

Ishráqát (Splendors)

Bahá'u'lláh

Original English



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Ishráqát (Splendors)

This is the Epistle of God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting

He is God, exalted is He, the Lord of wisdom and utterance.

Praise be unto God, incomparable in majesty, power and beauty, peerless in glory, might and grandeur; too high is He for human imaginations to comprehend Him or for any peer or equal to be ascribed unto Him. He hath clearly set forth His straight Path in words and utterances of highest eloquence. Verily He is the All-Possessing, the Most Exalted. When He purposed to call the new creation into being, He sent forth the Manifest and Luminous Point from the horizon of His Will; it passed through every sign and manifested itself in every form until it reached the zenith, as bidden by God, the Lord of all men.

This Point is the focal center of the circle of Names and marketh the culmination of the manifestations of Letters in the world of creation. Through it have appeared indications of the impenetrable Mystery, the adorned Symbol, He Who standeth revealed in the Most Great Name — a Name which is recorded in the luminous Tablet and is inscribed in the holy, the blessed, the snow-white Scroll. And when the Point was joined to the second Letter¹ which appeareth in the beginning of the *Maṭhání*,² it traversed the heavens of exposition and utterance. Then the eternal Light of God shed its radiance, flared up in the midmost heart of the firmament of testimony and produced two Luminaries. Glorified be the Merciful One, unto Whom no allusion can be made, Whom no expression can define, nor any assertion reveal, nor any evidence describe. He is in truth the Ordainer, the All-Bountiful, both in the beginning and in the end. And He provided for them protectors and defenders from among the hosts of power and might. Verily, He is the Help in Peril, the Mighty, the Unconstrained.

The preamble of this Epistle is being revealed twice, even as was the *Maṭhání*³

1. i.e., the letter “B,” the second letter of the alphabet.

2. The opening chapter of the Qur’án, which begins with the letter “B”: *Bismi’lláhi’r-Raḥmání’r-Raḥím* (In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful). This chapter of the Qur’án was revealed twice, once in Mecca and once in Medina.



ORIGINAL



AUDIO

Praise be unto God Who hath manifested the Point, hath unfolded therefrom the knowledge of all things, whether of the past or of the future — a Point He hath chosen to be the Herald of His Name and the Harbinger of His Great Revelation which hath caused the limbs of all mankind to quake and the splendor of His light to shine forth above the horizon of the world. Verily, this is the Point which God hath ordained to be an ocean of light for the sincere among His servants and a flame of fire to the froward amidst His creatures and the impious among His people — they who bartered away the gift of God for unbelief, and the celestial food for hypocrisy, and led their associates to a wretched abode. These are the people who have manifested sedition throughout the world and have violated His Covenant on the Day when the immortal Being mounted His throne and the Crier raised His Voice from the haven of security and peace in the holy Vale.

O followers of the Bayán! Fear ye the All-Merciful. This is the One Who hath been glorified by Muḥammad, the Apostle of God, and before Him by the Spirit⁴ and yet before Him by the One Who discoursed with God.⁵ This is the Point of the Bayán calling aloud before the Throne, saying: “By the righteousness of God, ye have been created to glorify this Most Great Announcement, this Perfect Way which lay hid within the souls of the Prophets, which was treasured in the hearts of the chosen ones of God and was written down by the glorious Pen of your Lord, the Possessor of Names.”

Say: Die in your wrath, O malicious ones! Verily He Whose knowledge nothing escapeth hath appeared. He Who hath caused the countenance of divine knowledge to be wreathed in smiles is come. Through Him the kingdom of utterance is embellished, every receptive soul hath set his face towards the Lord of Revelations, everyone resting on his knees hath stood up, and every indolent one hath rushed forth to attain the Sinai of assurance. This is the Day that God hath ordained to be a blessing unto the righteous, a retribution for the wicked, a bounty for the faithful and a fury of His wrath for the faithless and the froward. Verily He hath been made manifest, invested by God with invincible sovereignty. He hath revealed that wherewith naught on the earth or in the heavens can compare.

Fear ye the All-Merciful, O people of the Bayán, and commit not that which the followers of the Qur’án have committed — they who in the daytime and in the night season professed belief in the Faith of God, yet when the Lord of all men did appear, turned aside from Him and pronounced so cruel a sentence against Him that, on the Day of Return, the Mother Book sorely bewailed His plight. Call ye to mind and ponder upon their deeds and words, their stations and merits and the things they brought to pass when He Who conversed on Sinai unloosed His tongue, when there was a blast on the Trumpet, whereupon all that are in heaven and on earth swooned away except such as are reckoned among the letters of affirmation.

3. The opening chapter of the Qur’án, which begins with the letter “B”: Bismi’lláhi’r-Raḥmání’r-Raḥím (In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful). This chapter of the Qur’án was revealed twice, once in Mecca and once in Medina.

4. Jesus.

5. Moses.

O people of the Bayán! Abandon your idle fancies and vain imaginings, then with the eye of fairness look at the Dayspring of His Revelation and consider the things He hath manifested, the words He hath divinely revealed and the sufferings that have befallen Him at the hands of His enemies. He is the One Who hath willingly accepted every manner of tribulation for the proclamation of His Cause and the exaltation of His Word. At one time He suffered imprisonment in the land of Tā (Tīhrán), at another in the land of Mím (Mázindarán), then once again in the former land, for the sake of the Cause of God, the Maker of the heavens. In His love for the Cause of God, the Almighty, the All-Bountiful, He was subjected there to chains and fetters.

O people of the Bayán! Have ye forgotten My exhortations, which My Pen hath revealed and My tongue hath uttered? Have ye bartered away My certitude in exchange for your idle fancies and My Way for your selfish desires? Have ye cast away the precepts of God and His remembrance and have ye forsaken His laws and ordinances? Fear ye God and abandon vain imaginings to the begetters thereof and leave superstitions to the devisers thereof and misgivings to the breeders thereof. Advance ye then with radiant faces and stainless hearts towards the horizon above which the Daystar of certitude shineth resplendent at the bidding of God, the Lord of Revelations.

