

An Epistle of the Báb to Muḥammad Shāh Qájár¹ From Mákú: A Provisional Rendering of Its Twofold Revelation

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24 July 2025

Introduction and background:

Among the several Epistles revealed by the Báb and addressed to Muḥammad Shāh Qájár, the Epistle under present study occupies a unique station. Revealed during His confinement in the remote fortress of Mákú, it is written in a mixture of Arabic and Persian and is distinguished by the clarity of its purpose, the solemnity of its tone, and the immediacy of its historical context.

The Epistle comprises two distinct parts: the first recounts the circumstances surrounding its transmission to the Shāh, while the second contains the full text of the Epistle itself.

Internal evidence indicates that the main body of the Epistle—the second part—was revealed on the 15th of Sha‘bán 1263 A.H. (27 July 1847 C.E.), while the prefatory portion appears to have been revealed subsequently, on the 21st of Ramaḍán 1263 A.H. (30 August 1847 C.E.). This sequence suggests that the Báb revealed the Epistle itself in late July, and that the opportunity to dispatch it to the court of the Shāh arose only a month later, prompting the addition of a covering introduction at the time of its delivery.

“Muḥammad Shāh—at the time he ordered the Báb’s confinement in Mákú—had pledged to summon Him to Tīhrán upon his return from a military campaign in the northeast, undertaken to suppress Ḥasan Khán Sālár,² chastise the Turkmen, and advance toward Herat through Khurásán. This promise, however, was never fulfilled. Whether due to a deterioration in health or the shifting tides of political expediency, the Shāh remained in the capital and abandoned the intended summons.

The Báb, fully aware—and having already confirmed through personal experience—that Ḥájí Mírzá Áqásí, the Grand Vizier, would by every means and under any pretext strive to obstruct any meeting between the Sovereign and Himself, resolved to eliminate any

¹ Muḥammad Shāh Qájár (r. 1834–1848) was the third sovereign of the Qájár dynasty in Persia. His reign coincided with the emergence of the Bábí Faith, a new religious movement that profoundly challenged the established order.

² Ḥasan Khán Sālár: A prominent Qájár nobleman and military commander, Ḥasan Khán Sālár was the son of ‘Alí Mardán Khán, a leading tribal chieftain. Appointed governor of Khurásán under Muḥammad Shāh Qájár, he later rose in rebellion against the central government around 1847–1850, in defiance of the increasingly unpopular Prime Minister, Ḥájí Mírzá Áqásí. Declaring himself the rightful sovereign, he mobilized tribal forces and seized control of large swathes of northeastern Iran. His revolt, however, was eventually quelled during the early reign of Náṣiri’-d-Dín Shāh, and he was executed in 1850. His uprising formed part of the turbulent backdrop to the Báb’s ministry and the widespread discontent that characterized the final years of Muḥammad Shāh’s rule.

possible pretext for delay or inaction. In a spirit of clarity and candour, and lest any failure to act be imputed to the monarch, He addressed Muḥammad Shāh directly in this Epistle. In it, He set forth the gravity of the hour, reminded him of his solemn pledge, and called upon him to fulfil his covenant by summoning Him to Ṭihrán that a meeting might take place."³ That audience, however, was never granted.

What follows is a provisional English rendering of this sacred Epistle—comprising two parts—translated with utmost reverence and care. The original text is published in *‘Ahd-i A‘lá*, pp. 279–281.

Part I

The Bab reveals:

“He is the Most Exalted, the Most High

Praise be to God—He Who is worthy of all Glorification—Who, by virtue of the loftiness of the revelation of His Mercy, hath singled out His Chosen Ones through grievous tribulations, such that, were but a single drop from the oceans of these afflictions to fall upon the mountains, they would be crushed and reduced to dust. To Him be praise, in a measure consonant with His Transcendent Majesty, and upon Muḥammad and His Kindred be all laudation, as is their due—for He, verily, is the Almighty, the All-Praised.

The purpose of the inscription of this page upon parchment is this: that a Letter had been addressed unto the presence of His Most Exalted Holiness—may the glory of His Transcendent Majesty be eternally exalted—and was entrusted to one of the devoted friends of God, who, immediately upon its receipt, was to deliver it into that hallowed presence and entreat permission to enter into His August Audience.

Since it was made contingent upon the movement of the Imperial Convoy, the excuse for non-attendance was inquired into, and the impediment hath now been removed. Nevertheless, I remain watchful for a response to shine forth from that sanctified Court. Should His Imperial Majesty himself deign to assume this burden in person, the hope of receiving a reply—coupled with the bestowals of His exalted presence, may His glory be eternally sustained—would be even greater.

