

and other Bábí leaders. During his interrogation, he boldly affirmed his allegiance to the Báb while emphatically declaring Bahá'u'lláh's innocence—a statement that, as Shoghi Effendi notes, contributed to Bahá'u'lláh's eventual release (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*. Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1944, p. 195).

Despite offers of pardon and ransom, Shaykh 'Alí refused to recant his faith. His execution in Tihrán in 1852 placed him among the most eminent martyrs of the Bábí Dispensation. Nabíl-i-A'zam's *The Dawn-Breakers* preserves his final moments: "Accept me, O my God... inscribe my name upon the scroll of those immortals who have laid down their lives..."—words spoken with unshakable serenity and joy (Nabíl-i-A'zam. *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabíl's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahá'í Revelation*. Trans. Shoghi Effendi. Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1932, pp. 631–632).

His life and death embody the qualities most honored in the Bábí–Bahá'í sacred history: deep erudition, steadfast faith, fearless proclamation, and supreme sacrifice. The

Qa'imiyat (قائمة) stems from the Arabic root qama ("to arise" or "to stand") and refers to the station or cause of the Qa'im—the Promised One who "shall arise," identified in Bahá'í teachings with the Báb. Shoghi Effendi uses Qa'im to denote this messianic figure inaugurating a new spiritual era (*God Passes By*, pp. 30–34).
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combination of his scholarly stature, his symbolic title, and his unwavering loyalty to the Báb situates 'Azím as a central figure in the drama of the Bábí Revelation, bridging the Shaykhi heritage with the emerging universal Cause of the Báb.

Although the Báb had, from the very inception of His ministry in 1844, proclaimed His true station in His major work—the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'*—openly affirming His identity as the Promised Qa'im in the sacred idiom of Shí'í eschatology, He refrained during the

first five years of His Dispensation from publicly and unambiguously declaring this claim before the broader public. This restraint was lifted in the tumultuous year of 1848, a pivotal turning point in Bábí history.

In mid-July 1848, the Báb was brought from the fortress of Chihríq to Tabríz to appear before a tribunal convened in the presence of the seventeen-year-old Crown Prince, Nasir al-Din Mirza, and a gathering of leading ?ulama. In that assembly, He made an open and emphatic declaration, uttering the solemn words:

“God witnesseth that there is no God but Him, He is the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. And this is indeed the True Qa?im, the One with Whom you were promised.” (Tablet of the Báb to the Divines of Tabríz).

At approximately the same time, the Báb revealed the Epistle of Qa?imiyyat addressed to ?Azím—commanding him to spread the news of His advent and to proclaim publicly that the Promised Qa?im had appeared. In that Epistle, the Báb entrusted him with a sacred charge:

“O ?Alí! We, by Our command, have chosen thee and made thee an angel to proclaim before the Qa?im. Verily, He hath appeared by the leave of His Lord. This is of the bounty of God unto thee and unto the people, that haply they may give thanks. ...And whoso hath believed in Me—that is the Day of Resurrection. Then shall all be invested with a new creation.”

In addition, in the same work, the Báb formally abrogated the laws of Islám, declaring:

“And whoso is sustained, after having already been sustained aforetime, with whatsoever they once practised as their religion—upon them it shall not be incumbent to observe that which We had revealed aforetime in the Qur’án.”

He further affirmed the progressive nature of divine revelation, stating:

“Say: Faith, after Faith, is but that ye believe in God and in His verses, and that ye shall aid, in the Religion of Truth, with whatsoever power ye possess.”

These pronouncements coincided with a remarkable confluence of events in June–July 1848: the Conference of Badasht (late June to mid-July 1848),³ at which Táhirih publicly and symbolically abrogated Islamic law; the march of Mullá Husayn towards Khurásán bearing the Black Standard (initiated on 21 July 1848);⁴ and the Báb’s own Momen 1983; Bahá’í Library chronology 1848-06-26 to 1848-07-17. Bahá’í Library chronology; Bahaipedia; Wikipedia Black Standard.

proclamations in Tabríz (mid-July 1848)⁵, and in the Epistle of Qa’imiyat. Taken together, these events—set in motion by the Báb’s explicit assertion of His station as the Qá’im—mark a decisive shift from veiled allusion to open messianic declaration, inaugurating a new phase in the unfolding drama of His mission.