Praise be unto God Who hath made the Most Great Infallibility the shield for the temple of His Cause in the realm of creation, and hath assigned unto no one a share of this lofty and sublime station — a station which is a vesture which the fingers of transcendent power have woven for His august Self. It befitteth no one except Him Who is seated upon the mighty throne of “He doeth what He pleaseth.” Whoso accepteth and recognizeth that which is written down at this moment by the Pen of Glory is indeed reckoned in the Book of God, the Lord of the beginning and the end, among the exponents of divine unity, they that uphold the concept of the oneness of God.

When the stream of words reached this stage, the sweet savors of true knowledge were shed abroad and the daystar of divine unity shone forth above the horizon of His holy utterance. Blessed is he whom His Call hath attracted to the summit of glory, who hath drawn nigh to the ultimate Purpose, and who hath recognized through the shrill voice of My Pen of Glory that which the Lord of this world and of the next hath willed. Whoso faileth to quaff the choice wine which We have unsealed through the potency of Our Name, the All-Compelling, shall be unable to discern the splendors of the light of divine unity or to grasp the essential purpose underlying the Scriptures of God, the Lord of heaven and earth, the sovereign Ruler of this world and of the world to come. Such a man shall be accounted among the faithless in the Book of God, the All-Knowing, the All-Informed.

O thou honored inquirer!⁶ We bear witness that thou didst firmly adhere unto seemly patience during the days when the Pen was held back from movement and the Tongue hesitated to set forth an explanation regarding the wondrous sign, the Most Great Infallibility. Thou hast asked this Wronged One to remove for thee its veils and coverings, to elucidate its mystery and character, its state and position, its excellence, sublimity and exaltation. By the life of God! Were We to unveil the pearls of testimony which lie hid within the shells of the ocean of knowledge

⁶. This Tablet was addressed to Jalíl-i-Khú'í, one of the early believers in Áḡhribajján, Persia. After the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh he broke the Covenant.

and assurance or to let the beauties of divine mystery which are hidden within the chambers of utterance in the Paradise of true understanding, step out of their habitation, then from every direction violent commotion would arise among the leaders of religion and thou wouldst witness the people of God held fast in the teeth of such wolves as have denied God both in the beginning and in the end. Therefore We restrained the Pen for a considerable lapse of time in accordance with divine wisdom and for the sake of protecting the faithful from those who have bartered away heavenly blessings for disbelief and have chosen for their people the abode of perdition.⁷

O thou seeker who art gifted with keen insight. I swear by Him Who attracted the Concourse on High through the potency of His most sublime Word! Verily, the birds abiding within the domains of My Kingdom and the doves dwelling in the rose-garden of My wisdom utter such melodies and warblings as are inscrutable to all but God, the Lord of the kingdoms of earth and heaven; and were these melodies to be revealed even to an extent smaller than a needle's eye, the people of tyranny would utter such calumnies as none among former generations hath ever uttered, and would commit such deeds as no one in past ages and centuries hath ever committed. They have rejected the bounty of God and His proofs and have repudiated the testimony of God and His signs. They have gone astray and have caused the people to go astray, yet perceive it not. They worship vain imaginings but know it not. They have taken idle fancies for their lords and have neglected God, yet understand not. They have abandoned the most great Ocean and are hastening towards the pool, but comprehend not. They follow their own idle fancies while turning aside from God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting.

Say, by the righteousness of God! The All-Merciful is come invested with power and sovereignty. Through His power the foundations of religions have quaked and the Nightingale of Utterance hath warbled its melody upon the highest branch of true understanding. Verily, He Who was hidden in the knowledge of God and is mentioned in the Holy Scriptures hath appeared. Say, this is the Day when the Speaker on Sinai hath mounted the throne of Revelation and the people have stood before the Lord of the worlds. This is the Day wherein the earth hath told out her tidings and hath laid bare her treasures; when the oceans have brought forth their pearls and the divine Lote-Tree its fruit; when the Sun hath shed its radiance and the Moons have diffused their lights, and the Heavens have revealed their stars, and the Hour its signs, and the Resurrection its dreadful majesty; when the pens have unloosed their outpourings and the spirits have laid bare their mysteries. Blessed is the man who recognizeth Him and attaineth His presence, and woe betide such as deny Him and turn aside from Him. I beseech God to aid His servants to return unto Him. Verily He is the Pardoner, the Forgiving, the Merciful.

O thou who hast set thy face towards the Realm on High and hast quaffed My sealed wine from the hand of bounteousness! Know thou that the term "Infallibility" hath numerous meanings and diverse stations. In one sense it is applicable to the One Whom God hath made immune from error. Similarly it is applied to every soul whom God hath guarded against sin, transgression, rebellion, impiety, disbelief and the like. However, the Most Great Infallibility is confined to the One Whose station is immeasurably exalted beyond ordinances or prohibitions and is sanctified from errors and omissions. Indeed He is a Light which is not followed by darkness and a Truth not overtaken by error. Were He to pronounce water to be wine or heaven

⁷. cf. Qur'án 14:33.

to be earth or light to be fire, He speaketh the truth and no doubt would there be about it; and unto no one is given the right to question His authority or to say why or wherefore. Whosoever raiseth objections will be numbered with the froward in the Book of God, the Lord of the worlds. "Verily He shall not be asked of His doings but all others shall be asked of their doings."⁸ He is come from the invisible heaven, bearing the banner "He doeth whatsoever He willeth" and is accompanied by hosts of power and authority while it is the duty of all besides Him to strictly observe whatever laws and ordinances have been enjoined upon them, and should anyone deviate therefrom, even to the extent of a hair's breadth, his work would be brought to naught.

Consider thou and call to mind the time when Muḥammad appeared. He said, and His word is the truth: "Pilgrimage to the House⁹ is a service due to God."¹⁰ And likewise are the daily prayer, fasting, and the laws which shone forth above the horizon of the Book of God, the Lord of the World and the true Educator of the peoples and kindreds of the earth. It is incumbent upon everyone to obey Him in whatsoever God hath ordained; and whosoever denieth Him hath disbelieved in God, in His verses, in His Messengers and in His Books. Were He to pronounce right to be wrong or denial to be belief, He speaketh the truth as bidden by God. This is a station wherein sins or trespasses neither exist nor are mentioned. Consider thou the blessed, the divinely revealed verse in which pilgrimage to the House is enjoined upon everyone. It devolved upon those invested with authority after Him¹¹ to observe whatever had been prescribed unto them in the Book. Unto no one is given the right to deviate from the laws and ordinances of God. Whoso deviateth therefrom is reckoned with the trespassers in the Book of God, the Lord of the Mighty Throne.

