

## **The Súrat adh-Dhikr of the Qayyúm al-Asmá’ (chapter 108):**

### **A Provisional Translation and Commentary**

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This paper is an initial attempt to understand a sura (chapter) of the Qayyúm al-Asmá’.<sup>1</sup> The text of the Qayyúm al-Asmá’ is very abstruse in places and the present paper can be regarded only as a preliminary and provisional attempt to capture some of its meaning. It will be many years, perhaps many generations, before all of these meanings are successfully unravelled, if indeed that is possible.

The story of the Qayyúm al-Asmá’ is well known and does not require repetition here. Nabíl records that the Báb wrote the first sura of the book, the Súrat al-Mulk, on the night of the declaration of his mission to Mullá Husayn Bushrú’í (Nabíl 1962, p. 61). However, as will become evident, the sura being considered here, the 108th of the book, gives rise to the question of whether all of the book was written by the Báb before his pilgrimage to Mecca in 1844 or whether some of it may not have been written in 1845 after his return, or at any rate after the end of the pilgrimage rites, which he completed on 24 December 1844.

The 108th sura of the Qayyúm al-Asmá’, which is given the title Súrat adh-Dhikr (Sura of the Remembrance), occurs towards the end of the book. The Qayyúm al-Asmá’ is in form a commentary on the Quranic Sura of Joseph (sura 12). Each sura of the Qayyúm al-Asmá’ is a commentary on a verse of the Quranic sura. Thus the 108th sura of the Qayyúm al-Asmá’ is a commentary on the 108th verse of the Quranic Sura of Joseph, which is cited at the opening of the sura (see below).

The Súrat adh-Dhikr is written, as is the rest of the book, in the literary style known as *saj’*, which is usually translated as ‘rhyming prose’. This translation does not fully reflect this literary form, as some may imagine that it means that there is rhyme but no rhythm in the verses. In fact, both rhyme and rhythm are present. The only reason that it is not possible to call it poetry, in the classical literary meaning of this word, is the fact that the rhyme and rhythm do not follow any uniform or regular pattern and there are short passages of prose linking parts of the text. The text contains much alliteration. See, for example, the words *sirr*, *mastúr* and *satr* as they occur in verses 4, 15 and 21 (transliteration provided in the translation below).

Indeed, as suggested below in the commentary on verse 40, this text may have been intended as much for recitation as study, in that several elements of it are clearly intended to be heard rather than read. It is thus a performative text as much as a cognitive one; it is meant to be experienced as much as understood.

As with other suras of the Qayyúm al-Asmá', this sura can be divided into verses because each unit ends in the rhyme *-á*. The final word is usually in the form of the accusative indefinite ending *-an*, which is pronounced *-á* when it is placed at the end of a sentence or clause. All suras of the Qayyúm al-Asmá' have 42 verses in them, 42 being the number equivalent to *balá* (Yea, verily!), which is the response to the Quranic covenantal question: 'Am I not your Lord?' (Q 7:172).<sup>2</sup> The whole book is thus a symbolic affirmation of the eternal divine covenant.

The Súrat adh-Dhikr can be divided into three sections with axial verses marking the transition point between each section. Not only do these three sections differ in content and tone but there is even a change of voice.

## Section 1

This section runs from verse 1 to verse 11. The first verse of the sura is a citing of the 108th verse of the Quranic Sura of Joseph, the verse on which this sura is a commentary. As with much of the rest of the Qayyúm al-Asmá', the text of this sura contains only faint echoes of the Quranic verse, its supposed subject.

The second verse begins with the disconnected Arabic letters *'Ayn Lám Yá*. This is an echo of many Quranic suras which also start with disconnected letters but this set of three letters is not Quranic.

Having exalted God in the second verse, the third verse declares that God has sent down (*anzala*) the mysteries upon his servant in the lines of the tablets. Although it is not explicitly stated here, but is elsewhere in the book, this implies the revelation of divine verses – something that Muslims consider occurs only when holy books such as the Qur'an are being revealed. This point is repeated, this time explicitly at the beginning of verse 5, where the word used, *awhá*, is derived from *wahy*, which in the Qur'an is almost exclusively specific to the revelation of divine verses. Thus the Báb, while outwardly stating that this book was given to him by the Hidden Imam, is in fact implicitly claiming that the book is divine revelation, a point that was very clear to the Sunni and Shi'i ulama who tried the Letter of the Living Mullá 'Alí Bastámí in Baghdad in January 1845 on the basis of the text of the Qayyúm al-Asmá' (Momen 1982).

The phrase 'around the fire' (*hawl an-nár*) occurs in verse 5 for the first time in this sura and recurs frequently (vv. 6, 16, 17, 21, 25, 26, 31, 36 and 38) in this sura and in the text of the book as a whole. While in many places in the writings of the Báb the word 'fire' is an allusion to hellfire, this is clearly not the correct interpretation here. The most obvious allusion is to the fire of the Sinaitic experience of Moses and in particular the words that were heard by Moses as he approached the fire: 'Blessed are they who are in the fire and those who are around it' (*'man fí 'n-nár wa man hawlahá'*, Q 27:8). References to Sinai and Sinaitic imagery abound in this sura, as they do throughout the book (see also vv. 19 and 24).

Verses 8, 9 and 10 are perhaps the most interesting of this sura from the historical

viewpoint. They refer to the Báb's pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*), his circumambulation of the Ka'ba (seven circumambulations are performed), his journey to Mount Ararat on 9 Dhu'l-Hijja and then proceeding to Mash'ar or Muzdalifa on the eve of that day and performing a final circumambulation some day after 10 Dhu'l-Hijja – all essential parts of the *hajj* ritual. The fact that the Báb writes about this event and what he found there as having already occurred means that this sura, at least, was probably written after the Báb had concluded his pilgrimage to Mecca. This, of course, is contrary to the accepted view that the book was completed prior to the Báb's departure for pilgrimage. We know that some, perhaps all, of the Letters of the Living as they dispersed from Shiraz had copies of the Qayyúm al-Asmá' with them, therefore we know that copies of it were being distributed before the Báb's departure. The question is whether these were copies of the whole book or copies of only part of it. Did the Báb write part of the Qayyúm al-Asmá' before leaving for pilgrimage – the Letters of the Living taking with them copies of this part – and then complete the book as we know it today after his pilgrimage? Fádíl Mázandarání cites a tablet of the Báb in which he states that he completed the book in 40 days (Mázandarání n.d., p. 285) but this does not necessarily mean 40 consecutive days.

Unfortunately, no copies of the Qayyúm al-Asmá' as carried by the Letters of the Living in 1844 are known to have survived (although it is not impossible that somewhere in Baghdad or Kirman or elsewhere there is such a manuscript). We do have evidence, however, of the content of the copies of the Qayyúm al-Asmá' the Letters of the Living carried with them because it was cited in two documents. The first is the fatwa given by Shi'í and Sunni ulama against the Letter of Living Mullá 'Alí Bastámí in January 1845. In the fatwa document, 17 extracts from the Qayyúm al-Asmá' carried by Mullá 'Alí are cited as evidence. The highest numbered sura of these extracts is sura 65 (see Momen 1982). Our second source of information about the copies of the Qayyúm al-Asmá' carried by the Letters of the Living is from the writings of the Shaykhi leader Hájjí Mírzá Muhammad Karím Khán Kirmání. The Letter of the Living Quddús came to Kirman and interacted with the Shaykhi leader there. He was followed by Mullá Sádiq Muqaddas Khurásání and another Letter of the Living, Mullá Yúsuf Ardabilí. From one of these, probably the first, Karím Khán obtained a copy of the Qayyúm al-Asmá' from which he quoted in his refutation of the Báb, *Izháq al-Bátíl*, which was completed on 12 Rajab 1261/17 July 1845. Quddús left the company of the Báb immediately after they set foot ashore in Bushihr following their pilgrimage journey. If the Báb had completed the Qayyúm al-Asmá' before this time, then it is possible that Karím Khán was given a copy of the entire text. But if the Báb completed the Qayyúm al-Asmá' after his return to Iran, then Quddús probably had with him only the same Qayyúm al-Asmá' that the other Letters of the Living had taken with them. In any case, the evidence from *Izháq al-Bátíl* is virtually identical to that from the Mullá 'Alí Bastámí fatwa document. The last sura of the Qayyúm al-Asmá' that is cited in this book is sura 62<sup>3</sup> (Kirmání 1973, pp. 97–8).

Assuming that the Báb wrote the Qayyúm al-Asmá' in sequence, it seems likely that he stopped writing it at some point between sura 65 and sura 108 before he went on pilgrimage and that it was this incomplete Qayyúm al-Asmá' that the Letters of the Living took with them when they dispersed from Shiraz in 1844. The Báb then completed the 111 suras of the Qayyúm al-Asmá' after his pilgrimage.

## Section 2

Verse 13 forms what can be called an axial point in the sura in that the tone and voice change at this point. In the first section the Báb refers to himself in the first person and writes about the book itself and about his pilgrimage. In the second section he writes mainly about himself but in the third person. In verse 13 the Báb exhorts his readers to listen to his call. From this point onwards the whole of this section is a series of statements referring back to the Báb and to his call. Most of the verses in this section start '*Inna hadhá lahuwa*' (literally, 'Verily, this person, he is . . .'). The rhythm of the sura also changes here.

In verse 13 the Báb refers to himself as the tree (*ash-shajara*), a term which he frequently uses in referring to himself,<sup>4</sup> and in verse 14 he refers to himself as the path (*sirát*), another term that he uses many times in relation to himself (see Persian Bayán 2:12; Momen 1987, p. 333). This verse states that the Báb is himself the straight path mentioned in the opening sura of the Qur'an (1:6) to which Muslims ask to be guided when they use this sura as part of their daily prayers. The word *al-'amá*, which occurs in verse 13 and frequently thereafter in this sura and throughout the book, is a reference to the Primordial Cloud which, according to a Tradition related of the Prophet Muhammad, was where God was before he created the Creation. The word is derived from the root meaning 'blindness' or 'being in the dark' and refers to the concept of God being wrapped in a mist, enshrouded in darkness. In the present translation this has mostly been rendered as 'the Unseen'.<sup>5</sup>

Al-Yamaní, mentioned in verse 18, is an eschatological figure in Islam who is expected to return at the same time as the Mahdi. The '70' in this verse and the 'two' in the previous verse make 72, the number of companions of the Imam Husayn at Karbala, who are also expected to return with the Imam Husayn when he returns at the time of the Mahdi.

Verses 20 to 36 continue this theme of the Báb describing himself in the third person in mystical terms, many of which are highly abstruse. Verse 20 contains allusions to Muhammad (*al-abtahi*), the Imam 'Alí (*'Alawí*) and Fatima (*Fátimí*). Mount Qáf (verse 22) is the name of a mystical mountain that encircles the earth. Although originating in Zoroastrianism, it became for Sufis the symbol of the goal which they sought, the true home of the soul, the nesting place of the immortal phoenix. There is also a Quranic sura of this name. The adjectives Ahmadí 'Arabí in verse 29 refer to the Prophet Muhammad while the perceptive Arabic Guardian (*al-walí al-alma'í al-'Arabí*) in verse 31 would probably be a reference to the Imam 'Alí. Buráq (verse 36) was the steed of Muhammad during his mystical night ascent (*mi'ráj*).

## Section 3

The opening words of verse 37 differ from the opening words of the preceding verses, thus interrupting the rhythm and flow of the text and signalling the start of the third and last section of this sura. Verse 37 introduces the image of a bird flying through the air, which then becomes the central theme of this section. This mystic bird is, of course, the Báb himself and the reader is invited to learn about the pathway of servitude from this bird.

Verse 38 is a key verse. Not only does the Báb identify himself with Bahá' in this verse but the verse contains several allusions back to the heretofore neglected Qur'an 8:108, which is, of course, the supposed subject of commentary for this sura. The literary technique in this verse is very typical of the Báb, who weaves in among the words of Qur'an 12:108 his own words so as to transform the plain cloth of the Quranic verse into a rich mystical fabric. 'His awaited remnant' (*baqiyyathi 'l-muntazar*) is a reference to the awaited Twelfth Imam, one of whose titles was the Baqiyyatu'lláh (the Remnant of God).

Verse 39 is an important verse in that it introduces and, I propose, explains the following verse. Verse 40 is very long and the outward meaning of it is not at all clear. It consists of a series of 11 short statements each beginning 'To me, to me', most of which are followed by a number of words in the dual form. As distinct from English, which has only singular and plural forms of a noun, Arabic has three: singular, dual and plural. The dual form is created by adding the ending '-ayn' to the singular form of the word. In the fifth and sixth lines of the verse, however, the words following 'To me, to me' are in the *nisba* form, ending in '-i'.

In considering what this verse could mean, it seems possible that verse 39, which introduces verse 40, might be taken literally when it states that the following verse is the song of the bird; in other words, that verse 40 might actually be an onomatopoeic rendering, imitating the warbling of a bird. Other than this, it is difficult to understand the import of this verse. A transliteration of the first four lines is:

*Illayya illaya hukm al-má'Ayn  
wa illaya illaya hukm al-hawá'Ayn fi'l-ardayn  
wa illaya illaya arba' al-harfayn fi'l-ismayn  
wa illaya illaya arba' al-hawá'Ayn fi's-satrayn min sirrayn*

The following two verses round off the sura with a number of formulaic statements, indicating the author's submission to God and the inability of words to convey the whole truth. Other allusions in the text are suggested in the endnotes.

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The manuscripts used for this translation have been the following three and an attempt has been made to create a critical text (see notes of variants in the endnotes):

Manuscript A: Photocopy of manuscript completed 1 Muharram 1323 (8 March 1905) written in a neat *naskh* script, 17 lines per page; given to the author by Mr Abul-Qasim Afnan, ff. 430–4.

