

Cover

Tablet
to
the Chief
(Súriy-i-Ra'ís)

by

Bahá'u'lláh

Title Page

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Bahá'í Faith

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Tablet to the Chief (Súriy-i-Ra'ís)

IN HIS NAME, THE ALL-GLORIOUS!

1.

Hearken, O Chief, ^[1] to the voice of God, the Sovereign, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. He, verily, calleth aloud between heaven and earth, summoning all mankind unto the scene of transcendent glory. Neither thy grunting, nor the barking of those around thee, nor the opposition of the hosts of the world can withhold the Almighty from achieving His purpose. The whole world hath been set ablaze by the Word of thy Lord, the All-Glorious, a Word softer than the morning breeze. It hath been manifested in the form of the human temple, and through it God hath quickened the souls of the sincere among His servants. In its inner essence, this Word is the living water by which God hath purified the hearts of such as have turned unto Him and forgotten every other mention, and through which He draweth them nigh unto the seat of His mighty Name. We have sprinkled it upon the people of the graves, and lo, they have risen up, with their gaze fixed upon the shining and resplendent Beauty of their Lord.

2.

Thou hast, O Chief, committed that which hath caused Muḥammad, the Apostle of God, to lament in the most sublime Paradise. The world hath made thee proud, so much so that thou hast turned away from the Face through Whose brightness the Concourse on high hath been illumined. Soon thou shalt find thyself in manifest loss! Thou didst conspire with the Persian Ambassador to harm Me, though I had come unto you from the source of majesty and grandeur with a Revelation that hath solaced the eyes of the favoured ones of God.

[1] This Tablet was revealed in Arabic in honour of Ḥájí Muḥammad Ismá'íl-i-Káshání, entitled Dhabíḥ (Sacrifice) and Anís (Companion) by Bahá'u'lláh, and addresses 'ÁlÍ Páshá, the Ottoman Prime Minister, referred to here as Ra'ís (Chief or Ruler).

3.

By God! This is the Day wherein the undying Fire crieth out from within all created things: "The Best-Beloved of the worlds is come!" And before all things there standeth a Moses, hearkening to the Word of thy Lord, the Almighty, the All-Knowing. Were We to divest Ourselves of the mortal raiment which We have worn in consideration of your weakness, all that are in heaven and on earth would offer up their souls for My sake. To this thy Lord Himself doth testify. None, however, can perceive it save those who have detached themselves from all things for love of their Lord, the Almighty, the Most Powerful.

4.

Hast thou imagined thyself capable of extinguishing the fire which God hath kindled in the heart of creation? Nay, by Him Who is the Eternal Truth, couldst thou but know it. Rather, on account of what thy hands have wrought, it blazed higher and burned more fiercely. Erelong will it encompass the earth and all that dwell therein. Thus hath it been decreed by God, and the powers of earth and heaven are unable to thwart His purpose.

5.

The day is approaching when the Land of Mystery ^[2] and what is beside it shall be changed, and shall pass out of the hands of the King, and commotions shall appear, and the voice of lamentation shall be raised, and the evidences of mischief shall be revealed on all sides, and confusion shall spread by reason of that which hath befallen these captives at the hands of the hosts of oppression. The course of things shall be altered, and conditions shall wax so grievous, that the very sands on the desolate hills will moan, and the trees on the mountain will weep, and blood will flow out of all things. Then wilt thou behold the people in sore distress. ^[3]

^[2] Adrianople.

^[3] Sulṭán 'Abdu'l-'Azíz lost both his throne and his life in 1876. During the subsequent war with Russia (1877–1878), Adrianople was occupied by the enemy and the Turks experienced a violent bloodbath.

6.