O thou who hast fixed thy gaze upon the Dawning-Place of the Cause of God! Know thou for a certainty that the Will of God is not limited by the standards of the people, and God doth not tread in their ways. Rather is it incumbent upon everyone to firmly adhere to God's straight Path. Were He to pronounce the right to be the left or the south to be the north, He speaketh the truth and there is no doubt of it. Verily He is to be praised in His acts and to be obeyed in His behests. He hath no associate in His judgment nor any helper in His sovereignty. He doeth whatsoever He willeth and ordaineth whatsoever He pleaseth. Know thou moreover that all else besides Him have been created through the potency of a word from His presence, while of themselves they have no motion nor stillness, except at His bidding and by His leave.

O thou who soarest in the atmosphere of love and fellowship and hast fixed thy gaze upon the light of the countenance of thy Lord, the King of creation! Render thanks unto God, inasmuch as He hath unraveled for thee that which was hidden and enshrined in His knowledge so that everyone may become aware that within His realm of supreme infallibility He hath not taken a partner nor a counselor unto Himself. He is in truth the Dayspring of divine precepts and commandments and the Fountainhead of knowledge and wisdom, while all else besides Him

8. cf. Qur'án 21:23.

9. Mecca.

10. Qur'án 3:91.

11. Muḥammad.

are but His subjects and under His rule, and He is the supreme Ruler, the Ordainer, the All-Knowing, the All-Informed.

As to thyself, whenever thou art enraptured by the vitalizing breaths of the revealed verses and art carried away by the pure, life-giving water proffered by the hand of the bounty of thy Lord, the sovereign Ruler of the Day of Resurrection, lift up thy voice and say:

O my God! O my God! I yield Thee thanks that Thou hast directed me towards Thyself, hast guided me unto Thy horizon, hast clearly set forth for me Thy Path, hast revealed to me Thy testimony and enabled me to set my face towards Thee, while most of the doctors and divines among Thy servants together with such as follow them have, without the least proof or evidence from Thee, turned away from Thee. Blessing be unto Thee, O Lord of Names, and glory be unto Thee, O Creator of the heavens, inasmuch as Thou hast, through the power of Thy Name, the Self-Subsisting, given me to drink of Thy sealed wine, hast caused me to draw nigh unto Thee and hast enabled me to recognize the Dayspring of Thine utterance, the Manifestation of Thy signs, the Fountainhead of Thy laws and commandments and the Source of Thy wisdom and bestowals. Blessed is the land that hath been ennobled by Thy footsteps, wherein the throne of Thy sovereignty is established and the fragrance of Thy raiment is diffused. By Thy glory and majesty, by Thy might and power, I desire not my sight save to behold Thy beauty, nor my hearing save to hearken to Thy call and Thy verses.

O my God! O my God! Debar not the eyes from that for which Thou hast created them, nor the faces from turning to Thy horizon, or from paying homage at the portals of Thy majesty, or from appearing in the presence of Thy throne, or from bowing down before the splendors of the Daystar of Thy bounty.

I am the one, O Lord, whose heart and soul, whose limbs, whose inner and outer tongue testify to Thy unity and Thy oneness, and bear witness that Thou art God and that there is no God but Thee. Thou didst bring mankind into being to know Thee and to serve Thy Cause, that their station might thereby be elevated upon Thine earth and their souls be uplifted by virtue of the things Thou hast revealed in Thy Scriptures, Thy Books and Thy Tablets. Yet no sooner didst Thou manifest Thyself and reveal Thy signs than they turned away from Thee and repudiated Thee and rejected that which Thou didst unveil before their eyes through the potency of Thy might and Thy power. They rose up to inflict harm upon Thee, to extinguish Thy light and to put out the flame that blazeth in Thy Burning Bush. Their iniquity waxed so grievous that they conspired to shed Thy blood and to violate Thy honor. And likewise acted he¹² whom Thou hadst nurtured with the hand of Thy loving-kindness, hadst protected from the mischief of the rebellious among Thy creatures and the froward amidst Thy servants, and whom Thou hadst set the task of writing Thy holy verses before Thy throne.

Alas! Alas! for the things he perpetrated in Thy days to such an extent that he violated Thy Covenant and Thy Testament, rejected Thy holy Writ, rose up in rebellion and committed that which caused the denizens of Thy Kingdom to lament. Then no sooner had he found his hopes shattered and had perceived the odor of utter failure than he raised his voice and gave tongue to that which caused Thy chosen ones, who are nigh unto Thee, and the inmates of the pavilion of glory, to be lost in bewilderment.

12. Mírzá Yaḥyá.

Thou seest me, O my God, writhing in anguish upon the dust, like unto a fish. Deliver me, have mercy upon me, O Thou Whose aid is invoked by all men, O Thou within Whose grasp lie the reins of power over all men and women. Whenever I ponder my grievous shortcomings and my great trespasses, despair assaileth me from every direction, and whenever I pause to meditate upon the ocean of Thy bounteousness and the heaven of Thy grace and the daystar of Thy tender compassion, I inhale the fragrance of hope diffused from right and left, from north and south, as if every created thing imparteth unto me the joyous tidings that the clouds of the heaven of Thy mercy will pour down their rain upon me. By Thy might, O Thou Who art the Mainstay of the sincere ones and the Desire of them that enjoy near access unto Thee! Thy manifold favors and blessings and the revelations of Thy grace and loving-kindness have truly emboldened me. How, otherwise, can utter nothingness magnify the Name of Him Who hath, by a word, brought creation into being, and how can an evanescent creature extol Him Who hath demonstrated that no description can ever express Him and no word of praise magnify His glory? He hath from everlasting been immeasurably exalted above the understanding of His creatures and sanctified from the conceptions of His servants.

O Lord! Thou beholdest this lifeless one before Thy face; suffer him, through Thy generosity and bountiful favor, not to be deprived of the chalice of immortal life. And Thou seest this afflicted one standing before Thy throne; turn him not away from the ocean of Thy healing. I entreat Thee to enable me at all times and under all conditions to remember Thee, to magnify Thy Name and to serve Thy Cause, though I am well aware that whatever proceedeth from a servant cannot transcend the limitations of his soul, nor beseem Thy Lordship, nor be worthy of the court of Thy glory and Thy Majesty.

