

Declaration of the Báb - Survey of Sources

A survey of sources for researchers

Version : 2019-09-08

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Overview

There are a number of accounts of the journey of Mullah Husayn to Shiraz and his submission to the Bab. They are however widely varying in how he comes to submit, in a way that is hard to resolve in a satisfactory way. This document surveys the events by collecting up the episodes into themes without an attempt to apply a chronology, since undoubtedly they all have a basis in what transpired. The sources are detailed in the end appendix "Source References".

Descent of the Spirit

Whilst 23 May marks the reaching out of the Bab into His mission, Mullah Husayn was preceded in his discovery of the Bab by the Bab's wife.

Tárikh Amry Fárs va Shíráz

Dating

(Footnote:) In Kitáb Fihrist, the Báb states that the first descent of Spirit on Him was on 15th of the third month of AH 1260 [3 April 1844].

Báb's Evening Practice

The practice of His Holiness was that each day He would return home about an hour after the sunset and commence devotions, the chanting of the names of God, and writing. About three hours into the night He would have the evening meal and would retire about four hours past sunset. In the morning, He would rise one hour before the dawn and, after washing, would perform His ablutions and then proceed to the upper chambers of the House, which had been set aside as His formal guestroom and formed an outer apartment. There, He stood to recite tablets of visitation, prayers, supplications, and to repeat the names of God. When the sun had risen, Fiddih* would fire up the samovar and prepare the tea in the chamber occupied by His mother. His Holiness would come down to that apartment and have the morning tea. After that, He would proceed to His merchant office to engage in His own business.

[* Mirzá Hablbu'lláh adds parenthetically: Fiddih and Mubárah were two Black servants purchased in Büshihr during His days of commerce.]

Early Meal, Special Task

However, one night, unlike other nights, He came home at dusk, saying, "Tell Fiddih to prepare whatever we are having for the evening meal sooner than usual. Tonight I have a particular task to attend to." About an hour and a half into the night, the dinner was served, and He joined us for this purpose. Afterwards, Fiddih brought water for Him to wash His blessed hands, and, as usual in the evenings, she spread our bedding and retired to her own quarters. His Holiness retired for the night.

Rising from Bed; Seeking the Báb

It was not long after that I saw Him rise from the bed and leave the room, going to the outer courtyard. At first, I thought He had gone to the lavatory. When considerable time had passed and He did not return, I was seized by apprehension. I rose from my bed and left the apartment. I looked in the lavatory but did not see Him. Checking the street door, I found it locked from within. I looked in the chamber of His mother and did not find Him there either. By then I was deeply bewildered and perplexed.

Transfiguration

I walked to the western part of the house and looked up towards the upper chamber, situated on the eastern wing of the House and serving as His private quarters, and saw that it was well lighted. It seemed as if a thousand lamps illumined the room. This added to my surprise, because there were no guests to require so many lamps. Therefore, full of astonishment, I went up the steps to the room. When I entered, I found that the room was so brilliantly lit that it dazzled my eyes, although there was only a single lamp.

I saw His Holiness standing, facing the Qiblih; His hands raised heavenwards, intoning a prayer. As soon as my gaze fell upon His blessed Being, I beheld such majesty and resplendence as is beyond my powers to explain. Suddenly, such awe and trepidation enveloped me that I stood transfixed where I was, trembling uncontrollably like a leaf. I could neither retrace my steps nor

stand. I was close to losing consciousness. All kinds of perplexities enveloped me. Suddenly He made a gesture with His blessed hand, telling me to go back. This movement of His sanctified hands released me from that state, and I returned to the apartment and bed.

Sleepless

But I could not sleep, and I remained deeply disturbed. Every detail of the image of His blessed Person and that scene added to my consternation. I felt like a wrongdoer who has fallen short and awaits the all-powerful sovereign to pass sentence on her. I did not sleep that night, until the mu'adhdhin's call to morning prayers sounded from the mosque adjacent to the house.

Dawn

After the adhán [call to prayer] He came downstairs. As soon as my eyes alighted on His blessed Countenance, I was seized by awe and perplexity. He no longer seemed like the Person with whom I had lived for two and a half years. I did not have the courage to utter a word. In any case, the sun was rising and I rose, carried out my ablutions, and performed the obligatory prayer.

Morning Tea

In accordance with our daily routine, our servant, Fiddih, had prepared the samovar and tea in the room of His mother and informed us that the tea was ready. Accompanied by Him, I proceeded there. In His mother's room, He drank some tea. Each moment added to my perplexity and conjecturing. With His blessed hand He poured a cup of tea, passed it to me, and with a heavenly smile said, "What is it that troubles you? You are distraught." I drank the tea, which eased my perturbation and anxiety to some extent. I said, "Aqá, what exalted state was it that I witnessed in Your chamber last night?"

Declaration to Khadijah

He replied, "At what an extraordinary time you arrived! That was untimely. But it was the will of God that you should see it with your own eyes. Know and be certain that at that very moment the One Exalted God appointed Me for the guidance of these servants. I am that Promised One whose advent they have been expecting. For the past twelve hundred and sixty years they have perpetually beseeched the Almighty for His appearance. I am the one appointed for the salvation of the people."

As soon as I heard Him speak these words, I kissed His knees and became a believer in Him. In prostration, I raised my voice in gratitude to the Lord for having enabled me to recognize Him.

Going to Shiraz

Siyyid Kazim Dies & Mullah Husayn's Spiritual Retreat

Siyyid Kazim dies and his disciples, who had expected Mullah Husayn would succeed him, after a lengthy and gruelling spiritual retreat, set off in search of the One he promised, first toward Najaf (a shrine very nearby), and then south-east to coastal Bushire (920 km), to Shiraz (260 km), with plans to continue east to Kirman (560 km).

