

# Elucidations

## Designation of Mírzá Yahyá Azal in the Writings of the Báb

### Part 1: Memorandum from the Research Department

Universal House of Justice

To: The Universal House of Justice

Date: 1 December 2004

From: Research Department

#### **Tablet of the Báb; the Appointment of Azal and His Titles**

The Research Department has considered the questions contained in the email message of 15 January 2004 from ... to the Universal House of Justice. As a context for his queries, ... appends a number of extracts from Web sites and email communications he has had with several individuals. ... appears to be particularly interested in “the nature of the designation of Azal” and to this end seeks information about the authenticity of the Lawḥ-i-Vaṣaya, which he understands is regarded by the Azal’s as the basis for Mírzá Yahyá’s titles and position. He also enquires about the meaning of a particular verse in the Persian Bayán. We provide the following response.

#### *Tablet of the Báb*

The Tablet of the Báb, which is described as “The Báb’s Lawḥ-i-Vasaya: The Will and Testament” on the Web site [www.h-net.org/bahai/areprint/Báb/S-Z/vasaya/vasaya.htm](http://www.h-net.org/bahai/areprint/Báb/S-Z/vasaya/vasaya.htm),

referred to by ..., can be found on pages 95–102 in volume 64, published in the Iran National Bahá'í Archives (INBA) series. This volume was published in B.E. 133 and contains various Writings of the Báb. We attach for ... information a photocopy of the Tablet from that volume. It is important to call attention to the fact that, while in some quarters this Tablet has become known as the Will and Testament of the Báb, the Research Department has, to date, found no explicit evidence to suggest that the Báb, Himself, designated the Tablet as such. Indeed, from a perusal of the attached material, ... will see that the Tablet bears no title. He will also see that, while the Tablet is addressed to Azal, there is nothing in its contents pertaining to questions of successorship and authority. Rather, the recipient is enjoined to promote and protect the Faith and to invite people to follow what has been revealed in the Bayán. To date, no authorized English translation of the Tablet is available.

As to the circumstances of Mírzá Yahyá's nomination, it is interesting to note that in the Bábí Dispensation, the Lesser Covenant, that Covenant made by the Manifestation of God with His followers to accept His appointed successor, is, according to the Guardian, found interspersed in the Báb's Book of Laws, the Persian Bayán, in many passages, some of which were "designedly obscure," but mostly "indubitably clear and conclusive."<sup>1</sup> The Báb seems to have alerted His followers to the promised advent of Bahá'u'lláh, instead of designating an appointed successor. Indeed, the Guardian stated:

A successor or vicegerent the Báb never named, an interpreter of His teachings He refrained from appointing. So transparently clear were His references to the Promised One, so brief was to be the duration of His own Dispensation, that neither the one nor the other was deemed necessary. All He did was, according to the testimony of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in "A Traveller's Narrative," to nominate, on the advice of Bahá'u'lláh and of another disciple, Mírzá Yahyá, who would act solely as a figure-head pending the manifestation of the Promised One, thus enabling Bahá'u'lláh to promote, in relative security, the Cause so dear to His heart. ("God Passes By," pp. 28–29)

The following extract from a letter dated 4 August 1980, written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, deals with the position of Mírzá Yaḥyá in the Bábí community:

Concerning the position of Mírzá Yaḥyá in the Bábí community, the Guardian has made it quite clear in “God Passes By” that Mírzá Yaḥyá was the Báb’s “nominee” and was the “recognized chief of the Bábí community” following the martyrdom of the Báb. He has also referred to him as “titular head” and “a mere figurehead” (see “God Passes By” page 90). The position occupied by Mírzá Yaḥyá was far different from being an appointed Successor of a Manifestation of God in the sense that St. Peter, the Imám ‘Alí or ‘Abdu’l-Bahá were appointed Successors with far-reaching authority. Obviously the Báb had no need to appoint such a Successor, for He knew that Bahá’u’lláh was already present and ready to be revealed at the appointed time. He seems, therefore, merely to have nominated a titular head for the Bábí community as a focal point of unity until such time as He Whom God will make manifest would decide to unveil Himself.

Additional details concerning the circumstances of Mírzá Yaḥyá’s nomination are contained in

- ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, “A Traveller’s Narrative” (Wilmette: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1980), pp. 37–38;
- Adib Taherzadeh, “The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh,” volume I (Oxford: George Ronald, 1974), pp. 53–54;
- Adib Taherzadeh, “The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh,” volume II (Oxford: George Ronald, 1977), pp. 241–242 and 247.

### *Titles of Azal*

As to whether Mírzá Yaḥyá’s titles were derived from Tablets of the Báb or fabricated by Azal and his followers, in his book, “Mustayqi,” Mírzá Yaḥyá attributes a number of divine names and attributes to himself, one of which is “Azal.”<sup>2</sup>

The title “Şubḥ-i-Azal” appears in an Islamic tradition which is called Ḥadīth-i-Kumayl (Kumayl was a devoted student of the first Imám, ‘Alí<sup>3</sup>), and a portion of the Ḥadīth is quoted by the Báb in “Dalá’il-i-Sab’ih” (Bábiyyih Publication, p. 58). Mírzá Yaḥyá and his followers erroneously have taken this term as a reference to Mírzá Yaḥyá.

In the book “Making the Crooked Straight: A Contribution to Bahá’í Apologetics,”<sup>4</sup> the following footnote provides additional information about the origin of Mírzá Yaḥyá’s attributing to himself the title “Şubḥ-i-Azal.”

Mírzá Yaḥyá Azal was evidently known also by the name Şubḥ-i-Azal. This is, at least, the title used by Browne, and it is probably through his works that this title was first made public. In Azalí works (such as “Hasht Bihisht”) and works written under Azalí influence (such as the “Kitáb-i-Nuḡtatu’l-Káf” or Gobineau’s “Les Religions”) Mírzá Yaḥyá is referred to by the title “Ḥaḍrat-i-Azal,” not “Şubḥ-i-Azal.” The origin or first use of the title Şubḥ-i-Azal has not yet been identified. This title of honour was evidently not conferred on him by the Báb, who only called him “Thamaratu’l-Azalíyya” and “Ismu’l-Azal” (see Mírzá Yaḥyá, “Mustayqi,” pp. 391f.). However, the Báb did employ the title Şubḥ-i-Azal in reference to various other leading Báb’s (see the commentary on the Ḥadīth of Kumayl, Teheran Bahá’í Archives MS 6006 C., pp. 74ff.), so that it is quite possible that Mírzá Yaḥyá was occasionally thus designated.

*Persian Bayán, passage 2:16*

... requests assistance in understanding a passage from the Persian Bayán, 2:16, which, among other things, refers to the Mustagháth and the timing of the advent of the Promised One. Although ... specific question is not clearly stated, it would appear that he is unsure how the meaning of the verse in the Bayán is to be understood in light of a statement in H. M. Balyuzi’s “E. G. Browne and the Bahá’í Faith” concerning the Azalí view of the coming of the Promised One.

The Research Department has not, to date, been able to locate an authoritative interpretation of the particular passage from the Persian Bayán in the Writings. However, we attach for ... information a discussion of the prophesy in the Writings of the Báb concerning the advent of the Promised One that is published in “Making the Crooked Straight: A Contribution to Bahá’í Apologetics.”<sup>5</sup> This discussion may well assist ... in furthering his understanding of some of the themes in the passage in question.

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#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> See “God Passes By” (Wilmette: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1995), pp. 27–28.
- <sup>2</sup> A section of this book containing the divine names and attributes appears in Rawhani Bushru’í’s “Risálih-i-Rawhání,” compiled by Vahíd Ra’fatí (Ontario: Association for Bahá’í Studies in Persian, 2000), pp. 108–109.
- <sup>3</sup> In “The Encyclopaedia of Islám,” New Edition, ed. H. A. R. Gibb, et. al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960), vol. I (A–B), p. 89, reference is made to “‘Risálat al-Kumayliyya,’ on the traditional answer by ‘Alí to the question of Kumayl b. Ziyád.”
- <sup>4</sup> Udo Schaefer, Nicola Towfigh and Ulrich Gollmer, “Making the Crooked Straight: A Contribution to Bahá’í Apologetics,” translated by Geraldine Schuckelt (Oxford: George Ronald, 2000), p. 631.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 601–604.

# Will and Testament: Translation and Commentary

by [The Báb](#)

translated by [Sepehr Manuchehri](#).

2004-09

original written in Arabic and Persian.

## The Primal Point's Will and Testament

### Introduction

This paper provides an analytical examination of a vital piece of Babi literature most commonly referred to as the Will and Testament of the Bab.

Draft extracts from this paper were first posted in instalments on the Tarikh list (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/tarikh/>) in February and March 2004 that generated a lively discussion<sup>1[1]</sup>.

Whilst this document is an important Babi work and has been available in several MS copies, it has not yet given the attention it deserves by generations of Babi scholars<sup>2[2]</sup>. Indeed it may be a pre-requisite to study this tablet first prior to analysing the events of the Middle Babi period.

This paper is only the first step in uncovering the contents of the tablet. There may be issues that are exaggerated, sidelined, simplified or completely missed. I hope the readers will bless me with their comments and suggestions for improvement.

### Available Versions

I first came across what I perceived at the time to be the only complete copy of this work in 1995. It was a facsimile of a copy maintained in the Iranian National Baha'i Archives (INBA) along with several other lesser-known tablets by the Primal Point.

I then discovered extracts of this tablet in a work by Mirza Yahya Nuri (hereby known as 'Subh-e Azal') entitled Mustaqyaz. In more recent times other complete versions of the tablet have become available in one form or the other.