³ *‘Ahd-i A‘lá*, p. 279.

The intent is that, through the efforts of him who hath borne this toil in drawing nigh unto the presence of the Shadow of God⁴, His Majesty may deign to peruse the page and may graciously pardon the substance of the conventional flatteries of this nether world.

Verily, we are God's, and unto Him shall we return. And praise be to God, the Lord of all worlds.

21st of the month of Ramaḍán, 1263 A.H. (circa 30 August 1847)."

An Epistle of the Báb to Muḥammad Shāh Qájár From Mákú (Part I): Transcription from a Typed Copy

هو العلی الاعلی

حمد خداوندی را سزاوار است که از علو ظهور رحمت خود مخصوص گردانیده اولیاء خود را به مصائب عظیمه که اگر یک قطره از ابجر آن مصائب بر جبلها نازل می شد همه را مندرک میساخت فله الحمد كما هو اهل و اثني لمحمد آله كما و هو مستحقه انه عزیز حمید غرض از نگارش این صفحه قرطاس اینکه صفحه ای بحضور حضرت اقدس ادام الله اجلاله العالی نوشته شده به مردی از دوستان حق زحمت داده که به مجرد وصول بحضور برده و استدعای اذن حضور را نموده چونکه منوط به حرکت موکب همایون فرموده اند عذر عدم حضور را حال مستفسر شده و مانع مرتفع است ولی علی ای حال مراقب جواب بوده که از ساحت قدس لامع گردد ولی هرگاه خود متحمل این زحمت شوند رجاء جواب با اقتران به عنایات حضرت

شهریاری ادام اجلاله العالی زیاده است غرض هر کس متحمل این زحمت است در قرب حضور حضرت ظل الله صفحه را ملاحظه فرموده از جوهریات تعارفات کونیه عفو فرمایند فانا الله و انا الیه راجعون و الحمد لله رب العالمین . ۲۱ ر

(رمضان)

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⁴“Shadow of God” (ẓillu’lláh): An honorific title traditionally claimed by Muslim sovereigns, particularly in the Persian and Ottoman contexts, signifying their role as the earthly representative of divine authority. In Qájár Iran, monarchs such as Muḥammad Shāh adopted this title to legitimize their rule as divinely sanctioned, presenting themselves as protectors of religion and justice. The concept draws upon Qur’anic and Islamic metaphysical notions of kingship, wherein the ruler is perceived as a reflection or shadow of God's will upon earth.

Part II

The Bab Reveals:

“He is the King, the Omnipotent, the Compassionate

May My heart be a ransom for thee, O thou lord of sovereignty and power, O almighty and most compassionate one!

Praise and thanksgiving—beyond all measure and compare—be unto the Most Holy Essence of the Lord of all Dominion, Who hath ever been sanctified in the reality of His Inmost Essence above the attributes of all else besides Him.

And by reason of the appearance of His Might and Sovereignty, did bring into being all created things from the realm of “no-thingness” (lā min shay’)⁵ through His Will and the sixfold appearances of Divine Creative Action,⁶ until all atoms might become resplendent through the splendor of the Light of His Creative Will, yearning to behold the robes of the beauty of His Manifestation, and trembling in awe before His Justice, Nor do they behold a thing in anything save His Appearance, which is more manifest than every thing.

Blind be the eye that beholdeth Thee not, while Thou hast ever been watchful over it. And lost is the servant who hath no share of Thy Love. I seek refuge, O My Lord, in Thy Presence, from Thy Wrath, and unto Thee do I flee, hoping for Thy Bounty and the vastness of Thy Mercy. I beseech Thee, through Muḥammad and His Kindred, to vouchsafe unto me a Glance from Thee, nigh and tender, befitting the majesty of Thy Might. Verily, Thou art the All-Bounteous, the Ever-Bestowing.

⁵ The phrase *lā min shay’* (lit. “not from a thing”) is a Qur’anic expression (cf. Qur’án 19:9) denoting the realm of absolute nothingness or non-being, often used in mystical theology to describe the divine act of creation *ex nihilo* and the utter dependency of contingent existence.

