

Suggested Devotional Program for the Birth of the Báb

1. THE DAY

On October 20, Bahá'ís celebrate the Holy Day commemorating the Birth of the Báb, who was born in Shiraz, Persia. The Báb (1819-1850) was the Martyr-Prophet of the Bahá'í Faith. His mission was to proclaim the imminent arrival of "Him Whom God shall make manifest," namely Bahá'u'lláh (1817-1892), the Founder of the Bahá'í Faith.

Bahá'u'lláh tells us, "This is the Day whereon the Ocean of God's mercy hath been manifested unto men, the Day in which the Day Star of His loving-kindness hath shed its radiance upon them, the Day in which the clouds of His bountiful favor have overshadowed the whole of mankind. Now is the time to cheer and refresh the down-cast through the invigorating breeze of love and fellowship, and the living waters of friendliness and charity." ~ Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 6

2. PRAYER

I know not, O my God, what the Fire is which Thou didst kindle in Thy land. Earth can never cloud its splendor, nor water quench its flame. All the peoples of the world are powerless to resist its force. Great is the blessedness of him that hath drawn nigh unto it, and heard its roaring.

Some, O my God, Thou didst, through Thy strengthening grace, enable to approach it, while others Thou didst keep back by reason of what their hands have wrought in Thy days. Whoso hath hastened towards it and attained unto it hath, in his eagerness to gaze on Thy beauty, yielded his life in Thy path, and ascended unto Thee, wholly detached from aught else except Thyself.

I beseech Thee, O my Lord, by this Fire which blazeth and rageth in the world of creation, to rend asunder the veils that have hindered me from appearing before the throne of Thy majesty, and from standing at the door of Thy gate. Do Thou ordain for me, O my Lord, every good thing Thou didst send down in Thy Book, and suffer me not to be far removed from the shelter of Thy mercy.

Powerful art Thou to do what pleaseth Thee. Thou art, verily, the All-Powerful, the Most Generous. ~ Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 76-77

3. AN ACCOUNT

The early nineteenth century was a period of messianic expectations in many lands. Deeply disturbed by the implications of scientific inquiry and industrialization, earnest believers from many religious backgrounds turned to the scriptures of their faiths for an understanding of the accelerating processes of change.

Many Millerites emerged in the West and the East. They believed they had found in the Christian scriptures evidence supporting their conviction that history had ended and the return of Jesus Christ was at hand. A markedly similar ferment developed in the Middle East around the belief that the fulfillment of various prophecies in the Qur'an and Islamic Traditions was imminent.

During this period, in 1844, a young merchant from the city of Shiraz, known to history as the Báb, proclaimed that the Day of God was at hand. Humanity stood, He said, on the threshold of an era that would witness the restructuring of all aspects of life.



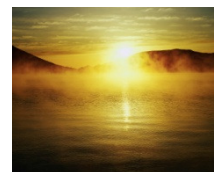
Although the young merchant's given name was Siyyid 'Ali-Muhammed, He took the name "Báb," a title that means "Gate" or "Door" in Arabic. The Báb founded a distinctive, independent religion, known as the Bábí Faith, spawned its own vigorous community, own scriptures, and left its own indelible mark on history. The Báb was Bahá'u'lláh's herald: His primary mission was to prepare the way for Bahá'u'lláh's coming. The founding of the Bábí Faith is viewed by Bahá'ís as synonymous with the founding of the Bahá'í Faith--and its purpose was fulfilled when Bahá'u'lláh announced in 1863 that He was the Promised One foretold by the Báb. Accounts agree that the Báb was an extraordinary child. Born on 20 October 1819, He possessed a surprising wisdom and nobility, reminiscent of the young Jesus. In His own words, The Báb said: "God beareth Me witness, I was not a man of learning, for I was trained as a merchant. In the year sixty God graciously infused my soul with the conclusive evidences and weighty knowledge which characterize Him Who is the Testimony of God – may peace be upon Him – until finally in that year I proclaimed God's hidden Cause and unveiled its well-guarded Pillar, in such wise that no one could refute it. 'That he who should perish might perish with a clear proof before him and he who should live might live by clear proof.'" ~ The Báb, *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 11-12

After His announcement, the Báb attracted followers rapidly, and the new religious movement spread through Iran like wildfire. This growth stirred opposition and persecution--especially among the religious establishment, who saw a threat to their power and prestige. In the course of this persecution, the Báb was imprisoned several times.