O Chief! We revealed Ourselves unto thee at one time upon Mount Tíiná, and at another time upon Mount Zaytá, ^[4] and yet again in this hallowed Spot. Following, however, thy corrupt inclinations, thou didst fail to respond and wert accounted with the heedless. Consider, then, and call thou to mind the time when Muḥammad came with clear tokens from Him Who is the Almighty, the All-Knowing. The people were wont to pelt Him with stones from hidden places and in the markets, and they rejected the signs of God, thy Lord and the Lord of thy forefathers. The learned also denied Him, as did their followers, and likewise the kings of the earth, as thou hast heard from the tales of old. Among those kings was Chosroes, ^[5] to whom Muḥammad sent a blessed epistle summoning him unto God and forbidding him from misbelief. Verily, thy Lord knoweth all things. Following the promptings of his evil and corrupt desires, however, Chosroes waxed arrogant before God and tore up the Tablet. He, verily, is accounted among the inmates of the nethermost fire.

7.

Was it in Pharaoh's power to stay the hand of God from exercising His sovereignty when he acted wantonly in the land and was of the transgressors? From within his own house and in spite of his will We brought forth Him Who conversed with God. Well able are We to achieve Our purpose. Recall, moreover, how Nimrod kindled the fire of impiety that its flames might consume Abraham, the Friend of God; We delivered Him, however, through the power of truth and seized Nimrod with the fury of Our wrath. Say: The Oppressor ^[6] put to death the Beloved of the worlds to quench the light of God amongst the people and to debar them from the wellspring of life eternal in the days of thy Lord, the Gracious, the Most Bountiful.

[4] Literally, "the Mount of Figs" and "the Mount of Olives", cf. Qur'án 95:1.

[5] Chosroes II, the Sasanian monarch who reigned in Persia during the lifetime of Muḥammad.

[6] Muḥammad Sháh of Iran.

8.

We, too, have revealed the Cause of God in His cities and raised aloft His remembrance amidst them that truly believe in Him. Say: This Youth hath come to quicken the world and unite all its peoples. The day is approaching when that which God hath purposed will have prevailed and thou shalt behold the earth transformed into the all-glorious paradise. Thus hath it been inscribed by the Pen of Revelation upon this weighty Tablet.

9.

Forsake Thy mention of the Chief, O Pen, and call to remembrance Anís, that intimate of the love of God who severed himself from the wayward and the infidel. He tore the veils asunder in such wise that the inmates of Paradise could hear them being rent. Glorified be God, the Sovereign, the Powerful, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

10.

O nightingale! Incline thine ear unto the voice of the All-Glorious on this night when armed troops have surrounded Us while We remain in a state of utmost joy. O would that our blood might be shed upon the earth and our bodies cast upon the dust in the path of God! This, indeed, is My desire and the desire of whosoever hath sought Me and attained unto My most wondrous, Mine incomparable Kingdom.

11.

Know thou, O servant, that one day, upon awakening, We found the beloved of God at the mercy of Our adversaries. Sentinels were posted at every gate and no one was permitted to enter or leave. Indeed, they perpetrated a sore injustice, for the loved ones of God and His kindred were left on the first night without food. Such was the fate of those for whose sake the world and all that is therein have been created. Woe betide the perpetrators and those who led them into such evil! Erelong will God consume their souls in the fire. He, verily, is the fiercest of avengers.

12.

The people surrounded the house, and Muslims and Christians wept over Us, and the voice of lamentation was upraised between earth and heaven by reason of what the hands of the oppressors had wrought. We perceived

that the weeping of the people of the Son exceeded the weeping of others—a sign for such as ponder.

13.

One of My companions offered up his life, cutting his throat with his own hands for the love of God, an act unheard of in bygone centuries and which God hath set apart for this Revelation as an evidence of the power of His might. ^[7] He, verily, is the Unconstrained, the All-Subduing. As for the one who thus slew himself in 'Iráq, ^[8] he truly is the King and Beloved of Martyrs, and that which he evinced was a testimony from God unto the peoples of the earth. Such souls have been influenced by the Word of God, have tasted the sweetness of His remembrance, and are so transported by the breezes of reunion that they have detached themselves from all that dwell on earth and turned unto the Divine Countenance with faces beaming with light. And though they have committed an act which God hath forbidden, He hath nevertheless forgiven them as a token of His mercy. He, verily, is the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Compassionate. So enraptured were these souls by Him Who is the All-Compelling that the reins of volition slipped from their grasp, until at last they ascended to the dwelling of the Unseen and entered the presence of God, the Almighty, the All-Knowing.