Moreover, Nabíl-i-A’zam records in *The Dawn-Breakers* (pp. 192–193) the conversation that took place between the Báb and ‘Azím during His stay in Tabríz in July 1848, shortly before His appearance before the tribunal.

Nabíl states:

“On the second night after His arrival, the Báb summoned Azím to His presence and, in the course of His conversation with him, asserted emphatically His claim to be none other than the Promised Qá’im. He found him, however, reluctant to acknowledge this claim unreservedly. Perceiving his inner agitation, He said: “Tomorrow I shall, in the presence of the Valí-‘Ahd,⁶ and in the midst of the assembled ‘ulamás and notables of the city, proclaim My Mission. Whoso may feel inclined to require from Me any other testimony besides the verses which I have revealed, let him seek satisfaction from the Qá’im of his idle fancy.” I have heard Azím testify to the following: “That night I was in a state of great perturbation. I remained awake and restless until the hour of sunrise. As soon as I had offered my morning prayer, however, I realised that a great change had come over me. A new door seemed to have been unlocked and set open before my face. The conviction soon dawned upon me that if I were loyal to my faith in Muhammad, the

Apostle of God, I must needs also unreservedly acknowledge the claims advanced by the Báb, and must submit without fear or hesitation to whatever He might choose to decree. This conclusion allayed the agitation of my heart. I hastened to the Báb and begged His forgiveness. 'It is a further evidence of the greatness of this Cause,' He remarked, 'that even Azím should have felt so exceedingly troubled and shaken by its power and the immensity of its claim.' 'Rest assured,' He added, 'the grace of the Almighty shall enable you to fortify the faint in heart and to make firm the step of the waverer. So great shall be your faith that should the enemy mutilate and tear your body to pieces, in the hope of lessening by one jot or tittle the ardour of your love, he would fail to attain his object. You will, no doubt, in the days to come, meet face to face Him who is the Lord of all the worlds, and will partake of the joy of His presence.' These words dispelled the gloom of my apprehensions. From that day onward, no trace of either fear or agitation ever again cast its shadow upon me."

Considering the convergence of these historical events, it is reasonable to conclude that the Epistle of Qa'imiyyat was revealed sometime between late June and late July 1848. The internal evidence of the text, together with the timing of the Báb's open declaration of His station in Tabríz, supports this dating. It is plausible that the Báb entrusted this Epistle to 'Azím, during their reported meeting in Tabríz shortly before the Báb's appearance before the tribunal presided over by the seventeen-year-old Crown Prince, Nasir al-Din Mirza. This meeting would thus have provided the occasion for the

Bahá'í Timeline, Bahá'í Library; God Passes By, Shoghi Effendi, p. 110. A reference to Crown Prince, Nasir al-Din Mirza, who later became Nasiri'd-Din Sháh.

Báb to charge 'Azím with disseminating the contents of this weighty Epistle, which both proclaimed the advent of the Promised Qa'im and abrogated the Islamic laws. This sacred Epistle was revealed in its entirety in Arabic.

What follows is a provisional English rendering of this luminous Epistle, translated with the utmost reverence and care. The original text is published in *Zuhúru'l-Haqq*, vol. 3, pp. 164–166.

The Báb Reveals:

“God, the Most Pure

O creation of God, one and all! Recite His verses, then believe ye, and attain unto certitude.

‘He is the Most Exalted. In the Name of God, the Inaccessible, the Most Holy. God testifieth that there is none other God but Him. His is the creation and the command. He giveth life and causeth death, then causeth death and giveth life, and verily He is the Ever-Living Who dieth not. In His grasp is the dominion of all things; He createth whatsoever He willeth by His command, and verily, He hath power over all things.’