His major work, the Bayan, stressed a high moral standard, with an emphasis on purity of heart and motive. It also upheld the station of women and the poor, and it promoted education and useful sciences. The central theme of the Bayan was the imminence of a second Messenger from God, one Who would be far greater than the Báb, and Whose mission would be to usher in the age of peace and plenty that had for so long been promised in Islam, as well as in Judaism, Christianity, and all the other world religions.

4. REFLECTION

The Báb, heralded in a new Era; a day which Bahá'u'lláh tells us, "This is the Day whereon the Ocean of God's mercy hath been manifested unto men, the Day in which the Day Star of His loving-kindness hath shed its radiance upon them, the Day in which the clouds of His bountiful favor have overshadowed the whole of mankind. Now is the time to cheer and refresh the down-cast through the invigorating breeze of love and fellowship, and the living waters of friendliness and charity." ~ Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 7



Bahá'u'lláh revealed a special Tablet for the Anniversary of the Birth of the Báb: "This glorious Tablet hath been revealed on the Anniversary of the Birth [of the Báb] that thou mayest recite it in a spirit of humility and supplication and give thanks unto thy Lord, the All-Knowing, the All-Informed. Make thou every effort to render service unto God, that from thee may appear that which will immortalize thy memory in His glorious and exalted heaven."

Musical Interlude

5. TABLET REVEALED BY BAHÁ'U'LLÁH IN HONOR OF THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE BÁB'S BIRTH

All praise be to Thee, O my God, inasmuch as Thou hast adorned the world with the splendour of the dawn following the night wherein was born the One Who heralded the Manifestation of Thy

transcendent sovereignty, the Dayspring of Thy divine Essence and the Revelation of Thy supreme Lordship. I beseech Thee, O Creator of the heavens and Fashioner of names, to graciously aid those who have sheltered beneath the shadow of Thine abounding mercy and have raised their voices amidst the peoples of the world for the glorification of Thy Name.

O my God! Thou beholdest the Lord of all mankind confined in His Most Great Prison, calling aloud Thy Name, gazing upon Thy face, proclaiming that which hath enraptured the denizens of Thy kingdoms of revelation and of creation. O my God! I behold Mine own Self captive in the hands of Thy servants, yet the light of Thy sovereignty and the revelations of Thine invincible power shine resplendent from His face, enabling all to know of a certainty that Thou art God, and that there is none other God but Thee. Neither can the power of the powerful frustrate Thee, nor the ascendancy of the rulers prevail against Thee. Thou doest whatsoever Thou willest by virtue of Thy sovereignty which encompasseth all created things, and ordainest that which Thou pleasest through the potency of Thy behest which pervadeth the entire creation.

I implore Thee by the glory of Thy Manifestation and by the power of Thy might, Thy sovereignty and Thine exaltation to render victorious those who have arisen to serve Thee, who have aided Thy Cause and humbled themselves before the splendour of the light of Thy face. Make them then, O my God, triumphant over Thine enemies and cause them to be steadfast in Thy service, that through them the evidences of Thy dominion may be established throughout Thy realms and the tokens of Thine indomitable power be manifested in Thy lands. Verily Thou art potent to do what Thou willest; no God is there but Thee, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting.

This glorious Tablet hath been revealed on the Anniversary of the Birth [of the Bab] that thou mayest recite it in a spirit of humility and supplication and give thanks unto thy Lord, the All-Knowing, the All-Informed. Make thou every effort to render service unto God, that from thee may appear that which will immortalize thy memory in His glorious and exalted heaven.

Say: Glorified art Thou, O my God! I implore Thee by the Dawning-Place of Thy signs and by the Revealer of Thy clear tokens to grant that I may, under all conditions, hold fast the cord of Thy loving providence and cling tenaciously to the hem of Thy generosity. Reckon me then with those whom the changes and chances of the world have failed to deter from serving Thee and from bearing allegiance unto Thee, whom the onslaught of the people hath been powerless to hinder from magnifying Thy Name and celebrating Thy praise. Graciously assist me, O my Lord, to do whatever Thou lovest and desirest. Enable me then to fulfil that which will exalt Thy Name and will set ablaze the fire of Thy love.