It needs to be emphasised that the original of this tablet has not yet surfaced. Therefore it is not possible to verify which of the existing copies are closer to the original.

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<sup>1[1]</sup> I wish to acknowledge helpful comments from Iskandar Hai, Kavian Sadeghzadeh Milani, Don Calkins, Armin Ecshraghi, Ahang Rabbani, Khazeh Fananapazir and Robin Mahrshahi.

<sup>2[2]</sup> Most notably Denis MacEoin

This paper takes in to account four versions of this document. In the following section each version is briefly discussed and reason(s) for their inclusion highlighted:

1. Mustaqyaz version (hereby known as 'Version 1'):

<http://www.h-net.org/~bahai/areprint/azal/M-R/M/mustayqz/ms378.jpg>

2. Introduction to Motammem Al-Bayan (hereby known as 'Version 2'):

<http://www.h-net.org/~bahai/areprint/azal/M-R/mutammim/vesayat2.gif>

In the introductory note number 3, the publisher of Motammem Al-Bayan confirms the following:

*"This is one of the tablets issued to Subh-e Azal by the Bab. Because the original tablet was not available, a copy of the text in the hand writing of His Holiness the Eternal Fruit is hereby presented."*<sup>3[3]</sup>

There are minor differences between Version 1 and Version 2, which may point to yet another copy/variation of the MS in Subh-e Azal's possession. Unlike Version 1, this copy is a complete set.

3. INBA No 64 version (hereby known as 'Version 3'):

<http://www.h-net.org/~bahai/areprint/bab/inba64/64IBA095.gif>

The header of the tablet has the title: *'Will and Testament of His Holiness the Primal Point may all other spirits be sacrificed for Him'*.

After the conclusion of the tablet there is a note by the scribe. Parts of the note appear to be missing from the scan so their verification is at this point not possible.

The legible portions of the message read:

*"The above will and testament was taken from an old manuscript (without) points (Nuqteh)<sup>4[4]</sup>. During the copying process extreme care was taken in comparing (the two copies). Up on instructions from Jenab-e Afnan from the Holy Family (\*illegible\*) Sayyid Habibu'llah Afnan."*

The note is signed - presumably by the checker/scribe and dated 14<sup>th</sup> Shahr Al-Nur, Year 100 of the Badi calendar in Shiraz (1944)<sup>5[5]</sup>.

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<sup>3[3]</sup> Refer to <http://www.h-net.org/~bahai/areprint/azal/M-R/mutammim/preface.gif>

<sup>4[4]</sup> This was a tradition prevalent amongst the Bab's scribes in imitating His handwriting

<sup>5[5]</sup> The actual INBA No 64 volume was formally bound, numbered and archived around 1976-1977. This copy was discovered and verified well in advance of this time.

This copy is obviously made from a manuscript owned by the Afnan family. It is significant because of two reasons:

Firstly its discovery in 1944 proved that apart from the MS available to Subh-e Azal and the scribe of MMB (Bayani community) at least one other manuscript was in circulation within Baha'i families.

It is particularly noteworthy that this copy was found at approximately the same time as the publication of Version 2 above.

Secondly, its discovery in the Afnan collection may point an earlier MS owned by Sayyid Ali Afnan<sup>6[6]</sup> or the Bab's immediate family residing in Shiraz. It could suggest that the Bab or Subh-e Azal chose to send an early copy of the original MS to Shiraz.

The Baha'i scribe notes that the original did not contain any points/dots in the handwriting, which could suggest that this MS was from either Sayyid Husayn Yazdi or the Bab.

4. Independent version (hereby known as 'Version 4'):

<http://www.h-net.org/~bahai/areprint/bab/S-Z/vasaya/vasaya.htm>

This version is a modern typed script of an MS in private hands. It is not clear whether this MS was copied from the original or one of the subsequent copies made by generations of Babi/Bayani scribes overtime.

It can safely be concluded that the MS used for this version is not the same as the other 3 versions above as it contains varying degrees of differences with each one. This version is also significant because it indicates the presence of at least one other surviving MS presumably tracing back to the 1850's<sup>7[7]</sup>.

## Verse Numbering

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<sup>6[6]</sup> Sayyid Ali and the Bab's mother/wife are actually mentioned in the text of the letter

<sup>7[7]</sup> Copies of the Primal Points letters and writings were controlled by Sayyid Husayn Yazdi (Maku) and Mulla Abdu'l Karim Qazvini (Tehran). In addition selected writings were dispatched directly to Subh-e Azal. The capture of Sayyid Husayn Yazdi within 2 years of the Bab's martyrdom and brutal slaying of Mulla Abdul Karim following the failed assassination attempt on the Shah essentially means that any copies held by the scribes have probably been lost forever – unless they had been copied prior to their capture. Refer to my paper entitled "Mulla Abdu'l Karim Qazvini" to be published soon for further details on the Babi document control and tracking process.



None of the above versions have verse numbers. I have inserted verse numbers in order to provide reference points throughout the text for easier tracking of the contents. Some verses appear longer than others simply because there is a carry over of contents between one, two or three phrases.

Therefore the reader must bear in mind that my verse numbering system is not always related to one per sentence, but in some cases takes into account the overall tone and message of a number of sentences taken together.

## Miscellaneous Versions

Other than the four versions mentioned above, extracts from this tablet have been quoted in a number of works including:

- Φ0B7 Nuqtat al-Kaf: ed E G Browne, Leiden: EJ Brill 1910. Reprinted East Lansing, Mi: H-Baha'i 1997. Whilst not quoting any of the verses in full, the author focuses on the general tone of the letter particularly verses 5, 25, 27, 30, 32 and 34.
- Φ0B7 Sultan `Izziyyih Khanum Nuri. *Tanbih an-Na'imin*. (Tehran, n.p.). Republished in digital facsimile. East Lansing, Mi.: H-Bahai, 2000, page 31-32. The author only quotes verses 1-8 in full.
- Φ0B7 Mulla Isma`il "Mirza Mustafa Katib" Isfahani, Pasokh Nameh. Typescript from Ms. in private hands. Digitally reprinted in Adobe Acrobat pdf format. East Lansing, Mi.: H-Bahai, 2001, page 77-78. The author only quotes verses 1-8, 38 and 39 in full.
- Φ0B7 Mulla Muhammad Ja`far Niraqi. *Tadhkirat al-Ghafilin*. MS. British Manuscript Project, University of Michigan, 1322 (6). Published in digital facsimile. East Lansing, Mi.: H-Bahai, 2000, pages 101-103. Includes verses 1-23 in full.

As the above authors have not quoted the tablet in its entirety, I have elected to exclude their respective versions from the scope of this study.

Therefore it appears since 1850 this document has existed or referred to in one form or another, itemised as follows:

- Φ0B7 1849 - Original
- Φ0B7 1855/6 - Mustaqyaz (Version 1)
- Φ0B7 1892 - 1904 Tanbih al-Na'imin
- Φ0B7 1910 – Nuqtat al-Kaf
- Φ0B7 1913 – Tadhkirat al-Ghafilin
- Φ0B7 1919 - Pasokh Nameh
- Φ0B7 1945 – Afnan copy discovered and verified (Version 3)
- Φ0B7 1945 – Introduction to Motammem Al-Bayan (Version 2)
- Φ0B7 1976/7 – INBA 64 finalised (Version 3)
- Φ0B7 2004 – Typescript of an Independent copy (Version 4)

## **Comparison of the selected Versions**

Table 1 below provides a summary of comparisons made between the four versions.

For each verse the applicable variation(s) within each version are quoted.

Where the content of a particular verse are identical across all versions, they are noted as 'Same' and highlighted in yellow.

Verses not quoted in Version 1 are noted as 'Not quoted' and highlighted in black.

Where verses from various versions agree they have been identified as required.

Verse Number	Version 1 Mustaqyaz	Version 2 M Al-Bayan	Version 3 INBA No 64	Version 4 Independent
1	Same	Same	Same	Same
2	ثم اشهد على انه لا اله الا انت المهيمن القيوم	Agrees with Version 1	ثم اشهد على ان لا اله الا انا الله المهيمن القيوم	Agrees with Version 1
3	Not quoted	هذا امر الله لما خلق و يخلق	هذا امر الله لمن خلق و يخلق	Agrees with Version 2
4	Not quoted	يحكم الله مظهر نفسه من عنده في كل شئ كيف يشاء بامرہ	من عنده مظهر نفسه في كل شئ كيف يشاء بامرہ	Agrees with Version 2
5	تتلو من آيات ربك ما يلقى الله على فؤادك	تتلوا من آيات الله ما يلقى الله على فؤاده	يتلو من آيات الله ما يلقى الله على فؤاده	Agrees with Version 1
6	Same	Same	Same	Same
7	Same	Same	Same	Same
8	لا اله الا انا السلطان الممتع	Agrees with Version 1	لا اله الا انا السلطان المنيع	Agrees with Version 1
9	اسمع كل من يذكرني بذكرى اياي	Agrees with Version 1	اسمع كل من يذكر اياي	Agrees with Version 1
10	Same	Same	Same	Same
11	Same	Same	Same	Same
12	ثم اشهد بان الله لطيف فوق كل ذالطف لطيف	ثم اشهد ان الله لطيف فوق كل ذالطف	ثم اشهد بان الله لطيف فوق كل ذى لطف لطيف	Agrees with Version 2
13	Not quoted	لا يجب ان يشهد على عرش قد نطق من ربه الابهي	يجب الله ان يشهد على عرش قد نطق عن ربه الابهي	Agrees with Version 2
14	Not quoted	يجب الله ان يستترن اعراش الحقيقه في حرير بيض ثم يسترون في اداعى مرات بلور ثم يسترون تلك الا داعى في الاحجار التى ما خلقت الطف على شان كل يستطيعون	يجب الله يسترون فى اداعى مرات بلور ثم يسترون تلك الا داعى فى الاحجار التى ما خلقت الطف على شان كل يستطيعون	Agrees with Version 2
15	Not quoted	هم امنوا بالله و اياته ان هم يستطيعون	هم امنوا بالله و اياته ان انتم يستطيعون	Agrees with Version 2