⁶ In the metaphysical cosmology articulated by the Báb and further developed by Bahá’u’lláh, the arc of descent (*qaws-i-nuzúl*) delineates the process by which divine creative energy is progressively unfolded from the unmanifest realm to the world of creation. God is the Unknowable Essence, the Hidden Treasure—the source of all being—utterly beyond human comprehension or approach; He can only be known through His Will as manifested by His chosen Intermediaries. This ontological descent comprises seven stages (the seven stages of divine creation): **Will of God/Will** – the primal intention of God, revealed to humanity through His Manifestations; **Determination** – the initial delimitation of the Will; **Destiny** – the specification of the form that creation will assume; **Decree** – the formalization of that destined form; **Permission** – the divine consent for existence; **Term** – the temporal limit or allotted span of existence; and **Book** – the archetypal record of all created things, often associated with the Preserved Tablet (*Lawḥ-i-Mahfūz*). These stages represent the modalities through which the infinite and unknowable Will of God is articulated and actualized within the temporal realm. See Nader Saiedi, *Logos and Civilization: Spirit, History, and Order in the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh* (Bethesda, MD: University Press of Maryland, 2000), pp. 131–134.

From the moment I departed the court of nearness until now, which is the day marking the middle of the exalted month of Sha‘bān⁷, at every instance I have been expectantly awaiting that the bell of thy bounty might be set ringing with the call of: “Glorified be He Who carried [His servant] by night!”;⁸

That the peacock of the majesty of thy inmost essence might warble with the cry of: “Then (He) drew nigh and came down”;⁹

And that the birds of Paradise of thy essence might chant in dulcet tones: “And was at a distance of but two bows or nearer still”;¹⁰

And that the cock of Ephredous¹¹ of thy selfhood might trill with the melody: “Is it that man shall have whatsoever he desireth? Nay, to God belongeth the end and the beginning.”¹²

Yet it was by reason of the revolution of the celestial spheres, and to the decrees of Him Who proclaimed¹³, “Were it not for Thee, I would not have created the heavens,”¹⁴ and by reason of the vicissitudes and the doubts of a people perverse and bewildered, and of portents sinister and effaced—such as are derived from the baleful configurations of the stars—that the sovereign attention was withheld, and the One (i.e., the Báb) was left to dwell alone in the mountain of MáKú, within the spacious land of the sovereign realm.

Alas! Alas! By Him in Whose hand is My soul! Were I to have known of this station, I would never have recognized thee, O My soul!¹⁵ And yet I have no doubt that the vastness of thy bounty would never countenance such a thing. For the son of the Messenger of God—may the blessings of God be upon Him and His Kindred—despite the knowledge he possesseth, which none today within thy realm can match, standeth before thee in a station more abased than that of the sons of the kings of the earth. By thy might! Wert one of them to descend upon thee, thou wouldst never have

⁷ Sha‘bān, the eighth month of the Islamic lunar calendar, fell in July 1847 CE; its midpoint corresponded to late July of that year.

⁸ Qur‘án 17:1. A reference to the Night Journey (*Isrā‘*) of the Prophet Muḥammad from Mecca to Jerusalem.

⁹ Qur‘án 53:8. Describes the Prophet’s nearness to the Divine during the heavenly ascent (*Mi‘rāj*).

¹⁰ Qur‘án 53:9. A reference to the closeness of the Prophet to God during the *Mi‘rāj*, symbolized by the nearness of “two bows’ length or nearer.”

¹¹ “Ephredous” (Arabic: الإفریدوس) is a stylized rendering of Firdaus, a term of Persian origin widely adopted into Arabic and Qur‘anic usage to signify the loftiest station of Paradise. In Islamic cosmology, al-Firdaus al-A‘lā (“the highest Paradise”) is described as the most exalted and intimate realm of divine nearness. The Báb here invokes it with an esoteric inflection—possibly as “Ephredous”—to evoke both its sublime majesty and the veiled, transcendent realities that lie beneath its shadow. The expression “the sombre shadows of Ephredous” intimates a metaphysical descent from the zenith of Paradise into the realms of limitation, mortality, or concealment, in keeping with the imagery of ontological gradation found throughout the Báb’s writings.

¹² Qur‘án 53:24-25. Emphasizes that all desires are subject to God’s ultimate authority, for to Him belongs the beginning and the end.

¹³ A reference to the Prophet Muḥammad.

¹⁴ Alludes to the divine creative sovereignty expressed in Qur‘án 6:101 and 2:117, affirming that creation is by God’s will alone.

