

Tablet of Pilgrimage House of the Báb

By Bahá'u'lláh



Translated by Denis MacEoin.

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Originally revealed as "Suriy-i-Hajj".

O Muhammad, when the fragrances of holiness have drawn thee unto them and turned thee unto the land of the All-Merciful that thou mayest discover the breezes of divine praise, go forth then by permission of Thy Lord, the Generous, unto the spot around which circle the angels that are nigh unto God, they that sing His praises about the Throne. At the moment when thou arisest from thy place, seeking to turn in the direction of God, thy Lord, take off from thy body the robe of self and desire and from thy feet the sandals of sin and wickedness, for thou art entering the spot that none may reach save he that casteth behind him all that are on earth and in the heavens, wherein naught but the greatest righteousness shall be accepted, if thou art of them that comprehend, and around which circle the Mount of Command and the Land of Holiness and the Sinai of Glory and the hearts of them that ascend at all times unto the heaven of nearness. None other shall ever attain unto it nor be mentioned by God as having reached it, even should he dwell there for a thousand years as you number them.

And when thou hast journeyed from thy self and from the world and its people and hast travelled unto God, thy Lord, and hast reached the spot at which thou beholdest the outskirts of the city, dismount and stop where thou art and say: "Spirit and light and glory and praise be upon thee, O City of God, O dwelling-place of His names, O treasury of His attributes, O source of His bounties, O mine of His grace, O place of the manifestation of His effulgences that have encompassed all creation. I bear witness that from thy outskirts appeared the Primal Point [i.e. the Báb] and the ornament of pre-existence and the eternal mystery and the universal word and the fixed decrees and the hidden secrets. Thus hast thou surpassed all others in receiving grace from God, the Protector, the Self-Subsisting."

Lift up, then, your hands unto God, thy Lord, with humility and self-effacement, with submission and pleasing contentment, and say: "O Lord, praise be to Thee for the wonders of Thy gifts and the graces of Thy bestowals. How can I give thanks to Thee, O my God, for having provided me with the visitation of Thy House and having honoured me with it and having chosen me for this bounty in which none hath preceded me and having taught me what none hath known but Thee? Wherefore, O my God, I have fled from the house of my self and taken refuge in the place in which Thy most exalted Self hath been established; I have taken flight from whatever hath kept me back from drawing nigh unto Thee and gone for protection unto the precincts of Thy most great mercy. Deprive me not, then, O my God, of that which belongeth unto Thee and cause me not to be occupied with any but Thee. Thou, verily, art the Mighty, the Forgiving. O Lord, make me steadfast in Thy love and in the love of Thy friends, and cause me not to be of them that have disbelieved in Thy verses after they were sent down, them that have mocked them after their perfumes had encompassed all created things and all that was brought into existence in the visible and the invisible worlds. O Lord, send unto me the rod of Thy grace and bounty that I may cleave therewith the sea of self and desire, pass over it, and reach the pavilion of the glory of Thine exaltation and the tabernacle of the holiness of Thy protection, lest there be made manifest from me that which Thy good-pleasure abhorreth. Thou, verily, art He that doeth as He willest, and Thou art, in truth, the Lord of this firmly builded House."

Ride on, then, until thou reachest a spot at which there shall be between thee and the city only a thousand steps, be it more or less. Whereupon, dismount and immerse thyself in water, as thou hast been commanded in the Book of God, the Protector, the Exalted, the Self-Subsisting. And when thou comest forth from the water, trim thy moustache, then clip thy nails, then shave thy head, then make use of the best of perfumes, then put on the best clothes you are able to afford. And if thou art not able to perform that which We have commanded thee, be thou not saddened, for God hath pardoned thee; He, verily, is the Powerful, the Forgiving, the Pardoner. Strive, then, within thyself that, at the moment thy eye falleth upon the city and thou comest close to it, thy heart may be purified from the mention of all things in such wise that thou mayest cast behind thee all that hath been created between the earth and the heavens, for thou art at that moment walking before the King of all creation, thy Sovereign of names and attributes. Thus instructeth thee the Pen of God, thy Lord and the Lord of all things, if thou art of them that know.