Tarikh-i-Jadid/Bayani (1851/1880)

On his return from Surra-man-ra'a the venerated Seyyid [Kazim] departed this life, even as he had foretold; and I, after a while, repaired to the mosque of Kúfa, and there abode for a time engaged in the performance of certain spiritual exercises which I had undertaken. Here I saw Mullá Huseyn of Bushraweyh, Mullá 'Alí of Bistám, Hájí Mullá Muhammad 'Alí of Bárfurúsh, Áká 'Abdu'l-Jalíl the Turk, Mírzá 'Abdu'l-Hádí, Mírzá Muhammad Hádí, Áká Seyyid Huseyn of Yezd, Mullá Hasan of Najistán, Mullá Bashír, Mullá Bákí the Turk, and Mullá Ahmad Abdál, with many other learned and devout men who had retired into seclusion to undergo as severe a spiritual

discipline as can well be imagined. On the completion of these exercises I proceeded to visit Nejef, while the others departed each on his own way.

Ahmad (1869)

Mulla Husain enjoyed the full confidence of the late Hajji Sayyid Kazim Rashti; and the latter had told him several times: 'After my death, the True One will appear, and thou wilt surely enter his service and answer his call.' We were a large body who accompanied Mulla Husain everywhere, and it was our belief that, after the death of Hajji Sayyid Kazim, the leadership of the Shaikhi sect would vest in Mulla Husain, because we did not know anyone in the tribe more pious than he. He was a hermit and ascetic in the mosque of Kufa at the time of Hajji Sayyid Kazim's demise. Two days later, one of the adherents arrived there and handed a letter to Mulla Husain from the Sayyid. We felt certain that the Sayyid had constituted him his successor and leader of the sect. On reading it, Mulla Husain decided to leave, despite the fact that the purpose for which he had stayed there had not been completed. We asked him the reason for his departure, and he said: 'I am ordered to undertake a journey and to go to the service of a great personage.' We said: 'We presumed that this is your turn to be the leader.' He burst into tears, saying: 'How far from me! Where am I, and where are these positions?'

Dawnbreakers (1890)

Immediately after the completion of his forty days' retirement, Mulla Husayn, together with his two companions, departed for Najaf...

Jinab-i-Fadil

Before starting they gathered together in a mosque and for forty days fasted that they might be prepared for the momentous journey. They had been taught that there were nineteen proofs by which they might recognize the Great Master, the coming One, one of which was his spiritual power which, even if he spoke not a word, would draw the people to him. This power they were to find in the person of a handsome youth. They made a compact that he who discovered the Truth should at once communicate it to the others. Then they started off, in different directions.

Journey to Shiraz

The reasons for heading to Shiraz are variously given - to address a palpitating heart (which whilst it might have been metaphorical, may reasonably have been physical following the severe austerities of the 40-day retreat and the 1200km journey), and he planned to meet up with the Bab, Who he knew from his days with Siyyid Kazim. He anticipates continuing after Shiraz to Kirman, which doesn't happen.

Tarikh-i-Jadid/Bayani (1851/1880)

So God did direct their steps in the path of search until they came to Shíráz. To Mullá Huseyn of Bushraweyh was granted the happiness of first coming to His Supreme Holiness, and he became "the first who believed".

[Mullá Huseyn recounts:] "After the death of Seyyid Kázim I became afflicted with great perturbation of mind, and, in the course of my mental struggles, went from Kerbelá to Shíráz in the hope of benefiting a palpitation of the heart from which I suffered."

Ahmad (1869)

[Receiving Siyyid Kazim's letter:] He [Mullá Huseyn], thereupon, prepared to go to Shiraz, and used to tell me, en route: 'It has not been determined where I am to go; but I believe that I may go to Kirman and see Hajji Muhammad Karim Khan, as it may be that the Sayyid meant that I should enter the service of the Imam through him.'

Mirza Yahya (1889)

"Now when the time of the Manifestation was come, the Lord did reveal himself from the land of Fárs [i.e. Shiraz]. For after that His Reverence the Seyyid [Kázim] was departed, His Holiness

the Gate (Jenáb-i-Báb), who is Mullá Muhammad Huseyn, came to Shíráz with certain persons who were in appearance his disciples, and there began to teach.

Dawnbreakers (1890)

He left Karbila by night, visited on his way the shrine of Najaf, and proceeded directly to Bushihr, on the Persian Gulf. There he started on his holy quest after the Beloved of his heart's desire. He could not, however, tarry longer in Bushihr. Drawn as if by a magnet which seemed to attract him irresistibly towards the north, he proceeded to Shiraz.

Qatil

On his return to Iran, Mulla Husayn apparently was ahead of other Shaykhis, Who seemed to be still engaged in the forty-days retreat, "Accompanied by his brother and his cousin, he arrived in Bushihr via Basra."

Jinab-i-Fadil

Mulla Hossein, a very celebrated and learned man was one of this group. He remembered having met at Karbala a singularly spiritual youth, who came from Shíráz, and he decided to journey to Shiráz and try to find him.

Arrival at Shiraz; Going to the Bab

Arriving at Shiraz, they eventually meet up with the Bab, part of whose routine was connected to a caravanserai (travel inn)¹. Since Mullah Husayn was visiting Shiraz with a plan to meet the Bab (without expecting him to be the One) as well as the need for lodging, enquiries are made in both respects, resulting in the servant's arrival and asking for him, and whilst he follows behind the servant into the city it seems to the Bab's house, his companions head off to the Mosque to wait for him for prayers; after he doesn't arrive they make their way toward the caravanserai, where they find Mullah Husayn with the Bab in their room. A little after they go to the Bab's home.