16	Not quoted	قل القطن ثم ادعيه الشجر ما يستطيعون من الحجر الاعلى و لو انتم يعد ايام يستطيعون ان تظهرون	قل القطن ثم ادعيه الحرير ما يستطيعون من الحجر الاعلى و لو انتم يعد ايام يستطيعون ان تظهرون	Agrees with Version 2
17	Not quoted	ذلك للذين هم احياء لنلا تكره قلوبهم و هم بذلك يفرحون	ذلك للذين هم احياء لنلا يكره قلوبهم و هم بذلك يفرحون	Agrees with Version 2
18	Same	Same	Same	Same
19	Same	Same	Same	Same
20	و اذكر بالحسنى كل الذين هم امنوا بي ثم بكلماتى لنلا يختلفون فى امر الله و هم عن الصراط ليعبدون	Agrees with Version 1	و اذكر بالحسنى كل الذين هم امنوا بي ثم بكلماتى لنلا يختلفون فى امر الله و هم عن الصراط ليعبدون	و اذكر بالحسنى الذين هم امنوا بي ثم كلماتى لنلا يختلفون فى امر الله و هم عن الصراط ليعبدون
21	فان يظهر الله فى ايامك مثلك هذا ما يورثن الامر من عند الله الواحد الوحيد	فان يظهر الله فى ايامك بمثلك هذا ما يورثن الامر من عند الله الواحد الوحيد	Agrees with Version 1	Agrees with Version 2
22	فان لم يظهر فايقن بان الله ما اراد	فان لم يظهر فايقن بان الله ما اراد	فان لم يظهر فايقن بان الله ما اراد	Agrees with Version 2
23	و امروا بالشهداء الذينهم يتقون فى دينهم	و امر بالشهداء الذينهم يتقون فى دينهم	و امر بالشهداء الذينهم يتقون فى دينهم	و امر بالشهداء الذينهم يتقون فى امر ربهم
24	Same	Same	Same	Same
25	و ان ابواب البيان قد قدر على عدد كل شئ و لكننا ما اظهرنا الا احدى عشر واحدا لكل هيكل واحد من هياكل التسعه من قبل العشر احدى عشر واحدا ذكرنا من عند الله العلى العظيم	و ان ابواب البيان قد قدر على عدد كل شئ و لكننا ما اظهرناه الا احدى عشر واحد الكل هيكل واحد من هياكل التسعه من قبل العشر احدى عشر واحدا ذكرنا من عند الله العلى العظيم	و ان ابواب البيان قد قدر على عدد كل شئ و لكننا ما اظهرنا الا تحدى و عشر واحد الكل هيكل واحد من هياكل التسعه من قبل العشر احد عشر واحدا ذكرنا من عند الله العلى العظيم	و ان ابواب البيان قد قدر على عدد كل شئ و لكننا ما اظهرناه الا تحدى و عشر واحد الكل هيكل واحد من هياكل التسعه من قبل العشر احدى عشر واحدا ذكرنا من عند الله العلى العظيم
26	Same	Same	Same	Same
27	Same	Same	Same	Same
28	و انا كل عباد الله و انا كل له ساجدون	Agrees with Version 1	Agrees with Version 1	و انا كل عباد و انا كل له ساجدون

29	Same	Same	Same	Same
30	Same	Same	Same	Same
31	بما كنت عليه من الاكرمين	Agrees with Version 1	بما كنت مقدرًا عليه انه اكرم الاكرمين	Agrees with Version 1
32	و انا قد وعدنا من حملت عرش ربك بمنهاج واحد	Agrees with Version 1	و انا وعدنا من حملت عرش ربك بمنهاج واحد	Agrees with Version 1
33	Same	Same	Same	Same
34	Same	Same	Same	Same
35	Same	Same	Same	Same
36	Same	Same	Same	Same
37	حد الواحد لنفسك ثم هب كل واحد لمن في الارض فاء .... سيوصلن اليك من كان من واحد الاول في كتاب عظيم	حد الواحد لنفسك ثم هب كل واحد لمن في ارض فاء .... سيوصلن اليك من كان من واحد الاول في كتاب عظيم	حد الواحد لنفسك ثم كل واحد لمن في الارض فاء ... سيوصل اليك من كان واحد الاول في كتاب عظيم	حد الواحد لنفسك ثم هب كل واحد لمن في الارض فاء .... سيوصلن اليك من كان من واحد الاول في كتاب عظيم
38	و كل ما يبلغنك ذلك الاسم من لدنا ذلك من عندنا فكن به من الامرين . و احفظ نفسك ثم ما احفظ نفسك ثم ما نزل في البيان ثم ما ينزلن من عندك	و كل ما يبلغنك ذلك الاسم من عندنا فكن به من الامرين . و احفظ نفسك ثم احفظ نفسك ثم ما نزل في البيان ثم ما ينزل من عندك	و كل ما يبلغنك ذلك اسم من لدنا ذلك من عندنا فان به من الامرين . فاحفظ نفسك ثم احفظ نفسك ثم ما نزل في البيان ثم ما ينزلن من عندك	و كل ما يبلغنك ذلك اسم من عندنا فكن له من الامرين . و احفظ نفسك ثم احفظ نفسك ثم ما نزل في البيان ثم ما ينزل من عندك
39	Same	Same	Same	Same
40	Not quoted	و ان واحد ارض الفاء يوصل الى اسم العلي ليوثين كل واحد من اولى مجتبي واحدا ذكر من عندالله العلي العظيم	و ان واحد ارض الفاء يوصل الى اسم الله العلي ليوثين كل واحد اولى مجتبي واحدا ذكرا من عندالله العلي العظيم	Agrees with Version 2
41	Not quoted	Same	Same	Same
42	Not quoted	.. قد بلغوا حدود خمسهم الى حقوقهم في البيان ..	.. قد بلغوا حدود خمسهم من حقوقهم في البيان ..	Agrees with Version 2
43	Not quoted	.. و ان في ارض الالف الى اسم عز رحيم .	.. و ان في ارض الالف يوصل الى اسم عز رحيم .	Agrees with Version 2
44	Not quoted	Same	Same	Same
45	Not quoted	Same	Same	Same
46	Not quoted	Same	Same	Same

٤٧	Not quoted	Same	Same	Same
48	Not quoted	فان واحدا منها لم يعدل خلق السموات و الارض و ما بينهما اذا كان احد به من العارفين	فان واحدا منها لم يعدلها خلق السموات و الارض و بينهما اذا كان احد به من العارفين	Agrees with Version 2
4٩	Not quoted	فاستعد بالله عن كل الظالمين	واستعد بالله عن كل الظالمين	Agrees with Version 2
50	Not quoted	Same	Same	Same
51	Not quoted	Same	Same	Same
52	Not quoted	... بلغ من هياكل الكبرى واحدا اليه لينصرک في دين الله ..	... بلغ من هياكل الكبرى و حدالله لينصرک في دين الله ..	Agrees with Version 2
53	Not quoted	Same	Same	Same
54	Not quoted	ثم ياخذ لنفسه هيكلا كبرى ثم يؤتى كل ذى حق حقه من الذين هم من عندالله متوقعون	ثم ياخذ لنفسه هيكلا كبرى ثم ياتى كل ذى حق حقه من الذين هم من عندالله متوقعون	ثم ياخذ لنفسه هيكلا كبرى ثم يؤتى كل ذى حق حقه من الذين هم من عندالله متوقعون

**Table 1** – Detailed comparison of the four available versions of the text

From the above comparison the following points become evident:

- Φ0B7 The contents of 17 verses are identical across all versions.
- Φ0B7 The contents of 8 verses not quoted in Version 1 are identical for the remaining versions.

Therefore a total of 25 verses - 46% of the tablet - are exactly identical regardless of the version used.

Where there are differences for the same verse between versions:

- Φ0B7 There is virtually little or no change in the meaning or intent of the phrase for 15 verses - 27% of the tablet<sup>8[8]</sup>. These are instances where the differences can be classified as a simple typo, petty or insignificant.
- Φ0B7 There is a moderate change in the translation of the phrase with no significant changes to the intent of the phrase for 9 verses - 17% of the tablet<sup>9[9]</sup>.
- Φ0B7 There is a significant change in the translation and intent of the phrase for 5 verses - 9% of the tablet<sup>10[10]</sup>.

Therefore it can be concluded that the contents in 91% of the tablet are similar across all versions and there is a major conflict between various versions for 5 verses - or approximately 9% - of the tablet.

With that in mind let us take a look at the translation of the text and then analyse the variations for the five verses in question.

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<sup>8[8]</sup> Refer to verses 3, 5, 12, 15, 21, 22, 25, 32, 37, 38, 40, 42, 48, 49 and 54

<sup>9[9]</sup> Refer to verses 4, 8, 9, 17, 20, 23, 31, 43 and 52

<sup>10[10]</sup> Refer to verses 2, 13, 14, 16 and 28

# Translation

[Verse 1]

Φ0B7 Name of Azal, testify that there is no God but I, the dearest beloved.

[Verse 2]

Φ0B7 Then testify that there is no God but you, the victorious and permanent.

[Verse 3]

Φ0B7 Say, God created what He created from the time of beginning that has no beginning and, whatever He creates until the time of end that has no ending, to manifest His own being. This is the commandment of God upon whatever He has created and shall create.