And when thou hast performed that which We have commanded thee, rise from that spot and turn your face towards the House. Then stop, then raise your hands in humble devotion to God, the Powerful, the Protector, the Beloved, and say: "O my God, this is the spot through which the eyes of them that desire Thee have been solaced and the hearts of Thy lovers have been attracted; this is the utmost goal of them that seek Thee and the highest desire of them that yearn for Thee. This is the spot wherein the eyes of them that know Thee have rained tears in their separation from Thee and the faces of them that have attained unto Thee have turned yellow in their longing for Thy beauty. I beseech Thee, O my God, by it and by the effulgences of the lights of the glory of Thy oneness and the flashes of the manifestation of the holiness of Thy divinity, to release me from the fire of my self and to sanctify me from all that is unworthy of Thy sovereignty. Thou, verily, art the Protector, the Self-Subsisting."

Lower, then, thy hands until they reach the level of thy cheeks, then magnify God (with the phrase Allahu akbar) nine times, then raise thy hands yet again unto God, thy Lord and the Lord of all that hath been and all that is, and say: "O my God, this is the city wherein Thy sovereignty was made manifest and the signs of the glory of Thy grandeur appeared and Thy verses were sent down and Thy word was completed and Thy might was exalted and Thy proof shone forth and Thy mercy encompassed all things and all that is in the heavens and the earth. There beareth witness unto this my self and my heart and my tongue and beyond them blessed servants. Whereupon, I beseech Thee, O my God, by it [the city] and all that hath been manifested in it to remove that which hath kept me far from the shore of the holiness of Thy mercy and bounty and shut me out from the precincts of the outpouring of Thy grace and bestowal. Clothe me, then, O my God, in the robe of Thy graciousness and bounty. Thou wilt and Thou art, truly, the Mighty, the Exalted, the Beloved. Give me, then, to drink, O my God, from the fountain of the glory of Thy knowledge and the living waters of the holiness of meeting with Thee, waters which, were but a drop from them to be sprinkled upon all created things, they would be raised to eternal, everlasting life, standing before Thy face and the manifestations of the flashes of the lights of Thy countenance. Thou, verily, art the Mighty, the Exalted, the Holy."

Lower, then, thy hands and walk upon the ground with the dignity of God and His tranquillity. And as thou walkest proclaim the singleness of thy Lord (with the phrase "there is no god but God") then proclaim His greatness (with the phrase Allahu akbar), then His holiness (with the phrase Allahu aqdás), then His majesty (with the phrase Allahu amjad). Follow, then, in the ways of the messengers and the manners of them that are near to God, saying: "Here am I, O my God, here am I; greetings unto Thee, and the light be before Thee." Repeat these words as much as will not cool down the fire of thy ardour and passion. Thus We have instructed thee in truth that thou mayest be of them that act in accordance with what they have been commanded. Know, then, that thou didst answer thy Lord with these words when He ascended the Throne and called upon all created things with His words "Am I not your Lord?" Those words are the secret of those others, if ye be of them that ponder upon the mysteries of their Lord. Indeed, shouldst thou behold with the eye of thine inner being, thou shalt at that moment behold Him raised upon the thrones of all created beings, crying: "No God is there but Me, the Protector, the Self-Subsisting." Know, then, O pilgrim, thy value and station at that moment. Give thanks, then, to God that this has been bestowed upon thee and that He hath aided thee therein. Verily, there is no God but Him; creation and command are His and all act according to His bidding. Blessed art thou, O servant, in that thou hast entered the land of holiness, the Paran of the Spirit, and the Sinai of Command. Yea, shouldst thou make sharp thy sight, thou wilt behold all about thee circumambulating. By God, O servant journeying from thy home, should God open thy vision and shouldst thou turn thy gaze above the head unto the heavens, thou wilt behold the sanctuaries of holiness, the habitations of loving-fellowship, the people of the pavilion of the heavenly kingdom, the inhabitants of the thrones of the kingdom of might, the bodies of the holy ones among the manifestations of the realm below and the kingdom above all moving in the heaven of holiness above thy head, extolling with thee the unity, the greatness, the holiness, and the majesty of the Lord of the City and of him that appeared from it and arose therein. Thus shalt thou behold the matter, if thou art of them that see with the eyes of the spirit.