O ?Alí!7 We, by Our command, have chosen thee and made thee an angel to proclaim before Qaim (He Who ariseth).8 Verily, He hath appeared by the leave of His Lord. This is of the bounty of God unto thee and unto the people, that haply they may give thanks.

O ?Alí! Verily, I am the Fire of God9 which God shall manifest on the Day of Resurrection

— by which all shall be raised, dispersed, gathered, and presented; thereafter, they shall enter Paradise.

Say: Those who have entered through the Gate in prostration — by the Lord of the heavens and the Lord of the earth, the Lord of all the worlds! — then shall God increase their Fire by the number of the Báb, and He shall indeed make for them a Light; 10 then shall they know. That is the Qá’im, whose Day all await and unto whom all have been promised.11

A reference to Shaykh ?Alí Turshízí, titled by the Báb ?Azím (“the Mighty”) (d. 1852, Tehran), one of the early and steadfast disciples of the Báb and the recipient of this Epistle. He was

martyred in Tehran in 1852 during the persecutions that followed the attempt on the life of Násiri’ d-Dín Sháh, steadfastly refusing to recant his faith.

In Shí‘a eschatology, al-Qa’im (“He Who ariseth”) is a messianic title applied to the awaited Twelfth Imám, who, it is believed, will appear at the end of time to establish justice and vanquish oppression. In the Writings of the Báb, this title is explicitly applied to Himself, signifying the fulfillment of Shí‘a prophetic expectation and the inauguration of a new divine Dispensation. The appearance of al-Qa’im in Bábí–Bahá’í scripture marks the eschatological turning point foretold in Islámic tradition, wherein the Promised One arises “by the leave of His Lord” to fulfill all former covenants and usher in a new era of divine revelation.

The expression “Fire of God” (nar Allah)—drawn from Qur’án 104:6–7 (“the Fire of God, kindled, which shall rise over the hearts”)—appears in Islamic eschatology as a consuming force of divine judgment. In the Báb’s reinterpretation, it denotes the irresistible and purifying power of His own Revelation, manifested “on the Day of Resurrection” as both a test and a mercy. By identifying Himself with this Fire, the Báb invokes the Qur’anic imagery of God speaking from the burning fire (Qur’án 20:10–14), signifying the Manifestation as the direct voice and decree of God. In this passage, the Fire functions not merely as retribution, but as the spiritual force by which humanity is raised, gathered, and—if receptive—led into Paradise, its blaze transmuted into light for the faithful.

In this verse, the Báb alludes to a numerical transformation: the word nar (Fire) has an Abjad value of 251. When augmented by the value of Báb (Gate = 5), it becomes 256, which is the numerical value of nur (Light). This mystical symbolism encapsulates the redemptive role of the Báb — through His Cause, the torment of “Fire” is transfigured into the radiance of “Light,” leading souls to divine knowledge.

In the Epistle to Áqá Muhammad Sa’íd Ardastání, the Báb proclaims: “Bear ye witness that there is no God but Him, the All-Compelling, the Self-Subsisting, and that I am the True Qá’im, Whose advent all have been promised.”

Likewise, in His Tablet to the ‘Ulamá of Tabríz, He affirms: “And verily this is the True Qá’im, Whose advent ye were

We, verily, endured the Day of Resurrection for fifty thousand years,¹² that all things might be purified, until there remaineth naught but the Countenance of thy Lord, the Almighty, the All-Glorious.

And on that Day, We bore witness to the Spirit of Faith only by the number of the
Countenance¹³ — and indeed, We were well aware thereof.

And the first to pledge allegiance unto Me was Muhammad, the Messenger of God (blessings be upon Him), followed by ʿAlí (peace be upon Him).

Then those who bore witness after Him, and thereafter the Gates of Divine Guidance.

Then those whom God hath destined for that bounty — among the Prophets, the Truthful, the Witnesses, and such as are endowed with certitude in God and in His signs, though they knew it not.