Tarikh-i-Jadid/Bayani (1851/1880)

On arrival Mullah Husayn seeks the Bab and comes to His door.

(Nabil-i-Akbar's [NA] revision of TJ is indicated.)

And since the Seyyid 'Alí Muhammad [the Bab] had honoured me with his friendship during a journey which we made together to the Holy Shrines <of Kerbelá and Nejef>, I at once on reaching Shíráz sought out his abode. As I approached the door I desired inwardly to tarry there some few days. So I knocked at the door. *TJ: Before he had opened it or seen me, I heard his voice exclaiming, 'Is it you, Mullá Huseyn?' / NA: As it chanced he came to the door in person.* Then he opened the door. *TJ: It did not at the time strike me how strange it was that without having seen me he should know I was there.* When he had opened the door he smiled and said, 'All day I have felt disinclined to go to the caravansaray, and now I know that it was because of your coming.'

On a later day before his submission to the Bab, a similar occurrence -

Mírzá 'Alí Muhammad [the Bab] said, 'Let the rest of our friends go to their own houses, and do you alone accompany me.'

Ahmad (1869)

They are met by a servant; the companions go to the inn and Mullah Husayn follows the servant.

¹ "During those years of their marriage, Khadijih Bagum related, her Husband had no definite occupation... At times, He went in the morning to His uncle's trading-house in the Saray-i-Gumruk (Customs Serai)." [Khadijih Bagum Wife of the Báb by Balyuzi] & See in this section the Tarikh-i-Jadid and Ahmad accounts.

In this belief [of continuing to Kirman] we came to Shiraz; and on the day of our arrival we met a negro at Dukkan-i-Riva, which is ½ farsakh [half an hour's laden journey] from Shiraz, who inquired which of us was named Mulla Husain. We pointed him out, and the negro approached Mulla Husain and stopped him, whispering certain words into his ears while he remained on his horse. We saw Mulla Husain dismount, his attitude greatly changed. He made the negro walk ahead of him, he following in his wake. We asked what we should do; and the negro told us to go to the Qumruk (Customs) caravanserai. We followed [his instructions or person], and on reaching the caravanserai, the same negro guided us to a room. We went in, and there saw Mulla Husain sitting most reverently opposite a Sayyid. They were engaged in a discussion. A little later both got up and went to the Sayyid's house, giving us another residence. We could see that there was some difference between the Sayyid and Mulla Husain; but at every subsequent meeting Mulla Husain showed more respect and loyalty (to the Sayyid) than on the previous occasion.

Dawnbreakers (1890)

Mullah Husayn sends his companions to the Mosque (and to find lodgings).

Arriving at the gate of that city, he [Mullah Husayn] instructed his brother and his nephew to proceed directly to the Masjid-i-Ilkhani [Mosque], and there to remain until his arrival. He expressed the hope that, God willing, he would arrive in time to join them in their evening prayer.

Nabil's account differs from others in notable ways:-

- **Period of Submission** - *In the others, Mullah Husayn spends some days interacting with and resisting submission to the Bab, whilst in Nabil everything is narrated into the space of a few hours (one evening). The natural resolution to this would be that Nabil has collected the details of Mullah Husayn's encounter with the Bab spanning several days and written them up as a single episode.*
- **Who Seeks Who?** - *In Nabil the Bab seeks out Mullah Husayn and calls him in unsought, whereas in the other accounts Mullah Husayn seeks out the Bab. It is notable that a little later Nabil narrates a tradition that all 18 of the Letters have to find the Bab without assistance, which fits poorly with the Bab summoning Mullah Husayn to His home on arrival at the large city, but fits well with the other accounts.*
- **Style** - *Nabil takes a poetic approach, visible from its length, adjectives and creative style, suggestive of an artistic re-imagining of what would have happened for the events 40 years prior, whilst the much older accounts adopt a terser more prosaic approach.*

The alternative, that the other accounts with their independent chains of witness all mistakenly have it over several days, with the records of Mullah Husayn's complaint at the number of days it took him to submit, is less likely. The readers naturally should enjoy whatever approach they feel is best.

On that very day, a few hours before sunset, whilst walking outside the gate of the city, his eyes fell suddenly upon a Youth of radiant countenance, who wore a green turban and who, advancing towards him, greeted him with a smile of loving welcome. He embraced Mulla Husayn with tender affection as though he had been his intimate and lifelong friend. Mulla Husayn thought Him at first to be a disciple of Siyyid Kazim who, on being informed of his approach to Shiraz, had come out to welcome him...

'The Youth who met me outside the gate of Shiraz overwhelmed me with expressions of affection and loving-kindness. He extended to me a warm invitation to visit His home, and there refresh myself after the fatigues of my journey. I prayed to be excused, pleading that my two companions had already arranged for my stay in that city, and were now awaiting my return. "Commit them to the care of God," was His reply; "He will surely protect and watch over them." Having spoken these words, He bade me follow Him. I was profoundly impressed by the gentle yet compelling manner in which that strange Youth spoke to me.

As I followed Him, His gait, the charm of His voice, the dignity of His bearing, served to enhance my first impressions of this unexpected meeting. "We soon found ourselves standing at the gate of a house of modest appearance. He knocked at the door, which was soon opened by an Ethiopian servant. "Enter therein in peace, secure," were His words as He crossed the threshold and motioned me to follow Him. His invitation, uttered with power and majesty, penetrated my soul. I thought it a good augury to be addressed in such words, standing as I did on the threshold of the first house I was entering in Shiraz, a city the very atmosphere of which had produced already an indescribable impression upon me. Might not my visit to this house, I thought to myself, enable me to draw nearer to the Object of my quest? Might it not hasten the termination of a period of intense longing, of strenuous search, of increasing anxiety, which such a quest involves?