[Verse 4]

Φ0B7 God commands His manifestation directly about all things, the way He pleases through His cause. Verily, He is the knowing and wise.

[Verse 5]

Φ0B7 When you are isolated from this Throne<sup>1</sup>, read the verses of your Lord. Verses that are infused in your heart by God are a reminder from Him, the victorious and permanent.

[Verse 6]

Φ0B7 At every day and night, mention this verse on my behalf and on behalf of the believers:

[Verse 7]

Φ0B7 Verily I am God. There is no God but I, the all knowing and powerful. Or if you wish<sup>11[11]</sup> There is no God but I, the all-controlling king.

[Verse 8]

Φ0B7 And testify that I am verily alive in the brighter horizon<sup>12[12]</sup>.

[Verse 9]

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<sup>11[11]</sup> Alternatively mention

<sup>12[12]</sup> Ofoq al-Abha can also be interpreted as the horizon of Abha



Φ0B7 Listen to whomever that remembers me through My words<sup>13[13]</sup>. Verily I am the best of rememberers.

[Verse 10]

Φ0B7 Whoever attains the presence of the Throne of your Lord, has in effect attained the presence of God, the victorious and permanent.

[Verse 11]

Φ0B7 And there is no reward greater than attaining the presence of God, if he is from the people of certitude.

[Verse 12]

Φ0B7 Then testify that verily God is more elegant than any elegance.

[Verse 13]

Φ0B7 He dislikes pondering on a person who has spoken on behalf on his Lord with his permission, unless it is the most precious thing He has created. Verily He is the most forgiving of the forgivers.

[Verse 14]

Φ0B7 God desires that the thrones<sup>14[14]</sup> of Truth to be wrapped in white silk, placed in coffins made of shiny crystal and then, if possible, buried beneath the most elegant and tender stones ever created.

[Verse 15]

Φ0B7 This is verily desired by God for those who have believed in God and His verse, if they can afford it.

[Verse 16]

Φ0B7 If they cannot afford, advise them to prepare a plant for the body, place it in a timber coffin and burry it. And after some time, if they could afford, place the best<sup>15[15]</sup> stones on site.

[Verse 17]

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<sup>13[13]</sup> The believers

<sup>14[14]</sup> Embodiments

<sup>15[15]</sup> Quality

Φ0B7 This commandment is for the sake of the living that their hearts may not grieve and become sorrowful. So that through this, they become joyful.

[Verse 18]

Φ0B7 Attain the presence of God whenever you can and convey the cause of your Lord to the peoples of the world.

[Verse 19]

Φ0B7 And invite them to the illuminated and refined path revealed in the Bayan.

[Verse 20]

Φ0B7 Mention those who believed in My words with positive<sup>16[16]</sup>. So that they may not cause dissention in the Cause of God, and fall away from the path of worshippers.

[Verse 21]

Φ0B7 Whenever God shall manifest a person like you in your lifetime, this person is the heir to the Cause of God, the one and unique.

[Verse 22]

Φ0B7 However if God did not manifest a mirror like you, then be certain that God verily did not wish to be introduced. Therefore leave the matter to your Lord and the Lord of all peoples.

[Verse 23]

Φ0B7 And give advice to the faithful witnesses<sup>17[17]</sup> in the cause of their Lord. Persons who believe in their religion and shall not transgress the limitations of God.

[Verse 24]

Φ0B7 We have verily taught the jewels of knowledge and wisdom to the person who is at the presence of your Lord. So take news from him for We are the all informing. Pay respects to him on behalf of your Lord, as much as you are able to.

[Verse 25]

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<sup>16[16]</sup> Attributes

<sup>17[17]</sup> The term used here is 'Shodada'. The same term is used repeatedly in conjunction with 'Letters' and 'Mirrors' (Huruf va Maraya) in the Bayan.

Φ0B7 The number of chapters<sup>18[18]</sup> in the Bayan was based on the number of Kulu Shay<sup>19[19]</sup>. We only revealed 11 in number from that. That is, one Vahed for each Haykal out of 19. This is a mention from the great and elevated God.

[Verse 26]

Φ0B7 Such is the mention of generosity. All are from God and all shall return towards Him.

[Verse 27]

Φ0B7 We order you to obey Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest. He will verily appear amongst this people with a sublime reign in the final resurrection.

[Verse 28]

Φ0B7 Verily we are all servants and kneel down before Him.

[Verse 29]

Φ0B7 He shall carry out whatever He wishes, with permission from His Lord. He shall not be questioned for his actions. However all others are responsible for everything they do.

[Verse 30]

Φ0B7 If God manifests victory in your time, you have the pleasure to reveal the eight sequels with His permission.

[Verse 31]

Φ0B7 We have promised one sequel to the person<sup>20[20]</sup> who carried the Throne of your Lord. If the order is given from her, we are verily the fulfillers.

[Verse 32]

Φ0B7 God shall not ignore what He has promised. Because He is the most truthful of the truthfals.

[Verse 33]

Φ0B7 And if God does not manifest victory in your time, be patient with what has been revealed and do not forge a letter. This is an order from God in the greatest book.

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<sup>18[18]</sup> The term used here is 'abwab'

<sup>19[19]</sup> Meaning All-things, the abjad equivalent of Kulu Shay is 361

<sup>20[20]</sup> Reference to a female believer

[Verse 34]

Φ0B7 Invite {\*people\*} to what is revealed. Do not alter anything so that people do not dissent in the religion of God, and are trained in the same sequel until the final resurrection.

[Verse 35]

Φ0B7 And remember whomever we have named in your letter. Verily we are from the rememberers.

[Verse 36]

Φ0B7 From the writings of God in your possession, prepare seven chapters<sup>21[21]</sup>. Verily we are from the distributors.

[Verse 37]

Φ0B7 Take one chapter for thyself. Then donate one chapter each to the believers in the lands of Fa, Ain, Kha, Alef, Mim and Kaf. Soon we shall deliver to you the person who was in the first chapter of the greatest book. Then seal the writings that deserve to be sealed by your Lord. And circulate copies amongst the peoples of the world.

[Verse 38]

Φ0B7 Invite all to the writings that are delivered to you by that name. Protect yourself, then protect yourself<sup>22[22]</sup>, then protect what is revealed in the Bayan followed by what is revealed from your presence.

[Verse 39]

Φ0B7 So that all is protected until the day of resurrection and all believers shall benefit from them.

[Verse 40]

Φ0B7 The chapter<sup>23[23]</sup> for the land of Fa, deliver to the name of Ali. So that he shall give a copy to those who have my love. This is a mention from the great and elevated God.

[Verse 41]

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<sup>21[21]</sup> The term used here is 'Vahed'

<sup>22[22]</sup> Repeated emphasis on personal protection

<sup>23[23]</sup> Read as 'chapter earmarked'

Φ0B7 In the land of Ain, deliver to the name of Nabil who assisted God with all his possessions in the day of resurrection. He has a significant station in the presence of God.

[Verse 42]

Φ0B7 Verily in the Bayan, we have elevated the privileges of those who paid their Khums obligation<sup>24[24]</sup> to me. And this is a benediction from us. Verily we are the benedictors.

[Verse 43]

Φ0B7 In the land of Kha, deliver to the Name of Saddaq Sadiq. In the land of Alef, to the blessed name of Rahim.

[Verse 44]

Φ0B7 In the land of Mim, deliver to the person who is from the people of certitude.

[Verse 45]

Φ0B7 In the land of Kaf, deliver to the name of your Lord, Javad Javed Javeed.

[Verse 46]

Φ0B7 It is not halal for each person to own more than one chapter. All must be content with one.

[Verse 47]

Φ0B7 Protect whatever verses and letters revealed from the victorious and permanent God. Do not forward them to anyone but the truthful believers of God.

[Verse 48]

Φ0B7 Verily the creation of the skies and earth and whatever is in between them, shall not compare with one chapter from the above, if one is learned.

[Verse 49]

Φ0B7 Take refuge in God from all tyrants.

[Verse 50]

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<sup>24[24]</sup> Customary Shiite practice of donating 20% of total revenue to the descendants of the Prophet or their representative each year

Φ0B7        Until such time that God manifests that which will make all happy.

[Verse 51]

Φ0B7        Say, He prevails over His creation and He is the victorious and permanent.

[Verse 52]

Φ0B7        If the name of Aman is from the people of certitude, deliver to him a great Haykal. So that he may assist you in the religion of God, if he has the power.

[Verse 53]

Φ0B7        Verily we have appointed the one who wrote the verses of God<sup>25[25]</sup> as the distributor of the writings. So that he may deliver a selection of the best to the elevated Wahid<sup>26[26]</sup>.

[Verse 54]

Φ0B7        Then he can take for himself one great Haykal and pay the dues of each benedictor, those who have expectations from God.

This concludes the translation of the complete text of the tablet. The following section discusses significant variations between the four nominated versions.

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<sup>25[25]</sup> Reference to Aqa Sayyid Husayn Yazdi, also known as 'Kateb-e Aziz' – the Dear Scribe

<sup>26[26]</sup> The term used is 'Wahid Al-Aala' reference to one of Subh-e Azal's titles

## Significant Variations

Verses 2, 13, 14, 16 and 28 appear to be significantly different for the versions examined. The following is a summary of variations for each verse.

### Verse 2

Versions 1, 2 and 4 read the same:

‘Then testify that there is no God but you, the victorious and permanent’

Version 3 differs:

‘Then testify that verily there is no God but me, the victorious and permanent’

### Verse 13

Not quoted in Version 1.

Versions 2 and 4 read the same:

‘He dislikes pondering on a person who has spoken on behalf on his Lord with his permission, unless it is the most precious thing He has created. Verily He is the most forgiving of the forgivers.’