Manuscript B: Photocopy of manuscript completed on 1 Rabí' II 1309 (4 November 1891) in *nasta'liq* handwriting of Husayn Írání (i.e. Mírzá Áqá Khán Kirmání) in Istanbul and sent to E. G. Browne by Shaykh Ahmad Rúhí. 22 lines per page, MSS F11 (9) in Browne collection, University Library, University of Cambridge, ff. 192–3 (see Browne 1892, pp. 261–8).

Manuscript H: Photocopy of manuscript completed 28 Jamádí I 1261 (4 June 1845) written in a neat *naskh* hand by Muhammad Mahdí ibn Karbalá'í Sháh Karam for Mullá Husayn Bushrú'í and sent by him through Mírzá Habibu'lláh Cháhí to 'Sarkár Amír' (possibly the Amir of Qá'inát). Entered Iranian National Bahá'í Archives, Rabí' al-Awwal 1298, INBA 3, ff. 382–6.

### Provisional translation

In the Name of God, the Merciful the Compassionate

1. 'Say this is my way (*sabílí*). I summon unto God with clarity ('*ala basírah*), I and those who follow me. Praise be to God, I am not one of the idolators' (Q 12:108).
2. 'Ayn Lám Yá. He is God, there is no God but Him, the Lord of the Throne and of Heaven. And He is God who is exalted, mighty.
3. He is the one who sent down (*anzala*) upon His servant, in truth, the mysteries from the tablets<sup>6</sup> in lines (*astur*), in order that he may teach the scholars that He is,<sup>7</sup> according to this mighty word, detached from the world, in truth and through the truth.
4. O People of the Unseen! Listen to my call from this illumined moon that did not desire that its orb should eclipse the countenance of this Youth who is of both the East and the West, whom you will find in every tablet as a concealed secret recorded upon a line, written in red, which has, in truth, been hidden (*fí kullí l-alwáh sirran mustasirran 'ala as-satr musattaran 'ala 's-satr al-muhammir qad kána bi'l-haqq mastúran*).<sup>8</sup>
5. Say: God has revealed (*awhá*) to me: I am God, there is no god but Me, the worshipped. I did not create among the Gates the like of this Remembrance. The most great Word is as this Remembrance<sup>9</sup> and all come to him in the tablet of the inmost heart (*fu'ád*), as instructed<sup>10</sup> from around the fire.
6. O people of the earth! The point (*al-nuqtah*) has reached the region (*al-mantaqah*). So listen to my call from that Arabian, Muhammadan, 'Alawí youth, whom you will find in all tablets, a most mighty secret witnessed around the fire.
7. O believers! Verily, God has enjoined upon you after the book, the writing of it with the best handwriting in gold ink. So thank God your Lord for the creation of the heavens and the earth and what is between them and prostrate before God who has created them in order that you may worship Him<sup>11</sup> in truth. And He is God who sees what you do.
8. O Consolation of the Eye! Say: When I set out for the [Sacred] House [i.e. Mecca or the Ka'ba], I found the Ka'ba<sup>12</sup> itself raised up upon four-fold legs [A 430] in the presence of the Gate.

9. And when I set off to perform the circumambulation (*at-tawwáf*) [B 193] of the House I found the obligations in the Mother Book to be seven, in very truth.

10. And when I wanted to perform the recitation upon the earth, I found the Mash‘ar and the Arafat were both in distress<sup>13</sup> around the Báb.

11. O Concourse of Lights! By God, the True One! Verily the most great word of God is, in truth, the hidden truth. And He is God who is the mighty, the Ancient of Days.

12. Verily the inner truth of this chapter is difficult and mighty. Even were the oceans of the heavens and the earth to be joined together as ink and all things for pens [cf. Q 18:109, 31:27], they would not be sufficient or able [to write it] except for an unconnected Alif (*alif ghayr ma‘túfah*), just as the Command, in truth, now exists thus in the form of heaven or the shape of the earth and was [previously] with God the Lord of the heavens.

13. O people from the Temple of Divine Unity who are attracted (*ahl al-jadhb min haykal at-tawhíd*)! Listen to my call from this yellowed leaf (*al-waraqa al-musaffirah*) sprouting in red oil (*bi ‘d-dahn al-muhammir*) from the tree (*ash-shajara*) moving in the atmosphere<sup>14</sup> of the Unseen (*al-‘amá’*). This<sup>15</sup> [tree] is that of which God did not decree anything on earth as its root and it is, by the command of God, planted in the air (*hawá’*) of the Unseen (*al-‘amá’*) by the hands of the Remembrance.

14. Verily, this pathway (*sirát*) of your Lord has been set straight (*mustaqíman*) in the Mother Book.

15. And verily, this is the secret (*as-sirr*) in the hiding place (*mustasarr*) of the veils (*as-satr*), written (*mastúran*) on the line (*satr*) above the Unseen (*al-‘amá’*) and above the heavens.

16. Verily this is the Arabic form (*ash-shikl*) of the two which was, in truth and upon the truth, witnessed around the fire<sup>16</sup> [H 224].

17. And it is the truth, the form of al-Yamaní mentioned in the 70, the two paths,<sup>17</sup> in truth, around the fire.

18. In order that the believer may be mentioned in that Book in the name of truth, upon the truth.

19. Verily, this is the light upon the [Sinaitic] Mountain and it is shining (*al-mutajallí*) from the [Divine] Names on the concourse of the Manifestation (*zuhúr*). And He is the True One and only He knows what He is about. And He is God who is the Exalted,<sup>18</sup> the Ancient of Days.

20. Verily, this [A 422] is the True One in the Meccan (*al-abtahi*) cadence. And he is

the secret shining (*al-mutajallí*) from the 'Alawí body (*al-jism*). And he is the light stored in the form of a dove in the Fátimí heart (*kabad*). Exalted is God, his Creator, Exalted and Great, above what the wrong-doers assert of Him.

21. Verily, this is the secret (*as-sirr*) [B 193] veiled (*mastúran*) within the secrets (*al-asrár*) which are around the fire.<sup>19</sup>

22. Verily, this is the light which was hidden and stored among the lights in the midst of the mountains (*al-jibál*) on the right hand of the Throne behind the Qáf.

23. Verily, these are the coverings of Manifestation (*qumus az-zuhúr*) and the secret of the depths (*sirr al-butún*) which are inscribed around the secret in the books of heaven.<sup>20</sup>

24. Verily, this is the tree of the inner heart (*shajarat al-fu'ád*) which is witnessed for God, the True One, upon Mount Sinai.

25. Verily, these are the leaves (pages) of holiness which have been written around the fire upon the thrones of the spheres (*fí surur al-aflák*) from the attributes (*siffát*).

26. Verily, this is the Truth which hath been decreed in the Mother Book around the fire.

27. Verily, this is the Point in the beginning which hath appeared, lauded in truth, in the centre of the seal (*al-khatm*) by the permission of God, the Ancient of Days.

28. Verily, this is the secret in praise of the book upon the Thrones<sup>21</sup> of Grandeur which are equal with regard to fire and water.

29. Verily, this part (*qiddah*) of the secret, the secret of the Arabian Ahmad [the Prophet Muhammad], is the centre of the Throne in the Unseen (*al-'amá*) upon the water which was, in truth, prostrating before and beloved of God, the Ancient of Days.

23. Verily, this is the secret inscribed upon the heart of the Prophet, which was hidden in the exalted truth.

31. Verily, this is the hidden unknown which was written around the fire in the breast of the perceptive Arabic guardian (*walí*).

32. Verily, this is the glorious pearl that was kept safe, through God the praiseworthy One, in the shell of the Friend (*al-khalíl*, Abraham) in the ocean of the Unseen (*al-'amá*) that is around [the Garden of] Eden.

33. Verily, this is the one who flees from every refuge, in truth, and He is God who is, in truth, a witness against you.

34. Verily, thou art in truth and through the truth, giving praise to God in holiness<sup>22</sup> in the pillar of the praise of God (*rukṅ at-tasbīh*) [A 423].

35. Verily, this is, in truth, the Maghribí sheen (*at-talq al-maghribí*) upon<sup>23</sup> the ‘Alawí<sup>24</sup> hair (*ash-shaʿr al-‘alawí*) for the shaving of the head (*liʿl-sahq*) after the untying (*baʿd al-hall*) [of the locks],<sup>25</sup> which is concealed in the point of the fire.

36. Verily, this is Buráq in the Concourse on High; the other Buráqs (*al-burqá*) do not resemble him or anything like him, for he is the lofty similitude (*al-mathal al-aʿlá*) which was seen around the fire in every Mystic Cloud (*al-‘amáʾ*) [B 194].<sup>26</sup>

37. O people of Paradise! Learn the pathway<sup>27</sup> of servitude from this bird skimming<sup>28</sup> through the atmosphere of the Unseen (*al-‘amáʾ*) and plunging into the ocean of red musk, and annihilate yourselves in this white fire through God the True One. You have been able to settle in the East and the West<sup>29</sup> by the permission of God, the King of earth and heaven. He is, in truth, the All-Knowing. He is God, who is powerful over all things.

38. O Consolation of the Eye! Say: I am Baháʾ and this is the pathway of God [cf. Q 12:108]. I summon unto God [Q 12:108] alone and to His awaited remnant (*ilá baqiyyatíhi ʿl-muntazar*). And I am looking, in truth, upon the East and the West (*al-mashriqayn*) with discernment (*ʿalá basíra* [cf. Q 8:108]). Verily, I and whoever follows me [Q 8:108], we are questioned, in truth and upon the truth, around the fire.

39. O people of [H 225] the Lights! Listen to my call from this bird that is singing, raised in the atmosphere of heaven in accordance with the melody (*ʿala ʿl-lahn*) of David the prophet.

40. To me, to me is the judgement of the two waters (*al-máʾAyn*).

And to me, to me is the judgement of the two airs (*al-hawáʾAyn*) in the two worlds.  
And to me, to me are four of the two letters in the two names.

And to me, to me are four of the two airs in the two lines from the two secrets.

And to me, to me is the bearer of the Throne of seven and one (*sabʿi wáhidí* or *wa ahadí*).

And to me, to me are the eight heavens,<sup>30</sup> narrated and concealed.

And to me, to me is the judgement of the two first lights upon the two mountains.

And to me, to me is the judgement of the two shining lights (*al-nayyirayn*, sun and moon) on the two last lines from those two inner depths (*al-batnayn*).

And to me, to me is the judgement of the two heavens concerning the eight of the Báb, in this Báb<sup>31</sup> there are two Báb's.

And to me, to me is the judgement of the two earths concerning the seven of the Báb by the two letters.

And to me, to me is the command and the judgement and there is no God but Him, our Lord alone. He has no partner and He is God the Exalted, the Great [A 424].

41. O Consolation of the Eyes! Say: all that God has caused to flow from my pen in this Book is only by the permission of God, the True One, and the book has only borne<sup>32</sup> in this chapter but a letter of the chapter which is witnessed around the water.

42. And praised be to God, the True One, except for whom there is no God. And He is God who is powerful over all things. And He is God who is independent of the worlds.

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## Notes

1. I am grateful to Todd Lawson for suggesting to me the translation of this sura and encouraging me to persevere in the task.
2. In Todd Lawson’s Ph.D. thesis *The Qur’an Commentary of Sayyid ‘Alí Muhammad, the Báb*, this observation is attributed to Dr Muhammad Afnan and there is the following additional comment: ‘The work has elsewhere been described as containing forty verses per *súra* [Browne, ‘Some Remarks on the Bâbî Texts’, pp. 261–2], representing the *abjad* value of the quranic *lí* ‘to me’ or ‘before me’ . . . The prepositional phrase is an explicit allusion to the dream of Joseph: *Father, I saw eleven stars, and the sun and the moon: I saw them bowing down before me (li)* [Q 12:4]. Browne notes, however, that several chapters of the British Library MS (probably Or. 3539; another MS of the work there is Or. 6681) are described in the MS itself as having 42 verses (as is one chapter of F11). In both cases, however, the number of verses is taken to be symbolic of either the acceptance or assertion of spiritual authority (Browne, ‘Remarks’, p. 262).’
3. Kirmání, *Izháq al-Bátíl*, pp. 97–8.
4. For example, this term occurs frequently in the Persian Bayán; see 2:1, 2:2, 2:11, 2:12,

- etc. See 'Summary of the Persian Bayán' in Momen, *Selections from the Writings of E.G. Browne*, pp. 327, 333, 334; Bahá'u'lláh, of course, continued this metaphor when he referred to himself as the Ancient Root from which the Aghsán (branches) spread forth. Interestingly, this image of a tree, the roots of which are in heaven and whose branches stretch towards earth, occurs in the Hindu scriptures (Bhagavad Gita 15:1–2).
- 5.. For a fuller discussion of this term, see Lambden, 'Some Notes on the Use of the Term *'amá'*'.
  6. *Al-alwáh*. B has *al-arwáh*.
  7. H omits the words *al-'alimún bi-annahu*.
  8. This and the previous verse are repeated almost exactly in sura 111, the last sura of the Qayyúm al-Asmá', vv. 25–6.
  9. B and H have *kalimat al-akbar hadhá dhikran*; A has *kalimat al-akbar hadhá dhikr allah* (the most great word is this Remembrance of God).
  10. A has *ma 'múran*; B has *ma 'múran* (populated); H has *ma 'húdan* (authorized, commissioned, enjoined).
  11. B and H have *iyváhu*; A has *iyváná* (us).
  12. A and B have *as-sakina* (tranquillity of the presence of God, a word that has powerful connotations in Jewish and Islamic mysticism); H has *al-ka 'ba*. I have chosen to use *Ka'ba* because these three verses, 9–11, have a parallelism of structure all related to the *hajj*.
  13. B has *baliyyatan* (in distress); A has *malínatan* (gently, softly); H has no word here.
  14. Band H have *jaw* (atmosphere, air), A has *huww* (black or dark red, plural).
  15. B and H have *hadhihi*, which appears more correct; A has *hadha*.
  16. A and B have *bi'l-haqq hawl an-nár 'ala al-haqq*; H has *bi'l-haqq 'ala al-haqq hawl an-nár*.
  17. A has *sirátan*.
  18. A and H have *'aliyan* (the Exalted); B has *ghaniyan* (the Rich, the Self-Sufficient).
  19. A and B have *hawl an-nár*; H has *hawl al-má'* (around the water).
  20. *Fi'l-kutub as-samá'* might also be translated as 'in the exalted books'. The translation in the text is not grammatically correct; the translation given in this note is not correct lexically.
  21. A has *saráyir* (thrones); B and H have *sará'ir* (secrets).
  22. A and B have *bi'l-quds*; H has *fi'l-quds*.
  23. A and B have *wa 'ala ash-sha'r*; H has just *'ala ash-sha'r*.
  24. B and H have *al-'Alawí*; A has *al-'Arabí*.
  25. *Sahq*, the shaving of the head, is in mystical terminology, a reference to the shedding of worldly attachment and becoming selfless.
  26. H has *fi hall al-'amá*; A and B have *fi kull al-'amá*. The coming together of the words *mathal* and *nár* in this sentence alludes to the Light Verse of the Qur'an (24:35). Even the name *Buráq* here may be feeding into this allusion to the Light Verse since it is derived from *barq*, referring to the first flash of light that dawns upon the horizon.
  27. A and H have *sabíl*; B has *subul*.
  28. H has *at-tayr al-mudaff*; A and B have *at-tayr al-muwarraq* (leafy bird!).
  29. H has *al-gharb*; A and B have *al-ghurbá*.
  30. B and H have *al-jannát*; A has *al-jaththát* (bodies).
  31. This phrase *fi hadha 'l-báb* is omitted in B.
  32. H has *ma hamala*; A and B have *ma hamaltu* (I have not borne).