Thou art, in truth, the Forgiving, the Bountiful. ~ Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 232-234

What are your reflections and thoughts as someone who is privileged to be living at such a momentous time in history?

Persian Chant

6. TABLET OF VISITATION

The praise which hath dawned from Thy most august Self, and the glory which hath shone forth from Thy most effulgent Beauty, rest upon Thee, O Thou Who art the Manifestation of Grandeur, and the King of Eternity, and the Lord of all who are in heaven and on earth! I testify that through Thee the sovereignty of God and His dominion, and the majesty of God and His grandeur, were revealed, and the Day-Stars of ancient splendor have shed their radiance in the heaven of Thine irrevocable decree, and

the Beauty of the Unseen hath shone forth above the horizon of creation. I testify, moreover, that with but a movement of Thy Pen Thine injunction “Be Thou” hath been enforced, and God’s hidden Secret hath been divulged, and all created things have been called into being, and all the Revelations have been sent down.

I bear witness, moreover, that through Thy beauty the beauty of the Adored One hath been unveiled, and through Thy face the face of the Desired One hath shone forth, and that through a word from Thee Thou hast decided between all created things, causing them who are devoted to Thee to ascend unto the summit of glory, and the infidels to fall into the lowest abyss.

I bear witness that he who hath known Thee hath known God, and he who hath attained unto Thy presence hath attained unto the presence of God. Great, therefore, is the blessedness of him who hath believed in Thee, and in Thy signs, and hath humbled himself before Thy sovereignty, and hath been honored with meeting Thee, and hath attained the good pleasure of Thy will, and circled around Thee, and stood before Thy throne. Woe betide him that hath transgressed against Thee, and hath denied Thee, and repudiated Thy signs, and gainsaid Thy sovereignty, and risen up against Thee, and waxed proud before Thy face, and hath disputed Thy testimonies, and fled from Thy rule and Thy dominion, and been numbered with the infidels whose names have been inscribed by the fingers of Thy behest upon Thy holy Tablets.

Waft, then, unto me, O my God and my Beloved, from the right hand of Thy mercy and Thy loving-kindness, the holy breaths of Thy favors, that they may draw me away from myself and from the world unto the courts of Thy nearness and Thy presence. Potent art Thou to do what pleaseth Thee. Thou, truly, hast been supreme over all things.

The remembrance of God and His praise, and the glory of God and His splendor, rest upon Thee, O Thou Who art His Beauty! I bear witness that the eye of creation hath never gazed upon one wronged like Thee. Thou wast immersed all the days of Thy life beneath an ocean of tribulations. At one time Thou wast in chains and fetters; at another Thou wast threatened by the sword of Thine enemies. Yet, despite all this, Thou didst enjoin upon all men to observe what had been prescribed unto Thee by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

May my spirit be a sacrifice to the wrongs Thou didst suffer, and my soul be a ransom for the adversities Thou didst sustain. I beseech God, by Thee and by them whose faces have been illumined with the splendors of the light of Thy countenance, and who, for love of Thee, have observed all whereunto they were bidden, to remove the veils that have come in between Thee and Thy creatures, and to supply me with the good of this world and the world to come. Thou art, in truth, the Almighty, the Most Exalted, the All-Glorious, the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Compassionate.

Bless Thou, O Lord my God, the Divine Lote-Tree and its leaves, and its boughs, and its branches, and its stems, and its offshoots, as long as Thy most excellent titles will endure and Thy most august attributes will last. Protect it, then, from the mischief of the aggressor and the hosts of tyranny. Thou art, in truth, the Almighty, the Most Powerful. Bless Thou, also, O Lord my God, Thy servants and Thy handmaidens who have attained unto Thee. Thou, truly, art the All-Bountiful, Whose grace is infinite. No God is there save Thee, the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Generous.

The Tablet of Visitation. ~ Bahá’u’lláh, Prayers and Meditations by Bahá’u’lláh, p. 310-314