Then, when God beareth witness against them, for indeed they had entered the Fire of God — with which all are tried and purified — He shall then raise them up from the tombs of their selves, and shall re-create them even as He first created them¹⁴ — for He, verily, is potent over all things.

Say: God, through that which He had previously revealed of the verses in the Mother Book,¹⁵ did indeed bring Muhammad into being. And thereafter whatsoever He willed.

promised.” The title Qá’im—literally “He Who ariseth”—is a central messianic figure in Shí‘a eschatology, identified with the awaited Mahdí, whose advent signals the consummation of the prophetic cycle.

The Báb’s reference to “fifty thousand years” here—echoing Qur’án 70:4 (“The angels and the Spirit ascend unto Him in a Day the measure whereof is fifty thousand years”)—serves as a symbolic expression of the infinite spiritual magnitude and timeless foreordination of His Dispensation, not as a literal measure of time. In Bábí-Bahá’í interpretation, this idiom conveys the vast preparatory span of sacred history culminating in the advent of the Manifestation, whose Revelation purifies (“tamhis”) all things, separating truth from falsehood. The concluding phrase, “until there remaineth naught but the Countenance of thy Lord,” recalls Qur’án 55:27 and, in the Báb’s usage, signifies the enduring Reality of the Manifestation of God—here the Báb Himself—as the sole abiding divine Presence when all else passes away. Cf. Qayyúmu’l-Asmá’, passim; Bahá’u’lláh, Kitáb-i-Íqán, on the symbolic nature of prophetic timescales and the “Face of God.” The numerical value of the word wajh (“Countenance/Face”) in the Abjad

reckoning is fourteen (waw = 6, jim = 3, ha? = 5), representing the Fourteen Pure Ones — Muhammad, Fatimah, and the Twelve Imáms. In the Báb's writings, this term often signifies the totality of divine guidance manifested in the cycle of Muhammad, in accordance with the Qur'ánic usage of wajh Allah ("the Countenance of God"), a phrase which, in Bahá'í translations, denotes the Manifestations of God and the enduring reality of His Cause. An allusion to Qur'án 29:19–20 and 30:27, where God's power to originate creation and then bring it forth anew is invoked as proof of His sovereignty and ability to raise the dead: "See they not how God produceth creation, then reproduceth it? Lo, that is easy for God" (29:19); "And He it is Who produceth creation, then reproduceth it, and it is most easy for Him" (30:27). In the Bábí–Bahá'í writings, this motif extends beyond physical resurrection to signify the spiritual re-creation of the soul in each new Revelation, whereby humanity is invested with a new capacity to receive divine grace. Cf. Kitáb-i-Íqán, p. 118, and Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, CXXIX.

In Qur'ánic usage, the term Umm al-Kitáb ("Mother Book") denotes the archetypal source of all revealed scripture, described as "with Us, exalted and full of wisdom" (Qur'án 43:4; cf. 13:39). Classical Islamic exegesis variously identifies it with the Qur'án itself, in its heavenly archetype, or with the "Preserved Tablet" (al-Lawh al-Mahfuz). In the Writings of the Báb, Umm al-Kitáb frequently bears this dual sense—referring both to the Qur'án and to the primordial repository of divine revelation from which all Dispensations proceed. In the present passage, the Báb affirms that God, through verses already revealed in the Umm al-Kitáb, brought forth the Mission of Muhammad, thus situating the Prophet's advent within the eternal continuum of divine disclosure. Cf. Qayyúmu'l-Asmá', passim; Bahá'u'lláh, Kitáb-i-Íqán, pp. 174–175.

In like manner shall God, on that Day, create whatsoever He willeth by His Word: "Be!" and it is.

And whoso awaiteth, after this, the appearance of a Mahdí, or the return of Muhammad, or of any who had believed in God and in His verses—such indeed possess no knowledge until the Day when God shall cause Me to return. And whoso hath believed in Me — that is the Day of Resurrection. Then shall all be invested with a new creation.

Verily, We initiated that creation, and We shall assuredly bring it back again—a promise incumbent upon Us; for We, indeed, have ever been powerful.