Thy might beareth me witness! Were it not to celebrate Thy praise, my tongue would be of no use to me, and were it not for the sake of rendering service to Thee, my existence would avail me not. But for the pleasure of beholding the splendors of Thy realm of glory, why should I cherish sight? And but for the joy of giving ear to Thy most sweet voice, of what use is hearing?

Alas! Alas! I know not, O my God, my Mainstay, my heart's Desire, whether Thou hast ordained for me that which shall bring solace to mine eyes, gladden my bosom and rejoice my heart, or whether Thine irrevocable decree, O King of eternity and the sovereign Lord of all nations, will debar me from presenting myself before Thy throne. I swear by Thy glory and majesty and by Thy dominion and power, the darkness of my remoteness from Thee hath destroyed me. What hath become of the light of Thy nearness, O Desire of every understanding heart? The tormenting agony of separation from Thee hath consumed me. Where is the effulgent light of Thy reunion, O Well-Beloved of such as are wholly devoted to Thee?

Thou seest, O my God, what hath befallen me in Thy Path at the hand of those who have denied Thy Truth, have violated Thy Covenant, caviled at Thy signs, rejected the blessings Thou didst vouchsafe, disbelieved the verses Thou didst send down and have refused to acknowledge the testimony Thou didst fulfill.

O Lord! The tongue of my tongue and the heart of my heart and the spirit of my spirit and my outward and inmost beings bear witness to Thy unity and Thy oneness, Thy power and Thine omnipotence, Thy grandeur and Thy sovereignty, and attest Thy glory, loftiness and authority. I testify that Thou art God and that there is none other God besides Thee. From everlasting Thou

hast been a treasure hidden from the sight and minds of men and shalt continue to remain the same for ever and ever. The powers of earth can never frustrate Thee, nor can the might of the nations alarm Thee. Thou art the One Who hath unlocked the door of knowledge before the faces of Thy servants that they may recognize Him Who is the Daystar of Thy Revelation, the Dawning-Place of Thy signs, the Heaven of Thy manifestation and the Sun of Thy divine beauty. In Thy holy Books, in Thy Scriptures and Thy Scrolls Thou hast promised all the peoples of the world that Thou Thyself shalt appear and shalt remove the veils of glory from Thy face, even as Thou didst announce in Thy words unto Thy Friend¹³ through Whom the Daystar of Revelation shone brightly above the horizon of Hījáz, and the dawning light of divine Truth shed its radiance among all men, proclaiming: "The Day when mankind shall stand before the Lord of the worlds."¹⁴ And before Muḥammad Thou didst impart this glad-tiding unto Him Who conversed with Thee,¹⁵ saying: "Bring forth thy people from the darkness into the light and remind them of the days of God."¹⁶ Moreover Thou didst proclaim this truth unto the Spirit¹⁷ and unto Thy Prophets and Thy Messengers, whether of the remote or more recent past. If all that which Thou hast sent down in glorification of this Most Great Remembrance, this Great Announcement, were to stream forth from the wellspring of Thy most august Pen, the inmates of the cities of knowledge and understanding would be dumbfounded, except such as Thou wouldst deliver through the potency of Thy might and wouldst protect as a token of Thy bountiful favor and Thy grace. I bear witness that Thou hast in truth fulfilled Thy pledge and hast made manifest the One Whose advent was foretold by Thy Prophets, Thy chosen ones and by them that serve Thee. He hath come from the heaven of glory and power, bearing the banners of Thy signs and the standards of Thy testimonies. Through the potency of Thine indomitable power and strength, He stood up before the faces of all men and summoned all mankind to the summit of transcendent glory and unto the all-highest Horizon, in such wise that neither the oppression of the ecclesiastics nor the onslaught of the rulers was able to deter Him. He arose with inflexible resolve and, unloosing His tongue, proclaimed in ringing tones: "He Who is the All-Bountiful is come, riding aloft on the clouds. Advance, O people of the earth, with shining faces and radiant hearts!"

Great indeed is the blessedness of him who attaineth Thy presence, drinketh the wine of reunion proffered by the hand of Thy bounteousness, inhaleth the fragrance of Thy signs, unlooseth his tongue in celebrating Thy praise, soareth high in Thy heavens, is carried away by the sweetness of Thy Voice, gaineth admittance into the most exalted Paradise and attaineth the station of revelation and vision before the throne of Thy majesty.

I beg of Thee by the Most Great Infallibility which Thou hast chosen to be the dayspring of Thy Revelation, and by Thy most sublime Word through whose potency Thou didst call the creation into being and didst reveal Thy Cause, and by this Name which hath caused all other names to

13. Muḥammad.

14. Qur'án 83:6.

15. Moses.

16. Qur'án 14:5.

17. Jesus.

groan aloud and the limbs of the sages to quake, I beg of Thee to make me detached from all else save Thee, in such wise that I may move not but in conformity with the good-pleasure of Thy Will, and speak not except at the bidding of Thy Purpose, and hear naught save the words of Thy praise and Thy glorification.

I magnify Thy Name, O my God, and offer thanksgiving unto Thee, O my Desire, inasmuch as Thou hast enabled me to clearly perceive Thy straight Path, hast unveiled Thy Great Announcement before mine eyes and hast aided me to set my face towards the Dayspring of Thy Revelation and the Fountainhead of Thy Cause, whilst Thy servants and Thy people turned away from Thee. I entreat Thee, O Lord of the Kingdom of eternity, by the shrill voice of the Pen of Glory, and by the Burning Fire which calleth aloud from the verdant Tree, and by the Ark which Thou hast specially chosen for the people of Bahá, to grant that I may remain steadfast in my love for Thee, be well pleased with whatsoever Thou hast prescribed for me in Thy Book and may stand firm in Thy service and in the service of Thy loved ones. Graciously assist then Thy servants, O my God, to do that which will serve to exalt Thy Cause and will enable them to observe whatsoever Thou hast revealed in Thy Book.

Verily Thou art the Lord of Strength, Thou art potent to ordain whatsoever Thou wilt and within Thy grasp Thou holdest the reins of all created things. No God is there but Thee, the All-Powerful, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

O Jalíl! We have unveiled to thine eyes the sea and the waves thereof, the sun and the radiance thereof, the heavens and the stars thereof, the shells and the pearls thereof. Render thou thanks unto God for so great a bounty, so gracious a favor that hath pervaded the whole world.