Chosen Highway

This is the first day from Khadijeh's perspective, although it's possible she had not met him on the day he arrived.

[The Bab to His wife:] "To-night there will come a very particularly dear friend, whom I am earnestly expecting; go to your rest; do not wait up for me, he may be quite late."

She saw a grave expression of determination on His face, as she rose to obey His wish; her intuitive soul at once understood that the guest for whom He waited must be of no ordinary kind.

As she went she turned to look at her Husband, the beautiful youth with the serene, earnest face, who then, as though in answer to the call of an invisible command, took His seat exactly facing the door, upon which he fixed His eyes.

There she left Him seated, waiting! Waiting!

At length a step was heard, and the awaited one came. The young wife, wondering too much for sleep, heard what caused even greater wonder.

Submission to the Bab

Submission Took Several Days

The accounts are in overall agreement that Mullah Husayn resisted the Bab over some days before yielding.

Tarikh-i-Jadid/Bayani (1851/1880)

This substantial account explicitly narrates the events over several days, and would be hard to quote here.

Ahmad (1869)

[At the caravanserai:] We could see that there was some difference between the Sayyid and Mulla Husain; but at every subsequent meeting Mulla Husain showed more respect and loyalty (to the Sayyid) than on the previous occasion. After several days we became tired, and remonstrated with Mulla Husain, saying: 'We supposed that we should obey thee after the Sayyid and thou didst bring us away on a promise that we should go to Kirman. Thou madest such haste that thou didst not complete the days of seclusion. What means this stoppage at Shiraz? If thou goest in quest of the True One, haste should be made.' Said he: 'I am stranded here. I was not ordered to Kirman but to Fars; and since I did not anticipate seeing anyone in Fars, I presumed that my destination was Kirman. But since the negro came and mentioned my name and gave me this Sayyid's message, and after the meetings of the last few days, I am inclined to think that this is the man whom the Sayyid (Kazim) mentioned to me in his prediction about the appearance of the True One. However, I have not satisfied my mind completely. We must hold several other conversations; and I must obtain full discernment, for the matter of religion is a difficult one.' They conversed with one another on several other occasions; and at length Mulla Husain was won over.... He yielded to proofs which convinced us, and he assured

us that this was in truth the very man whose appearance was promised. We also witnessed some of his miracles, and followed him.

Fu'adi

Account from Mulla Husayn's sister from Aqa (Mulla) Muhammad Hasan Bushru'i, one of the survivors of Tabarsi.

I wish my steps had never reached the madrasa, so I would never have bothered the Proof of God for three days and nights.

Hashtrudi in Mu'in

Hashtrudi... relates that, having formed a brief acquaintance in Karbala', they [the Bab and Mullah Husayn] met again at the lectures of a religious teacher in Shiraz. There Sayyid 'Ali Muhammad gradually introduced Mulla Husayn to his claims.

Mu'min in Mu'in

(In this account 'forty days' is likely an idiom for 'far too long', rather as all languages have.)

Mullah Husayn's friend Aqa Sayyid Mu'min Khurasani relates:

One day in the presence of the Bab al-Bab [Mulla Husayn] in Khurasan [probably Mashhad], we were passing a madrasa. He looked at the school and recited this verse: "Not one warm-hearted man [ahl-i dil] has ever come out of a madrasa. Down with these schools which are houses of ignorance." I said, "By the Grace of God, eminent individuals like yourself have come out of these schools, why are you condemning them?" He replied, "Do not say that, Sayyid Mu'min, all that I ever learned in these wretched places was to make me argue with and oppose the Proof of God for forty days [=far too many days]. I realized the meaning of the saying 'knowledge is the greatest veil' through the fruits of this ruined place. I wish I had no education."

Qazvini

Mulla Jalil Uriimi, who was himself present in Shiraz, informs us that the teacher was none other than Mulla Husayn himself, now holding his teaching sessions on Ahsa'is Sharh al-Ziyara in the Vakil mosque. In the course of these lectures, Sayyid 'Ali Muhammad [the Bab] asked Mulla Husayn

Gobineau (1866)

The universal history entitled: *Nasekh Attewarikh*, or "Erasures of the Chronicles," which gave, from the official and strictly Muslim point of view, the history of the events that I report, assures that the first times that Moulla Houssein-Boushrewyèh saw the Bab, it was in secret, and that he had many conversations with him before declaring himself publicly to his listener. He was convinced.

L'histoire universelle intitulée: *Nasekh Attewarikh*, ou «Effacements des Chroniques,» qui a donné, au point de vue officiel et strictement musulman, l'histoire des événements que je rapporte, assure que les premières fois que Moulla Houssein-Boushrewyèh vu le Bâb, ce fut en secret, et qu'il eut avec lui de nombreux entretiens avant de se déclarer publiquement son auditeur. Il fut convaincu.

Mirza Yahya (1889)

[Mullah Husayn started to teach in Shiraz.] To that place before the Manifestation would His Holiness the Point [the Bab] sometimes come; until one day, when His Excellence the Gate [Mullá Huseyn] introduced this very subject, saying, 'Such an one must appear, and these will be his tokens,' and proceeded to describe the conditions of the Manifestation, His Holiness the Point said, 'Look whether these tokens be in me or not.' At this saying alone His Excellence the Gate understood, and, after seeing and hearing, believed in the First Book; and for a while, in the words of the Book, 'None believed in the Bá save the Sín '.'