And when thou reachest the spot at which thou art come nigh unto the gate of the city at a distance of 20 paces, stop at the command of God, thy Lord, the Lord of all things, and the Lord of this praiseworthy scene. Extol, then, the greatness of God 19 times, then address the city on My behalf, saying: "May God curse a people that have interposed themselves between Us and the lights of thy holiness, O City of God, and who have kept us back from inhaling the fragrances of the holiness of Thy oneness and from dwelling within the precincts of the glory of Thy mercy and from standing in the courtyard of the gate of the outpouring of Thy compassion." Turn, then, thy gaze unto the most great spectacle, in the direction of the wall of the city and whatsoever hath been created therein and hath existed within it, for upon all of these hath fallen the eye of God, the Mighty, the Protector, the Self-Sufficient. Say: "O wall of the City! Blessed be thou, inasmuch as there shone forth above thee the lights of the sun of thy Lord, the Exalted, the Most High. O trees of the City! Blessed be ye, inasmuch as the breezes of holiness have been wafted upon you from the direction of eternity. O air of the City! Blessed be thou, inasmuch as the breath of God, the Mighty, the Powerful, the Beloved, was spread within thee. O earth of the City! Blessed be thou, inasmuch as the feet of thy Lord, the All-Merciful, have walked upon thee and the form of the Praised One hath passed over thee in the days when all were wrapped in the veils of their own selves. "

Walk, then, until thou reachest the city; and when thou hast attained its presence and arrived at its gate, place thy face upon the dust of the gate, that thou mayest discover the fragrance of thy Lord, the Exalted, the Most High and may be of them that are nourished with the water of life. Know, then, that from its dust is manifested the decree of water, and from its water the decree of air, and from its air the effect of fire, and from a torch ignited from it hath appeared the decree of 'B' and 'E' [ukm al-kdf wa'l-nan - i.e. kun, "be"]^[1]i, if thou art of them that know.

This is how We have described it unto thee in the land and among these people that are unconscious in the drunkenness of self. Otherwise, by Him in Whose hand is my soul, an atom of its dust is more glorious in the sight of God than all that hath been created in the meadows of eternity and all that hath been decreed in the tablets of destiny within the mystery of fate in the realm of the divine decree. Thus do We cast upon thee the secrets of the Cause, that thou mayest be of them that comprehend.

When thou hast kissed the dust and derived a blessing therefrom, raise up thy head, then stand and magnify God (with the phrase Allahu akbar) 19 times, then walk with the dignity and tranquillity of God and with His grandeur and majesty until you arrive before the House. Then stop and say: "I bear witness by my tongue and my soul and my spirit and my body that this is the spot whereon prostrate themselves the inhabitants of the empyrean realm and the denizens of the kingdom of God's decree and they that inhabit the highest mansions of eternity behind the veils of grandeur. Through it all things have been made manifest and through it the breezes of bounty have blown upon the forms of all the worlds. And this is the spot whence the inhabitants of the Concourse of Eternity derive their blessings and the hearts of them that are established between earth and heaven obtain their illumination. Every day the dwellers of the crimson chambers sweep its courtyard and the angels that are nigh unto God brush it with the tresses of the spirit. And this is the spot wherein the Beauty of the All-Merciful appeared and in His own person ascended the Throne of Forgiveness and decreed that which He willed for all creation. He, verily, is the One that doeth as He willeth and decreeth as He desireth and performeth whatsoever He wisheth. I bear witness that, from a handful of this dust, the first Adam was created, wherefore was he named "the father of man" (Abu 'IBashar)^[2]i in the kingdom of names, and God made him His remembrance amongst all created things."

Bow down, then, with thy face upon the dust, then place thy right cheek upon it and say with my tongue: "Praised be Thou, O God, my God. This is Thy servant that hath detached himself from all directions, turning in the direction of Thy oneness, and hath freed his soul from all apart from Thee, and hath clung to the cord of the bounty of Thy grace, and hath come in his completeness unto the meadows of the glory of Thy forgiveness. Cause to blow, then, O my God upon my heart the breezes of the glory of the holiness of Thy bounty and upon my inner being the fragrances of the majesty of the glory of Thy favours. Cast me not away disappointed, O my God, from Thy gate or

despairing from the manifestations of the sun of Thy bounties. Thou, verily, art the Powerful over what Thou wilt and Thou art the Protector, the Mighty, the Powerful."