14.

Say: This Youth hath departed out of this country and deposited beneath every tree and every stone a trust, which God will ere long bring forth through the power of truth. Thus hath the True One come and the command of Him Who is the Ordainer, the All-Wise, been fulfilled. The hosts of earth and heaven are powerless to resist His Cause, nor can all the kings and rulers of the world ever frustrate His purpose. Say: Adversity is the oil which feedeth the flame of this Lamp and by which its light is increased, did ye but know. Indeed, the repudiation of the froward serveth but to proclaim this Faith and to spread the Cause of God and His Revelation throughout the world.

[7] Hájí Ja'far-i-Tabrízí; he was prevented in time from ending his life.

[8] Siyyid Ismá'íl of Zavárih.

15.

Great is your blessedness, inasmuch as ye have forsaken your homes and wandered the land for the love of your Lord, the Almighty, the Ancient of Days, until ye entered the Land of Mystery at a time when the fire of oppression was ablaze and the croaking of the raven of discord had been raised. Ye are My partners in My tribulations, for ye were present with Us during the darksome night in which the hearts of those who testify to the unity of God were agitated. Ye entered this land for the sake of Our love, and departed therefrom through Our command. By the righteousness of God! Because of you the earth itself glorieth over heaven. How excellent is this most sublime, this glorious and exalted bounty! Ye have been deprived of your nest, O birds of eternity, for the sake of your Lord, the Unconstrained, but your true abode is beneath the wings of the grace of the All-Merciful. Blessed are they that understand.

16.

O My Dhabíh! May the breaths of the spirit waft upon thee and upon such as have sought communion with thee, inhaled from thee the sweet fragrance of My presence, and hearkened unto that whereby the hearts of the true seekers are sanctified. Render thanks unto God inasmuch as thou hast attained unto the shores of this Most Great Ocean, and give ear to the very atoms of the earth proclaiming: "This is the Best-Beloved of the worlds!" The dwellers of the earth have wronged Him and failed to recognize the One Whose name they ceaselessly invoke. Lost are such as have remained heedless and have opposed Him for Whose loved ones it would have behoved them to offer up their lives, how much more for His own luminous and resplendent Beauty!

17.

Be thou patient, though thy heart be consumed in its separation from God, for He hath granted thee an exalted station in His presence. Nay, thou art even now standing before His face, and We are imparting unto thee, through the tongue of might and power, such words as even the ears of the sincere ones have been deprived of hearing. Say: Were He to utter but one word, that word alone would exceed in sweetness all the sayings of men.

18.

Had Muḥammad, the Apostle of God, attained this Day, He would have exclaimed: "I have truly recognized Thee, O Thou the Desire of the Divine Messengers!" Had Abraham attained it, He too, falling prostrate upon the ground, and in the utmost lowliness before the Lord thy God, would have cried: "Mine heart is filled with peace, O Thou Lord of all that is in heaven and on earth! I testify that Thou hast unveiled before mine eyes all the glory of Thy power and the full majesty of Thy law! I bear witness, moreover, that through Thy Revelation the hearts of the faithful are well assured and contented." Had Moses Himself attained it, He, likewise, would have raised His voice saying: "All praise be to Thee for having lifted upon me the light of Thy countenance and enrolled me among them that have been privileged to behold Thy face!"

19.

Consider the people and their condition. Reflect upon the things that their mouths have uttered and that their hands have wrought in this blessed, this most holy and peerless Day. They that have tarnished the good name of the Cause of God and turned unto the Evil One are accursed of all created things and are numbered among the inmates of the fire. Verily, whosoever hath hearkened to My call shall remain unperturbed by the clamour of all that are on earth; and whosoever is influenced by the words of anyone beside Me hath never heard My call. By God! Such a man is deprived of entering My Kingdom, is debarred from My realms of majesty and power, and is of them that are in utter loss.

