

Amazing Stories from the Dawn-Breakers

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(The story so far: *Mulla Husayn was the first follower of the Báb after the Báb had declared that He was the Promised One from God. But the Báb told him not to tell anyone until seventeen other people had also found Him for themselves. These believers (with Mulla Husayn) would become known as the 18 Letters of the Living.*)

Part 7

The Letters of the Living

The first sixteen Letters of the Living

Mullá Husayn left the house of the Báb in a state of great excitement. Before, he had felt shy and helpless. Now he felt strong and brave. He wanted to shout out loud for everyone to hear:

“Awake! O peoples of the world! For He who is your promised One has come!”

But he knew he must not tell anyone this secret until a total of eighteen believers had found the Báb for themselves.

It was not long before Mullá Husayn’s brother and nephew also recognised the Báb. Then thirteen other disciples of Siyyid Kázim arrived in Shíráz. They had also been praying to be guided to the Truth. One of them was Mullá ‘Alí-i-Bastámí. He saw how happy and contented Mullá Husayn was and guessed he must have found the Promised One. He begged Mullá Husayn to tell him Who it was, but Mullá Husayn told him he must pray to God for the answer.

Mullá ‘Alí prayed and fasted for three nights, and then he had a dream. A light appeared in front of him, which moved off into the distance. Mullá ‘Alí followed the light and, in his dream, he was led into the presence of the Báb.



Although it was the middle of the night, Mullá ‘Alí ran to wake Mullá Husayn and tell him about his dream. Mullá Husayn lovingly embraced him, and very early the next morning the two of them went to the house of the Báb. When they arrived they found the door open and the Báb’s faithful servant waiting to welcome them.

“While it was still dark,” said the servant, “my Master called me to Him and told me to open the door of the house. ‘I am expecting two guests to arrive early this morning,’ He said. ‘Give them a warm welcome in My name. Say to them from Me: Enter in the name of God.’ ”

Before long, all the travelling companions of Mullá ‘Alíy-i-Bastámí also recognized the Báb. There were now sixteen Letters of the Living. The seventeenth would be the only woman.

Táhirih, the seventeenth Letter of the Living

When Táhirih was a little girl she quickly learned to read even though she never went to school. In the olden days, people did not think it was important for girls to be educated, only boys. As she grew older, Táhirih read some books written by Shaykh Ahmad and knew what they said was true.

Táhirih’s father loved her very much and was proud of his clever daughter, but he was not happy that she was reading the books of Shaykh Ahmad because he did not agree with these new ideas. But Táhirih knew that Shaykh Ahmad’s ideas were right. By this time, Shaykh Ahmad had died, so she began to write letters to his successor, Siyyid Kázim. And one day she set out to visit him in Karbilá.

When Táhirih arrived, she was bitterly disappointed to find he had also died, just ten days before. When the other disciples told her what his last instructions to them had been, and how he had said they should start searching for the Promised One, she prayed and asked God to guide her.



One night, after she had said her prayers, she had a dream. In her dream, she saw the Báb standing against the sky. He raised His hands and recited some beautiful words of God. When she woke up, she wrote the words in a notebook so that she would not forget them.



Táhirih had a sister whose husband was also interested in the teachings of Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kázim. He was one of the thirteen who followed the example of Mullá Husayn and set out with Mullá ‘Alíy-i-Bastámí to find the Promised One. Táhirih was not able to go with her brother-in-law as women could not travel around as freely as men. So instead she wrote a letter and asked him to give it to the Promised One as soon as he found Him.

When Táhirih’s brother-in-law arrived in Shíráz, he soon recognised that the Báb was the Promised One and became the sixteenth to believe in Him. He then gave the Báb the letter from Táhirih. When the Báb read it, He immediately declared that she was the seventeenth Letter of the Living. Many months later, one of the friends gave her some of the Writings of the Báb to read and she found the exact words she had heard in her dream and written down in her note book.

“Seventeen Letters have so far enlisted under the standard of the Faith of God,” said the Báb . “There remains one more to complete the number.... Tomorrow night the remaining Letter will arrive.”

Quddús, the eighteenth Letter of the Living

It was early in the evening and the Báb was walking towards His house. Mullá Husayn was following close behind. Suddenly, a twenty-two-year-old youth appeared, looking very tired and covered in dust from his travels. It was Quddús, another disciple of Siyyid Kázim. He ran towards Mullá Husayn, embraced him, and excitedly asked if he had found the Promised One yet.



Mullá Husayn tried to calm Quddús and said he would talk to him later. But Quddús was not listening. He was looking at the Báb, who was walking in front of them, a little distance away.

“Why are you trying to hide Him from me?” Quddús asked Mullá Husayn. “I can recognise Him by His walk!”

Mullá Husayn was amazed and did not know what to say. He told Quddús not to say a word to anyone and hurried towards the Báb. He told Him about the strange young man and what he had said.

“Marvel not at his strange behaviour,” said the Báb. “We have in the world of the spirit been communing with that youth. We know him already. We indeed awaited his coming.”

The Báb and Quddús had already met in the world of dreams.

So Quddús became the eighteenth, and last, Letter of the Living. The number was complete. Now they could all openly tell everyone that the Promised One had come.

(To be continued)