## 8

### **The Surát al-‘Abd of the Qayyúm al-Asmá’ (chapter 109):**

### **A Provisional Translation and Commentary**

Todd Lawson

#### **Introduction**

The *Súrat al-‘Abd*, the Sura (or Chapter) of the Servant, is the 109th sura of the Báb’s Qayyúm al-Asmá’ (The Transcendent Source and Sustainer of the Divine Names<sup>1</sup>); the work is also known as the *Tafsír súrat Yúsuf* or the *Commentary on the Sura of Joseph* and *Ahsan al-Qasas (The Fairest of Stories)*. Beginning on the night of his meeting with Mullá Husayn Bushrú’í, 22 May 1844, this commentary was revealed by the Báb in the form of the long-awaited true Qur’an that had been (according to the beliefs and lore of the Shi‘a) expected to be restored to its rightful place in the community at the time of the return of the Hidden Imam, the Qá’im, on the Day of Resurrection (*yawm al-qiyáma*). The Hidden Imám, Muhammad ibn Hasan al-‘Askari, had been in occultation since 873 CE. Together with the true Qur’an, in his care and protection since his disappearance from public ken, he would appear wearing the robe of Joseph and carrying the staff of Moses. There is no space here (nor is it relevant) to delve into the historical accuracy of these beliefs. It is important, however, to recognize that they were (and are) widespread amongst the followers of *Ithná ‘ashari* or Twelver Shi‘ism. Thus the Qayyúm al-Asmá’ is a messianic or chiliastic text and its ‘publication’ or appearance (cf. *khurúj, zuhúr*) is every bit as charged with the considerable charisma of ‘expectation-to-be-fulfilled’ as is the actual appearance of the Hidden Imam. After all, the return of the true Qur’an to replace the current corrupted version would be a logical and important step in the unfolding of the specifically Shi‘i religious apocalyptic drama and vision: ‘To fill the earth with justice as it is now filled with injustice.’

As emblems and proofs of the arrival of the Day of Resurrection, the return of the Hidden Imam and the revelation of the heretofore hidden true Qur’an together form an evidentiary miracle quite unparalleled, each being the credential of the other and representing a kind of sub-messianic theme of their own, related to the seminal Day of the Covenant first mentioned in the Qur’an (Q 7:172) and subsequently contemplated as the *par excellence* scenario and dramatization of the

birth and genesis of spiritual authority (*waláya*) in Shi‘i Islam, a myth, it has been suggested, which accounts for the birth of consciousness itself.<sup>2</sup> The primordial day is explicitly and unmistakably identified by the Báb in a work he composed prior to the Qayyúm al-Asmá’, with the actual historical day Ghadír al-Khumm, which took place 18 Dhu’l-Hijja 10 AH (= 16 March 632 CE) as the Prophet Muhammad was returning to Medina from the Farewell Pilgrimage and he and his large entourage rested at the pond (*ghadír*) of Khumm, half-way between Mecca and Medina. Here he publicly announced that he would soon die and that when this happened the community should turn to ‘Alí as their leader (*mawlá*). Here also the Prophet enjoined unwavering belief in two things after him: 1) the Book of God and 2) his descendants, the Holy Family. For the Twelver Shi‘a this means ‘Alí, the Prophet’s son-in-law, cousin and half-brother, his wife Fatima (the Prophet’s daughter) and their descendants. Both sources of authority and guidance are referred to in the tradition as ‘the Two Formidable Ones’, ‘the Two Weighty Ones’ or even ‘the Two Decisive (and Infallible Sources of Guidance)’ (*al-thaqalayn*). Their reappearance after such prolonged and epic absence are thus seen by the Shi‘a as not only a promise fulfilled but an umbilical reconnection with the original Day of the Covenant – whose earthly dramatization, imitation or recital (cf. *hikáya*) was mentioned above – a connection which serves to merge the spiritual power of that primordial event with the messianic consummation of history and time: each is identified with the other. For this reading it is not accidental that the Day of Resurrection is explicitly mentioned in the verse that recounts the primordial covenant. This provides essential background for understanding why the verses of the Qayyúm al-Asmá’ have been precisely established at 42<sup>3</sup> because this is the spiritual or *abjad* value of the word *balá* (Yea verily!) which was the first part of the response uttered by the assembled, universal humanity in the original answer to the divine ‘originating’ question asked on the primordial Day of the Covenant: *Am I not your Lord?* (Q. 7:172).<sup>4</sup> For convenience, we reproduce here a translation of this pivotal verse:

When your Lord took out the offspring from the loins of the Children of Adam and made them bear witness about themselves, He said, ‘Am I not your Lord?’ and they replied, ‘Yes, we bear witness.’ So you cannot say on the Day of Resurrection, ‘We were not aware of this.’<sup>5</sup>

The revelation, composition and promulgation of the Qayyúm al-Asmá’ deserves first to be seen as a spiritual re-enactment of both the primordial Day of the Covenant and the earthly reiteration of those originating spiritual energies at Ghadír al-Khumm, spiritual energies that, according to the Shi‘i tradition, had for their object the making absolutely clear the line of succession from the Prophet and the identification of the locus of all authority (*waláya*) on earth, namely the designation of ‘Alí ibn Abí Tálíb as the first Imam and bearer of this authority after the passing of Muhammad. The guiding purpose and defining message of the Qayyúm al-Asmá’ is the invocation, evocation and identification of the very same authority with the purpose of its author, the Báb. Such a powerful and compelling message is achieved through the efficacy of typological figuration. In literary terms, this is

the metaphorical representation of the key features and persons of Islamic history in the new garment woven by the Báb with this text. These events are frequently of a metahistorical nature and therefore deemed utterly present (even if invisible) and true and vital in the cultural *imaginaire*: the long-awaited ‘True Qur’an’ with its rightful guardian, the Hidden Imam. At this stage in our research it is quite impossible to offer a positive opinion about the literal similarity between the Qayyúm al-Asmá’ and the textual evidence for what in fact may prove to be a legendary book whose importance was and is more in its continued absence and hiddenness than in its actual appearance. The interested reader is directed to some pertinent bibliography.<sup>6</sup> Such typological iteration or figuration may also be considered a performance of a sacred script, existing from a time that precedes time itself and is therefore beyond the scrutiny and analysis of earthly historians.

This particular sura was chosen for translation out of a number of other possibilities because of several factors. First of all, it is part of a pair of suras (108 and 109) whose relationship to each other is clearly indicated by their titles (Súrat al-Dhikr and Súrat al-‘Abd) that are in fact titles of authority or prophethood, the analogue to what would eventually come to be known as the quality of being a divine manifestation.<sup>7</sup> *Dhikr* means remembrance and it is one of the more common titles assumed by the Báb throughout this work and elsewhere in his writings.<sup>8</sup> It applies to his spiritual authority and simultaneously applies to spiritual authority (*waláya*) in general. Indeed, all prophets and messengers and the Imams of the Shi‘a are rightfully recognized by such a term. It is also important to add that the other infallible source of spiritual authority, the Qur’an itself, is also recognized by the same word. Thus a chapter going by this name can be reasonably expected to speak directly to the nature of spiritual authority as manifested or personified in a particular instance. In this instance, of course, the spiritual authority being described and taught is the one obtaining – again in umbilical fashion – between the Hidden Imam and ‘Alí Muhammad Shírází, in whose very name the spiritual authority of both Muhammad, the ‘Seal of the Prophets’ and ‘Alí, his appointed guardian (*walí*) is invoked. It is, of course, not only invoked but in the exquisite atmosphere of revelation these names are felt to be personified anew in the person of the Báb. As if to substantiate and emphasize this, the Báb employs the unique trope of using the familiar device of Quranic disconnected letters to spell, rather surprisingly, an actual word, which is in fact (and even more remarkably) his name.<sup>9</sup> The disconnected letters that head the *Súrat al-Dhikr* are ‘*ayn, lám, yá*’, which together spell the sacred name ‘Alí. The ‘disconnected’ letters heading the *Súrat al-‘Abd* are *mím, há*’, *mím, dál*, which together spell the sacred name Muhammad. Both unmistakably indicate the author of the text at hand, ‘Alí Muhammad Shírází, the Báb, while simultaneously invoking and evoking the spiritual authority of the original bearers of these names, first the Prophet and his appointee, the first Imam, but then also several of the actual subsequent Imams as well. It should be remembered, also, that such names in Islamic culture are significant because their actual semantic values are not lost sight of in the way names in other cultures are rarely noticed for the literal meaning of the word. When we hear the name ‘Robert’ we are not immediately reminded of its meaning ‘bright fame’. When we encounter the name ‘Jesus’, derived from the Hebrew Joshua meaning ‘the Lord is salvation’, we

are not mindful of this etymology, even though we may acknowledge some portentous or spiritual power in the name. Generally, such power sensed is by association with the life and ministry of Jesus and not derived from the meaning of the word ‘Jesus/Joshua’. The words ‘*alí* and *muhammad* do have specific meanings, which are very much in operation when used as names and especially in the instance of the spiritual leaders of Islam. *Muhammad* is based on the Arabic trilateral root *há*, *mím*, *dál* which denotes the idea and action of ‘praise’. Thus the name may be roughly translated as ‘praiseworthy’. *‘Alí* is based on the Arabic trilateral root ‘*ayn*, *lám*, *yá*’ and denotes loftiness and sublimity. Thus the name may be roughly translated as ‘exalted’. Quite apart from their function as designating the two most important figures in the history and teachings of (Shi‘i) Islam, these two names are widely used throughout Islamic culture as preferred names for male children. In the Islamic cultural context of naming, as is the case with so many other cultures, names are chosen for their spiritual value, the way in which they represent, encourage and cultivate selected and esteemed virtues for the one so named. It is as if individual words have effective energies of their own and may be set to work upon both their bearer and the world with which the one so named comes into contact. Naming is a serious matter. In the case of these two names, another factor must be taken into consideration. Each may, to some degree, be thought of as being applicable also to God. This is most clear in the case of ‘Alí, which is used as a divine epithet numerous times in the Qur’an.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the Shi‘a have long held that the frequent mention of this word as a divine attribute was a clear indication of the truth of ‘Alí’s Imamate. While the other name, Muhammad, is not used in the same way in the Qur’an, its meaning indicates that it could logically be applied to God as ‘One worthy of praise’.<sup>11</sup> Thus in both instances a blurring of the identities of the manifestation and the godhead occurs. This blurring of the line of distinction is intentional since it bespeaks a central principle of the faith and practice at hand: God is utterly and infinitely unknowable in Essence; however, certain extraordinary beings appear from time to time in order to teach humanity the truth about God, the world and the role of the human race. These emissaries are called divine manifestations, or more to the point, ‘special places’ where – or channels through which – divinity is caused to appear by means of its own self-manifestation (cf. *tajallí*), viz. *mazáhir iláhi*’. They represent for their respective time and place both all that can be known of the divine and a reminder that God is ultimately unknowable. As representatives of all that can be known of the divine, they are functionally identical with ‘God’. In respect of their role as reminders of the unknowableness of God, they are utterly dependant upon and eternally other than God.

This discussion of personal names and divine attributes is offered to help set the stage for an aspect of the Báb’s writings that is extremely difficult to translate, yet may be reasonably assumed to stand for the great appeal his writings had for his followers from the time of revelation. This feature would be called ‘punning’ if there was not such a danger thereby of misrepresenting the work at hand as something less than utterly and absolutely serious and non-negotiable. Word play as such is a prime feature of language and its growth and use in literature, whether poetry or prose.<sup>12</sup> This is true in English and it is true to an almost unimaginable degree in Arabic and Persian, the languages of the author of this work. Word play – pointing

out and exploiting for artistic and rhetorical effect the similarities of different words and their oppositions, appositions and resonances – is a delight and proof of the profound and durable relation between language, meaning and truth. The degree to which both Arabic and Persian thus express and generate meaning and poetic effect is a source of cultural pride in each instance.

