

Tablet to the Premier [Ali Pasha]: Tablet study outline

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Name of Tablet in Arabic or Persian: Lawh-i-Ra'ís. This is the one of three Tablets revealed for Alí Páshá, and the second with this name. It is sometimes mixed up with the Súriy-i-Ra'ís.

Translation into English: The Tablet of the Ruler (an exact translation of the word "Ra'ís" is not easy to find. It can mean "boss," "president," "ruler," "chief," "head," or "leader"). One sentence of this Tablet has been translated in World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, 194. A full provisional translation, published in Star of the West Vol.2 No.2, April 9 1911, page 3, is available online at Bahá'i-library.org/provisionals/lawh.rais.2.html. (Now at <http://www.bahai-library.com/writings/bahauallah/slh/rais2.html>)

Significance of Name: Revealed for the "Ra'ís," the ruler, of Turkey. One student observes that "the title 'Chief (Ra'ís)' which Bahá'u'lláh uses to address Alí Páshá is indicative of his attachment to worldly glory and honor."

Tablet was revealed in: Persian

Name of Recipient: Alí Páshá, the Grand Vizir of Turkey and Bahá'u'lláh's "great adversary" (Taherzadeh 34)

Reason for Revelation of the Tablet:

To condemn Alí Páshá for his cruelty and unjust treatment of the innocent Bahá'ís; to remind the Páshá that his glory will disappear like that of a puppet at the end of the puppet show, whereas the glory of those who follow the Cause of God will be eternal; to tell the Páshá that his inhumane treatment of the Bahá'ís has caused two to commit suicide and another two to die from the poor conditions of the prison (Shoghi Effendi says that three died, but Bahá'u'lláh only mentions two of them); to call the Páshá and the people of the world to awaken from their ignorance and embrace the Cause of God.

Date of Revelation: Shortly after the death of three Bahá'ís, who died due to the harsh conditions of the prison (_Bahá'u'lláh: King of Glory_ 283 and _God Passes By_ 187), which would place it at the end of summer, 1868. The _Basic Bahá'í Chronology_ places this Tablet at around the end of August.

Place of Revelation: The Most Great Prison, Akká

Role of Amanuensis or Secretary:

No mention is made of any direct role in the revelation or transcription of the

Tablet. However, Taherzadeh mentions that, after its revelation, Mírzá Áqá Jan asked Bahá'u'lláh what would happen if, despite all the cruelties and the injustices to which Alí Páshá has subjected Bahá'u'lláh and His followers, the Páshá were to repent. Bahá'u'lláh's "emphatic response" was that whatever had been stated in the Tablet would inevitable be fulfilled.

Other Tablets revealed at about the same time:

There were many Tablets revealed around this time, most notably the epistles to the Kings, such as the Súriy-i-Ra'ís, Lawh-i-Fu'ád, Second Tablet to Napoleon III, Tablet to Pope Pius IX, Tablet to Czar Alexander II, and the Tablet to Queen Victoria.

Style, subject, and genre of the Tablet: [?]

I. Tone of Tablet:

1. Tablets with the tone of command and authority.

II. Subjects Covered by Tablet:

4. Tablets concerning matters of government and world order, and those addressed to the kings.

6. Tablets exhorting men to education, goodly character and divine virtues.

III. Literary Genre of Tablet:

1. Letter to an individual.

Voice of Tablet: [?] Bahá'u'lláh

Outline Contents of Tablet:

(This summary taken from a provisional translation.) Bahá'u'lláh rebukes Alí Páshá for his cruel and inhumane treatment of Bahá'u'lláh's followers. He tells the Páshá that men like him have regarded God's manifestations as wrong-doers, and this Páshá regards Bahá'u'lláh as a guilty wrong-doer. But the Manifestations and those who believe in God have not committed the crimes of which they're accused. It is rather the names of these rulers that are lost in history, just as this Páshá's name, too, will be lost to history.

The Páshá has persecuted a number of people who showed no opposition to him. Even the guards admitted that the Bahá'ís were innocent. The Bahá'ís were locked in a gloomy dungeon and given neither bread nor water. They have now been in this dungeon for some time, even though all the people of Adrianople would testify that they are innocent and saintly. Upon being exiled one Bahá'í killed himself, and a second drowned himself during the voyage. Yet the government is increasing their hardships and giving them nothing to eat but inedible bread.