¹⁵ The phrase “Were I to have known of this station, I would never have recognized thee, O My soul” conveys the Báb’s realization that the profound trials and sufferings He endured have brought Him into a fuller, more intimate awareness of His own soul and its divine reality. These hardships, rather than obscuring His essence, served to purify and illuminate it, drawing Him nearer to God and deepening His spiritual station. This expresses the transformative power of adversity in revealing the soul’s true nature and its relationship with the Divine.

commanded that he be cast into prison. But now the decree hath been fulfilled as He hath willed. Unto God do I complain of My sorrow and grief, and upon Him do I rely in My solitude and estrangement. Sufficient is He as a Protector and Trustee.

A page of supplications and visitation was inscribed under the burden of intense grief and heartfelt sorrow. It is my hope that, by reason of my abasement and poverty, it may attract the glances of thy favor. Two scrolls, received from two of the devout and learned Siyyids, were presented before thy sacred presence. Forasmuch as both are known unto thee by their own hand, it is earnestly hoped that they may dispel the doubts of the perverse and become a means of nearness.¹⁶

Exalted is God above that which they ascribe unto Him!"

An Epistle of the Báb to Muḥammad Shāh Qájár From Mákú (Part II): Transcription from a Typed Copy

هو الملك المقتدر العظوف

فدا فؤادك من في ملكوت ملكك يا ذا السلطان المقتدر الرؤف حمد و سپاس بی قیاس ذات اقدس مالک الملکی را سزا است که لم یزل بوجود کینونیه خود مقدس بوده از نعت ماسوای خود و لایزال بر شان ذاتیت خود هست و موجودی در ساحت قدس او نیست و منزّه است از نعت مادون خود و از جهت ظهور قدرت خود و ملک خود ابداع فرموده ممکنات لامن شیئی بمشیت و ظهوراتها الستة تا آنکه کل ذرات لائح شوند به اشراق نور اختراع او و مشتاق گردند بمشاهده قصص جمال طلعت او و خائف گردند از عدل او و نبینند شینی در شیئی الا ظهور او را که اظهر است از هر شیئی عمیت عین لا تراك و انت لم تزل علیها رقیباً و خسرت ... عبد لا یكون له من حبك نصیباً و اعوذ بحضرتک یا مولای من سخطک و الیک و اهرب رجائاً لوجود و سعة رحمتک و انتشفع بمحمد آله الیک لعز کبریائیتک فانظر الی بنظرة قریبة بما یلیق لسلطان عزتک انک انت الجواد الوهاب

از حین حرکت از ساحت قرب الی الان که یوم نصف شهر شعبان المعظم است أنا فأنأ مترصد بوده که ناقوس عنایت حضرتت بنداء سبحان الذی اسری ناطق و طاقوس عزت کینونیتت بصوت ثم دنی فتدلی مشرق و اطيّار فردوس ذاتیتت بتغرد فکان قاب قوسین او ادنی متغرد و دیک افرینوس انیتت به تغنی ام للانسان ما تمنی الله الاخره و الاولی مترنم گردد ولی از گردش افلاک و قضاهاى حضرت لولاک لما خلقت الافلاک لاجل تغییرات و شبهات خلق منکوس مدهوش و طوالع منحوسه مطموسه بوده که علت تاخیر توجهات سلطانی گشته و سبب سکون در جبل ماکو وحده باسعه ارض ملک شهریاری شده فاه آه فوالذی نفسی بیده لو علمت بهذا المقام ما عرفتك نفسی و لا شک لی ان سعة جود حضرتک لا ترضى بذلك لان ابن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله و مع علمه الذی لا یساویه الیوم احد فی ملکک لیس لدیک اذل موقفاً من ابناء ملوک الارض ولو ان واحداً منهم نزل علیک فو عزتک لا تأمر فی حقّه بالسجن ولكن الآن قضی ما قضی الی الله اشکو بئى و حزنی و علیه اعتمد فی وحدتی و غربتی و کفی به ولیاً و وکیلاً. صفحه مناجاتی و زیارتی از شدت حزن قلبی نگارش شده امید که از قبل عجز و فقرم منظور نظر حضرتت افتد و دو ملفوفه از دو سید عالم موحد رسید ایفاد حضور شد چون هر دو معروفند نزد حضرتت بخطهما امید که رافع شبهات مؤتفکه ناس گردد و سبب قرب شود و تعالی الله عما یصفون

¹⁶ "Nearness" (qurb) in the Writings often denotes spiritual proximity to the Manifestation of God through recognition, love, and obedience—hallmarks of true faith. In this instance, the Báb implies that the Shah, upon seeing the handwriting of two trusted figures, might draw closer to the Manifestation Himself.