Then stand and turn to the right of the House, in the direction of thy Lord, the Exalted, the Mighty, the Wise. Raise, then, thy hands unto God, the Exalted, the Most High and say: "Praised be Thou, O God, my God. I have raised the hands of my hope unto the heaven of Thy bounty and grace, and I have fastened the fingers of my reliance upon the cord of Thy grace and favours. I beseech Thee by him through whom Thou didst clothe all created things with the robe of Thy guidance and didst raise to life all existence from the power of Thy compassion and generosity, not to lock the door of Thy knowledge upon the face of my heart nor the door of Thy mercy upon my soul. Cause me, then, O my God, to be such as will be worthy of the power of the glory of Thy singleness and the majesty of the holiness of Thine eternity. Thou, verily, art the Gracious, the Bestowing, the Mighty, the Generous. And I, O my God, have become detached from mine own self, hastening unto Thy Most Exalted Self, and have fled from mine own abode and stood before Thy most pure and most glorious House. Wherefore, I beseech Thee not to leave me unto myself nor unto them that keep back mankind from the love of Thy beauty and debar Thy servants from Thy mighty and unbending path."

Circle, then, about the House on my behalf seven times. Thus commandeth thee the Ancient Beauty and teacheth thee what none in all the worlds doth know. And at the time when thou art circumambulating the House of the Lord, make mention of Him in thy heart and upon thy tongue and turn within thyself unto the direction of the mighty Throne. And when thou hast completed thy circum-ambulation, present thyself within the first portico, before the door of the sanctuary, then, stand, then raise thy hands unto the heaven of the outpouring of the grace of thy Lord, the Mighty, the Inaccessible. And I counsel thee that, at that time when thou dost raise up thy hands, raise them with such yearning that thereby the hands of all beings may be raised up towards the heaven of the grace of thy Lord. And when thou desirest to call upon God, thy Lord, call upon Him with such devotion that thereby the tongues of all atoms may utter the praise of thy Creator and may make mention of Him that brought thee into existence, the Powerful, the Mighty, the Wondrous. And if thou be not thus, it is not fitting for thee to stand in the spot whereon have stood the bodies of the holy ones and them that are nigh unto God. Nor art thou worthy of thy relation unto my Self nor thy habitation beneath the shadow of my love, which God hath made a cutting sword whereby to separate the unbelievers from them that extol His oneness. And when thou hast raised thy hands unto the clouds of the mercy of thy Lord, the Mighty, the Knowing, the All-Informed, say: "I bear witness that no god is there but He; He is alone, no companion is there for Him nor likeness nor deputy nor comparison nor rival nor equal nor similitude for His sovereignty, the Exalted, the Inaccessible, the Most High. From all eternity He was one in His Essence and one in His attributes and one in His deeds and unto all eternity He shall be as He hath ever been in the glory of His majesty and the sovereignty of His sublimity, such that the mystic knowers have confessed their inability to attain unto the meadows of the holiness of His knowledge and the devoted ones have admitted their powerlessness to ascend unto the heaven of His mention and His praise. He, verily, is the Protector of all things and He, in truth, is the Mighty, the All-Generous. I bear witness that the Primal Point [the Báb] our Lord the Exalted, the Most High is, truly, His Manifestation in the realm of the empyrean and His Appearance in the kingdom of the decree and His Dawning-place in the domain of destiny. Through Him all created things are brought to life and all existence is renewed and the balance of justice hath been set up upon the station of praiseworthy glory. Through Him the Bird of the Throne hath crowed and the Dove of Glory hath warbled and the resurrection of the command hath come to pass and all that lay hidden in the treasuries of hidden glory hath been made manifest. Through Him the heavens of pre-existence were raised up and the clouds of bounty were elevated unto this most holy and most notable sky and the sun of grace and beneficence shone forth from the horizon of resplendent holiness. Through Him the oceans of verses surged in the kingdom of names and attributes and the time set for the command arrived with that which was decreed in the tablets of inaccessible majesty. And I bear witness that, through Him, the veil of mystery was removed from the beauty of grandeur and the secrets of the unseen were revealed in the kingdom of the divine decree, and that through Him every poor and needy one ascended unto the heaven of riches and every transient one rose up unto the dwelling-places of eternal life and every sick one was raised to the abodes of healing within

pavilions of shining light. And I bear witness that this is the Spot wherein Thou didst ascend the Throne of the glory of Thy unity and didst bring into being all creation, both former and latter, through the power of Thy will and Thy desire, and wherein the clouds of Thy grace rained down upon all created things.