20.

Sorrow not for that which hath befallen thee. Thou hast borne for My love that which most people have never endured. Thy Lord knoweth and is informed of all. He was with thee in the assemblages and gatherings, and heard that which flowed from the wellspring of thy heart in remembrance of thy Lord, the All-Merciful. This, indeed, is a token of His bountiful favour.

21.

Erelong will God raise up from among the kings one who will aid His loved ones. He, verily, encompasseth all things. He will instil in the hearts the love

of His loved ones. This, indeed, is irrevocably decreed by One Who is the Almighty, the Beneficent.

22.

We beseech God to gladden the hearts of His servants through thy call, to make thee an ensign of guidance in His lands, and to assist through thee those who have been brought low. Heed not the one who raised a loud clamour and he who raiseth it even now. Let thy Lord, the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Generous, be all-sufficient unto thee. Relate unto My loved ones that which thou hast seen and learned of the tale of this Youth, and convey unto them that which We have imparted unto thee. Verily, thy Lord assisteth and watcheth over thee at all times and under all conditions. The blessings of the Concourse on high surround thee, and the kindred and the leaves of the holy family who circle round the celestial Tree extol thee with a wondrous praise.

23.

O Pen of Revelation! Call Thou to remembrance him ^[9] whose letter reached Us during this darksome night. He it is who wandered from region to region until he entered the City ^[10], seeking the shelter of the mercy of his Lord, the Almighty, the Most High. Eagerly awaiting the favours of his Lord, he dwelt therein for a night, but departed therefrom the following morning as bidden by God, filling with sorrow the heart of this Youth. To this the Almighty is Himself a witness.

24.

Great is thy blessedness, for thou hast received the wine of utterance from the hand of the All-Merciful, and became so enraptured by the sweet fragrance of the Best-Beloved as to renounce thy comfort and to be numbered with them that have hastened unto His Paradise, the Dawning-Place of the signs of thy Lord, the Gracious, the Peerless. Happy the one who hath quaffed the wine of inner mysteries from the countenance of his Lord and been intoxicated by this pure and crystal draught. By God! It

[9] Anís.

[10] Adrianople.

causeth every true believer to soar in the heaven of majesty and grandeur, and transmuteth every doubt into certainty.

25.

Grieve not at what hath befallen thee, but put thy whole trust in God, the Almighty, the All-Knowing, the Wise. Raise thy house upon the solid foundation of divine utterances, and give praise to thy Lord. He, verily, shall suffice thee above all the peoples of the earth.

26.

God hath, in truth, inscribed your names upon a Tablet wherein are enshrined the hidden secrets of all that hath been. Erelong shall the faithful call to remembrance your exile and all your journeys in His path. He, verily, loveth those who love Him, and is the helper of the sincere. By the righteousness of God! The eyes of the Concourse on high are fixed upon you and their fingers point towards you. Thus doth the bounty of your Lord encompass you. Would that the people might recognize that which hath escaped them in the days of God, the All-Glorious, the All-Praised.

27.

Render thanks unto God for having aided thee to know Him and to enter within the precincts of His court at a time when the ungodly surrounded the family of thy Lord and His loved ones, and expelled them from their homes with manifest cruelty, intending to separate us at the shore of the sea. Verily, thy Lord is aware of that which lieth concealed within the breasts of the unbelievers. Say: Even should ye tear our bodies asunder, ye could not banish from our hearts the love of God. We were of a truth created for sacrifice, and in this do we take pride before all creation.

28.

O thou who art set aglow with the fire of the love of God! Know thou that thy letter hath reached Us and that We have been apprised of its contents. We beseech God to confirm thee in His love and in His good pleasure, to assist thee in the promotion of His Cause, and to number thee with such as have arisen for the triumph of His Faith.

29.