Version 3 differs:

‘He likes pondering on a person who has spoken on behalf on his Lord with his permission, unless it is the most precious thing He has created. Verily He is the most forgiving of the forgivers.’

### Verse 14

Not quoted in Version 1.

Versions 2 and 4 read the same:

‘God desires that the thrones of Truth to be wrapped in white silk, placed in coffins made of shiny crystal and then, if possible, buried beneath the most elegant and tender stones ever created.’

Version 3 differs:

‘God desires to be wrapped in white silk, placed in coffins made of shiny crystal and then, if possible, buried beneath the most elegant and tender stones ever created.’

### Verse 16

Not quoted in Version 1.

Versions 2 and 4 read the same:

‘If they cannot afford, advise them to prepare a plant for the body, place it in a timber coffin and burry it. And after some time, if they could afford, place the best stones on site.’

Version 3 differs:

If they cannot afford, advise them to prepare a cotton wrap for the body, place it in a timber coffin and bury it. And after some time, if they could afford, place the best stones on site.'

Versions 2 and 4 do not mention requirements for white silk and instructs placement of a plant within the coffin<sup>27[27]</sup>.

## Verse 28

Versions 1, 2 and 3 read the same:

'Verily we are all servants of God and kneel down before Him.'

Version 4 differs:

'Verily we are all servants and kneel down before Him.'

None of the significant variations relate to the intended duties or responsibilities of Subh-e Azal. They are mainly concerned with the 'operational' aspects of his work (verses 13, 14, 16) or are simply praises (verses 2 and 28).

Now that the various versions are compared, translated and items of major difference highlighted, we may begin to analyse its contents to learn about the scope and purpose of the document.

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<sup>27[27]</sup> Note that Suleyman Khan first placed a plant with the remains of the Bab inside the timber coffin. Refer to  
Φ0B7 · <http://bahai-library.com/histories/remains.bab.html> 'Remains of the Bab in Tihran' by Ahang  
Rabbani  
Φ0B7 · <http://bahai-library.com/histories/remains2.html> 'Further extracts concerning the Remains of the Bab  
in Tehran' by Sepehr Manuchehri



## Commentary on The Primal Point's Will and Testament

by: Sepehr Manuchehri

Analysing this work is equivalent to taking the journey to a forgotten world. A point in time where the first generation of Babi leaders were paving the way for the new guard.

Little is written or said about the handover period. This work is not dated although the author of Nuqtat Al-Kaf provides a clue. He indirectly infers that that this tablet was written soon after the conclusion of the Shaykh Tabarsi uprising and martyrdom of Quddus on the fifth year of the revelation (1849)<sup>28[28]</sup>.

Indeed the commentary provided by the author of Nuqtat Al-Kaf is the earliest ever documented analysis of the Bab's Will and Testament. According to Nuqtat Al-Kaf the issue of the Will and Testament formally concluded a series of activities that had taken place previously:

*"When the letters of Jenab-e Azal were received by His Holiness the dhikr [the Bab], He became very pleased. It signalled the dusk for the sun of dhikriyah and the dawn of the moon of Azaliyah. Therefore He sent one item of His outwardly possessions that matched the inwardly [Baten] such as the pen holder, paper, writings, His blessed garment, noble stamp and similar to his holiness Azal<sup>29[29]</sup>."*

Whilst the document is not officially assigned a title by the author, for all intents and purposes it is the Will and Testament of a young prophet wary of His impending fate yet anxious about the future of His followers.

The Primal Point's Will and Testament is a powerful work both in terms of its message and scope. Here the Bab is succinct and to the point. He refrains from the usual plays with letters and words, and concentrates on the multitude of challenges facing His young movement.

The author of Nuqtat Al-Kaaf identifies the main purpose of the document:

*The secret (behind) documenting his vicarship is to reassure the hearts of the weak, so that they do not wonder about the truthfulness of his honour (through which) friend and foe are informed that grace of God shall never cease. And that the cause of truth shall appear until the end [of time]<sup>30[30]</sup>."*

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<sup>28[28]</sup> The author of NK makes the following observations and commentary about the Bab's Will and Testament (pp 243 – 244): "... the news of the martyrdom of His Holiness Quddus reached him ... This event took place on the fifth year of the revelation of truth ... The seditions of the seven martyrs, his holiness Vahid and also Zanjan took place during this revelation ... Orders were issued and hence [Azal] became the addressee.

<sup>29[29]</sup> Ibid

<sup>30[30]</sup> Ibid

Some allege that this work is an outright forgery and question its authenticity.

There is no hard evidence to suggest this is the case. Sections of this tablet have been quoted in various works since the Baghdad period prior to the infamous split. These works were identified earlier in this paper under the heading “Miscellaneous Versions”.

From the four versions examined for the purpose of this study, two versions are in the handwriting of Subh-e Azal, one version is from the Iranian National Baha’i Archives (taken from the Afnan library in Shiraz) and one version is from an independent MS.

## **Tone**

This document can be viewed from a number of different perspectives:

Φ0B7 It can be regarded as a love letter in displaying a range of emotions. The Bab trusts Subh-e Azal with His most intimate thoughts, fears and secrets. In a way treating him as a reliable partner, an insider and equal. Words used to describe Subh-e Azal are carefully selected and phrased.

Φ0B7 It can be regarded as a job description for the new nominee. The Bab clearly spells out His expectations from Subh-e Azal and provides him with a range of responsibilities and authorities. In doing so, He bestows confidence and self-respect to the young nominee at a very difficult juncture in the Babi history. Through this work, the Bab makes his choice for a successor transparently clear to other senior believers.

Φ0B7 It can be viewed as a strategic plan for the future. Risk and opportunities are identified and practical approaches are suggested for taking the movement into the next phase. The Bab canvasses many possibilities here: Victory may or may not happen, such a person may or may not appear etc. Subh-e Azal is hereby prepared to face a multitude of rising challenges.

Φ0B7 It can provide a fascinating insight into the persona of the Bab. A leader with a great attention to detail and unquestioned loyalty to His key followers who is able to identify and utilise key regional leaders, mobilise resources and repay His creditors.

Φ0B7 It can be viewed as a puzzle. There are vague references to characters and locations that may not be instantly recognisable. There are clues thrown here and there for the reader to chase up.

However one chooses to perceive this document, it is a visibly powerful and engaging piece of history. It can attract a few tears even to the hardened scholar. It is a must read for those interested in the life of the Bab as well as those interested in learning about the dynamics of the middle Babi period.

## **Analysis**

This section provides a running commentary on the relevant verses. Applicable verse numbers are identified followed by the actual commentary:

### Verses 1-3

The tablet is clearly addressed to the person with the name of Azal. As there was no one else with such a title in the Babi community, it can safely be assumed that the intended recipient of this tablet is none other than Subh-e Azal.

In typical fashion, the Bab starts with addressing Himself and His recipient.

All creation is made for the manifestation of His self. And He commands His manifestation in accordance with His will. Here the Bab effectively regards this letter as a command made to Azal.

### Verse 5

The Bab refers to His impending fate. He appreciates the sorrow this might generate amongst the believers. The Shaykh Tabarsi massacre has recently been concluded and there are numerous followers and grieving families affected by this tragedy.

Subh-e Azal is asked to read verses and remember Him. These are no ordinary verses. Indeed they shall be infused in his heart and are in effect revealed by God. Infusion of these verses will take place following the ascendance of the Primal Point.

### Verses 6-8

In addition to the infused verses, the Bab provides specific dhikrs to Azal for recital. Two dhikrs are hereby nominated. The option is provided to recite either. In these dhikrs the Bab is referred to as the all knowing, all controlling and powerful.

His physical life may be about to end but his influence and legacy is permanent. Painting a positive picture of the distant future, the Primal Point is alive in the brighter horizon. He reassures His followers to maintain hope. He is watching from afar and His blessings radiate to all promising better times ahead.

### Verse 9

Those who remember the Bab through His verses (believers) are given a special mention. Subh-e Azal is asked to listen to their concerns and grievances.

The Bab values effective communication skills as one of the vital virtues for His young nominee. Active listening helps to diffuse tension and potential dissention in the religion of God. This verse can also be read in conjunction with verses 19 and 20.

### Verses 10-12

Attaining Azal's presence is equivalent to attaining the presence of God. The recipient is assured that his utterings are divinely sanctioned. Only God reserves the right to review Azal's pronouncements on the most precious of matters.

This is a clear signal to other senior believers that Subh-e Azal is the Bab's chosen nominee. All are encouraged to meet him - ie attain the presence of God - presumably to give their allegiance.

### Verses 14-17

Clear instructions are given for the burial of believers. Two options are permitted in order to cater for both the rich and poor. For affluent believers, He suggests wrapping the remains in white silk, placing it in a crystal coffin and securing the most elegant of gravestones.

Arguably, this is the manner in which the Bab wished to be buried under normal circumstances.

For those who may not afford it, He allows the use of cotton for wrapping the remains in a timber coffin. Placement of a gravestone is dependent on their means but it must be provided as soon as they can afford it.

The reason for placement of quality gravestones is the happiness of the living relatives.

Verse 18

Subh-e Azal must devote himself to the cause of God as much as possible. Becoming a new leader is both a privilege and a responsibility. It is a full time position that requires continuous attention.

Verse 19-20

Subh-e Azal must observe two matters in his relations with others:

- a) a) Invite all peoples of the world to the writings of Bayan
- b) b) Remain cordial with the believers to prevent unwanted dissention

He must lovingly encourage the believers to remain in the straight path<sup>31[31]</sup>.