O thou who hast set thy face towards the splendors of My Countenance! Vague fancies have encompassed the dwellers of the earth and debarred them from turning towards the Horizon of Certitude, and its brightness, and its manifestations and its lights. Vain imaginings have withheld them from Him Who is the Self-Subsisting. They speak as prompted by their own caprices, and understand not. Among them are those who have said: "Have the verses been sent down?" Say "Yea, by Him Who is the Lord of the heavens!" "Hath the Hour come?" "Nay, more; it hath passed, by Him Who is the Revealer of clear tokens! Verily, the Inevitable is come, and He, the True One, hath appeared with proof and testimony. The Plain is disclosed, and mankind is sore vexed and fearful. Earthquakes have broken loose, and the tribes have lamented, for fear of God, the Lord of Strength, the All-Compelling." Say: "The stunning trumpet-blast hath been loudly raised, and the Day is God's, the One, the Unconstrained." And they say: "Hath the Catastrophe come to pass?" Say: "Yea, by the Lord of Lords!" "Is the Resurrection come?" "Nay, more; He Who is the Self-Subsisting hath appeared with the Kingdom of His signs." "Seest thou men laid low?" "Yea, by my Lord, the Most High, the Most Glorious!" "Have the tree-stumps been uprooted?" "Yea, more; the mountains have been scattered in dust; by Him the Lord of attributes!" They say: "Where is Paradise, and where is Hell?" Say: "The one is reunion with Me; the other thine own self, O thou who dost associate a partner with God and doubttest." They say: "We see not the Balance." Say: "Surely, by my Lord, the God of Mercy! None can see it except such as are endued with insight." They say: "Have the stars fallen?" Say: "Yea, when He Who is the Self-Subsisting dwelt in the Land of Mystery.¹⁸ Take heed, ye who are endued with

18. Adrianople.

discernment!" All the signs appeared when We drew forth the Hand of Power from the bosom of majesty and might. Verily, the Crier hath cried out, when the promised time came, and they that have recognized the splendors of Sinai have swooned away in the wilderness of hesitation, before the awful majesty of thy Lord, the Lord of creation. The trumpet asketh: "Hath the Bugle been sounded?" Say: "Yea, by the King of Revelation! when He mounted the throne of His Name, the All-Merciful." Darkness hath been chased away by the dawning light of the mercy of thy Lord, the Source of all light. The breeze of the All-Merciful hath wafted, and the souls have been quickened in the tombs of their bodies. Thus hath the decree been fulfilled by God, the Mighty, the Beneficent. They who reject the truth have said: "When were the heavens cleft asunder?" Say: "While ye lay in the graves of waywardness and error." Among the faithless is he who rubbeth his eyes, and looketh to the right and to the left. Say: "Blinded art thou. No refuge hast thou to flee to." And among them is he who saith: "Have men been gathered together?" Say: "Yea, by My Lord! whilst thou didst lie in the cradle of idle fancies." And among them is he who saith: "Hath the Book been sent down through the power of the true Faith?" Say: "The true Faith itself is astounded. Fear ye, O ye men of understanding heart!" And among them is he who saith: "Have I been assembled with others, blind?" Say: "Yea, by Him that rideth upon the clouds!" Paradise is decked with mystic roses, and hell hath been made to blaze with the fire of the impious. Say: "The light hath shone forth from the horizon of Revelation, and the whole earth hath been illumined at the coming of Him Who is the Lord of the Day of the Covenant!" The doubters have perished, whilst he that turned, guided by the light of assurance, unto the Dayspring of Certitude hath prospered. Blessed art thou, who hast fixed thy gaze upon Me, for this Tablet which hath been sent down for thee — a Tablet which causeth the souls of men to soar. Commit it to memory, and recite it. By My life! It is a door to the mercy of thy Lord. Well is it with him that reciteth it at eventide and at dawn. We, verily, heard thy praise of this Cause, through which the mountain of knowledge was crushed, and men's feet have slipped. My glory be upon thee and upon whomsoever hath turned unto the Almighty, the All-Bounteous. The Tablet is ended, but the theme is unexhausted. Be patient, for thy Lord is patient.

These are verses We sent down previously, and We have sent them unto thee, that thou mayest be acquainted with what their lying tongues have spoken, when God came unto them with might and sovereignty. The foundations of idle fancies have trembled, and the heaven of vain imaginings hath been cleft asunder, and yet the people are in doubt and in contention with Him. They have denied the testimony of God and His proof, after He came from the heaven of power with the kingdom of His signs. They have cast away what had been prescribed, and perpetrated what had been forbidden them in the Book. They have abandoned their God, and clung unto their desires. They truly have strayed and are in error. They read the verses and deny them. They behold the clear tokens and turn aside. They truly are lost in strange doubt.

We have admonished Our loved ones to fear God, a fear which is the fountainhead of all goodly deeds and virtues. It is the commander of the hosts of justice in the city of Bahá. Happy the man that hath entered the shadow of its luminous standard, and laid fast hold thereon. He, verily, is of the Companions of the Crimson Ark, which hath been mentioned in the Qayyúm-i-Asmá.

Say: O people of God! Adorn your temples with the adornment of trustworthiness and piety. Help, then, your Lord with the hosts of goodly deeds and a praiseworthy character. We have forbidden you dissension and conflict in My Books, and My Scriptures, and My Scrolls, and My

Tablets, and have wished thereby naught else save your exaltation and advancement. Unto this testify the heavens and the stars thereof, and the sun and the radiance thereof, and the trees and the leaves thereof, and the seas and the waves thereof, and the earth and the treasures thereof. We pray God to assist His loved ones, and aid them in that which beseemeth them in this blest, this mighty, and wondrous station. Moreover We beseech Him to graciously enable those who surround Me to observe that which My Pen of Glory hath enjoined upon them.

O Jalíl! Upon thee be My glory and My loving providence. Verily We have enjoined the people to do what is meet and seemly and yet they have committed such things as have caused My heart and My Pen to lament. Incline thine ear to that which is sent down from the heaven of My Will and the realm of My good-pleasure. I sorrow not for My captivity, nor for the things that have befallen Me at the hand of Mine enemies. Nay, My sorrows are occasioned by those who claim to be related to Me and yet commit that which causeth the voice of My lamentations to be lifted up and My tears to flow. We have exhorted them at length in various Tablets and beseech God to graciously assist them, to enable them to draw nigh unto Him and to confirm them in that which would bring peace to the hearts and tranquility to the souls and would stay their hands from whatsoever ill-beseemeth His days.

