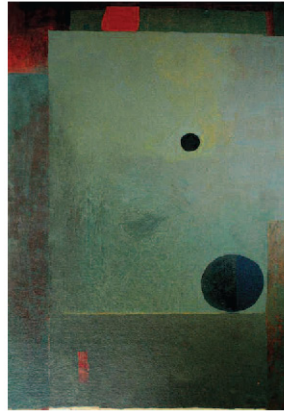


The following story is from the book

*The Central Figures*  
*The Báb*  
*Volume Two*



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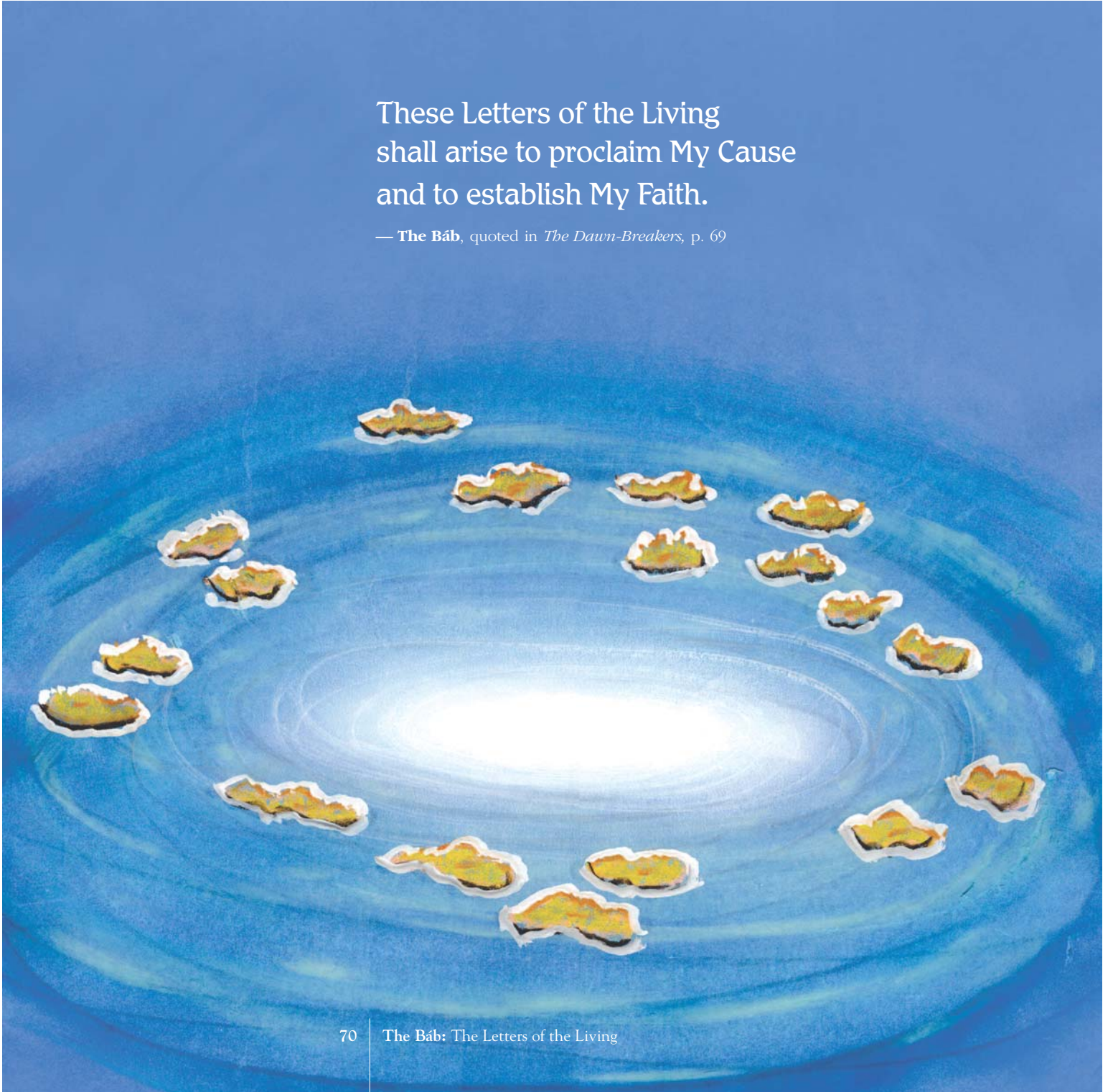
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These Letters of the Living  
shall arise to proclaim My Cause  
and to establish My Faith.