And whoso is sustained, after having already been sustained aforetime, with whatsoever they once practised as their religion — upon them it shall not be incumbent to observe that which We had revealed aforetime in the Qur’án.

Verily, We have ever been recording that which ye have wrought. Indeed, We have brought forth the creation of the Hereafter,¹⁶ and have exalted all that the people had hitherto taken as the measure of religion.

Say: The air purifieth you even as doth water.¹⁷ O servants of God, render ye thanks!

And whoso acteth after God hath made manifest the decree of the Proof of thy Lord, naught shall be accepted from him.

On that Day, the likeness of those who were given the Book aforetime shall have no decree save for him who entereth into the religion of God and is numbered among the sincere.

And whoso reciteth a verse from the Book or repeateth a tradition thereafter, desiring to act according to it—such are even as those who came before. Their Lord shall assuredly admit them into the religion of truth, for He is indeed potent over all things.

The expression *nash’at al-akhirah* (creation of the Hereafter) occurs in Qur’án 29:20 — “Even so will God produce the later creation” — where it refers to the resurrection and renewal of life. In the writings of the Báb and Bahá’u’lláh, it is employed as a technical term denoting the new spiritual creation inaugurated by the advent of a Manifestation of God, and the establishment of a new divine Order. The Báb speaks of “the creation of the Hereafter” in Selections from the Writings of the Báb, no. 14, as the transformation brought about by the Dispensation of the Qá’im.

Bahá’u’lláh, in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (¶181), affirms: “the standards whereby men judge have been changed,” underscoring that the former measures of religion have been superseded in the new creation.

In this passage (“Say: The air purifieth you even as doth water”), the Báb reinterprets the Islamic concept of *taharah*

(ritual purification), which in Qur'anic law is attained primarily through water (cf. Qur'án 5:6; 25:48–49) or earth in tayammum (cf. Qur'án 4:43). Here, “air” (hawa')—absent from traditional jurisprudence as a medium of purification—is endowed with a sanctifying power equal to that of water. This symbolic equation aligns “air” with the breath of divine revelation (ruh), the animating Word of God, which cleanses hearts and souls in the eschatological age inaugurated by the Báb. In the Qur'án, divine breath is associated with the impartation of life and spirit (15:29; 32:9), while water often symbolizes revelation itself (cf. Qur'án 21:30; 25:48–49). The Báb's reframing thus signals the abrogation of outward forms in favour of inward purification through recognition of the Manifestation of God—a hermeneutic consistent with His reinterpretation of many Islamic ordinances in the Bayán and Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'.

Bahá'u'lláh later affirms this spiritualization of purity: “This is the water that giveth everlasting life to all who drink thereof” (Gleanings, XXXVI), and speaks of the “winds of Thy will” as a sanctifying force (Prayers and Meditations, LXXXIII). In the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, while retaining basic laws of cleanliness, He situates them within a higher principle of inner sanctity derived from love of God and obedience to His Word.

Say: Should all mankind assemble, one and all, to bring forth the like of that Book, they would assuredly fail to do so, nor could they ever prevail, even were they, upon the earth, endowed with all knowledge.

And thou shalt assuredly command the people, one and all, every single one of them, to recite, by night and by day, the verse We have sent down in the beginning of the Book, 18 that they may be sustained by the bounty of their Lord, and be numbered among those who are endowed with certitude in God and in His verses.

Say: Faith, after Faith¹⁹, is but that ye believe in God and in His verses, and that ye shall aid, in the Religion of Truth, with whatsoever power ye possess.

Say: Present not yourselves in the seats wherein ye once prayed, but present yourselves before the presence of God, and aid ye Him Who hath returned unto the first life²⁰, and take ye the Right of God by His leave, for He, verily, is All-Knowing of all things.