Baha'u'llah and the New Era (1923)

After some days of anxious investigation and study, Mulla Husayn became firmly convinced that the Messenger long expected by the Shi'ahs had indeed appeared.

Questions and Answers

Qualities of Siyyid Kazim's Successor

This discussion of the Qualities of the Promised One is placed in accounts as the first discussion.

Tarikh-i-Jadid/Bayani (1851/1880)

So we entered the house and sat down, and after we had exchanged the customary enquiries he said, 'Do not you Sheykhis believe that some one must take the place occupied by the late Seyyid Kázim? Five months have now elapsed since his death. Whom do you now recognize as your Master?'

'As yet,' I replied, 'we have recognized no one.'

'What manner of man,' asked he, 'must the Master be?'

Thereupon I enumerated some of the requisite qualifications and characteristics.

'Do you observe these in me?' he asked.

Now during the two months he abode at Kerbelá I had not observed in him any signs of special knowledge, and I knew that he had not studied in the colleges nor attended the lectures of any teacher, so I answered, 'I see in you none of these qualities.'

On another day -

When we reached his house he said, 'By what sign canst thou recognize the Master, and what proof dost thou deem most effectual to convince thee that thou hast attained the object of thy search?'

I answered, 'The possession of the Point of Knowledge, which is the source and centre of all the wisdom of past and future prophets and saints.'

'Do you perceive this in me?' he asked; 'How if I were so endowed?'

'That you are devout, godly, and holy of life,' I answered, 'is true; but only knowledge derived directly from God can admit to this lofty rank.'

At this he was silent for a while as though in wonder, while I thought to myself, 'What idea can this devout youth be harbouring in his mind that he so persistently introduces this topic?'

Qazvini

Mulla Jalil Uriimi, who was himself present in Shiraz, informs us that the teacher was none other than Mulla Husayn himself, now holding his teaching sessions on Ahsa'is Sharh al-Ziyara in the Vakil mosque. In the course of these lectures, Sayyid 'Ali Muhammad [the Bab] asked Mulla Husayn, "If someone expounded better than you, what would you say?" Mulla Husayn answered, "I will obey and listen." Then Sayyid 'Ali Muhammad asked what his reaction would be if someone expounded better than Rashti and even Ahsai'i, to which Mulla Husayn gave the same reply. Then Sayyid 'Ali Muhammad presented him with some of his writings. "Immediately after reading them," recalls Uriimi, "he was overwhelmed and deeply moved. But the Bab advised him to conceal his emotions. "

Mulla Jalil Uriimi adds that Mulla Husayn "could not sleep the whole night for his inner struggle and mental occupation."

Dawnbreakers (1890)

"Whom, after Siyyid Kazim," He asked me, "do you regard as his successor and your leader?"

"At the hour of his death," I replied, "our departed teacher insistently exhorted us to forsake our homes, to scatter far and wide, in quest of the promised Beloved. I have, accordingly, journeyed to Persia, have arisen to accomplish his will, and am still engaged in my quest."

"Has your teacher," He further enquired, "given you any detailed indications as to the distinguishing features of the promised One?"

"Yes," I replied, "He is of a pure lineage, is of illustrious descent, and of the seed of Fatimih. As to His age, He is more than twenty and less than thirty. He is endowed with innate knowledge. He is of medium height, abstains from smoking, and is free from bodily deficiency."

He paused for a while and then with vibrant voice declared: "Behold, all these signs are manifest in Me!" He then considered each of the above-mentioned signs separately, and conclusively demonstrated that each and all were applicable to His person.

I was greatly surprised, and politely observed: "He whose advent we await is a Man of unsurpassed holiness, and the Cause He is to reveal, a Cause of tremendous power. Many and diverse are the requirements which He who claims to be its visible embodiment must needs fulfil. How often has Siyyid Kazim referred to the vastness of the knowledge of the promised One! How often did he say: 'My own knowledge is but a drop compared with that with which He has been endowed. All my attainments are but a speck of dust in the face of the immensity of His knowledge. Nay, immeasurable is the difference!'" No sooner had those words dropped from my lips than I found myself seized with fear and remorse, such as I could neither conceal nor explain. I bitterly reprov'd myself, and resolved at that very moment to alter my attitude and to soften my tone. I vowed to God that should my Host again refer to the subject, I would, with the utmost humility, answer and say: "If you be willing to substantiate your claim, you will most assuredly deliver me from the anxiety and suspense which so heavily oppress my soul. I shall truly be indebted to you for such deliverance."...

Jinab-i-Fadil

They had been taught that there were nineteen proofs by which they might recognize the Great Master, the coming One, one of which was his spiritual power which, even if he spoke not a word, would draw the people to him.

Khadijih Bagum in Chosen Highway

On his arrival [at the Bab's home] the awaited visitor announced that he was seeking for his master, and took from his wallet the Tablet before mentioned, the five-pointed star, following the chief lines of the form of the human body - filled with writing containing the description of the signs by which he should know Him whom he sought.

As this was recounted by the guest, the young host listened gravely, and then, taking of his green turban, said: "Look well at me, do I not show these signs?" His calm face was illumined by a smile full of meaning.

"That is a very high claim," wonderingly said the visitor.

Mullah Husayn's Questions & Treatise

Tarikh-i-Jadid/Bayani (1851/1880)

'What idea can this devout youth be harbouring in his mind that he so persistently introduces this topic [that He might be the One]? I must at all events ask some question of him which he has never heard discussed and cannot answer, so that he may be turned aside from his vain imaginings.'