In a sense, the form and contents of the Qayyúm al-Asmá' may, in fact, be considered an extended instance of 'revelational' paronomasia. As pointed out in earlier scholarship, much of it consists of lengthy and copious direct quotations from the Qur'an in which this or that key word or key phrase has been altered, sometimes slightly and sometimes more profoundly, in order to focus the lens of *waláya* more closely and precisely on the historical circumstances, the life and ministry of the Báb. Thus in a grand gesture of deadly serious punning, an indelible and unchangeable identification is made between the meaning of two events, in the same way that homophony draws attention to the identity of two otherwise distinct words. But in the present case, there is no 'otherwise distinct' in operation unless one focuses to a distorting and irrelevant degree upon what must be considered in the context of absolute truth (*al-haqq al-mutlaq*) respective (and superficial) cultural and biographical contexts of, on the one hand, Muhammad ibn 'Abd Alláh of Mecca (b. c. 570 CE, d. 632 CE), and Sayyid 'Alí Muhammad of Shiraz (b. 1819 CE, d. 1850 CE). The Qayyúm al-Asmá' insists in numerous passages that it is bringing the same truth originally revealed to Muhammad, a truth uncorrupted by the evil designs of enemies or accidental lapses of scribes (*tahrif*).

The following attempt at translation will allow the reader to experience firsthand, as it were, just how often the specific paronomastic device centred on the word 'Alí is used. Here it must be remembered that in order to read this text it is never a case of either/or with regard to the 'true intention' of such references. The name 'Alí, even when in the form of the divine attribute *al-'Alí*, simultaneously points to 1) the historical figure of the first Imam, and perhaps even more importantly, 2) the universal charismatic authority (*waláya*) which he inherited from the Prophet; 3) the process of such inheritance or transmission, thus implicating and involving (or causing to be present, conjuring) each of the subsequent Imams of the Shi'a; 4) God himself both in his unknowable, apophatic aspect, mentioned above, and the process of self-manifestation by means of which the cosmos and all that is in it came to be; and 5) this as a direct counterpart or subsidiary side effect of self-manifestation (*tajallí*); and 6) the Báb himself. All is to be understood simultaneously. It is thought that humans are capable of this. This rule applies to each and every one of the divine attributes encountered in the text but it is with *al-'Alí* that it becomes most obvious.

An attempt is made also in the following translation to indicate the degree and frequency with which the Qur'an figures in the actual text. To do this, the somewhat cumbersome expediency of typography is employed. Here, all identified Quranic quotations and words – what might best be thought of as moments of sacred meaning and melody – appear in small capitals. This is not the best method but it is the only one I can think of which clearly shows the presence of the Qur'an and the bold innovation the composition of the Qayyúm al-Asmá' actually represents. What might be thought by the sceptical or ungenerous as a heretical or worse appropria-

tion of scripture, reveals itself in the eventual performance of the revelation to have been another compelling feature of the appeal of the young Messiah. Those who recognized the use of the Qur’an would easily have been deeply impressed by the extent to which this young layman had internalized and indeed become one with the sacred word, to a degree that in his first great proclamatory gesture the actual distinction between ‘his’ words and the words of the Qur’an is so blurred as to be nearly impossible to draw a distinct line between them. This, as we know, was an extremely compelling aspect of the new revelation and one which is impossible to experience unless the trouble is taken to attempt to distinguish between the Quranic material and the rest of the composition.<sup>13</sup>

As important as it obviously is, the Qur’an is not the only ‘source’ (to use a very unsatisfactory term) found to play such a formative and definitive role in the composition of the Qayyúm al-Asmá’. The other major formative element is, as might be expected, the *hadíth*. The so-called ‘second scripture’ of Islam plays an extensive role in the composition of this work. It is not as easy to track the use of *hadíth* (*akhbár*) because of the nature and history of the genre. There are of course well-known ‘orthodox’ compilations of this material in both Sunni and Shi‘i Islam. But there are also other collections that are not always readily available and even some that may have never been committed to writing in the first place. Thus while many references to or ‘occurrences’ of *hadíth* are identifiable, many remain elusive and untraceable. These *hadíth* come largely from the Shi‘i collections but some come also to Shi‘ism from the Islamic mystical tradition. One of the great influences here is the magnum opus of Ibn al-‘Arabí (d. 1240) entitled *The Meccan Revelations* (*al-Futúhát al-Makkiyya*). Such sometimes opaque and puzzling references as, for example, the Earth of Saffron (*ard al-za‘farán*) or the Red Sandhill (*kathíb al-ahmar*), owe their currency to this work, even if the immediate audience of the Báb’s theophanic performance was largely inimical to the great mystic and had no idea that he was being quoted in the service of the new revelation. By the time of the Báb many such references, tropes and topoi had been thoroughly domesticated to Shi‘ism through the work of such scholars as Haytham al-Bahrání (d. 1280 CE), Haydar Ámulí (d. after 1385 CE), Rajab al-Bursí (d. 1411 CE) and Ibn Abí Jumhúr al-Ahsá’í (d. 1499 CE).

There is no space here to pursue at any adequate length the study of the *hadíth* quoted or referred to by the Báb in this commentary. But it is important to draw attention to one particular *hadíth* that has had an enduring formative influence on the distinctive expressive style of both the Bábí revelation and the subsequent Bahá’í revelation. This is the remarkable (and depending upon one’s religious temperament, celebrated or reviled), *Hadíth Khutbat al-tutunjiyya*. Henry Corbin first brought it to the attention of western scholarship in the 1960s but by that time it had long been recognized as a key component of an esoteric or at least elitist stream of Shi‘ism. Since then it, along with a number of similar texts, has been studied by a number of scholars, both western and eastern.<sup>1</sup>

The reader of translations of the Qayyúm al-Asmá’ should know that the basic attitude of the text, the voice of the commentary and the structure of its theophanic claims echo the form and contents of this sermon. The sura translated here was chosen also because it is a particularly clear illustration of the impact of the *Khutbat al-tutunjiyya*

on the mind of the Báb and his audience. It had been the object of a lengthy commentary by Sayyid Kázim Rashtí (d. 1844 CE), and the Báb himself would later compose an explanation of one of the statements of his ‘beloved teacher’ found in that commentary. But its presence is already quite palpable in the earlier commentary by the Báb, the *Tafsír sūrat al-Baqara*. Thus the *Khutbat al-tutunjiyya* exercised a strong hold on the collective consciousness and imagination of the immediate milieu out of which the Báb’s message arose. It becomes important, therefore, in light of the advice of the Guardian of the Bahá’í Faith quoted in the introduction to this collection of essays, to become aware of the basic outline and contents of this central – if extra-Quranic – source and its influence on the language of the new revelation.

The fascination with this text may be partly understood by referring to its main topic: the role and nature of the bearer of divine authority (*waláya*). The main text of the sermon is a lengthy catalogue of divine epithets and sometimes otherwise obscure Quranic and other references in which their proper intention is clarified. Without exception, each and every noun or symbol of divinity is identified with the person of ‘Alí, by ‘Alí himself, as a result of a powerful vision he experienced between Kufa and Medina, between two gulfs (*tatanjayn, tutunjayn*), and as a result of which the nature and mystery of divine transcendence is expressed in such a way that ‘none can bear its divine power’. A brief extract may be helpful.

I understood the wonders of God’s creation, wonders that only God Himself understood.

And I knew all that had been and all that would be. And all that occurred on the Day of the pre-Primordial Covenant that preceded the First Adam.

It was unveiled to me and I understood. My Lord taught me and I knew. And if it were not that I feared for you I would disclose everything destined to happen to you between now and the DAY OF RESURRECTION.

...

I am the master (*sáhib*) of the first creation before Noah.

And if you knew what wondrous things occurred between the time of Adam and Noah and the nations that passed away you would understand more fully the Quranic word: HOW VILE THEIR DEEDS WERE (Q 5:79)!

And I am the master of the prior FLOOD (*túfán*, Q 7:133) and I am the master of the second FLOOD (Q 29:14), and I am the master of the FLOOD OF ‘ARAM (Q 34:16), I am the master of the hidden SECRETS (Q *passim*), I am the master of ‘ÁD and THE GARDENS (Q *passim*), I am the master of THAMÚD (Q *passim*) and all the DIVINE SIGNS (*al-áyát*, Q *passim*), I am their destroyer and I cause them to tremble, I am their authority and I am their annihilator.

...

I am the one who causes them to die and I am the one who causes them to live.

I am THE FIRST, I am THE LAST, I am the OUTWARD, I am the INWARD (cf. Q 57:3).

Thus the Imam ‘Alí addresses his faithful followers in the *Khutbat al-tutunjiyya*. We have translated here just a very small series of excerpts to demonstrate the closeness between that sermon and this revolutionary work by the Báb. In the former, ‘Alí’s words accomplish two primary objectives. First they explain heretofore obscure or controversial references in the Qur’an; frequently these are of the interesting category *hapax legomenon*, a word or phrase that occurs only once in the Qur’an and thus may be especially difficult to define or understand because of such limited usage. An example of this in the above excerpt is THE FLOOD OF ‘ARAM. This refers to a legendary deluge which was visited upon a certain region as divine punishment. The details are a matter of debate, though most Qur’an commentators incline towards the view that it is a reference to the breaking of the Ma’rib dam, not long before the coming of the Prophet. Nonetheless, the exact meaning of the phrase is elusive. By instructing his followers that it was actually ‘Alí himself who was the ‘master’ of that great event, great progress is made in neutralizing a source of uncertainty in the sacred Book by giving assurance that whatever else is not known about the event, it is known that the one who was responsible for it is their own leader. This means that if his followers wished to know more specific details about the famous yet obscure Quranic pronouncement, they have but to ask. This leads to the second objective accomplished in this sermon and those like it, namely that by his words, which are a distinctive appropriation of the sacred scripture, sometimes paraphrased with his own ‘original’ formulations, he has claimed unique and comprehensive religious authority of the type frequently, if not usually, ascribed to God alone.

There can be no doubt that the Qayyúm al-Asmá’ accomplishes these same two objectives. But this is not the only basis upon which the comparison and genetic relationship is posited. The deft and compelling intermixing of the Báb’s words with the words of the Qur’an is obvious and we have mentioned above the central place the *Khutbat al-tutunjiyya* occupied in the religious culture of both the Báb and his immediate audience. There is more, namely the prevailing atmosphere of the text: it is an atmosphere generated by the certitude or certainty of its verses, a certainty and absoluteness that can be found only in the Qur’an itself and the functioning of what may be called the prophetic or apocalyptic imagination which illumines each word. It is audacious. It is artistic. It is creative. Each of these observations may be made with regard to its contents or meaning. The form of both the *Khutbat al-tutunjiyya* and the Qayyúm al-Asmá’ also share much in common with the way in which the Arabic language is used, or better, orchestrated. It is not possible at this time to delve deeply into this aspect of the two compositions but it is important to point out that the structure of the Arabic language together with its distinctive genius for generating meaning is intimately bound up with the relationship between sound and sense in which the two frequently change places with regard to priority and semiotic circumstance. The sound and the music of the composition is that without which any meaning cannot be compelling. Thus there is a great deal of rhyme of all kinds (internal, end-stop, enjambed, slant and so on) as well as assonance, consonance and all the usual ‘devices’ at play in a poetic composition,

whether written or oral. In addition, there are many features of classical oral composition present in both works. It is, after all, cast in rhymed prose (*saj'*) from beginning to end, an ancient and venerable emblem of supernatural communication that came to be identified with the Qur'an alone after the profound and transformative spiritual experience of Muhammad and his 'translation' of that experience into the words and message of the holy Qur'an. This is a topic whose full discussion must be postponed for a later time.

The arrogation to himself by the author of absolute authority is accomplished in the *Khutbat al-Tutunjiyya* in a rather straightforward, literal manner. The Báb is also straightforward and literal with regard to the claims being put forth, but not always. The authority that may be thought to flow through the composition and find its rightful bearer in the author is negotiated and evoked in a number of different ways. In the first place, and in the very first sura, the remarkable *Súrat al-mulk*, written in the presence of Mullá Husayn on that fateful night in Shiraz, the Báb employs what might appear to the uninitiated as the pious fiction of a constructed pedigree for his composition. A consideration of the opening chain of authority by means of which the Báb tells us that this Book was conveyed to him shows that it has much in common with a familiar feature of the genre of literature commonly referred to as apocalyptic. There can be no discussion of the inadequate and badly conceived topic of the 'historical accuracy' of the claim by the Báb that this Book was conveyed to him directly by the Hidden Imam. Or, furthermore, that the Hidden Imam received it from his father who received it from his father and so on up the chain of transmission until it stops with the first Imam himself. This important passage runs as follows:

God decreed that THIS IS THE BOOK in explanation of the FAIREST OF STORIES come forth from its place of hiding (*yakhrāja*) with Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn 'Alí ibn Muhammad ibn 'Alí ibn Músá ibn Ja'far ibn Muhammad ibn 'Alí ibn al-Husayn ibn 'Alí ibn Abí Tálib to HIS SERVANT that it be the CONCLUSIVE PROOF OF GOD in the possession of the REMEMBRANCE UNTO ALL THE WORLDS (QA I.9).

One of the things to observe about this statement is that it is cast in the form of a *hadíth*. Without digressing further, suffice it here to say that such a form is intended to evoke authority. In this instance, the authority could not be more intense since the names mentioned are the names of all the 12 Imams except one. This together with the reference to Quranic emblems of authority such as the significant quotation from Q 2:2: THIS IS THE BOOK, in the Shi'í tradition is understood to refer to both the book and its bearer simultaneously despite, or perhaps because of, the inherent grammatical ambiguity.<sup>15</sup> Another such emblem is the epithet PROOF OF GOD which in the construction of this particular verse is a direct reference in partial paraphrase of Qur'an 6:149: SAY: [KNOW,] THEN, THAT THE FINAL EVIDENCE [OF ALL TRUTH] RESTS WITH GOD ALONE; AND HAD HE SO WILLED, HE WOULD HAVE GUIDED YOU ALL ARIGHT. Authority, then, is largely evoked through the employment of Quranic words and phrases but also by reference to the sacred history of suffering and messianic expectation distinctive to the Shi'í tradition. The use of the phrase HIS SERVANT is also fraught with typological meaning inasmuch as no reader or listener could hear it without also thinking of the Prophet Muhammad for whom the phrase is a frequent Quranic

epithet.<sup>16</sup> So, while the sceptic or uninitiated might cavil that the Báb has artificially structured his composition to exploit the expectations and presuppositions of his audience, it is more the case that the Báb actually experienced and felt the mysterious unity of time and history in the spiritual and apocalyptic energies of which he saw himself the centre. Corbin is helpful here, and while his main subject is Islamic philosophy, what he says pertains also to the general intellectual culture of Islam and especially Shi‘i Islam.