He must fulfil internal and external functions. Teaching the faith is the primary external duty whilst positive communication with the believers is the most important internal function.

Verse 21-22

There is a possibility that a person like Subh-e Azal may appear during his lifetime.

This is not a reference to Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest (hereby known as 'HWGSMM') who is clearly given a station higher than all-things in the Bayan. The Primal Point regards HWGSMM as the fulfilment of all creation and higher than any other – including Himself.

This verse is a code for continuing succession after the time of Subh-e Azal in the event that HWGSMM does not appear. Subh-e Azal is given the sole authority to recognise (choose) this person. Indeed he is free to decide whether to have a successor and has a power of veto on the matter.

The Bab does not clarify whether succession is to be based on family ties (similar to the Shiite Imamate system).

In effect succession shall be through appointment and cannot be claimed.

Verse 23

The Bayan contains several references to the 'witnesses'. Here the Primal Point formally recognises that witnesses have a role in assisting Azal and community life.

Azal shall instruct and advise these steadfast witnesses that are to remain within the limitations placed by God.

Effectively here we have a consultative arrangement that provides a vehicle for Azal's instructions/decision to be implemented.

Verse 24

This verse refers to Sayyid Husayn Yazdi who at the time of writing this tablet was present with the Bab.

The Primal Point informs Subh-e Azal that his secretary is taught the jewels of knowledge and wisdom – code for the most intimate secrets of the movement.

Subh-e Azal is invited to take news/counsel from him. The Bab clearly desired Sayyid Husayn Yazdi to play an active role in shaping the future of the Babi community.

The final decisions however, were to be approved by Subh-e Azal.

Verse 25-26

The Bab provides a snap shot of the Bayan including the number of completed chapters. As the new nominee, Subh-e Azal must be updated on its progress in order to conduct his duties. Refer to the comments made for verse 19 above.

*Persian Bayan*

The Bab revealed a total of 162 babs during his life. This is made up of the following:

(8 completed vaheds x 19 babs each) + (10 babs from the 9<sup>th</sup> vahed) = 162

Subh-e Azal continued the progress of the Persian Bayan from where it was left. He wrote a total of 47 babs. This is made up of:

(2 completed vaheds x 19 babs each) + (9 babs leftover from the 9<sup>th</sup> vahed) = 47 babs

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<sup>31[31]</sup> In another short tablet quoted by E G Browne in Tarikh Jadid, the Bab addresses Azal as the Straight Path.

This work is known as Motammem Al-Bayan.

In fact Subh-e Azal managed to bring the Persian Bayan up to 11 completed vaheds, which is the same as the Arabic Bayan<sup>32[32]</sup>. He completed Motammem Al-Bayan in 1895<sup>33[33]</sup>.

There is no evidence that Subh-e Azal wrote any additional vaheds of the Bayan. In reality the Bayan by all accounts, remains an uncompleted work to this day.

Perhaps Subh-e Azal felt that victory had not arrived during his lifetime and thus did not complete this assignment. Refer also to comments made for verse 33 below.

Verse 27-28

The first reference to HWGSMM is made on verse 27, approximately half way in the document. Subh-e Azal is asked to invited people to HWGSMM whose coming is promised. HWGSMM shall appear amongst the people of Bayan.

Verse 29

HWGSMM has no responsibility for his actions and may not be subjected to questioning. Here there is a subtle distinction between the authorities of Subh-e Azal and HWGSMM.

When He appears, HWGSMM can overrule Subh-e Azal on various matters. In effect, the authorities of HWGSMM shall supersede those of Azal and others that are eligible for questioning on their actions.

Verses 30-33

This verse must be read in conjunction with verse 25 above. The Bab reminds Subh-e Azal that eight chapters of the book remain uncompleted<sup>34[34]</sup>.

Subh-e Azal is given the choice to complete them if 'victory' appears during his lifetime. In essence, the revelation of Bayan is to be completed by Subh-e Azal.

Although it is not clear what is meant by the term victory. It may be a reference to a future Babi state, exacting revenge on the Qajar monarch or the appearance of HWGSMM. The fact that Bayan remains an uncompleted work is a signal that Subh-e Azal did not witness the victory during his life.

The Bab has promised one chapter to a female believer who carried the embodiment of the Lord. This may be a reference to the Primal Point's mother. Although the verse can be interpreted as meaning the female follower who tolerated the embodiment of the Lord, in which case it may be a reference to either the Bab's wife or siqah.

The possibility of defeat - this term is not used, rather framed as lack of victory - looms large. So if God does not produce 'victory' during his lifetime, Subh-e Azal is asked to remain content with what has already been revealed.

This is a reference to the Bab's writings (as per verse 9 above), the Bayan (as per verse 25 above) and those by Azal (as per verse 5 above).

Subh-e Azal is warned against making a single change to the revealed text. This comes as an order from God in His greatest book. This is further expanded on verse 34.

Verse 34

Subh-e Azal is requested to invite people to the revelation. He is not to change a 'single thing' in the religion of God so that the believers are trained in an equal manner and shall not dissent until the appearance of the next manifestation.

Verse 35

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<sup>32[32]</sup> The Bab revealed a total of (11 completed vaheds x 19 babs each = 209 babs) in the Arabic Bayan

<sup>33[33]</sup> Refer to the date/signature on <http://www.h-net.org/~bahai/areprint/azal/M-R/mutammim/156.gif>

<sup>34[34]</sup> The author of NK writes about this verse (p 224):

"However concerning the fact that He did not write eight Vaheds of the Bayan and left it to his honour, the reason is to inform people that the tongue of God is verily one. And his honour is an independent proof in his own right."

Subh-e Azal is required to acknowledge the persons named in this letter - reference to verses 31, 38, 40-45, 53 and 54. Execution of this Will is dependent on actions towards certain individuals.

Verse 36

Seven works of God shall be dispatched to Subh-e Azal. The terms used is 'vahed' which can be a reference to the completed chapters of the Bayan. The Primal Point is instructing the distribution of these chapters to His various followers.

Verse 37

After taking delivery of these writings, Azal is requested to take one vahed for himself and select one chapter each for the believers in the provinces of Fars, Iraq, Kurasan, Azerbaijan, Mazandaran and Kashan/Kerman<sup>35[35]</sup>.

The first five provinces are listed in the Bayan as locations earmarked solely for the Babi population. The unbelievers must be relocated from these areas.

I think the reference to Iraq is effectively the present day Iranian provinces of Isfahan, Arak and Markazi in central Iran. Refer to comments for verse 41.

Reference to the land of K'af is intriguing. It can be interpreted as either Kashan or Kerman. The city of Kashan was home to some senior Babi's including Haji Mirza Jani Kashani. Although one can argue that Kashan falls under the central provinces already referred to as Iraq.

I speculate that Ka'f is a reference to the city of Kerman, given the information about the recipient mentioned in verse 45.

Recipients of various writings are specified on verses 40-45. It appears that these are the active regional leaders that are hereby rewarded for their loyalty.

There is news of Subh-e Azal meeting a person who is from the first Vahed in the Great Book. This may be a reference to one of the Letters of Living who were sent by the Bab to his presence. Alternatively it may be a code for Aqa Sayyid Husayn Yazdi referred to earlier on verse 24.

Subh-e Azal is asked to stamp these works and arrange for their copying and distribution<sup>36[36]</sup>. These works are to be circulated amongst the peoples of the world. Here the Bab is entrusting Azal with significant tasks in community management:

- Φ0B7 • Authorising works
- Φ0B7 • Deciding who should receive copies

Verse 38-39

In these verses the Bab provides, what I believe to be, His three most important instructions to His nominee:

- Φ0B7 • Protect yourself (emphasised)
- Φ0B7 • Protect what has been revealed in the Bayan
- Φ0B7 • Protect whatever that is revealed from your pen

Subh-e Azal has often been criticized for being primarily concerned with personal safety. This trait seems to be in compliance with the wishes of the Primal Point.

At the time the movement had been devastated by the crushing defeat at Shaykh Tabarsi including the massacre of over 300 active believers amongst them prominent leaders and Letters of Living: Quddus and Mulla Husayn.

The Bab was fully aware of the enmity and hatred harboured by the young Naser'ul Din (Shah) towards the new religion after His ordeal during the Tabriz trial. He was also aware that the new premier Amir Kabir was vocally devoted to the destruction of the movement and actively pushed the proposal for His execution.

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<sup>35[35]</sup> Provinces of Fars, Iraq, Azerbaijan and Mazandaran are quoted in the Persian Bayan to be exclusively populated by the Babi's and cleansed of unbelievers

<sup>36[36]</sup> This agrees with NK's assertion that the Bab sent His personal stamp to Subh-e Azal shortly before the issue of this document. It may indicate that Subh-e Azal was already in the possession of His stamp

The movement was heading for oblivion and it was time to take a break, preserve energy, re-group and establish a longer-term strategy.

This verse formalises a departure from the earlier doctrines of longing for martyrdom in favour of immediate survival. Subh-e Azal must ensure his won safety because it is vital for the protection of the revelation, to lead and guide the community.

In response to the overwhelming opposition from the Ulama and the Government, the Bab prefers the new generation of Babi's to go underground and await their chance for a come back. It represents a logical conclusion to the youthful idealism of the earlier years.

Perhaps significantly, the Primal Point now views the writings of Subh-e Azal as being of the same league as that revealed in the Bayan. This further gives credence to the fact that the Bab was clearly impressed by the style and quality of Subh-e Azal's writings<sup>37[37]</sup>.

It becomes clear that the Bab wanted Subh-e Azal to take charge of recording, authorising, publication, maintenance and distribution of their writings.