I therefore put to him a question which appeared to me very difficult of solution, and which had always been in my mind during the life-time of the late Seyyid <Kázim>, though I had never found an opportunity of propounding it in such wise as to have my difficulties removed in a satisfactory manner. Without hesitation he gave me a full and sufficient answer. I was filled with amazement, and proceeded to propound to him several other hard questions, each of which, to my utter astonishment, he answered in the most conclusive way. Yet withal I reflected within

myself, 'Is not this he who but a few days ago blundered over a sentence in the Commentary on the *Súratu'l-Bakara*? How is it that he has now become the source and well-spring of this divine wisdom?'

Dawnbreakers (1890)

When I first started upon my quest, I determined to regard the two following standards as those whereby I could ascertain the truth of whosoever might claim to be the promised Qa'im. The first was a treatise which I had myself composed, bearing upon the abstruse and hidden teachings propounded by Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kazim. Whoever seemed to me capable of unravelling the mysterious allusions made in that treatise, to him I would next submit my second request [for a commentary on the Surih of Jospheh]...

I was revolving these things in my mind, when my distinguished Host again remarked: "Observe attentively. Might not the Person intended by Siyyid Kazim be none other than I?"

I thereupon felt impelled to present to Him a copy of the treatise which I had with me. "Will you," I asked Him, "read this book of mine and look at its pages with indulgent eyes? I pray you to overlook my weaknesses and failings."

He graciously complied with my wish. He opened the book, glanced at certain passages, closed it, and began to address me. Within a few minutes He had, with characteristic vigour and charm, unravelled all its mysteries and resolved all its problems. Having to my entire satisfaction accomplished, within so short a time, the task I had expected Him to perform, He further expounded to me certain truths which could be found neither in the reported sayings of the imams of the Faith nor in the writings of Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kazim. These truths, which I had never heard before, seemed to be endowed with refreshing vividness and power.

"Had you not been My guest," He afterwards observed, "your position would indeed have been a grievous one. The all-encompassing grace of God has saved you. It is for God to test His servants, and not for His servants to judge Him in accordance with their deficient standards. Were I to fail to resolve your perplexities, could the Reality that shines within Me be regarded as powerless, or My knowledge be accused as faulty? Nay, by the righteousness of God! it behoves, in this day, the peoples and nations of both the East and the West to hasten to this threshold, and here seek to obtain the reviving grace of the Merciful. Whoso hesitates will indeed be in grievous loss. Do not the peoples of the earth testify that the fundamental purpose of their creation is the knowledge and adoration of God? It behoves them to arise, as earnestly and spontaneously as you have arisen, and to seek with determination and constancy their promised Beloved."

Verses and Commentaries

The Book on Shelf

Tarikh-i-Jadid/Bayani (1851/1880)

{Mullah Husayn says he does not observe in the Bab the qualities of the One.} To this He replied nothing. After a while I observed several books lying on a shelf. I picked up one of them, and found it to be a commentary on the *Súratu'l-Bakara*. After reading a little I perceived it to be a commentary of remarkable merit, and demanded in astonishment who the author might be.

'A mere youthful beginner,' answered he, 'who nevertheless lays claim to a high degree of knowledge and greatness.'

I again asked who and where the writer was.

'Thou seest him,' he replied; but I did not at the time apprehend his meaning, and continued to read on till I came to a passage where it was written, '*the explanation of the inmost of the inmost.*' This appeared to me to be an error, and I remarked, 'Here it should be "*the inmost*," and "*the inmost of the inmost*" is written.'

'What can I say?' he answered, 'the author of this Commentary lays claim to more even than this of greatness and knowledge. Consider the passage attentively.'

I did so, and said, 'It is quite correct. But I am wearied. Do you read, and I will listen.'

He read for a time, and then, as men are wont, I said, 'It is enough. Do not trouble yourself further.'

Báb Utters Verses

Tarikh-i-Jadid/Bayani (1851/1880)

Even as I thus thought, I looked up, and saw him sitting in a most dignified and majestic attitude, the left hand laid on the left knee and the right hand over it; and, even as I looked, he began to utter most wondrous verses containing answers to every thought which passed through my mind, until seventy or eighty verses had been revealed. During all this time I waited anxiously for him to be silent, so strong was the fear and awe which possessed me. At length he ceased, and I, in the extremity of terror, rose up to flee, as some delinquent might flee from before a mighty king. [The Bab withholds him, and brings him tea, saying if he leaves people will think him mad.]

Surih of Joseph

Tarikh-i-Jadid/Bayani (1851/1880)

On the occasion of another visit I saw a commentary which he had written on the Tradition of the Handmaiden. Now the late Seyyid had been wont to say when he was alive that the Proof who was to appear would compose a full explanation of this tradition, and that sign I now witnessed. Moreover one day, when I was alone with the late Seyyid in his library, I enquired the reason why the *Súra-i-Yûsuf* was entitled in the Kur'an 'the Best of Stories,' to which he replied that it was not then the proper occasion for explaining the reason. This incident remained concealed in my mind, neither had I mentioned it to anyone. One day Mírzá 'Alí Muhammad said to me, 'Dost thou recollect enquiring once of the late Seyyid why the *Súra-i-Yûsuf* was called "the Best of Stories," and how he replied that the proper occasion for explaining this had not yet come? The time for this explanation has now arrived.' Thereupon he shewed me a Commentary <on this *Súra*> of the most perfect lucidity and eloquence, *TJ: whereat I was utterly astounded, perceiving that my trained intelligence was incompetent to grasp all the subtle mysteries and lofty ideas contained therein.*" ' "

Dawnbreakers (1890)

[Whoever could unravel the allusions in his treatise] to him I would next submit my second request, and would ask him to reveal, without the least hesitation or reflection, a commentary on the Surih of Joseph, in a style and language entirely different from the prevailing standards of the time. I had previously requested Siyyid Kazim, in private, to write a commentary on that same Surih, which he refused, saying: "This is, verily, beyond me. He, that great One, who comes after me will, unasked, reveal it for you. That commentary will constitute one of the weightiest testimonies of His truth, and one of the clearest evidences of the loftiness of His position."