As to thy question regarding the soul: Know thou that among the people there are numerous treatises and manifold views as to its stations. Among these are the soul of the kingdom, the soul of the dominion, the celestial soul, the divine soul, the sanctified soul, as well as the benevolent soul, the contented soul, the soul pleasing unto God, the inspired soul, the irascible soul, and the concupiscent soul. Every group hath its own pronouncements concerning the soul and We are disinclined to dwell upon the sayings of the past. Verily, with thy Lord is the knowledge of the former and latter generations.

30.

Would that thou wert present before Our throne to hear from the Tongue of Grandeur itself that which thou desirest and scale the loftiest heights of knowledge by the grace of Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise! The ungodly, however, have intervened between us. Take heed lest thou be grieved thereby. Be content with that which hath been ordained by an irrevocable decree, and be of them that endure with patience.

31.

Know that the soul which is common to all men cometh forth following the commingling of things and after their maturation, as thou dost observe in the germ: once it hath developed to its predestined stage, God manifesteth the soul that was latent within it. Thy Lord, verily, doeth what He willeth and ordaineth what He pleaseth.

32.

As to the soul which is intended, in truth it hath been called forth by the Word of God and is such that, if it be kindled with the fire of the love of its Lord, neither the waters of opposition nor the oceans of the world can quench its flame. That soul is indeed a fire ablaze in the tree of man which proclaimeth: "No God is there but Him!" Whosoever hearkeneth unto its call is verily of those who have attained unto Him. And when it casteth off its earthly frame, God shall raise it up again in the most excellent of forms and cause it to enter a sublime paradise. Thy Lord, of a certainty, hath power over all things.

33.

Know, furthermore, that the life of man proceedeth from the spirit, and the spirit turneth to wheresoever the soul directeth it. Ponder upon that which We have revealed unto thee that thou mayest recognize the Soul of God which hath appeared above the Dayspring of bounty invested with manifest sovereignty.

34.

Know also that the soul is endowed with two wings: should it soar in the atmosphere of love and contentment, then it will be related to the All-Merciful, and should it fly in the atmosphere of self and desire, then it will pertain to the Evil One; may God shield and protect us and protect you therefrom, O ye who perceive! Should the soul become ignited with the fire of the love of God, it is called benevolent and pleasing unto God, but should it be consumed with the fire of passion, it is known as the concupiscent soul. Thus have We expounded this subject for thee that thou mayest obtain a clear understanding.

35.

O Pen of the Most High! Recount unto him who hath turned unto Thy Lord, the All-Glorious, that which shall enable him to dispense with the sayings of men. Say: Spirit, mind, soul, and the powers of sight and hearing are but one single reality which hath manifold expressions owing to the diversity of its instruments. As thou dost observe, man's power to comprehend, move, speak, hear, and see all derive from this sign of his Lord within him. It is single in its essence, yet manifold through the diversity of its instruments. This, verily, is a certain truth. For example, if it directeth its attention to the means of hearing, then hearing and its attributes become manifest. Likewise, if it directeth itself to the means of vision, a different effect and attribute appear. Reflect upon this subject that thou mayest comprehend the true meaning of what hath been intended, find thyself independent of the sayings of the people, and be of them that are well assured. In like manner, when this sign of God turneth towards the brain, the head, and such means, the powers of the mind and the soul are manifested. Thy Lord, verily, is potent to do whatsoever He pleaseth.

36.

All that We have mentioned here hath been elucidated in the Tablets We have revealed in response to questions regarding the disconnected letters of the Qur'án. Ponder them that thou mayest comprehend that which hath been sent down from the Kingdom of Him Who is the Almighty, the All-Praised. Thus have We chosen to be concise in this Tablet. We beseech God to acquaint thee through this brief exposition with that which words can never hope to exhaust, and to give thee to drink of the limitless oceans from this cup. Thy Lord, verily, is the All-Bountiful and unassailable in His power.

37.

O Pen of the Ancient of Days! Call Thou to remembrance 'Alí ^[11], he who sojourned with Thee in 'Iráq until the Daystar of the world departed therefrom. He forsook his home to attain the court of Thy presence at a time when We were captive in the hands of such as have been deprived of the sweet savours of the All-Merciful. Grieve not at what hath befallen Us and thee in the path of God. Rest assured and persevere. He, verily, rendereth victorious those who love Him, and His might is equal to all things. Whoso turneth unto Him brighteneth thereby the faces of the Concourse on high, and unto this God Himself is My witness.