"Wherefore, I beseech Thee, O my God, by Thy hidden and Most Great Name and Thy concealed and most perfect word whose manifestation Thou didst promise unto Thy servants at the time of Mustaghath [i.e. at the time of the appearance of Him Whom God shall make manifest], to bring me unto the shore of the ocean of Thy forgiveness and to erase all that I have enumerated of my most great sins and my most mighty transgressions; then forgive, O my God, my father and my mother and my family and those whom I have related unto myself, them that have believed in Thee and Thy signs. Make, then, for me, O my God, a seat of truth by Thy side and cause me to be united with those of Thy servants that are nigh unto Thee. I ask Thee, then, O my God and my Beloved, not to make me to be one of them that circle about Thy House in Thy land and deny Thy sacred House within the Manifestations of Thy Self and the Dawning-places of the glory of Thy Self-Subsistence and the Locations of the glory of Thy Lordship. Thus, O my God, is my utmost wish and desire. Thou, verily, art the Sovereign, the Powerful, the Mighty, the Wise. I ask Thee, then, O my God, by Thy beauty whereby the suns of the glory of Thy bounty have been made luminous and the rays of the lights of the holiness of Thy generosity flashed forth, to cause me not to be distressed upon the day whereon every soul shall be distressed, on which the possessors of pomp and leadership shall be puffed up with pride, on which the feet of them that have attained shall slip, on which the lamentation of all things shall be raised, and on which every resplendent and shining light shall be darkened. Take hold, then, of my hand, O my God, with the hand of Thy grace and favours and deprive me not on that day of the fragrances of the glory of Thy holiness nor from hearkening unto the melodies of Thy new creation, and cause me not to follow upon that day behind every croaking, sinful one. Open my eyes through Thy grace that I may recognize Thee by Thine own Self, not by that which is other than Thee, and that I may behold the wonders of the lights of Thy Beauty by what Thou hast bestowed upon me through Thy bounty, not that which belongeth unto men. For Thou hast not created any proof for Thyself save Thine own Essence, nor any evidence save Thy signs. Thou, verily, art He that ariseth, the Ruler, the Knowing, the All-Informed. Praise be to God, Lord of all the worlds."

Whereupon, end thou thy pilgrimage, for We have not permitted anyone to approach closer than this unto the sanctuary, for before that spot shine the lights of the Essence from behind the names and the attributes. And, apart from that, courtesy must be observed, for that is one of the best of all attributes in the sight of God, King of the earth and the heavens. Thus have We sent down upon thee the command with a shining and manifest proof. It is our desire that, from every city, one should go forth on My behalf and for his own sake to visit the House of God and that he may be a pilgrim. By God, at every step mercy and grace shall descend upon him from the heaven of resplendent holiness, and at the same time when he raises his foot for the first step and sets it down, God shall forgive his sins and the sins of his mother and his father and all that are related unto him. Thus hath the grace of thy Lord encompassed all created things, whether of the first or of the last. By God, whosoever visiteth the House, it is as if he hath visited God within the pavilion of the glory of meeting with Him and the tent of the majesty of His Beauty. Thus do We inform thee of the call that is mighty by the side of the Throne.

Whosoever visiteth the House as We have commanded him, God shall raise him up after his death within the paradise of majesty and grandeur in such a beauteous form that the dwellers of the Concourse on High shall be illumined by the lights of his face, and all that are in the exalted heavens shall be commanded to appear before him and to circle about him and to make their pilgrimage unto his beauty every morning and evening. O trustees of God upon the earth, strive unto the most great mention, and cast away all that is in your hands and turn your faces unto the Abode of God, the Mighty, the Powerful, the All-Knowing. Be ye steadfast, O people, in this station that, if all that are on earth should rise up against you, ye would not pay the least attention to them and would remain firm in the faith of God. The unbelievers shall prevent you performing what God has sent down upon you on account of the rancour that is in their breasts. But God shall do as He willeth through His word; He, verily, is the Powerful, the Mighty.

Know, then, that We have written concerning pilgrimage to the House detailed and vast tablets, but We have not sent them until now, If God wills, We shall send them in truth. He, verily, is the Guardian of the Messengers. That which We have sent is what was sent down from the kingdom of divine power in a brief form, for the angels that are nigh unto God and the inhabitants of the Exalted Concourse love to be brief in their outward acts. And inwardly, let there be at all times those that perform the pilgrimage. Thus have We taught thee and made known unto thee the paths of holiness and guided thee unto the shores of manifest grace. (Amr, IV, pp.120-33)

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