Because it has not had to confront the problems raised by what we call the ‘historical consciousness’, philosophical thought in Islam moves in two counter yet complementary directions: issuing from the Origin (*mabda‘*), and returning (*ma‘ad*) to the Origin, issue and return both taking place in a *vertical* dimension. Forms are thought of as being in space rather than in time. Our thinkers perceive the world not as ‘evolving’ in a horizontal and rectilinear direction, but as ascending: the past is not behind us but ‘beneath our feet’. From this axis stem the *meanings* of the divine Revelations, each of these meanings corresponding to a spiritual hierarchy, to a level of the universe that issues from the threshold of metahistory. Thought can move freely, unhindered by the prohibitions of a dogmatic authority. On the other hand, it must confront the *shari‘ah*, should the *shari‘ah* at any time repudiate the *haqiqah*. The repudiation of these ascending perspectives is characteristic of the literalists of legalistic religion, the doctors of the Law.<sup>17</sup>

This insight is invaluable for not only helping us understand the transcendent logic of the Báb’s writings but also the transcendent logic of the historical events associated with his Revelation.

This introduction to the inadequate attempt at the translation of one of the suras of this remarkable ‘book’ has already gone on too long. But before ending it is important to return to the last statement above about the history of the Shi‘a as an underlying emblem of authority in this work, a feature that, in the nature of chronology, could not really have been at work in the earlier *Khutbat al-tutunjiyya*. This history is chiefly characterized by expectation of the return of the Hidden Imam and all of those emblems of authority associated with him, including the true Qur’an.<sup>18</sup> This return is the symmetrical and spiritual counterpart, as mentioned above, to the Day of the Covenant and may therefore be considered identical with it. A number of characteristic verbs are associated with this event, having to do with ‘advent’, ‘appearance’, ‘emergence’ [from hiding], ‘unveiling’, ‘revelation’, ‘apocalypse’ (which means ‘unveiling’), ‘return’ and so on. In the above verse from QA I.2 the verb translated as ‘come forth from hiding’ is one of these venerable verbal icons of return and victory: *kh-r-j*, upon which the messianically charged idea of *khurúj* ‘advent’ or ‘rising’ or even ‘rebellion’ is constructed. Like other similar words, such as *zuhúr*, *kashf*, *ma‘ád*, *raj‘a* and so on, it is impossible to encounter its sound in the context of the Shi‘i religious tradition without automatically thinking of the glad day when the Master of Time (*sáhib al-zamán*), the Lord of the Resurrection (*qá‘im al-qiyáma*) who is also, in the distinctive logic of this metahistorical world view, the Resurrection itself,<sup>19</sup> would return to fill the earth with justice as it is now filled with injustice. Its use here indicates the time has come.

Reference was made above to the greater Islamic mystical tradition and its presence in this work. All writers on the Bábí movement have largely ignored this important topic, yet it is one of the most important. The intertwined relationship between Shi‘ism as such and mysticism or Sufism is an acknowledged, if imperfectly understood, fact. It is logical, therefore, to accept that the same relationship may be described in the writings of not only the Báb but Bahá’u’lláh as well. Perhaps one day we will all overcome our strange allergy to Sufism and celebrate properly the way in which this perhaps most distinctive and most universal dimension of Islam has been given new life and energy in the Báb’s writings, not to mention the writings of his successor (which are, in fact, more closely wedded to that tradition). That this is the case is nowhere more plangent than in one of the more characteristic features of the Qayyúm al-Asmá’. This feature, which occurs in a number of closely related variants, is the refrain constructed around the central notion of the divine reality or truth, *al-Haqq*. This word, one of the favourites of the Sufi tradition because of its conceptual translucence, is used to designate the highest reaches of what we normally call ‘God’. It is a word redolent of numerous connotations which may be thought harmonized in its invocation. The familiar Sufi usage is in greeting or salutation (*Yá Haqq*) or in exclamatory expressions of assent to truth, sometimes spontaneous, sometimes not. It is, of course, Quranic and this is whence its real power derives.<sup>20</sup> But it became an emblem of Sufism and to some degree philosophy because of the purity of its abstraction of the idea of absolute reality and truth beyond the ken and limitation of this sub-lunar realm. In the Qayyúm al-Asmá’ – from the very first verse – we encounter the word literally thousands of times, and frequently in a sonorous, somewhat hypnotic refrain such as in these two verses (13 and 14) from the first chapter of the Qayyúm al-Asmá’, the *Súrat al-mulk*:

*wa man yakfaru bi’l-islám lan yaqbalu Alláh min a’ málihi fí yawm al-qiyáma min  
ba’d al-shay’ **‘alá al-haqq bi’l-haqq shay’an**  
wa haqqun ‘alá Alláh an yuharriqahu bi-nár Alláh al-badí‘ bi-hukm al-kitáb min  
hukm al-báb **‘alá al-haqq bi’l-haqq mahtúman***

A provisional rendering of such an integral and expressive yet imminently untranslatable phrase may vary slightly in what follows depending upon context, but the basic translation is: ‘By *the* Truth, in *the* Truth’ where the italics here are meant to indicate the qualifiers ‘one and only utter and absolute, namely God himself in his overwhelmingly remote and overwhelmingly intimate modes’. The music of the refrain, as mentioned, may bring to mind the rhythmic hymnic quality of prayers and phrases associated with Sufi gatherings known, incidentally, as sessions of remembrance or *dhikr* (Persian *zehr*). The various ways in which this basic phrase occurs throughout the text is a subject of study by itself. We mention it only briefly here to give the reader some idea of the pervasive musicality of the original, a musicality in which the illusions of time and space are simultaneously dissolved and made urgent.

## The Sura of the Servant

IN THE NAME OF GOD THE MERCIFUL THE COMPASSIONATE<sup>21</sup>

NOR DID WE SEND BEFORE THEE [AS MESSENGERS] ANY BUT MEN WHOM WE DID INSPIRE – [MEN] LIVING IN HUMAN HABITATIONS. DO THEY NOT TRAVEL THROUGH THE EARTH, AND SEE WHAT WAS THE END OF THOSE BEFORE THEM? BUT THE HOME OF THE HEREAFTER IS BEST, FOR THOSE WHO DO RIGHT. WILL YE NOT THEN UNDERSTAND?<sup>22</sup>

### Verse 1

*Mím Há Mím Dál*

### Verse 2

O People of the THRONE!<sup>123</sup> Listen to the CALL<sup>24</sup> of your Lord, THE MERCIFUL,<sup>25</sup> He who THERE IS NO GOD EXCEPT HIM (*huwa*),<sup>26</sup> from the tongue of the REMEMBRANCE,<sup>27</sup> this YOUTH (*al-fatá*),<sup>28</sup> son of the Sublime (*al-‘alí*), the ‘Arab<sup>29</sup> to whom [God has] in the MOTHER BOOK<sup>30</sup> testified.<sup>31</sup>

### Verse 3

Then LISTEN<sup>32</sup> to WHAT IS BEING REVEALED TO YOU FROM YOUR LORD:<sup>33</sup> VERILY VERILY I AM GOD<sup>34</sup> of WHOM THERE IS NO GOD BUT HIM.<sup>35</sup> NOTHING IS LIKE UNTO HIM<sup>36</sup> while He is God, Lofty (*‘aliyan*) Great (*kabíran*).<sup>37</sup>

### Verse 4

O People of the Earth! HEarken<sup>38</sup> to the CALL<sup>39</sup> of the BIRDS<sup>40</sup> upon the TREES<sup>41</sup> leafy and perfumed<sup>42</sup> with the CAMPHOR<sup>43</sup> of Manifestation (*káfúr al-zuhúr*) describing this YOUNG MAN (*ghulám*)<sup>44</sup> descended from the Arabs, from MUHAMMAD,<sup>45</sup> from ‘Alí, from Fatima, from Mekka, from Medina, from Bathá’,<sup>46</sup> from ‘Iráq with what the MERCIFUL<sup>47</sup> HAS MANIFESTED (*tajallá*)<sup>48</sup> upon their leaves, namely that he is THE SUBLIME (*al-‘aliy*)<sup>49</sup> and he is God, MIGHTY,<sup>50</sup> PRAISED.<sup>51</sup>

### Verse 5

This YOUTH<sup>52</sup> most white<sup>53</sup> in colour and most beautiful of eye (*ad‘aj fí al-‘ayn*),<sup>54</sup> even of eyebrow, limbs well formed like gold freshly cast from the two springs, soft of shoulder like pure malleable silver in two cups, sublimely awesome in appearance, like the awe-inspiring appearances of the Elders,<sup>55</sup> and outspreading his MERCY<sup>56</sup> as the two Husayns spread mercy over the land, the centre of the sky (i.e. the sun) has not seen the like of the justice of the two justices, and in grace like the two Lights (*nayyirayn*)<sup>57</sup> joined in the two names<sup>58</sup> from the most lofty of the two beloveds and the ISTHMUS<sup>59</sup> between the two causes in the SECRET<sup>60</sup> of al-Tatanjayn, the abider (*al-wáqif*) like the upright *alif* (*al-alif al-qá‘im*)<sup>61</sup> between the two scrolls

at the centre of the two worlds, THE JUDGE,<sup>62</sup> BY THE PERMISSION OF GOD<sup>63</sup> in the two later births (*nash'átayn*) the SECRET<sup>64</sup> of the two 'Alawís and the splendour<sup>65</sup> of the two Fátimís and an ancient fruit<sup>66</sup> from the BLESSED TREE<sup>67</sup> encrimsoned by the FIRE<sup>68</sup> of the Two Clouds and a group of those of the sacred veils pulsating with the shimmering light,<sup>69</sup> the abider around the FIRE<sup>70</sup> in the TWO SEAS<sup>71</sup> the glory of heaven unto the causes of the two earths<sup>72</sup> and a handful of the clay of the earth over the people of the two, these two GARDENS<sup>73</sup> of DARK GREEN FOLIAGE<sup>74</sup> over the point of the TWO WESTS<sup>75</sup> and those SECRET<sup>76</sup> two names in the creation of the TWO EASTS<sup>77</sup> born in the two Harams and the one looking towards the two Qiblas beyond the two Ka'bas, the one who prays over the THRONE<sup>78</sup> of the splendiferous (*'arsh al-jalíl*) twice a possessor of the two causes and the Pure Water in the two gulfs (*khalijayn*), the speaker in the two stations and the knower of the two Imams, the Bá' that circulates in the water of the two groups of letters (*hurúfayn*) and the Point Abiding (*al-nuqta al-wáqifa*) over the DOOR<sup>79</sup> of the Two Alifs revolving around God in the two cycles and the one made to speak on the authority of God in the two cycles (*kawrayn*), the SERVANT OF GOD<sup>80</sup> and the REMEMBRANCE<sup>81</sup> of His PROOF<sup>82</sup> THIS YOUNG MAN CALLED, because his grandfather is ABRAHAM, THE SPIRIT<sup>83</sup> in the forerunners and he is the Gate, after the two later gates. and PRAISE BE TO GOD THE OF ALL THE WORLDS.<sup>84</sup> And he is God, indeed the one who comprehends everything concerning ALL OF THE WORLDS.<sup>8</sup>

### Verse 6

This same YOUTH<sup>86</sup> WHO IS CALLED<sup>87</sup> by the People of the Cloud<sup>88</sup> the MYSTIC SECRET<sup>89</sup> (*sirr ladunni*)  
 and by the People of the VEIL,<sup>90</sup> the Flashing Mysterious SYMBOL<sup>91</sup> (*ramz lum'í*)  
 and by the People of the PAVILION (*surádiq*),<sup>92</sup> the WESTERN Divine Attribute (*wasf maghribi*)<sup>93</sup>  
 and by the People of the THRONE,<sup>94</sup> the Divine EASTERN Name (*ism mashriqí*)<sup>95</sup>  
 and by the People of the FOOTSTOOL,<sup>96</sup> the Exalted/'Alid Image (*rasm 'alawi*)  
 and by the People of the EMPYREAN,<sup>97</sup> an Arab TRUTH<sup>98</sup>  
 and by the People of the GARDENS,<sup>99</sup> a Fatimid SPIRIT<sup>100</sup>  
 and by the People of the EARTH,<sup>101</sup> a SERVANT<sup>102</sup> of the KINGDOM<sup>103</sup>  
 and by the People of the Water, the FISH<sup>104</sup> of Timelessness (*hút sarmadí*)

While he remains in the atmosphere of the EMPYREAN<sup>105</sup> the SINGLE<sup>106</sup> who is LUMINOUS<sup>107</sup> even as he is in the presence of multitudinous SIMILITUDES,<sup>108</sup> solar  
 And he is LIGHTNING<sup>109</sup> WESTERN<sup>110</sup> and THUNDER<sup>111</sup> EASTERN<sup>112</sup>  
 And he is the SECRET<sup>113</sup> in the Syrian GOSPEL<sup>114</sup>  
 And he is the SECRET<sup>115</sup> in the Rabbinic TORAH<sup>116</sup>  
 And he is the SECRET<sup>117</sup> enwrapped in a SECRET<sup>118</sup> in the Ahmadí FURQÁN<sup>119</sup>  
 So praised be God,<sup>120</sup> the Ancient Originator, He of whom THERE IS NO GOD EXCEPT HIM (*huwa*), none comprehends His CREATION (*san'*)<sup>121</sup> in its subtlety except whom He wills; and He is God, Lofty (*'ali*), Praised.<sup>122</sup>