Say, O My loved ones in My lands! Give ye ear unto the counsels of Him Who admonisheth you for the sake of God. He hath in truth created you, hath revealed before your eyes that which exalteth you and promoteth your interests. He hath made known unto you His straight Path and hath acquainted you with His Great Announcement.

O Jalíl! Admonish men to fear God. By God! This fear is the chief commander of the army of thy Lord. Its hosts are a praiseworthy character and goodly deeds. Through it have the cities of men's hearts been opened throughout the ages and centuries, and the standards of ascendancy and triumph raised above all other standards.

We will now mention unto thee Trustworthiness and the station thereof in the estimation of God, thy Lord, the Lord of the Mighty Throne. One day of days We repaired unto Our Green Island. Upon Our arrival, We beheld its streams flowing, and its trees luxuriant, and the sunlight playing in their midst. Turning Our face to the right, We beheld what the pen is powerless to describe; nor can it set forth that which the eye of the Lord of Mankind witnessed in that most sanctified, that most sublime, that blest, and most exalted Spot. Turning, then, to the left We gazed on one of the Beauties of the Most Sublime Paradise, standing on a pillar of light, and calling aloud saying: "O inmates of earth and heaven! Behold ye My beauty, and My radiance, and My revelation, and My effulgence. By God, the True One! I am Trustworthiness and the revelation thereof, and the beauty thereof. I will recompense whosoever will cleave unto Me, and recognize My rank and station, and hold fast unto My hem. I am the most great ornament of the people of Bahá, and the vesture of glory unto all who are in the kingdom of creation. I am the supreme instrument for the prosperity of the world, and the horizon of assurance unto all beings." Thus have We sent down for thee that which will draw men nigh unto the Lord of creation.

The Pen of the Most High turneth from the eloquent language¹⁹ to the luminous one²⁰ that thou, O Jalíl, mayest appreciate the tender mercy of thy Lord, the Incomparable One and mayest be of them that are truly grateful.

O thou who hast fixed thy gaze upon the all-glorious Horizon! The Call is raised but hearing ears are numbered, nay nonexistent. This Wronged One findeth himself in the maw of the serpent, yet He faileth not to make mention of the loved ones of God. So grievous have been Our sufferings in these days that the Concourse on High are moved to tears and to lamentation. Neither the adversities of the world nor the harm inflicted by its nations could deter Him Who is the King of Eternity from voicing His summons or frustrate His purpose. When those who had for years been hiding behind the veils perceived that the horizon of the Cause was resplendent and that the Word of God was all-pervasive, they rushed forth and with swords of malice inflicted such harm as no pen can portray nor any tongue describe.

They that judge with fairness testify that since the early days of the Cause this Wronged One hath arisen, unveiled and resplendent, before the faces of kings and commoners, before the rulers and the divines, and hath, in ringing tones, summoned all men unto the straight Path. He hath had no helper save His Pen, nor any succorer other than Himself.

Those who are ignorant or heedless of the motivating purpose of the Cause of God have rebelled against Him. Such men are the foreboders of evil, whom God hath mentioned in His Book and Tablets and against whose influence, clamor and deception He hath warned His people. Well is it with those who, in the face of the remembrance of the Lord of Eternity, regard the peoples of the world as utter nothingness, as a thing forgotten, and hold fast to the firm handle of God in such wise that neither doubts nor insinuations, nor swords, nor cannon could hold them back or deprive them of His presence. Blessed are the steadfast; blessed are they that stand firm in His Faith.

In response to thy request the Pen of Glory hath graciously described the stations and grades of the Most Great Infallibility. The purpose is that all should know of a certainty that the Seal of the Prophets²¹ may the souls of all else but Him be offered up for His sake — is without likeness, peer or partner in His Own station. The Holy Ones²² may the blessings of God be upon them — were created through the potency of His Word, and after Him they were the most learned and the most distinguished among the people and abide in the utmost station of servitude. The divine Essence, sanctified from every comparison and likeness, is established in the Prophet, and God's inmost Reality, exalted above any peer or partner, is manifest in Him. This is the station of true unity and of veritable singleness. The followers of the previous Dispensation grievously failed to acquire an adequate understanding of this station. The Primal Point²³ may the life of all else but

19. Arabic.

20. Persian.

21. Muḥammad.

22. The Imáms.

23. The Báb.

Him be offered up for His sake — saith: “If the Seal of the Prophets had not uttered the word ‘Successorship,’ such a station would not have been created.”

The people aforetime joined partners with God, though they professed belief in His unity; and although they were the most ignorant amongst men, they considered themselves the most accomplished. But, as a token of divine retribution upon those heedless ones, their erroneous beliefs and pursuits have, in this Day of Judgment, been made clear and evident to every man of discernment and understanding.

Beseech thou God, the True One, that He may graciously shield the followers of this Revelation from the idle fancies and corrupt imaginings of such as belong to the former Faith, and may not deprive them of the effulgent splendors of the daystar of true unity.

O Jalíl! He Whom the world hath wronged now proclaimeth: The light of Justice is dimmed, and the sun of Equity veiled from sight. The robber occupieth the seat of the protector and guard, and the position of the faithful is seized by the traitor. A year ago an oppressor ruled over this city, and at every instant caused fresh harm. By the righteousness of the Lord! He wrought that which cast terror into the hearts of men. But to the Pen of Glory the tyranny of the world hath never been nor will it ever be a hindrance. In the abundance of Our grace and loving-kindness We have revealed specially for the rulers and ministers of the world that which is conducive to safety and protection, tranquility and peace; haply the children of men may rest secure from the evils of oppression. He, verily, is the Protector, the Helper, the Giver of victory. It is incumbent upon the men of God’s House of Justice to fix their gaze by day and by night upon that which hath shone forth from the Pen of Glory for the training of peoples, the upbuilding of nations, the protection of man and the safeguarding of his honor.