Verse 49

The name of Ali in the Land of Fa is a reference to the Bab's maternal uncle (Sayyid Ali) who at this time was a devoted follower resident in Shiraz. The uncle is asked to forward a copy to the Primal Point's companions in that region.

Verse 41

The name of Nabil in the Land of Ain is a bit of a mystery. Nabil is quoted as having assisted the Lord in the day of revelation and has a significant station in the presence of God.

One possible candidate may be Nabil Zarandi. However he seemed to be stationed around Qum at this juncture and known to have travelled to/from Azerbaijan as a courier<sup>38[38]</sup>.

Verse 42

This verse confirms that certain believers did in fact pay their khums obligations to the Bab. He returns the favour by acknowledging them. Their rights<sup>39[39]</sup> and that of their children have been increased in the Bayan. True to His merchant past, the Primal Point is careful to acknowledge the sources of credit and seems happy to repay them with interest.

Who were these individuals and how their rights/salaries were to be increased remain unclear.

Verse 43

This is a reference to Mulla Sadeq Khurasani who was one Mulla Husayn's most trusted companions and a respected survivor of the Shaykh Tabarsi episode.

It is remarkable that the Bab was aware of those who had survived the massacre at this stage of his life. Couriers and pilgrims must have been quite active at this time.

We also find reference to Mirza Abd'ul Rahim Isfahani – one the Bab's earliest and trusted secretaries.

Verse 44

The regional contact in Mazandaran is not identified. Perhaps the strict security situation on the aftermath of the Shaykh Tabarsi episode is a reason for this.

Verse 45

Reference to Haji Mirza Sayyid Javad Karbalai who had met the Bab during His childhood and was acquainted with His family.

Verse 46

All recipients are viewed as equals. There are no favourite characters and all must own and be content with one Vahed.

Verse 47

Once again Subh-e Azal is asked to preserve the holy writings - reiteration of the instructions given on verse 38. He is asked to share them only with the genuine believers.

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<sup>37[37]</sup> Refer to Nuqtat al-Kaaf pp. 243-244

<sup>38[38]</sup> Although I personally discount that Nabil Zarandi is the intended person in this verse.

<sup>39[39]</sup> The word 'huquq' may also be interpreted as salarie

Is there a contradiction between this and the instruction given on verse 37 about distribution of writings to the peoples of the world?

Careful reading of the text suggests that Vaheds of the Bayan can be copied and openly distributed. Verse 47 restricts the distribution of tablets and other writings to the genuine believers.

Verse 48

The Bab clearly regards His writings to be superior to any other thing.

Verse 49

Reference to tyrants is clearly a code for Qajar officials and the Ulama who had obstructed the growth of the movement, instrumental in the defeat suffered at Shaykh Tabarsi and responsible for His impending execution.

Verse 50-51

The Primal Point is providing a glimmer of hope by saying 'God shall make manifest that which will make all happy'.

Verse 52

It is unclear who is meant by the name Aman.

Verse 53-54

Once again Aqa Sayyid Husayn Yazdi is given a special mention. He was clearly advised to approach Azal and provide him with Bab's best writings following His martyrdom.

Aqa Sayyid Husayn is asked to repay the owners of credit (or favour) and keep a Haykal.

## Exclusions

One of the intriguing aspects to this letter is the list of key disciples not specified in the text. There may be plausible reasons for their exclusion but at first glance the following characters seem to be left out:

Φ0B7 • Mulla Abd'ul Karim Qazvini (Karim). Two of his colleague scribes – Sayyid Husayn Yazdi and Mirza Abd'ul Rahim Isfahani – are acknowledged in the text. Mulla Abd'ul Karim was at this juncture an important link in the copying and distribution of the Bab's writings.

Φ0B7 • Soleyman Khan Tabrizi (Anis). He had attempted to mount a rescue mission to free the Bab prior to His execution. Furthermore he received instructions regarding the Bab's preferred burial place. Here the Bab explains the preferred means of burial but excludes His advice to Anis regarding the matter.

Φ0B7 • Hujat-e Zanjani: The Bab seems to ignore the Zanjan uprising under the leadership of Hujjat

Φ0B7 • Tahereh, Mulla Baqer Tabrizi and Shaykh Hadi Qazvini. Three surviving Letters of Living do not rate a mention in this letter. Particularly Mulla Baqer that was a frequent visitor to Maku and Tahereh who was one of the Bab's most active Letters.

Φ0B7 • Martyrs. The letter seems to be about those living and the future of the movement. The Bab consciously does not acknowledge their contribution in this document.

## Conclusion

This paper is only the first step in uncovering the mysteries of the Will and Testament of the Bab, a document that has not received any attention from generations of Babi scholars.

In recent years several versions of this tablet have become available. Available copies include those maintained by both Bayani and Baha'i collections. Some versions quote the entire tablet and some selectively quote specific verses.

Comparison of the key versions of the tablet indicates that the contents for over 91% of the tablet are either the same or similar across all version. Areas of major difference cover just 9% of the tablet.



None of the major items of difference affect the authorities and responsibilities bestowed on Subh-e Azal. Nuqtat Al-Kaf includes the earliest documented analysis of this tablet. It confirms that the Bab and Subh-e Azal exchanged correspondence prior to the issue of this tablet. It also suggests that the Bab sent his penholder, papers, writings, garment, stamp and other items to Subh-e Azal in conjunction with His Will and Testament.

Although the original of the tablet has not surface to this day, there is no evidence that this document has been forged or maliciously altered.

The tone of the letter can be interpreted as affectionate, strategic and prescriptive. It provides Subh-e Azal with sweeping powers to:

- Φ0B7 • Communicate with the believers
- Φ0B7 • Invite people to the revelation
- Φ0B7 • Ensure his personal safety
- Φ0B7 • Protect what has been revealed in the Bayan
- Φ0B7 • Protect what has been revealed from his pen
- Φ0B7 • Nominate a successor
- Φ0B7 • Recognise HWGSMM
- Φ0B7 • Invite people to HWGSMM
- Φ0B7 • Seek counsel from the witnesses
- Φ0B7 • Seek counsel from Aqa Sayyid Husayn Yazdi
- Φ0B7 • Update and if required, complete the Bayan
- Φ0B7 • Determine if victory has arrived
- Φ0B7 • Receive, stamp and distribute seven works of the Bab
- Φ0B7 • Distribute writings to key believers
- Φ0B7 • Share holy writings with the believers

Along the way it distinguishes the authorities of HWGSMM and Subh-e Azal, invites the believers to meet Subh-e Azal in person, increases the financial rights of certain believers and moves away from the earlier doctrines of confrontation with the enemy.

Characters named Aman and Nabil are not recognisable at this stage. Another intriguing aspect of this tablet is a list of key disciples that are excluded. The tablet includes the names of those living and makes no reference to the martyrs.

MAKING THE CROOKED STRAIGHT

A CONTRIBUTION TO BAHÁ'Í  
APOLOGETICS

by

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*Quod curiositate cognoverunt, superbia  
amiserunt.*

St Augustine, *Sermones* 151

*Souls such as these cause the straight to  
become crooked.*

'Abdu'l-Bahá

*Will and Testament* 2:13

*Melius est, ut scandalum oriatur, quam  
ut veritas relinquatur.*

Pope Gregory the Great (Hom.  
VII in Ezekiel, quoted from *Migne  
Patrologiae Cursus Completus  
Series Latina*, vol. 76, p. 842)

His promulgation of his mission opened up a new chapter in the history of religion: that of the Bahá'í Faith. In his scripture, the Báb had repeatedly indicated the coming of 'Him whom God shall make manifest' (*Man yuzhiruhu'lláh*). Bahá'u'lláh claimed to be that very figure of prophecy.

The Báb wrote of the concept of progressive revelation, which is confirmed in the scripture of Bahá'u'lláh. This doctrine is based on the idea that there is only one God, who guides and teaches humanity by means of religion. Hence, all the major religions originate from a single source and are meant to guide people to lead their lives in accordance with the will of God and to promote the development of the human race. In the text *Dalá'il-i-Sab'ih*, the Báb speaks of the Messengers of God in the following terms:

In the time of the First Manifestation the Primal Will appeared in Adam; in the day of Noah it became known in Noah; in the day of Abraham in Him; and so in the day of Moses; the day of Jesus; the day of Muḥammad, the Apostle of God; the day of the 'Point of the Bayán'; the day of Him Whom God shall make manifest; and the day of the One Who will appear after Him Whom God shall make manifest. Hence the inner meaning of the words uttered by the Apostle of God, 'I am all the Prophets', inasmuch as what shineth resplendent in each one of Them hath been and will ever remain the one and the same sun.<sup>104</sup>

Thus, the founder of each religion simultaneously announces the coming of the next divine Messenger:

The Lord of the universe hath never raised up a prophet nor hath He sent down a Book unless He hath established His covenant with all men, calling for their acceptance of the next Revelation and of the next

104. The Báb, *Selections* 4:10:6 (p. 126); see also 3:39:1 (Persian Bayán II:8).

Book; inasmuch as the outpourings of His bounty are ceaseless and without limit.<sup>105</sup>

Believers are therefore required to recognize and accept the Word of God in its new form if they are to continue to receive divine guidance. For this reason, the Báb demands that the Muslims recognize him.<sup>106</sup> Similarly, the Bábís should turn to 'Him who God shall make manifest' as soon as he should appear.<sup>107</sup> The moment a new revelation appears, it fulfils the prophecy of the previous religion and supersedes it. The Báb praises the Promised One and mentions him, as Browne correctly states,<sup>108</sup> on every page of the Persian Bayán. The Báb constantly exhorts his followers to accept the Promised One and not to cause him the same suffering as that which the Báb himself had endured at the hands of unbelievers. He orders the Bábís to repeat every nineteen days a verse from the Bayán on the subject of acceptance of the Promised One.<sup>109</sup> Finally, he stresses the rank of the Promised One by stating that the glory (*Bahá'*) of the Bayán is *Man yuzhiruhu'lláh*.<sup>110</sup>

#### 1. The prophecy concerning the advent of *Man yuzhiruhu'lláh*

The Báb evidently foresaw the imminent advent of the Promised One whom he described in such glowing terms. This is clear from many of the statements he made to contemporaries,

105. *ibid.* 3:12:1 (Persian Bayán VI:16 (p. 87)).