### Verse 7

PRAISED BE TO GOD<sup>123</sup> who bestowed, for the SOLACE OF MY EYES<sup>124</sup> this small AHMAD,<sup>125</sup> and we verily exalted him to God in truth, according to a single letter from the knowledge of the Book.<sup>126</sup> And indeed, the rule in this matter is according to the knowledge of the TABLET<sup>127</sup> directly from God, the Truth, decreed irrevocably.<sup>128</sup>

### Verse 8

O Qurrat al-‘Ayn!<sup>129</sup> Endure the decree of thy Lord<sup>130</sup> that is in you, VERILY GOD DOTH, in truth, WHATSOEVER HE WILLETH<sup>131</sup> and He is the ALL-WISE<sup>132</sup> in JUSTICE<sup>133</sup> and He is God, thy MASTER<sup>134</sup> who in His decision (*hukm*) is praised (*mahmud*).<sup>135</sup>

### Verse 9

Indeed, you have obeyed the CAUSE/COMMAND of God,<sup>136</sup> the Truth, through God and verily you have been accepted, through God my Lord, He of whom [it is the case that] THERE IS NO GOD EXCEPT HIM (*huwa*)<sup>137</sup> and I desire only what God desires, my Lord<sup>138</sup> in the Truth, and He is God, a Witness to ALL CREATED THINGS.<sup>139</sup>

### Verse 10

Our Lord! Forgive ME AND MY PARENTS<sup>140</sup> and whoever loves the REMEMBRANCE OF GOD<sup>141</sup> the Most Great in truth sincerely, BELIEVING MEN OR BELIEVING WOMEN.<sup>142</sup> Thou art verily the Lord of GRACE<sup>143</sup> and Bounty (*fadl* and *júd*). And verily Thou art in Truth Powerful OVER ALL CREATED THINGS.<sup>144</sup>

### Verse 11

Verily WE HAVE TAKEN A COVENANT ON THE MOST GREAT THRONE,<sup>145</sup> a law of love, over the truth<sup>146</sup> through the truth,<sup>147</sup> for OUR SERVANT.<sup>148</sup> Verily God, HIS ANGELS,<sup>149</sup> His FRIENDS (*awliyá*’), follow this law in all matters over the point of the Fire<sup>150</sup> according to what God decreed<sup>151</sup> in the BOOK<sup>152</sup> and He decreed the DIVINE PERMISSION. Verily, they are concerning His truth, according to the Truth<sup>153</sup> through the Truth,<sup>154</sup> witnesses (*shahidan*) to this.<sup>155</sup>

### Verse 12

And verily We did generously bestow (*faddala*) Our remembrance<sup>156</sup> OVER THE TWO WORLDS,<sup>157</sup> as God had indeed imposed upon Himself AND HE IS THE ONE,<sup>158</sup> THE SINGLE, THE ETERNALLY BESOUGHT,<sup>159</sup> He whom there is no god except Him (*huwa*),<sup>160</sup> and He is God, witness over and against all created things.<sup>161</sup>

### Verse 13

O Qurrat al-‘Ayn!<sup>162</sup> Do not be saddened by the words of the polytheists<sup>163</sup> WHAT

AILETH this 'Ajami Youth (*al-fatá*)!<sup>164</sup> The truth? THAT HE EATS FOOD AND WALKS IN THE MARKETS!!<sup>165</sup> and associates with men in speech WHILE MANKIND ACQUAINT ONE ANOTHER<sup>166</sup> with the Word of Truth, upon the Truth<sup>167</sup> in the Mighty Word upon a WEIGHTY truth, only slightly.<sup>168</sup>

### Verse 14

And this is THE WORD WHICH WENT BEFORE<sup>169</sup> to Muhammad, the Messenger of God,<sup>170</sup> AND YOU NEVER WILL FIND IN OUR SUNNA from before, neither from after, upon the truth<sup>171</sup> through the truth<sup>172</sup> to the smallest degree CHANGE.<sup>173</sup>

### Verse 15

O People of the Earth! Give thanks to God,<sup>174</sup> for verily WE HAVE SAVED YOU<sup>175</sup> from the ulama who follow mere conjecture (*zann*)<sup>176</sup> and have brought to you from the RIGHT SLOPE OF TÚR,<sup>177</sup> this adorable Arab Youth,<sup>178</sup> who is [the one for whom] God appointed the kingdoms of heaven and earth<sup>179</sup> TO BE IN HIS GRASP,<sup>180</sup> [AS] IN A HANDFUL OF DUST<sup>181</sup> upon the earth, through the truth<sup>182</sup> upon the truth<sup>183</sup> ENFOLDED.<sup>184</sup>

### Verse 16

O People of the Cloud!<sup>185</sup> Listen to my call<sup>186</sup> from my REMEMBRANCE<sup>187</sup> on the authority of the point of the Fire:<sup>188</sup> this is God, of Whom there is no god but Him (*huwa*).<sup>189</sup> So worship him according to the upright Alif around the Gate.<sup>190</sup> Verily he is the OUTSPREAD<sup>191</sup> PATH<sup>192</sup> in truth in the presence of God THE TRUTH.<sup>193</sup>

### Verse 17

O Qurrat al-'Ayn!<sup>194</sup> Announce upon TÚR<sup>195</sup> the secret<sup>196</sup> of the Light:<sup>197</sup> VERILY VERILY I AM THE SERVANT<sup>198</sup> through the truth in the centre of manifestational advent from the rising of the light [of] there is no god but Him (*huwa*)<sup>199</sup> and He is God, Knowing, Wise.<sup>200</sup>

### Verse 18

O People of the Cloud! Know that this is an Arab Youth<sup>201</sup> who speaks the Truth<sup>202</sup> in the centre of the Water<sup>203</sup> from the centre of the Fire:<sup>204</sup> there is no god except Him (*huwa*) the Mighty<sup>205</sup> and He is God,<sup>206</sup> Mighty,<sup>207</sup> Ancient.

### Verse 19

Indeed! this is the one, the Light<sup>208</sup> in the Fire<sup>209</sup> on behalf of the water:<sup>210</sup> THERE IS NO GOD EXCEPT HIM<sup>211</sup> and he is God, Knower, Wise.<sup>212</sup>

### Verse 20

AND WHEN<sup>213</sup> he ASCENDED<sup>214</sup> through the air of the HEAVEN<sup>215</sup> of the THRONE<sup>216</sup> speaking on the authority of the secret<sup>217</sup> of the Dust,<sup>218</sup> the mighty mystery of God<sup>219</sup> to the CONCOURSE of the air<sup>220</sup> of the exalted Cloud,<sup>221</sup> and He is God, over all created things a Witness.<sup>222</sup>

### Verse 21

AND WHEN he sat upon the Dust<sup>223</sup> speaking on the authority of the veiled secret,<sup>224</sup> like a Fish stranded flailing out of water UPON THE DUST,<sup>225</sup> as if he were killed upon the earth by the sword of the servants<sup>226</sup> according to the truth<sup>227</sup> through the truth,<sup>228</sup> Unique.

### Verse 22

And it is as if I see him with his blood covering him for the sake of the secret<sup>229</sup> enwrapped in a secret between the scrolls in the SACRED MOUNT<sup>230</sup> of manifestation when those veiled from the meeting with the Beloved saw him<sup>231</sup> with the Beloved they accounted him, according to mere CONJECTURE<sup>232</sup> like motionless ice in the heart of the most great frozen mountain; and when those for whom the veils of attributes had been torn asunder saw him they testified before God the Truth that WE INDEED KNEW NOT A SINGLE THING concerning his truth.<sup>233</sup> How long will he be until this was cast down slain upon the earth? How long will this be forbidden to be upon the Throne?<sup>234</sup> So, praised be to God<sup>235</sup> the Lofty (*al-‘ali*)<sup>236</sup> that this is him, the very secret<sup>237</sup> completely purged from the description of the attributes, firmly established by God the greatest. God is Greater in magnifying [him], lofty (*‘aliyan*).<sup>238</sup>

### Verse 23

None knows how to remember Him except Him and He is God, MIGHTY, WISE.<sup>239</sup>

### Verse 24

This YOUTH<sup>240</sup> made of the essence of CLAY<sup>241</sup> was designated AT THE TIME OF THE RISING of the Muhammadan<sup>242</sup> SUN. He verily is in THE MOTHER BOOK,<sup>243</sup> in the secret<sup>244</sup> of the Light,<sup>245</sup> an easterner upon the point of the Fire.<sup>246</sup>

### Verse 25

And this YOUTH<sup>247</sup> is at once made of salt<sup>248</sup> and of the Most Great Heaven.<sup>249</sup> The Persians say of him ‘this is a Shirazi angel’<sup>250</sup> and nothing was, in truth,<sup>251</sup> or will be except that it is written in the MOTHER BOOK<sup>252</sup> He is indeed the FRUIT<sup>253</sup> of the Arabs and the most noble of the noble ones on the authority of those who are expert in Arabic,<sup>254</sup> decreed [written]<sup>255</sup> as such in the precincts of the fire.<sup>256</sup>

### Verse 26

He is THE LIGHT<sup>257</sup> in TÚR<sup>258</sup> and the TÚR<sup>259</sup> in the rising of the Manifestation which, by the permission of God,<sup>260</sup> the Lofty (*al-'ali*),<sup>261</sup> has been hidden<sup>262</sup> in the point of happiness (*al-surúr*) upon the mountain<sup>263</sup> of the snow of manifestation.

### Verse 27

This is an Arab, a YOUNG MAN<sup>264</sup> in form (*khalq*) and Persian in reality, in the presence of the Lord. And the form that has, around the Fire<sup>265</sup> on the authority of the secret<sup>266</sup> of the Dust<sup>267</sup> in the point of the attributes, been testified to.<sup>268</sup>

### Verse 28

O Concourse of Lights!<sup>269</sup> Listen to my call from this gilt white Leaf. VERILY, VERILY, I AM GOD!<sup>270</sup> NO GOD IS THERE EXCEPT ME.<sup>271</sup> Say: 'Only those believe in our signs who, when they are reminded of them fall down prostrate' to God, the Truth 'and hymn the praise of their Lord and they are not scornful'<sup>272</sup> of the Truth and He is God, their Master, the Truth<sup>273</sup> and He is a Witness over all created things.<sup>274</sup>

### Verse 29

O Qurrat al-'Ayn!<sup>275</sup> Speak by the Permission of God<sup>276</sup> in the melody of the two beloveds and say: 'VERILY VERILY I AM THE TRUTH<sup>277</sup> in the two lights in the two vicinities. AND VERILY VERILY I AM the one who speaks on the authority of God in the two Mounts (*al-túrayn*)<sup>278</sup> AND VERILY VERILY I AM the revealer (*al-munzil*) by God these two Furqáns<sup>279</sup> to the two beloveds in the two names, this one to the beloved Muhammad,<sup>280</sup> the greater of years by two years and the other to the beloved Muhammad,<sup>281</sup> the younger in years by two years. These two Furqáns<sup>282</sup> are from the Lord of the worlds<sup>283</sup> to the People of al-Tutunjayn – the People OF THE TWO EASTS<sup>284</sup> AND THE TWO WESTS.<sup>285</sup> Indeed, God is verily a witness<sup>286</sup> of the worlds.'

### Verse 30

O People of the Earth! God does testify to the Truth<sup>287</sup> and likewise His angels<sup>288</sup> and the Believers,<sup>289</sup> the righteous martyrs<sup>290</sup> in the name of justice, that this remembrance<sup>291</sup> is the servant of God<sup>292</sup> and Our word<sup>293</sup> by the Truth (*'alá al-haqq*).<sup>294</sup> Indeed, God has sent down<sup>295</sup> the verses upon the awaited Proof<sup>296</sup> and verily I, by the permission of God,<sup>297</sup> have sent them down with the angels<sup>298</sup> of the Cloud to the heart of my Most Great Remembrance,<sup>299</sup> that mankind might surely believe in God and in His Words and that they might surely help<sup>300</sup> the remembrance<sup>301</sup> in my Most Great Cause.<sup>302</sup> And verily God is over all created things a witness.<sup>303</sup>

### Verse 31

O Qurrat al-'Ayn!<sup>304</sup> ESTABLISH THE PRAYER<sup>305</sup> through the Truth<sup>306</sup> in an even script<sup>307</sup>

AT THE TIME OF THE SETTING OF THE SUN (*dulúk al-shams*)<sup>308</sup> by the permission of God<sup>309</sup> in the zone of Bahá and remember God your LORD UNTIL THE DARK OF NIGHT<sup>310</sup> according to the rule of the Book about the secret<sup>311</sup> of the Gate<sup>312</sup> who is the true intention.

### Verse 32

And BLESS<sup>313</sup> the rising OF THE WHITE IN THE BLACK HORIZON.<sup>314</sup> And verily this is the Book of the Dawn<sup>315</sup> that has been witnessed<sup>316</sup> in the MOTHER BOOK.<sup>317</sup>

### Verse 33

SO ARISE IN THE NIGHT<sup>318</sup> for the ANCIENT REMEMBRANCE,<sup>319</sup> your Lord of WHOM THERE IS NO GOD EXCEPT HIM (*huwa*).<sup>320</sup> Then thou art, through the Truth, THE STATION OF PRAISE<sup>321</sup> in the MOTHER BOOK,<sup>322</sup> and thou art indeed upon the Truth<sup>323</sup> by the Truth<sup>324</sup> with God the one intended.