The first *Ishráq*

The first Ishráq: When the Daystar of Wisdom rose above the horizon of God’s Holy Dispensation it voiced this all-glorious utterance: They that are possessed of wealth and invested with authority and power must show the profoundest regard for religion. In truth, religion is a radiant light and an impregnable stronghold for the protection and welfare of the peoples of the world, for the fear of God impelleth man to hold fast to that which is good, and shun all evil. Should the lamp of religion be obscured, chaos and confusion will ensue, and the lights of fairness and justice, of tranquility and peace cease to shine. Unto this will bear witness every man of true understanding.

The second *Ishráq*

The second Ishráq: We have enjoined upon all mankind to establish the Most Great Peace — the surest of all means for the protection of humanity. The sovereigns of the world should, with one accord, hold fast thereunto, for this is the supreme instrument that can ensure the security and welfare of all peoples and nations. They, verily, are the manifestations of the power of God and the daysprings of His authority. We beseech the Almighty that He may graciously assist them in that which is conducive to the well-being of their subjects. A full explanation regarding this

matter hath been previously set forth by the Pen of Glory; well is it with them that act accordingly.

The third *Ishráq*

The third Ishráq: It is incumbent upon everyone to observe God's holy commandments, inasmuch as they are the wellspring of life unto the world. The heaven of divine wisdom is illumined with the two luminaries of consultation and compassion and the canopy of world order is upraised upon the two pillars of reward and punishment.

The fourth *Ishráq*

The fourth Ishráq: In this Revelation the hosts that can render it victorious are the hosts of praiseworthy deeds and upright character. The leader and commander of these hosts hath ever been the fear of God, a fear that encompasseth all things and reigneth over all things.

The fifth *Ishráq*

The fifth Ishráq: Governments should fully acquaint themselves with the conditions of those they govern, and confer upon them positions according to desert and merit. It is enjoined upon every ruler and sovereign to consider this matter with the utmost care that the traitor may not usurp the position of the faithful, nor the despoiler rule in the place of the trustworthy. Among the officials who in the past have governed in this Most Great Prison some, praise be to God, were adorned with justice, but as to others, We take refuge with God. We beseech the One true God to guide them one and all, that haply they may not be deprived of the fruit of faith and trustworthiness, nor be withheld from the light of equity and justice.

The sixth *Ishráq*

The sixth Ishráq is union and concord amongst the children of men. From the beginning of time the light of unity hath shed its divine radiance upon the world, and the greatest means for the promotion of that unity is for the peoples of the world to understand one another's writing and speech. In former Epistles We have enjoined upon the Trustees of the House of Justice either to choose one language from among those now existing or to adopt a new one, and in like manner to select a common script, both of which should be taught in all the schools of the world. Thus will the earth be regarded as one country and one home. The most glorious fruit of the tree of knowledge is this exalted word: Of one tree are all ye the fruit, and of one bough the leaves. Let not man glory in this that he loveth his country, let him rather glory in this that he loveth his kind. Concerning this We have previously revealed that which is the means of the reconstruction of the world and the unity of nations. Blessed are they that attain thereunto. Blessed are they that act accordingly.

The seventh *Iṣhráq*

The seventh Iṣhráq: The Pen of Glory counseleth everyone regarding the instruction and education of children. Behold that which the Will of God hath revealed upon Our arrival in the Prison City and recorded in the Most Holy Book.²⁴ Unto every father hath been enjoined the instruction of his son and daughter in the art of reading and writing and in all that hath been laid down in the Holy Tablet. He that putteth away that which is commanded unto him, the Trustees are then to take from him that which is required for their instruction, if he be wealthy, and if not the matter devolveth upon the House of Justice. Verily, have We made it a shelter for the poor and needy. He that bringeth up his son or the son of another, it is as though he hath brought up a son of Mine; upon him rest My Glory, My Loving-Kindness, My Mercy, that have compassed the world.

The eighth *Iṣhráq*

The eighth Iṣhráq: This passage, now written by the Pen of Glory, is accounted as part of the Most Holy Book: The men of God's House of Justice have been charged with the affairs of the people. They, in truth, are the Trustees of God among His servants and the daysprings of authority in His countries.

O people of God! That which traineth the world is Justice, for it is upheld by two pillars, reward and punishment. These two pillars are the sources of life to the world. Inasmuch as for each day there is a new problem and for every problem an expedient solution, such affairs should be referred to the House of Justice that the members thereof may act according to the needs and requirements of the time. They that, for the sake of God, arise to serve His Cause, are the recipients of divine inspiration from the unseen Kingdom. It is incumbent upon all to be obedient unto them. All matters of State should be referred to the House of Justice, but acts of worship must be observed according to that which God hath revealed in His Book.

O people of Bahá! Ye are the dawning-places of the love of God and the daysprings of His loving-kindness. Defile not your tongues with the cursing and reviling of any soul, and guard your eyes against that which is not seemly. Set forth that which ye possess. If it be favorably received, your end is attained; if not, to protest is vain. Leave that soul to himself and turn unto the Lord, the Protector, the Self-Subsisting. Be not the cause of grief, much less of discord and strife. The hope is cherished that ye may obtain true education in the shelter of the tree of His tender mercies and act in accordance with that which God desireth. Ye are all the leaves of one tree and the drops of one ocean.

The ninth *Iṣhráq*

The ninth Iṣhráq: The purpose of religion as revealed from the heaven of God's holy Will is to establish unity and concord amongst the peoples of the world; make it not the cause of dissension and strife. The religion of God and His divine law are the most potent instruments and the surest of all means for the dawning of the light of unity amongst men. The progress of the world, the development of nations, the tranquility of peoples, and the peace of all who dwell

²⁴. Kitáb-i-Aqdas.

on earth are among the principles and ordinances of God. Religion bestoweth upon man the most precious of all gifts, offereth the cup of prosperity, imparteth eternal life, and showereth imperishable benefits upon mankind. It behooveth the chiefs and rulers of the world, and in particular the Trustees of God's House of Justice, to endeavor to the utmost of their power to safeguard its position, promote its interests and exalt its station in the eyes of the world. In like manner it is incumbent upon them to inquire into the conditions of their subjects and to acquaint themselves with the affairs and activities of the diverse communities in their dominions. We call upon the manifestations of the power of God — the sovereigns and rulers on earth — to bestir themselves and do all in their power that haply they may banish discord from this world and illumine it with the light of concord.