I was revolving these things in my mind, when my distinguished Host again remarked: "Observe attentively. Might not the Person intended by Siyyid Kazim be none other than I?"

[After performing the first challenge of unravelling his treaty, and sternly warning him] He then proceeded to say: "Now is the time to reveal the commentary on the Surih of Joseph." He took up His pen and with incredible rapidity revealed the entire Surih of Mulk, the first chapter of His commentary on the Surih of Joseph. The overpowering effect of the manner in which He wrote was heightened by the gentle intonation of His voice which accompanied His writing. Not for one moment did He interrupt the flow of the verses which streamed from His pen. Not once did He pause till the Surih of Mulk was finished.

I sat enraptured by the magic of His voice and the sweeping force of His revelation. At last I reluctantly arose from my seat and begged leave to depart. He smilingly bade me be seated, and said: "If you leave in such a state, whoever sees you will assuredly say: 'This poor youth has lost his mind.'"

Chosen Highway

[After asking the Bab about the signs] Siyyid 'Ali Muhammad then reminded him of a day long ago at the table of Siyyid Kazim, who, speaking of the chapter in the Qur'an describing the story of Joseph, impressively told them to remember the discussion of that evening on the "Mystery of Joseph," adding that one day, in the future, the reason for this solemn injunction would be made clear to them.

Then and there Siyyid 'Ali Muhammad wrote a detailed commentary of the "Mystery of Joseph," revealing the hidden meaning of the story; this he handed to his visitor.

As Mulla Husayn-i-Bushru'i read, his eyes were opened, and he became greatly perturbed and overcome, and excited. He wished to rush forth proclaiming the wondrous tidings to the world.

He had found the Herald! Him whom he sought, the Imam, the Qa'im.

Perplexities and Anguish

Mosque Lectures

Tarikh-i-Jadid/Bayani (1851/1880)

Towards evening tea was brought, and several learned Sheykhís and merchants who had been informed of my arrival came to see me. In the course of conversation they, supported by Mirzá 'Alí Muhammad [the Bab], made me promise to deliver a lecture, and arranged to assemble on the morrow in the Ílkhání mosque to hear it.

Next morning, agreeably to this arrangement, they assembled in the mosque, whither I also repaired. When, however, I desired to begin my discourse, I found that in place of the ready flow of language and easy delivery generally at my command I was as though tongue-tied and unable to speak. This filled me with amazement, for I was persuaded that so unusual an occurrence must be due to some unusual cause, and wondered much who it was that exercised this secret control over me, and what might be his object. Such was the astonishment and emotion which took possession of me that I was obliged to make the best excuses I could for cutting short my discourse. Thereupon the assembly broke up, and I returned to my lodging deeply meditating.

Next day when I wished to preach precisely the same thing happened, and so again a third time. On this last occasion I came out from the mosque in a state of the utmost misery and astonishment.

Wishes to Flee

Tarikh-i-Jadid/Bayani (1851/1880)

During all this time[uttering verses], I waited anxiously for him to be silent, so strong was the fear and awe which possessed me. At length he ceased, and I, in the extremity of terror, rose up to flee, as some delinquent might flee from before a mighty king. But he withheld me, saying, 'Sit down! Whither goest thou? Anyone who should see thee in this state would think thee mad.'

So I was constrained to sit down as he bade me, while he withdrew to his private room. During his absence I was a prey to most anxious thoughts. Care for my worldly interests and fear of incurring suffering alike urged me to draw back; and yet, ponder as I might, I could find no pretext whereby I might excuse myself, neither did I perceive any course save confession and acceptance. So was I greatly perturbed, and troubled beyond all measure.

After some while Mírzá 'Alí Muhammad returned, and, contrary to his usual custom, himself brought in the tea. Having set tea before me, he seated himself by my side, and continued to behave towards me most graciously.

I remained, however, as one distraught, and presently again asked permission to depart.

'Thou art still,' said he, 'in a state of extreme bewilderment, though thou art not thyself aware of it. Should anyone see thee thus he would assuredly deem thee mad.' A little while afterwards, however, he suffered me to depart.

Fear and Remorse

Dawnbreakers (1890)

[Mullah Husayn tries to impress on the Bab the greatness of Knowledge the One must have.] No sooner had those words dropped from my lips than I found myself seized with fear and remorse, such as I could neither conceal nor explain. I bitterly reproved myself, and resolved at that very moment to alter my attitude and to soften my tone. I vowed to God that should my Host again refer to the subject, I would, with the utmost humility, answer and say: "If you be willing to substantiate your claim, you will most assuredly deliver me from the anxiety and suspense which so heavily oppress my soul. I shall truly be indebted to you for such deliverance."

Prayers

Dawnbreakers (1890)

Overwhelmed with His acts of extreme kindness, I arose to depart. "The time for evening prayer is approaching," I ventured to observe. "I have promised my friends to join them at that hour in the Masjid-i-Ilkhani."

With extreme courtesy and calm He replied: "You must surely have made the hour of your return conditional upon the will and pleasure of God. It seems that His will has decreed otherwise. You need have no fear of having broken your pledge."

His dignity and self-assurance silenced me. I renewed my ablutions and prepared for prayer. He, too, stood beside me and prayed. Whilst praying, I unburdened my soul, which was much oppressed, both by the mystery of this interview and the strain and stress of my search.

