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BIRTHDAY OF BAB

The **Báb**, born **Sayyed 'Alí Muḥammad Shírázī** (/ˈseɪjəd ˈæli moʊˈhæ məd ʃɪˈrɑːzi/; **Persian**: سید علی محمد شیرازی; October 20, 1819 – July 9, 1850) was the founder of **Bábism**, and one of the central figures of the **Bahá'í Faith**.

The Báb was a merchant from **Shiraz** in **Qajar Iran** who, in 1844 at the age of 25, claimed to be a messenger of God. He took the

title **Báb** (/bəːb/; **Arabic**: باب), meaning "Gate" or "Door", a reference to **the deputy** of the promised

Twelver **Mahdī**^{[3][4]} or **al-Qá'im**. He faced opposition from the Persian government, which eventually executed him and thousands of his followers, known as Bábís.

The Báb composed numerous letters and books in which he stated his claims and defined his teachings. He introduced the idea of **He whom God shall make manifest**, a **messianic figure** who would bring a greater message than his own. His ideas had roots in **Shaykhism** and possibly **Hurufism** and his writings were characterized by their extensive use of symbolism^[5] including the use of much **numerical calculations**.^[6] **Abdu'l Baha** summarises the Báb's impact: "Alone, He undertook a task that can scarcely be conceived... This illustrious Being arose with such power as to shake the foundations of the religious laws, customs, manners, morals, and habits of Persia, and instituted a new law, faith, and religion."^[7]

To Bahá'ís, the Báb fills a similar role as **Elijah** or **John the Baptist** in **Christianity**: a predecessor or forerunner who

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paved the way for their religion. **Bahá'u'lláh**, the founder of the Bahá'í Faith, was a follower of the Báb and claimed in 1863 to be the fulfillment of the Báb's prophecy, 13 years after the Báb's death

EARLY LIFE

The Báb was born on October 20, 1819 (1 Muharram 1235 **AH**), in **Shiraz** to a middle-class **merchant** of the city and given the name Ali Muhammad. His father was Muhammad Riḍá, and his mother was Fátimih (1800–1881), a daughter of a prominent Shiraz merchant. She later became a Bahá'í. His father died when he was quite young, and his maternal uncle **Hájí Mírzá Siyyid 'Alí**, a merchant, reared him.^{[8][9]} He was a descendant of **Muhammad**, a **Sayyid**, through **Husayn ibn Ali** through both his parents.^{[10][11]} In Shiraz his uncle sent him to a **maktab** primary school, where he remained for six or seven years.^{[12][13]}

In contrast to the formal, orthodox theology which dominated the school curriculum of the time, which included the study of jurisprudence and Arabic grammar, the Bab from a young age felt inclined towards

unconventional subjects like mathematics and calligraphy, which were little studied. The Bab's preoccupation with spirituality, creativity and imagination also angered his teachers and was not tolerated in the atmosphere of the 19th century Persian school system, which [Abbas Amanat](#) describes as "cruel, archaic and monotonous"^[14] This led the Bab to become disillusioned with the education system, later reforming it in his Bayan, where he instructs adults to treat children with dignity, to allow children to have toys and engage in play ^[15] and to never show anger or harshness to their students.^[16]

Sometime between age 15 and 20 he joined his uncle in the family business, a trading house, and became a merchant in the city of [Bushehr](#), Iran, near the [Persian Gulf](#),^{[8][12]} Some of his earlier writings suggest that he did not enjoy the business and instead applied himself to the study of religious literature.^[12] One of his contemporary followers described him as "very taciturn, and [he] would never utter a word unless it was absolutely necessary. He did not even answer our questions. He was constantly absorbed in his own thoughts, and was preoccupied with repetition of his prayers and verses. He is described as a handsome man with a thin beard, dressed in clean clothes, wearing a green shawl and a black turban."^[17] As a merchant, he was renowned for his honesty and trustworthiness in business ^[18] and an Irish physician described him as "a very mild and delicate-looking man, rather small in stature and very fair for a Persian, with a melodious soft voice, which struck me much". ^[19] [Shoghi Effendi](#) notes "the gentle, the youthful and irresistible person of the Báb" and praises him as being "matchless in His meekness, imperturbable in His serenity, magnetic in His utterance" ^[20] This personality has been described as having "captivated many of those who met him."