38.

Say: O people, do ye imagine that, after rejecting the One through Whom the religions of the world have been made manifest, ye still bear allegiance to the Faith of God? By the righteousness of God! Ye are accounted among the inmates of the Fire. Thus hath the decree been recorded in the Tablets by the Pen of God. Say: Never will the barking of dogs deter the Nightingale from warbling its melodies. Ponder awhile that perchance ye may discover a path leading to the Eternal Truth.

39.

Say: Magnified art Thou, O Lord my God! I entreat Thee by the tears Thy lovers have shed in their longing after Thee, and by the yearning of those who cry out in their separation from Thee, and by Thy Best-Beloved Who

[11] Mírzá 'Alí-Akbar-i-Naráqí.

hath fallen into the hands of Thine adversaries, to graciously assist those who have sought refuge beneath the sheltering wings of Thy favour and loving-kindness, and who have yearned for no other Lord except Thee.

40.

We have forsaken our homes, O Lord, in our eagerness to meet Thee and in our longing to be united with Thee. We have traversed land and sea to attain the court of Thy presence and to give ear to Thy verses. When we arrived at the shores of the sea, however, we were held back from Thee, as the ungodly intervened between us and the light of Thy countenance.

41.

O Lord! Dire thirst hath seized us, and with Thee are the soft-flowing waters of eternal life. Potent art Thou to do what pleaseth Thee. Deny us not the object of our quest. Write down then for us the recompense decreed for such of Thy servants as enjoy near access to Thee and are wholly devoted to Thy will. Make us so steadfast in Thy love that naught shall keep us back from Thee or deter us from Thine adoration. Powerful art Thou to do Thy pleasure. Thou, verily, art the Almighty, the Most Generous.

Note on the Translation

Wherever possible, translations made by Shoghi Effendi have been incorporated in the present volume.... The committees and individuals appointed to prepare the translations faced the challenge of rendering the balance of the Text in a manner at once faithful to the meaning of the original and consistent with the exalted English style established by the Guardian for the translation of Bahá'u'lláh's matchless utterance.

Passages translated by Shoghi Effendi

Para	Passage	Source
1	"Hearken, O chief ... the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting."	Shoghi Effendi. <i>The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh</i> , The Unfoldment of World Civilization.
2	"Thou hast, O Chief, committed that ... manifest loss!"	Shoghi Effendi. <i>The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh</i> , The Unfoldment of World Civilization.
5	"The day is approaching ... in sore distress."	Shoghi Effendi. <i>The Promised Day Is Come</i> , What of Turkey and Persia?.
11	"the loved ones of God ... on the first night without food."	Shoghi Effendi. <i>God Passes By</i> , Chapter X.
12	"The people surrounded the house ... wept over Us"	Shoghi Effendi. <i>God Passes By</i> , Chapter X.
12	"We perceived that the weeping ... such as ponder."	Shoghi Effendi. <i>God Passes By</i> , Chapter X.
13	"unheard of in bygone centuries ... the power of His might"	Shoghi Effendi. <i>God Passes By</i> , Chapter X.
13	"King and Beloved of Martyrs"	Shoghi Effendi. <i>God Passes By</i> , Chapter VIII.
14	"Say: This Youth hath departed ... the power of truth"	Shoghi Effendi. <i>God Passes By</i> , Chapter X.

Tablet to the Chief (Súriy-i-Ra'ís) by Bahá'u'lláh

18	“Had Muḥammad ... Thy law!”	Shoghi Effendi. <i>The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh</i> , Bahá'u'lláh.
18	“Had Moses ... Thy face!”	Shoghi Effendi. <i>The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh</i> , Bahá'u'lláh.
21	“Ere long will God ... the Almighty, the Beneficent”	Shoghi Effendi. <i>The Promised Day Is Come</i> , Recognition of Kingship.