106. *ibid.* 3:20:2; 4:3:1; 4:5:2.

107. *ibid.* 3:21:1; 3:24:1; 3:26:1; 3:32:1; 3:37:1; 5:4:1; 5:5:2; 5:6:1; 5:7:1; 5:8:1; 5:9:2; 6:4:1; 6:13:2 and others.

108. *JRAS* XXI.IV (October 1889), p. 927.

109. Persian Bayán VI:8.

110. *ibid.* III:14: *كل بهاء بيان من يظهره الله است*. This verse not only emphasizes the exalted station of the Promised One but may also be understood as an allusion to the person of Bahá'u'lláh.

whom he exhorted to recognize both himself and—as soon as he appeared—the promised *Man yuzhiruhu'lláh*. In a letter written to a Muslim clergyman named Sulaymán, for instance, he called upon the addressee to turn to him (the Báb), since he would otherwise be accursed. If he failed to accept the Báb, God would forgive him only if he turned, by means of a letter, to 'Him whom God shall make manifest'<sup>111</sup>—i.e. in the near future, during Sulaymán's lifetime. From another letter, written by the Báb to the Sharif of Mecca and others, it is again evident that the Báb expected the Promised One to appear during the lifetime of the Sharif. The Báb admonished the Sharif of Mecca

to embrace the Cause of God and to implore that the matter of thine allegiance be brought to the attention of Him Whom God shall make manifest, that He may graciously enable thee to prosper and cause thy fire to be transformed into light.<sup>112</sup>

Furthermore it is implied in the Persian Bayán that *Man yuzhiruhu'lláh* would appear during the 19 years following the Báb's declaration of his mission (1844); i.e. in the period up to the year 1863, although God alone would know the hour of his coming.<sup>113</sup> The early Bábís, too, clearly expected the Promised

111. The Báb, *Selections* 1:9:7.

112. *ibid.* 1:7:3 (p. 30).

113. Persian Bayán VI:3. The Persian text reads as follows:

در ظهور من يظهره الله خداوند عالم است که در چه حد از  
سن ظاهر فرماید اورا ولی از مبداء ظهور تا عدد واحد  
مراقب بوده که در هر سنه اظهار ایمان بحر فی ظاهر گردد

... i.e. 'And concerning the manifestation of Him Whom God shall manifest, God knows in what limit of years He will manifest him; but his advent is to be expected from the beginning of the Revelation until the number of the Wáhid (19) for in each year the announcement of the Faith may occur at any moment.' Browne's translation of this passage is somewhat inaccurate: 'And concerning the manifestation of Him whom God shall manifest, God knows in what limit of years He will manifest him; but watch from the beginning of the Manifestation until the num-

One to arrive soon.<sup>114</sup> Only this can explain the fact that during the years immediately following the martyrdom of the Báb so many proclaimed themselves to be the Promised One.

In contrast to this, the Azalí doctrine that the Promised One was to appear only after 1511 or 2001 years was based on statements made by the Báb in the Persian Bayán concerning *Ghiyáth* (Help) and *Mustagháth* (He who is called upon for help),<sup>115</sup> from which the numbers 1511 and 2001 are derived by means of the Abjad system. This is interpreted as an indication that the promised *Man yuzhiruhu'lláh* will not appear until this length of time has elapsed.<sup>116</sup> This argument was probably developed by the Azalís in order to dismiss Bahá'u'lláh's claim. They certainly referred to this in their rejection of Bahá'u'lláh, as Browne confirms: 'To these texts<sup>117</sup> the Ezelís specially appeal in justification of their rejection of Behá'u'lláh's claim to be the Promised Deliverer . . .'<sup>118</sup> It is clear from the words of the Báb in the Persian Bayán, however, that the Azalí view does not conform to that of the Báb when the latter expresses the hope that the Promised One would come before the end of the *Mustagháth*:

None knoweth save God as to when the Manifestation shall be. Whenever it occurs all have to follow the

ber of the Wáhid (19) for in each year Faith in one of the letters will appear' (Browne, 'A Summary of the Persian Bayán', in Momen, *Selections*, p. 376). In the Persian original, the crucial phrase is *bi-harfi záhir gardad*, the term *bi-harfi* expressing that the revelation will appear through a single letter of the Promised One, i.e. suddenly. This sudden appearance is also prophesied elsewhere in the Persian Bayán; see also Browne, *JRAS* XXI.III (July 1889), p. 515.

114. Mírzá Haydar-'Alí confirms in his memoirs that: 'In those days many were convinced that the advent of "Him Whom God shall make manifest" could not be far off' (*Stories from the Delight of Hearts*, p. 8).

115. Persian Bayán II:17, III:15.

116. See *Kitáb-i-Nuqţatu'l-Káf*, Intro., pp. xxvf.

117. On *Mustagháth*.

118. *JRAS* (April 1892), p. 299.

Point of Truth and thank God. However, it is hoped of God's grace that it will arrive before the *Mustagháth* and the Word of God will be exalted by it.<sup>119</sup>

It is obvious from these words that the Báb regards the *Mus-tagháth* as a period of time during which the Manifestation will appear. Bahá'u'lláh evidently shares the Báb's cyclical view and also sees *Ghiyáth* and *Mustagháth* as cycles within which the Promised One will appear. He speaks of the year 9 within the *Mustagháth* in which *Man yuzhiruhu'lláh* has appeared.<sup>120</sup> In response to the Azalí objection that he was already announcing the advent of the Promised One, Bahá'u'lláh argued:

Shake off, O heedless ones, the slumber of negligence, that ye may behold the radiance which His glory hath spread through the world. How foolish are those who murmur against the premature birth of His light. O ye who are inly blind! Whether too soon or too late, the evidences of His effulgent glory are now actually manifest. It behoveth you to ascertain whether or not such a light hath appeared. It is neither within your power nor mine to set the time at which it should be made manifest. God's inscrutable Wisdom hath fixed its hour beforehand.<sup>121</sup>

The Báb, too, was convinced that the Promised One 'might appear at any time',<sup>122</sup> as Browne correctly observed.

119. Persian Bayán III:15. The Persian text reads:

عالم بظهور نیست غیر الله هر وقت شود باید گل تصدیق  
بنقطه حقیقت نمایند و شکر الهی بجا آورند اگرچه امید از  
فضل اوست که تا مستغاث نرسد از قبل کلمه الله مرتفع گردد

120. *Rahiq-i-Makhtúm*, p. 514. The year nine refers to the summons experienced by Bahá'u'lláh in Teheran in the year 1852/53, nine years after the Declaration of the Báb. On *Mustagháth* see also *Kitáb-i-Iqán* 276 (p. 248).

121. *Gleanings* 50.

122. *A Traveller's Narrative*, Intro., p. XVII.

## 2. Two alleged proofs of the supremacy of Mírzá Yaḥyá in Baghdád

After the attempt by a Bábí to assassinate Násiri'd-Dín Sháh in 1852, an unprecedented wave of persecution swept over the Bábís, with large numbers being arrested, tortured and killed. Bahá'u'lláh, too, was arrested and imprisoned<sup>123</sup> for four months in the Siyáh-Chál, a foul-smelling, vermin-infested, subterranean dungeon in Teheran, until he was released as a result of the combined intervention of the Russian ambassador, Count Dolgorouki, pressure from his family and reports produced by the courts dealing with the case.<sup>124</sup> In spite of his innocence, Bahá'u'lláh was compelled to leave the country shortly afterwards. He was exiled to Baghdád,<sup>125</sup> then part of the Ottoman

123. The official Teheran gazette *Vaqáyi-yi-Ittisfáqiyyih* reported that Mírzá Ḥusayn-'Alí Núri (Bahá'u'lláh's original name) and several other Bábís, who had not been found guilty of conspiracy, had been condemned by His Majesty to life imprisonment (issue no. 82 dated 10 D iq'adih 1268 AH/26 August 1852 CE). See the English translation of this newspaper report, which provides an unvarnished account of the persecution inflicted on the Bábís, in *World Order: A Bahá'í Magazine*, vol. 13.2 (Winter 1978-79), pp. 12f.

124. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 104f.

125. A decree issued by Násiri'd-Dín Sháh commanded Bahá'u'lláh to leave Persian territory within one month of his release from prison, although he was permitted to select the country of exile himself, as Ficicchia rightly points out (*Bahā'ism*, p. 103; see also Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 106). Russia's diplomatic representative, Count Dolgorouki, offered Bahá'u'lláh asylum in the territories of the Russian Empire. However, Bahá'u'lláh did not take up this offer, choosing to go to Baghdád instead 'in pursuance of an unerring instinct' (ibid.), and possibly also to avoid being accused of political partisanship (see Bahá'í International Community (ed.), *Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 9). Ficicchia's assertion (*Bahā'ism*, p. 103) that 'according to his own testimony' Bahá'u'lláh 'was escorted to the border by a guard of honour' is incorrect. The statement made by Bahá'u'lláh to which Ficicchia here refers says only that the party was 'escorted by officers in the service of the esteemed and honoured governments of Persia and Russia' (*Epistle* 36 (p. 22))—something quite different from a 'guard of honour'.