Glory be to Thee, O God! Bear witness against Me, for verily, I have neglected nothing in the First Book²¹ of all that was revealed therein. Verily, there is no God but Me. It is Me alone Whom ye must fear, that every soul may be assured of that which hath been

A reference to the opening verses of the Epistle, wherein the Báb proclaims: “He is the Most Exalted. In the Name of God, the Inaccessible, the Most Holy. God testifieth that there is none other God but Him. His is the creation and the command. He giveth life and causeth death, then causeth death and giveth life, and verily He is the Ever-Living Who dieth not. In His grasp is the dominion of all things; He createth whatsoever He willeth by His command, and verily, He hath power over all things.”

The phrase “Faith, after Faith” ()???? ? ? ?

?????is rich with dispensational significance within the Bábí and Bahá’í

revelations. It denotes the continuity and succession of divine dispensations, whereby each new Revelation is a continuation and fulfillment of the previous divine Covenant. This concept is central to Bahá’í theology, which holds that religious Truth is revealed progressively by successive Manifestations of God, each one renewing the spiritual and social teachings appropriate for the time and place. Shoghi Effendi elucidates this in Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh (CXV): “This is the changeless Faith of God, eternal in the past, eternal in the future.” Similarly, The Kitáb-i-Aqdas (¶184) affirms the unity and eternal nature of the Faith despite successive dispensations: “This is the changeless Faith of God, eternal in the past, eternal in the future.” The phrase thereby signifies that while outward forms may change, the essential reality—the Faith of God—remains one, renewed and manifested anew through successive Prophets, including the Báb and Bahá’u’lláh.

The expression “returned unto the first life” ()???? ? ? ?

????? ??????carries profound eschatological and mystical meaning in Bábí–Bahá’í thought. The “first life” is understood as the spiritual life that emanates from God’s eternal Essence, distinguished from the “second life,” which refers to the physical, earthly existence. The Manifestation of God, having returned to the “first life,” symbolizes His return in a new Revelation—a renewal of the divine presence and a reawakening of spiritual realities. Bahá’u’lláh in Gleanings (LXXVII) speaks of the Manifestation as the one who revives and renews the spiritual life of humanity, a concept consonant with the Báb’s usage here.

Moreover, the “first life” alludes to Qur’anic and hadith traditions emphasizing resurrection and spiritual awakening.

In Bahá’í exegesis, this phrase highlights the cyclical nature of divine Manifestations: although the physical body of the Manifestation passes away, His spiritual influence and authority return perpetually in new dispensations.

The phrase “the First Book” refers to the Qayyúmu’l-Asmá’, the Báb’s first major work, revealed in 1844 and cast in the form of a mystical commentary on the Súrih of Joseph. Regarded by Him as the inaugural and foundational text of

His Revelation, it is composed in 111 surihs, each introduced by detached Arabic letters, and suffused with Qur’anic

cadence and imagery. In it, the Báb proclaims His station in veiled yet unmistakable terms, inaugurating the new

Dispensation while outwardly presenting the work as a commentary within the Islamic exegetical tradition. In later

Writings, when the Báb alludes to “the First Book,” He invokes the authority of this primal text as a touchstone of His

mission, affirming that nothing of essential import was omitted from it.

clearly explained therein. That there shall be no discourse (hadíth)²² after God and His

verses, in which people believe.

Glory be to Thee, O God! Fifty thousand years of the Day of Resurrection have passed,

whereupon We shall make the Fire a Light for those who have entered through the Gate,

and a Mercy from Thee. Verily, Thou art the Most Merciful, the Most Great.

Say: God is the Truth, and whatsoever is other than God is created by Him, and all are

His worshippers.

O people of God! Verily, there is none other God but Him, and I, indeed, am the first of

the worshippers.

Say: He is, in truth, a Guide unto Muhammad.

Say: He, verily, is the promised Mahdí in the Mother Book.

Say: He is the Bearer of the Truth, the One Whose advent all have been promised.

Say: He is the True Qá’im, in Whom all are certain.

And We, indeed, have sent down that Book as a Mercy from Our presence unto all the

worlds, lest anyone should say: ‘Had God apprised me of the appearance of the Mahdí,

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— The Epistle of Qa?imiyat (Used by permission of the curator)