It is incumbent upon everyone to firmly adhere to and observe that which hath streamed forth from Our Most Exalted Pen. God, the True One, beareth Me witness, and every atom in existence is moved to testify that such means as lead to the elevation, the advancement, the education, the protection and the regeneration of the peoples of the earth have been clearly set forth by Us and are revealed in the Holy Books and Tablets by the Pen of Glory.

We entreat God to graciously aid His servants. What this Wronged One doth expect from everyone is justice and fairness. Let no one be content with mere hearing; rather doth it behoove everyone to ponder that which this Wronged One hath revealed. I swear by the Daystar of utterance, shining above the horizon of the Kingdom of the All-Merciful, had there been any expounder or speaker discernible, We would not have made Ourselves the object of the censure, ridicule and slander of the people.

Upon Our arrival in 'Irâq We found the Cause of God sunk in deep apathy and the breeze of divine revelation stilled. Most of the believers were faint and dispirited, nay utterly lost and dead. Hence there was a second blast on the Trumpet, whereupon the Tongue of Grandeur uttered these blessed words: "We have sounded the Trumpet for the second time." Thus the whole world was quickened through the vitalizing breaths of divine revelation and inspiration.

Certain souls have now sallied forth from behind the veils, intent on inflicting harm upon this Wronged One. They have hindered and denied the outpouring of this priceless bounty.

O ye that judge with fairness! If this Cause is to be denied then what other cause in this world can be vindicated or deemed worthy of acceptance?

Such as have turned away from the Cause of God are diligently seeking to collect the Holy Writings of this Revelation; and they have already, through gestures of friendship, managed to secure certain of these Writings from those who held them in their possession. Moreover, when they meet the followers of any religion, they hold themselves out as believers therein. Say, die ye in your wrath! Verily He hath appeared with so great an authority that no man of vision, of hearing, of insight, of justice or of equity can ever deny Him. Unto this beareth witness in this resplendent Hour the Pen of Him Who is the Ancient of Days.

O Jalíl! Upon thee be My glory. We exhort the loved ones of God to perform good deeds that perchance they may be graciously assisted and may hold fast to that which hath been sent down from the heaven of His Revelation. The benefits arising from this divine utterance shall fall

upon such as observe His precepts. We beseech God to enable them to do that which is pleasing and acceptable unto Him, to grant that they may deal equitably and may observe justice in this all-compelling Cause, to acquaint them with His Holy Writings and to direct their steps towards His straight Path.

Our Exalted Herald — may the life of all else besides Him be offered up for His sake — hath revealed certain laws. However, in the realm of His Revelation these laws were made subject to Our sanction, hence this Wronged One hath put some of them into effect by embodying them in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas in different words. Others We set aside. He holdeth in His hand the authority. He doeth what He willeth and He ordaineth whatsoever He pleaseth. He is the Almighty, the All-Praised. There are also ordinances newly revealed. Blessed are they that attain. Blessed are they that observe His precepts.

The people of God should make the utmost endeavor that perchance the fire of hatred and malice which smoldereth in the breasts of kindreds and peoples may, through the living waters of utterance and the exhortations of Him Who is the Desire of the world, be quenched and the trees of human existence may be adorned with wondrous and excellent fruit. He is, in truth, the Admonisher, the Compassionate, the All-Bountiful.

May the brightness of His glory shining above the horizon of bounty rest upon you, O people of Bahá, upon every one who standeth firm and steadfast and upon those that are well grounded in the Faith and are endued with true understanding.

As to thy question concerning interest and profit on gold and silver: Some years ago the following passage was revealed from the heaven of the All-Merciful in honor of the one who beareth the name of God, entitled Zaynu'l-Muqarrabín²⁵ upon him be the glory of the Most Glorious. He — exalted be His Word — saith: Many people stand in need of this. Because if there were no prospect for gaining interest, the affairs of men would suffer collapse or dislocation. One can seldom find a person who would manifest such consideration towards his fellow-man, his countryman or towards his own brother and would show such tender solicitude for him as to be well-disposed to grant him a loan on benevolent terms.²⁶ Therefore as a token of favor towards men We have prescribed that interest on money should be treated like other business transactions that are current amongst men. Thus, now that this lucid commandment hath descended from the heaven of the Will of God, it is lawful and proper to charge interest on money, that the people of the world may, in a spirit of amity and fellowship and with joy and gladness, devotedly engage themselves in magnifying the Name of Him Who is the Well-Beloved of all mankind. Verily He ordaineth according to His Own choosing. He hath now made interest on money lawful, even as He had made it unlawful in the past. Within His grasp He holdeth the kingdom of authority. He doeth and ordaineth. He is in truth the Ordainer, the All-Knowing.

Render thou thanks unto thy Lord, O Zaynu'l-Muqarrabín, for this manifest bounty.

25. One of the early believers who is best known to the friends for his reliable transcriptions of the Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh. (See *Memorials of the Faithful*, Chapter 58: "Zaynu'l-Muqarrabín".)

26. Such loans as bear no interest and are repayable whenever the borrower pleases.

Many ecclesiastics in Persia have, through innumerable designs and devices, been feeding on illicit gains obtained by usury. They have contrived ways to give its outward form a fair semblance of lawfulness. They make a plaything of the laws and ordinances of God, but they understand not.

However, this is a matter that should be practiced with moderation and fairness. Our Pen of Glory hath, as a token of wisdom and for the convenience of the people, desisted from laying down its limit. Nevertheless We exhort the loved ones of God to observe justice and fairness, and to do that which would prompt the friends of God to evince tender mercy and compassion towards each other. He is in truth the Counselor, the Compassionate, the All-Bountiful. God grant that all men may be graciously aided to observe that which the Tongue of the One true God hath uttered. And if they put into practice what We have set forth, God — exalted be His glory — will assuredly double their portion through the heaven of His bounty. Verily He is the Generous, the Forgiving, the Compassionate. Praise be unto God, the Most Exalted, the Most Great.

Nevertheless the conduct of these affairs hath been entrusted to the men of the House of Justice that they may enforce them according to the exigencies of the time and the dictates of wisdom.

Once again We exhort all believers to observe justice and fairness and to show forth love and contentment. They are indeed the people of Bahá, the companions of the Crimson Ark. Upon them be the peace of God, the Lord of all Names, the Creator of the heavens.