I breathed this prayer: "I have striven with all my soul, O my God, and until now have failed to find Thy promised Messenger. I testify that Thy word faileth not, and that Thy promise is sure."

Hospitality

Washing & Tea

Tarikh-i-Jadid/Bayani (1851/1880)

After some while Mírzá 'Alí Muhammad returned, and, contrary to his usual custom, himself brought in the tea. Having set tea before me, he seated himself by my side, and continued to behave towards me most graciously.

Dawnbreakers (1890)

As I entered the house and followed my Host to His chamber, a feeling of unutterable joy invaded my being. Immediately we were seated, He ordered a ewer of water to be brought, and bade me wash away from my hands and feet the stains of travel. I pleaded permission to retire from His presence and perform my ablutions in an adjoining room. He refused to grant my request, and proceeded to pour the water over my hands. He then gave me to drink of a refreshing beverage, after which He asked for the samovar and Himself prepared the tea which He offered me.

Meals

Dawnbreakers (1890)

At the third hour after sunset, my Host ordered the dinner to be served. That same Ethiopian servant appeared again and spread before us the choicest food. That holy repast refreshed alike my body and soul. In the presence of my Host, at that hour, I felt as though I were feeding upon the fruits of Paradise. I could not but marvel at the manners and the devoted attentions of that Ethiopian servant whose very life seemed to have been transformed by the regenerating influence of his Master. I then, for the first time, recognised the significance of this well-known traditional utterance ascribed to Muhammad: "I have prepared for the godly and righteous among My servants what eye hath seen not, ear heard not, nor human heart conceived." Had my youthful Host no other claim to greatness, this were sufficient - that He received me with that quality of hospitality and loving-kindness which I was convinced no other human being could possibly reveal.

Timings

The submission of Mullah Husayn to the Bab in both Tarikh-i-Jadid and also Dawnbreakers can be related to the Surih of Joseph. In Dawnbreakers it is somewhat explicit, in Tarikh-i-Jadid/Bayani it is implied by the fact the story finishes there. Dawnbreakers states the precise timing the Bab had stated in the Bayan.

This night Abdu'l-Bahá also was born.

Persian Bayan (Bab)

And from the moment when the Tree of the Bayan appeared until it disappeareth is the Resurrection of the Apostle of God, as is divinely foretold in the Qur'an; the beginning of which was when two hours and eleven minutes had passed on the eve of the fifth of Jamadiyu'l-Avval, 1260 A.H., which is the year 1270 of the Declaration of the Mission of Muhammad. This was the beginning of the Day of Resurrection of the Qur'an, and until the disappearance of the Tree of divine Reality is the Resurrection of the Qur'an.

Dawnbreakers (1890)

That night, that memorable night, was the eve preceding the fifth day of Jamadiyu'l-Avval, in the year 1260 A.H. It was about an hour after sunset when my youthful Host began to converse with me.

...

At that moment the clock registered two hours and eleven minutes after sunset. That night, the eve of the fifth day of Jamadiyu'l-Avval, in the year 1260 A.H., corresponded with the eve preceding the sixty-fifth day after Naw-ruz, which was also the eve of the sixth day of Khurdad, of the year Nahang. "This night," He declared, "this very hour will, in the days to come, be celebrated as one of the greatest and most significant of all festivals. Render thanks to God for having graciously assisted you to attain your heart's desire, and for having quaffed from the sealed wine of His utterance. 'Well is it with them that attain thereunto.'"

Baha'u'llah and the New Era (1923)

The exact date of this announcement is given in the Bayan, one of the Bab's writings, as two hours and fifteen minutes after sunset on the 5th day of the month of Jamadiyu'l-Avval, 1260 A.H. (i.e. 23rd May, 1844 A.D.).

(Later editions adjust this to two hours and eleven minutes.)

After Submission

Sleepless

Dawnbreakers (1890)

I sat spellbound by His utterance, oblivious of time and of those who awaited me. Suddenly the call of the muadhdhin, summoning the faithful to their morning prayer, awakened me from the state of ecstasy into which I seemed to have fallen. All the delights, all the ineffable glories, which the Almighty has recounted in His Book as the priceless possessions of the people of Paradise - these I seemed to be experiencing that night. Methinks I was in a place of which it could be truly said: "Therein no toil shall reach us, and therein no weariness shall touch us"; "No vain discourse shall they hear therein, nor any falsehood, but only the cry, 'Peace! Peace!'; "Their cry therein shall be, 'Glory be to Thee, O God!' and their salutation therein, 'Peace!' And the close of their cry, 'Praise be to God, Lord of all creatures!'"

Sleep had departed from me that night. I was enthralled by the music of that voice which rose and fell as He chanted; now swelling forth as He revealed verses of the Qayyumu'l-Asma', again acquiring ethereal, subtle harmonies as He uttered the prayers He was revealing. At the end of each invocation, He would repeat this verse: "Far from the glory of thy Lord, the All-Glorious, be that which His creatures affirm of Him! And peace be upon His Messengers! And praise be to God, the Lord of all beings!"

Letters of the Living

Dawnbreakers (1890)

Following Mullah Husayn's submission, others followed.

"He then addressed me in these words: "O thou who art the first to believe in Me! Verily I say, I am the Bab, the Gate of God, and thou art the Babu'l-Bab, the gate of that Gate. Eighteen souls must, in the beginning, spontaneously and of their own accord, accept Me and recognise the truth of My Revelation. Unwarned and uninvited, each of these must seek independently to find Me.

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Map of the Journey



House of the Bab