Bahá'u'lláh says that He is not telling the Páshá these things to make him

mindful, because he is and will remain heedless. Their humiliation will not last, just as the current glory and power the Páshá enjoys will not last. To exemplify the ephemeralness of earthly glories, Bahá'u'lláh relates His famous

story of watching the puppet show as a child, in which many glorious personalities and events played across the stage but at the end all went back into the same box and were gone. In like wise, this earth has no lasting importance in the eyes of God, and all of the earth's treasures, glories, and haughty rulers will disappear in the tomb. In light of this, Bahá'u'lláh calls to

the Páshá to cease opposing the Bahá'ís and God's Cause.

Bahá'u'lláh then calls to the people of the Earth to listen to His message and

ponder the above story. All things must pass away, and only the cause of God is ultimately important. Bahá'u'lláh quotes the philosopher Avicenna (Ibn Sina)

to the effect that the people of the Earth must be admonished and must wake up. Bahá'u'lláh then speaks to the Páshá again, telling him that he has not succeeded in conquering Bahá'u'lláh, but rather it is he, the Páshá, who is in

truth defeated. Bahá'u'lláh reminds the Páshá that He had asked for but one favor: to grant Him an audience of ten minutes to verify the proof of Bahá'u'lláh's statements and His mission, a request the Páshá ignored.

Bahá'u'lláh concludes by telling the Páshá that two of His followers had just

died, and the guards had stolen the money given to them to arrange for a proper funeral. If the Páshá truly understood his low state and the true station of Bahá'u'lláh, he would leave everything to come and live with the Bahá'ís in the prison.

Principal themes of the Tablet:

The predominant theme is the ephemeralness of this earthly life. Bahá'u'lláh tells Alí Páshá not to rely on his pomp and glory, for they will pass away.

Only

the Cause of God is eternal. The second major theme would seem to be the innocence of the Bahá'ís and the injustice of the Páshá's treatment of them.

Tablet's relationship to other tablets:

One student observes that it is "interesting to compare the notion of tests and difficulties in Lawh-i-Salmán, a believer, and those tests Bahá'u'lláh says

Alí

Páshá faces. In the former He tells a believer to pay no attention to them.

God

does what He pleaseth and so long as we are obedient, moving in line with His will, we will move ahead in spite of physical life's ups and downs. To the non-believer (or disobedient 'believer') these same kinds of tests and difficulties

are shown as a terrible threat. He stresses the instability and futility of earthly life, that pomp and glory here will vanish, 'that God's chastisement will assail him from every direction and confusion overtake his peoples and government, and affirms that the wrath of God has ... (permanently) surrounded him."

Also, as one of the epistles to the rulers of the world, this Tablet fits in with

the overall themes of informing the rulers of His station and Message and calling them to accept the new Revelation, reminding them that their earthly rule is not ultimately real, for only God holds true power. Another student adds that "here we can see another proposition by Bahá'u'lláh to establish the validity of His Revelation. He gave similar proposals to Nasiri'd-Din Sháh of Persia in the *Lawh-I-Sultán*, and a similar proposal was given to Mullá Hassan 'Amu who came to see Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdad representing a group of dignitaries of Shiite, but in both cases there was no response from the other side."

Biography or bio note of the recipient of the Tablet:

A brief biography of Alí Páshá has been included in an appendix to *Bahá'u'lláh*:

King of Glory_, 469:

Muhammad Amin 'Alí Páshá was born in Istanbul in February 1815, the son of a shopkeeper. Because he had acquired a knowledge of French, he was able to obtain a post in the translation bureau of the Ottoman government in 1833. He was sent on several foreign missions and was the Turkish Counsellor in London, 1838-9. In 1840, he became Minister of Foreign Affairs for a short time and returned to this position in 1846 under Rashid Páshá. In 1852 he became Grand Vizier for a few months and then, in 1854, he was again appointed Foreign Minister and, in 1855, Grand Vizier (until the following year). He continued in high office for most of the rest of his life, being Foreign Minister in 1857-8, July 1861 and November 1861 to 1867, and Grand Vizier in 1858-9, 1861 and 1867-71. After Fu'ád Páshá's death in 1869, he combined the posts of Foreign Minister and Grand Vizier. He was a successful diplomat and one of a small group of Turkish statesmen determined to steer Turkey into the nineteenth century, but he tended to be authoritarian and overbearing in his personal manner. He died on 7 September 1871 after three months of illness.