### Verse 34

And say: Lord, cause me to enter<sup>325</sup> into the deeps of creational wonder<sup>326</sup> in the station of thy love<sup>327</sup> and FORGIVE WHOEVER ENTERS THIS GATE<sup>328</sup> through the Truth<sup>329</sup> for the affairs of the CAUSE<sup>330</sup> by thy attribute and give me from Thy presence a SUSTAINING POWER<sup>331</sup> upon the CAUSE.<sup>332</sup> Verily, thou art indeed powerful over all created things.<sup>333</sup>

### Verse 35

O Qurrat al-‘Ayn!<sup>334</sup> Say: VERILY, I AM NAUGHT BUT<sup>335</sup> the sign of the divine Essence<sup>336</sup> in the deeps of the Exclusive Unity<sup>337</sup> and *shirk*<sup>338</sup> at the time of the rejection<sup>339</sup> of the Most Great Word,<sup>340</sup> he whom God has made to be with me upon the truth<sup>341</sup> by the truth<sup>342</sup> prevailing over the earth, immovable.<sup>343</sup>

### Verse 36

O People of the Cloud! LISTEN<sup>344</sup> to my call from the LAMP in this whitened LAMP, this is the GLASS in this reddened GLASS who was spoken to (*mantúqan*) in truth by the sea of the earth of saffron<sup>345</sup> in the HOUSE OF THE GATE.<sup>346</sup>

### Verse 37

VERILY VERILY I AM GOD,<sup>347</sup> HE WHOM THERE IS NO GOD EXCEPT HIM.<sup>348</sup> INDEED, I HAVE ESTABLISHED THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH around this Word<sup>349</sup> through a single letter LIKE IT. So obey My Word. FOR VERILY VERILY I AM THE TRUTH. There is no god except I, the Exalted (*al-‘ali*)<sup>350</sup> who am by God the comprehender of all the worlds.<sup>351</sup>

### Verse 38

AND LISTEN<sup>352</sup> to this Most Mighty INTERPRETATION (*ta'wil*)<sup>353</sup> from the TONGUE<sup>354</sup> of this man made great, he whom I have brought up in My presence. NO HUMAN desire TOUCHED HIM<sup>355</sup> in Reality. Verily, he is the Truth<sup>356</sup> upon the Truth.<sup>357</sup> And his significance, by the law of FIRE,<sup>358</sup> HAS BEEN FULLY RECORDED IN THE MOTHER BOOK.<sup>359</sup>

### Verse 39

And Say, by the Truth, WE HAVE SENT BEFORE YOU NO MEN [as messengers] EXCEPT WE INSPIRED THEM be ye THE PEOPLE of that blessed TOWNSHIP,<sup>360</sup> and conceal yourselves IN THE EARTH of the heart (*fu'ád*) in order to help him. Know that for those who deny him (*mushrikín bihi*),<sup>361</sup> they will suffer the dire punishment of the Hereafter<sup>362</sup> over the Fire<sup>363</sup> in the Fire,<sup>364</sup> and this has been written<sup>365</sup> with Fire.<sup>366</sup>

### Verse 40

And He is God, over all created things a Witness.<sup>367</sup>

### Verse 41

And verily, God is Comprehender of all the worlds.<sup>368</sup>

### Verse 42

And verily thou art, through God, SELF SUFFICIENT, able to dispense with ALL THE WORLDS.<sup>369</sup>

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## Notes

1. ‘*Colui che s’erge sugli Attributi*’ (Bausani, *Persia Religiosa*, p. 460). = ‘He who rises up on the attributes.’ (J. M. Marchesi translation: *Religion in Iran*, p. 381.)
2. Lawson, ‘Duality, Opposition and Typology in the Qur’an’. *Journal of Qur’anic Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2 (2008), pp. 23–49.
3. In the manuscript designated *QA*, the oldest extant transcription. Other manuscripts offer different versifications, sometimes centring on the number 40. Such discrepancies are of course interesting but must await another occasion for detailed discussion.
4. The complete response is *Yea verily, we do bear witness [that you are our Lord]: balá shahidná*. In the context of the distinctive motif of martyrdom in Shi‘ism, its strong

presence in the writings of the Báb and the actual history of the Báb's short-lived religion, it is important to note the semantic charge of the second word *shahidná*. The word indicates both 'bear witness' and 'to be a martyr'. For more on the covenant as it relates specifically to the Bábí and Bahá'í contexts see Lawson, 'Seeing Double', in Momen, *The Bahá'í Faith and the World's Religions*, pp. 39–87.

5. Abdel Haleem, *Qur'an*.
6. See the extensive bibliography in Kohlberg and Amir-Moezzi, *Revelation and Falsification*.
7. See above in this volume the chapter on the Súrat al-Dhikr by Moojan Momen.
8. Lawson, 'The Terms Remembrance (*Dhikr*) and Gate (*Báb*) in the Báb's Commentary on the Sura of Joseph', in Momen, *Studies in Honor of the Late Hasan M. Balyuzi*, pp. 1–63.
9. The disconnected letters of the Qur'an have puzzled readers of the Book from the very beginning. One thing about which there was no mystery, however, was, whatever they might stand for, whatever might be their deeper import, much of their significance attached to the fact that they did not spell anything but were rather seen as initials or perhaps even sacred acronyms. The exegetical literature on them is vast and rich (see Welch, 'al-Kur'án, d. the mysterious letters' and accompanying bibliographical references, *EI2*). In a gesture that may in fact be interpreted as somewhat ironic, the Báb makes bold here to actually employ the device of disconnected letters to spell his own name: 'Alí for sura 108, and Muhammad, for sura 109. The poetic tension of such a gesture resides in the trope of 'clarity from obscurity' or 'truth in chaos' tradition, so familiar to the audience to whom this composition was addressed.
10. The root, '-L-Y occurs (apart from the preposition '*alá*' upon, over, against', innumerable times, *passim*) a total of 72 times in various nominal and verbal forms. As a name of God, it occurs in the company of three other divine names in Q 2:255; 42:4, *al-'aliy al-'azim* – the Lofty the Mighty; Q 22:62; 31:30; 34:23; 40:12 *al-'aliy al-kabir* – the Lofty the Great; Q 42:51; 43:4 *'aliy hakim* – Lofty, Wise.
11. The name occurs precisely four times in the Qur'an and in each case it is an unambiguous reference to the Prophet: Q 3:144; 33:40; 47:2; 48:29.
12. See Ricoeur, 'Creativity in Language' in *Philosophy Today*, vol. 17, no. 2 (Summer 1973), pp. 97–128. For a useful discussion of 'punning' in the Qur'an itself, see Rippin, 'The Poetics of Qur'anic Punning', in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, vol. 57, no. 1 (1994), pp. 193–207.
13. Táhirih, herself obviously so moved by this simultaneously new and ancient book, actually translated it into Persian for use in her preaching in Kirmánsháh. See also, Momen, 'The Trial', for evidence that it was not only his followers who were impressed by his 'appropriation' of the Qur'an.
14. Rafati, 'The Development of Shaykhí Thought in Shí'í Islam', p. 133; Lawson, 'A 14th Century Islamic Gnostic', pp. 422–38; Amir-Moezzi, 'Aspects de l'imámologie duodécimaine I', pp. 193–216; among others. See the chapter in this volume by Khazeh Fananapazir for a translation of a similar sermon transmitted and preserved in the Shi'í tradition through the hadith genre. Readers familiar with Bahá'í sacred writings will immediately recognize the style.
15. The Arabic, *dhálíka al-kitáb*, is more naturally translated as 'that is the book' or 'that book'.
16. Q 17:1; 18:1; 25:1; 39:36; 53:10; 57:9. By comparison, the name Muhammad occurs in the Qur'an only four times: Q 3:144; 33:40; 47:2; 48:29.
17. Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, pp. 4–5.
18. Note the pertinent statement in Bahá'u'lláh, *Book of Certitude*, p. 4:

Consider the past. How many, both high and low, have, at all times, yearningly awaited the advent of the Manifestations of God in the sanctified persons of His

chosen Ones. How often have they expected His coming, how frequently have they prayed that the breeze of divine mercy might blow, and the promised Beauty step forth from behind the veil of concealment, and be made manifest to all the world. And whensoever the portals of grace did open, and the clouds of divine bounty did rain upon mankind, and the light of the Unseen did shine above the horizon of celestial might, they all denied Him, and turned away from His face – the face of God Himself. Refer ye, to verify this truth, to that which hath been recorded in every sacred Book.

19. See Ghaemmaghami, ‘And the Earth will Shine with the Light of its Lord’, forthcoming.
20. It occurs in the Qur’an 227 times.
21. Q 1:1. This is the standard Quranic *basmala* which opens every sura of the Qur’an except one.
22. Q 12:109. Translated by Yusuf ‘Ali.
23. Q 27:2 and *passim*.
24. Cf. Q 19:3.
25. Q 20:90.
26. Q 2:163 and *passim*.
27. Q 15:9 and *passim*.
28. Cf. Q 21:60.
29. A pun, as mentioned in the introduction above. The reference is simultaneous to both ‘Alí, the first Imam and God.
30. Q 3:7; 13:39; 43:4.
31. Cf. Q 17:78.
32. Q 20:13.
33. Q 33:2.
34. Q 28:30: *inní aná ‘lláh* is frequent in the Qayyúm al-Asmá’. It suggests that the Báb is claiming revelation by equating his rank to that of Moses. See Lawson, *The Qur’an Commentary of Sayyid ‘Alí Muhammad, the Báb*.
35. Q 2:163 and *passim*.
36. Q 42:11; *hadith* ascribed to Ja‘far al-Sádiq: ‘Jábir hath said that Abú-Ja‘far – peace be upon him – spoke to him as follows: “O Jábir! Give heed unto the Bayán (Exposition) and the Ma‘ání (Significances).” He – peace be upon him – added: “As to the Bayán, it consisteth in thy recognition of God – glorified be He – as the ONE WHO HATH NO EQUAL [*laysa ka-mithlihi shay’* Q 42:11], and in thy adoration of Him, and in thy refusal to join partners with Him. As to the Ma‘ání, We are its meaning, and its side, and its hand, and its tongue, and its cause, and its command, and its knowledge, and its right. If We wish for something, it is God Who wisheth it, and He desireth that which We desire.” Bahá’u’lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, trans. Shoghi Effendi, p. 113.
37. Q 4:34.
38. Q 2:93 and *passim*.
39. Cf. Q 19:3.
40. Cf. Q 27:16 and *passim*.
41. Cf. Q 7:19; 24:35; 28:30.
42. Cf. Q 6:59; 7:22; 20:12.
43. Cf. Q 76:5.
44. Q 12:19.
45. Q 3:144; 33:40; 47:2; 48:29.
46. Name of the ‘hollow’ or centre of Mecca, where the Ka‘ba is located.
47. Q 1:1 and *passim*.
48. Q 7:143.
49. Q 2:255 and *passim*.
50. Q 48:19.

51. Q 4:131.
52. Cf. Q 21:60.
53. For this and other references to colours in this sura, see the chapter by Vahid Rafati in this volume on colours in the writings of the Báb.
54. Thanks to W. McCants, verbal communication, 'Irfán Colloquium, Louhelen, September 2003, for shedding light on this phrase.
55. Cf. Q 8:38 and *passim*.
56. Q 2:64 and *passim*.
57. Cf. Bahá'u'lláh about Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kazim: 'Likewise, there appeared on earth Ahmad and Kázim, those twin resplendent lights (*núrayn nayyirayn*) – may God sanctify their resting-place!' *Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 65; and about the King and Beloved of the martyrs: 'The twin shining lights (*núrayn nayyirayn*), Ḥasan and Ḥusayn (The King of Martyrs and the Beloved of Martyrs) offered up spontaneously their lives in that city [Isfahan].' *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 72.
58. 'Alí and Muhammad (see introduction).
59. Q 23:100; 25:53; 55:20.
60. Q 20:7; 25:6.
61. On this sermon and its significance in the works of Shaykh Ahmad, Siyyid Kázim and the Báb, see the introduction to this chapter. Its influence reaches its highest intensity in this verse, a verse which alone, or together with the following one, being the subject of a lengthy detailed analysis, demonstrates the remarkable manner in which the Báb combines the imagery, vocabulary voice and mood of the Qur'an and the Sermon of the two Gulfs. Such a study would shed much light on the expressive 'style' of the Bábí revelation. See also Lawson, 'Coincidentia Oppositorum in the Qayyum al-Asmá', *Occasional Papers in Shaykhi, Babi, and Baha'i Studies*, vol. 5, no. 1 (January 2001); Lawson, 'The Dawning Places of the Lights of Certainty in the Divine Secrets Connected with the Commander of the Faithful by Rajab Bursi (d. 1411)' *The Heritage of Sufism*, vol. 2, pp. 261–76.
62. Cf. Q 7:87 and *passim*.
63. Q 2:97 and *passim*.
64. Q 20:7, 25:6.
65. Q 27:60.
66. Q 2:25. As pointed out in a footnote in *Selections from the Writings of the Báb* (p. 3), 'Shoghi Effendi, in his writings, refers to the Báb as the 'Thamaríh' (fruit) of the Tree of God's successive Revelations. (See Shoghi Effendi's letter to the Bahá'ís of the East dated Naw-Rúz 110, p. 5).' Elsewhere in the Qayyúm al-Asmá', the Báb is addressed as the cherished Fruit: 'O Thou cherished Fruit of the heart! Give ear to the melodies of this mystic Bird warbling in the loftiest heights of heaven. The Lord hath, in truth, inspired Me to proclaim: Verily, verily, I am God, He besides Whom there is none other God. He is the Almighty, the All-Wise.' The Báb, *Selections*, p. 67.
67. Cf. Q 24:35.
68. Cf. Q 27:8; 2:24 and *passim*.
69. *qiddatun min qiddati al-hujub al-mutala'li'ayn bi'l-khafaqayn*
70. Cf. Q 27:8, 2:24 and *passim*.
71. Q 55:19. According to a famous *hadith* ascribed to Ja'far al-Sádiq, the two seas are 'Alí and Fatima.
72. *sharaf al-samá' ilá 'ilal al-ardayn*
73. Q 55:54.
74. Q 55:64.
75. Q 55:17.
76. Q 20:7, 25:6.
77. Q 55:17.