— The Báb, quoted in *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 69





# Mullá 'Alí

## The First to Suffer in the Path of God


*Written by Jacqueline Mehrabi*

*Illustrated by Carrie Kneisler*

The traveler shaded his eyes from the fierce rays of the sun. Puffs of dust rose from the dry ground as he plodded on, mile after mile. People passing him on their camels and donkeys probably thought he was just a poor and unimportant traveler. But they were wrong. He was a Bábí called Mullá 'Alí-y-i-Bastámí, and he had two priceless gifts in his heart. One was that he knew the Báb was the Promised One from God. The other was the words the Báb had spoken to him just before he had left Shíráz.

“Your faith must be immovable as the rock,” the Báb had told him, looking at this dear believer with the deepest love. “You are called to take part in the celestial banquet prepared for you in Heaven. You are the first to leave the House of God [Shíráz], and to suffer for His sake.”

Like many of the early believers, Mullá 'Alí had been led to the Báb through a dream, or vision. In the vision, a light had appeared to Mullá 'Alí. The light had then moved off into the distance. Mullá 'Alí had followed the light and he had been led into the presence of the Báb.




Although it had been the middle of the night, Mullá ‘Alí had run to tell Mullá Ḥusayn what had happened. Mullá Ḥusayn had already found the Báb and was the first of the Letters of the Living. When Mullá ‘Alí told him about the vision, Mullá Ḥusayn had lovingly embraced him. Very early the next morning, the two of them had gone to the House of the Báb, where they found the Báb waiting to welcome them.

Soon, all 18 Letters had discovered that the Báb was the Promised One. When the number was complete, the Báb had sent each one on a different teaching trip. He had told Mullá ‘Alí to go to Najaf and Karbilá, and Mullá ‘Alí had set off immediately.

And here he was, walking along a dusty road a few miles outside Shiráz.

Suddenly, a young man came running towards Mullá ‘Alí and told him about a dream he had had the night before. In the dream, he had seen Mullá ‘Alí standing in the market place whispering a wonderful secret in people’s ears. The young man was sure it was about the coming of the Promised One, and he said he wanted to join Mullá ‘Alí on his travels. Mullá ‘Alí tried to persuade the young man to return to the shop where he worked, but he began to cry and refused to go. Then the young man’s father appeared, waving a stick. Things were getting out of hand! He began beating Mullá ‘Alí because he thought the stranger was trying to take his son away from the town.



Mullá 'Alí remained very calm while he was being beaten.

“Stop your hand, for God is watching you,” he said to the man. “I am not responsible for the behavior of your son.”

But the man wouldn't listen and continued to beat Mullá 'Alí until he was exhausted and didn't have the strength to hit him any longer. On the way home, the young man tearfully explained to his father all about the dream. His father realized how wrong he had been and was deeply sorry. Some years later, he recognized Bahá'u'lláh and became a Bahá'í. Bahá'u'lláh was very kind to him and said God had forgiven him for being so cruel to Mullá 'Alí.

Mullá 'Alí continued on his way until he reached Najaf and Karbilá, where he began to teach the Faith. Many people became excited by what he said. But the chief religious leader was furious and refused to listen, even though he knew Mullá 'Alí was a good and learned person who was respected by everyone. He had Mullá 'Alí chained and taken to prison in Baghdád. But even here he continued to teach, and many became believers. He then was sent as a prisoner to Istanbul in Turkey, where he was sentenced to hard labor in a dock-yard. It was here, in 1846, that he died.

Mullá 'Alí was a brave and devoted believer. He loved the Báb with all his heart. He was the first person to suffer for the new Cause of God, and he was the first Bábí martyr. ★