لا يعلمون * و ما قال رسول الله ص صلواتك عليه و على آله الطيبين فيما جف به الاقلام وما كان حكمك فى نسبته بين الاركاف من العباد ثم النقباء ثم النجباء وحكم ما يخرج من صدر الصائم الى فضاء فمه وحكم صلوة الظهر فى يوم الجمعة جهرة كل ذلك مما سئل عبدك منى فى كتابه و انك يا الهى قد اجبت فى كلمة القرآن حكم الزوجية فى ارض الارادة وفى انفس الخلق ومما لا يعلمون فى كلمة المستتر وعهدك المستتر فى مقام العلم و فيما جف به الاقلام حكم ابدعك فى كل حين لان الخلق ما كانوا الا بما خلقوا و ما خلقوا الا بما عملوا و نزلت كل الامر فى كتابك اعملوا فكل ميسر لما خلق له و بينت نسبته الثلاثة فى لدى الامر كنسبته الروح و النفس و الجسم لديك فى ام الكتاب و جعلت اسم الاوتار للنقباء واسم الابدال للنجباء و كان حكمك فى كل شان مفصل مشروح لايحتاج ببيان من عبادك و انت بكل شيء محيط و انك يا الهى تعلم حكمى و تشهد سرى و تعرف ضميرى قد بينت حكم ما يخرج من الصدر الى الفم فى حين الصوم بان يخرج من الفم و لا يصح له اذا كان معتمدا فى عمله و انك تعفو لمن لا تقدر حفظ نفسه و انك بالمومنين روف رحيم * و اشهد ان اوليائك قد ذكروا فى صلوة الظهر يوم الجمعة حكم الجهر سنة و انك تجزى لكل بما عملت و انك بكل شيء محيط * اللهم قد اجبت حكمك فى عشرين مسألة من عبادك فى تلك الساعة من الشهر الصيام و اعترف لديك بالتقصير من كلمة الاختصار لاجل مشاهدة الاغيار و لكنى سائل ببابك يا الهى ان تعفو عنى ما قد احاط علمك و تلهم عبادك عما يحتاجون من احكامك فى ايام عيدك انك تمنى على من تشاء كما تشاء و تمنع عن تشاء كما تشاء لا راد لامرك و لا معقب لحكمك و انت على كل شيء قدير و الحمد لله رب العالمين.