78. Q 27:2 and *passim*.
79. Cf. Q 2:58 and *passim*.
80. Q 19:30, 72:19.
81. Cf. Q 12:104 and *passim*.
82. Cf. Q 6:149.
83. Cf. Q 21:60.
84. Q 1:2.
85. Cf. Q 4:108, 126.
86. Cf. Q 21:60.
87. Q 21:60.
88. See the *hadith* of the Prophet. See the masterful article on the word in Lambden, ‘*Rashh-i ‘Amá* ‘Sprinkling of the Cloud of Unknowing’, *Bahá’i Studies Bulletin*, vol. 3, no. 2 (September 1984). <http://bahai-library.com/provisionals/rashh.ama.lambden.html>.
89. Cf. Q 18:76; 20:7; 25:6.
90. Cf. Q 17:45; 42:51.
91. Cf. Q 3:41.
92. Cf. Q 18:29. See also the tradition attributed to Imam al-Báqir stating that out of the entire world, God chose Mecca, and within Mecca, He choose Bakka, and within Bakka, He chose a *surádiq* made of light surrounded by pearls and rubies, and placed four supports in the middle of the *surádiq*, etc. Cited in al-Tabrisí (d. 1902), *Mustadrak al-wasá’il*, vol. 9, pp. 335–6. He takes the *hadith* from Muhammad bin Mas‘úd al-‘Ayyáshí (d. c. 932), *Tafsír al-‘Ayyáshí*, vol. 1, pp. 39–40.
93. Cf. Q 24:35; 55:17.
94. Cf. Q 27:26.
95. Cf. Q 24:35; 55:17.
96. Cf. Q 2:255.
97. Q 2:19 and *passim*.
98. Cf. Q 3:86 and *passim*.
99. Cf. Q 2:82 and *passim*.
100. Cf. Q 97:4 and *passim*.
101. Q 2:22 and *passim*.
102. Q 43:59 and *passim*.
103. Cf. Q 6:75 and *passim*.
104. Cf. The story of Moses, the mysterious stranger and the equally mysterious fish: Q 18:61; 18:63; Cf. the story of Jonah and the whale, also *al-hút*: Q 37:142; 68:48.
105. Q 16:79.
106. Q 12:39 and *passim*.
107. Cf. Q 24:35 and *passim*.
108. Q 13:17 and *passim*.
109. Cf. Q 13:12.
110. Cf. Q 24:35.
111. Cf. Q 13:13.
112. Cf. Q 24:35.
113. Q 20:7; 25:6.
114. Q 3:3 and *passim*.
115. Q 20:7; 25:6.
116. Q 3:3 and *passim*.
117. Q 20:7; 25:6.
118. Q 20:7; 25:6. Cf. ‘Similarly, repeated use of such terms as *sirr mustasirr* (*passim*) is meant to allude to the corresponding Shaykhí theology’ (Lawson, *The Qur’an Commentary of Sayyid ‘Alí Muhammad, the Báb*, pp. 115–45). See two Traditions ascribed to Imam Ja‘far al-Sádiq. The Traditions are cited by Shaykh Ahmad in his

*Shar' al-Ziyāra* and discussed and translated by Lawson in his thesis (ibid. p. 117). The earliest extant *hadīth* collection that contains these Traditions is Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-Saffār al-Qummī (d. 903), *Basā'ir al-darājāt*, pp. 48–9.

119. Q 25:1.
120. Q 37:159 and *passim*.
121. Cf. Q 27:88.
122. Q 4:131.
123. Q 1:2 and *passim*.
124. Cf. Q 25:74.
125. Q 61:6.
126. Q 13:43. Reference to the Báb's son who died in infancy.
127. Cf. Q 85:22.
128. Q 19:21.
129. Cf. Q 25:74.
130. Cf. Q 68:48.
131. Cf. Q 22:18.
132. Q 2:32 and *passim*.
133. Cf. Q 4:58.
134. Cf. Q 8:40 and *passim*.
135. Q 17:79. Rosen offers a slight variant for this verse: *wa huwa alláh mawlá(y)k al-qadím*. von Rosen, *Collections scientifiques de l'Institut des Langues orientales de St. Petersbourg*, v. 1: Manuscripts arabes (1877), pp. 186–91.
136. Q 4:47 and *passim*.
137. Q 2:163 and *passim*.
138. Cf. Q 6:80.
139. Cf. Q 4:33; 33:55 and *passim*.
140. Q 14:41.
141. Q 5:91 and *passim*.
142. Q 9:72 and *passim*.
143. Q 2:105 and *passim*.
144. Q 33:27; 48:21. Cf. Q 2:20 and *passim*.
145. Cf. Q 9:129; 23:86; 27:26.
146. Q 27:79.
147. Cf. Q 2:71 and *passim*.
148. Q 2:23 and *passim*.
149. Q 33:56.
150. Cf. Q 27:8; 2:24 and *passim*.
151. Q 33:36. Cf. Q 8:42, 44.
152. Q 2:159 and *passim*.
153. Q 27:79.
154. Cf. Q 2:71 and *passim*.
155. Cf. Q 4:33 and *passim*.
156. Q 18:28; 53:29.
157. Or 'all the worlds'. Cf. Q 2:251.
158. Q 12:39 and *passim*.
159. Q 112:2.
160. Q 2:163 and *passim*.
161. Cf. Q 4:33 and *passim*.
162. Cf. Q 25:74.
163. Q 2:105 and *passim*.
164. Cf. Q 21:60.
165. Q 25:7.

166. Cf. Q 49:13; 10:45.  
 167. Q 27:79.  
 168. Q 2:41 and *passim*.  
 169. Q 10:19 and *passim*.  
 170. Q 48:29.  
 171. Q 27:79.  
 172. Cf. Q 2:71 and *passim*.  
 173. Cf. Q 17:77; 35:43.  
 174. Q 2:172.  
 175. Q 2:50; 7:141; 20:80.  
 176. Q 53:28 and *passim*.  
 177. Q 19:52 and *passim*.  
 178. Cf. Q 21:60.  
 179. Q 7:185.  
 180. Q 39:67.  
 181. Q 3:59 and *passim*.  
 182. Cf. Q 2:71 and *passim*.  
 183. Q 27:79.  
 184. Cf. Q 39:67. Cf. also the opening of the Sermon of the Two Gulfs for a similar image.  
 185. *al-‘amá*. ‘This word carries with it extensive symbolic and mystical meaning. In the famous hadith, the Prophet Muhammad designates it as the “place” where God “was” before creation.’ See the masterful article on the word in Lambden, ‘*Rashh-i ‘Amá*’ ‘Sprinkling of the Cloud of Unknowing’, *Bahá’í Studies Bulletin*, vol. 3, no. 2 (September 1984). <http://bahai-library.com/provisionals/rashh.ama.lambden.html>.  
 186. Cf. Q 19:3.  
 187. Q 15:9 and *passim*.  
 188. Cf. Q 27:8; 2:24 and *passim*.  
 189. Q 2:163 and *passim*.  
 190. Q 2:58; 4:154; 5:23; 7:161; 9:25.  
 191. Q 74:12. Cf. Q 56:30.  
 192. Q 1:6 and *passim*.  
 193. Cf. Q 2:71 and *passim*.  
 194. Cf. Q 25:74.  
 195. Q 2:63 and *passim*.  
 196. Q 20:7; 25:6.  
 197. Q 2:257; 24:35 and *passim*.  
 198. Cf. Q 2:23 and appropriation of the theophanic energy in *inni ána alláh* at Q 28:30 and the slight variation at Q 20:14 mentioned above. Such usage, suffice it to say for the moment, alludes to the profound mystery of manifestation in powerfully effective and daring appropriation of Quranic phrases.  
 199. Q 2:163 and *passim*.  
 200. Q 4:11 and *passim*.  
 201. Q 21:60.  
 202. Q 23:62.  
 203. Q 2:74 and *passim*.  
 204. Cf. Q 27:8; 2:24 and *passim*.  
 205. Q 3:6, 3:18.  
 206. Q 6:3 and *passim*.  
 207. Q 4:56 and *passim*.  
 208. Q 2:257; 24:35 and *passim*.  
 209. Cf. Q 27:8; 2:24 and *passim*.  
 210. Q 2:74 and *passim*.

211. Q 2:163 and *passim*.  
 212. Q 4:11 and *passim*.  
 213. *wa idha passim*  
 214. Cf. Q 70:4 and *passim*.  
 215. Q 16:79.  
 216. Q 7:54 and *passim*.  
 217. Q 20:7; 25:6.  
 218. Q 3:59 and *passim*.  
 219. Q 20:7; 25:6.  
 220. Cf. 'The Concourse on High' (*al-mala' al-a'lá*) mentioned in Q 37:8; 38:69.  
 221. Q 69:33.  
 222. Cf. Q 4:33 and *passim*.  
 223. Q 3:59 and *passim*. This is a possible reference to the story of how 'Alí got the nickname 'Abu Turáb' ('Dusty'). See Kohlberg, 'Abu Turab', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, vol. 41 (1978), pp. 347–52.  
 224. Q 20:7; 25:6.  
 225. Cf. Q 4:43; 5:6; 18:8; 18:40.  
 226. Cf. Q 2:207 and *passim*.  
 227. Q 27:79.  
 228. Cf. Q 2:71 and *passim*.  
 229. Q 20:7; 25:6.  
 230. Q 19:52 and *passim*.  
 231. Cf. Q 6:31 and *passim*.  
 232. Q 53:28 and *passim*.  
 233. Cf. Q 10:36; 53:28.  
 234. Q 27:2 and *passim*.  
 235. Q 21:22 and *passim*.  
 236. Q 2:255 and *passim*.  
 237. Q 20:7; 25:6.  
 238. Cf. Q 4:34.  
 239. Q 4:56.  
 240. Q 21:60.  
 241. Q 3:49; 5:110; 28:38.  
 242. Cf. Q 3:144; 33:40; 47:2; 48:29.  
 243. Q 3:7; 13:39; 43:4.  
 244. Q 20:7; 25:6.  
 245. Q 2:257; 24:35 and *passim*.  
 246. Cf. Q 27:8; 2:24 and *passim*.  
 247. Q 21:60.  
 248. Cf. Q 25:53; 35:12.  
 249. Q 2:19 and *passim*.  
 250. Cf. Q 12:31.  
 251. Cf. Q 2:71 and *passim*.  
 252. Q 3:7; 13:39; 43:4.  
 253. Cf. Q 2:25.  
 254. '*an al-fi'a al-fusahá*'; n.b. Rosen *al-ghammat al-fusahá*'.  
 255. Cf. Q 3:157.  
 256. Cf. Q 27:8; 2:24 and *passim*.  
 257. Q 2:257; 24:35 and *passim*.  
 258. Q 19:52 and *passim*.  
 259. Q 19:52 and *passim*.  
 260. Q 2:97 and *passim*.

261. Q 2:255 and *passim*.
262. Q 17:45.
263. Q 59:21.
264. Cf. Q 12:19 and *passim*.
265. Cf. Q 27:8; 2:24 and *passim*.
266. Q 20:7; 25:6.
267. Q 3:59 and *passim*.
268. Cf. Q 17:78; 85:3.
269. Cf. Q 24:35.
270. Q 28:30. Cf. Q 20:14.
271. Q 16:2; 20:14; 21:25.
272. Q 32:15. Pickthall translation.
273. Cf. Q 10:30.
274. Q 4:33; 33:55.
275. Cf. Q 25:74.
276. Q 2:97 and *passim*.
277. Q 2:26 and *passim*.
278. Cf. Q 19:52 and *passim*.
279. Cf. Q 2:53 and *passim*.
280. Q 3:144; 33:40; 47:2; 48:29.
281. Q 3:144; 33:40; 47:2; 48:29.
282. Cf. Q 2:53 and *passim*.
283. Q 1:2 and *passim*.
284. Q 43:38; 55:17.
285. Q 55:17.
286. Q 4:33; 33:55.
287. Cf. Q 43:86.
288. Q 4:136; 33:43, 56.
289. Q 2:285 and *passim*.
290. Q 5:8.
291. Q 3:58 and *passim*.
292. Q 19:30; 72:19.
293. Q 37:171. Cf. Q 9:40.
294. Q 27:79.
295. Q 2:174 and *passim*.
296. Cf. Q 6:149.
297. Q 2:97 and *passim*.
298. Cf. Q 4:166.
299. Q 3:58 and *passim*.
300. Cf. Q 22:60.
301. Q 3:58 and *passim*.
302. Cf. Q 20:90 and *passim*.
303. Q 4:33; 33:55.
304. Cf. Q 25:74.
305. Q 20:14 and *passim*.
306. Cf. Q 2:71 and *passim*.
307. *khatt min al-istawá*: in plain script?
308. Q 17:78.
309. Q 2:97 and *passim*.
310. Q 17:78.
311. Q 20:7; 25:6.
312. Q 2:58; 4:154; 5:23; 7:161; 9:25.

313. Cf. Q 33:56.  
 314. Cf. Q 53:7; 81:23; 41:53.  
 315. Q 89:1; 97:5. Cf. Q 17:78.  
 316. Cf. Q 17:78.  
 317. Q 3:7; 13:39; 43:4.  
 318. Cf. Q 17:79.  
 319. Q 3:58 and *passim*.  
 320. Cf. Q 6:106 and *passim*.  
 321. Cf. Q 17:79.  
 322. Q 3:7; 13:39; 43:4.  
 323. Q 27:79.  
 324. Cf. Q 2:71 and *passim*.  
 325. Q 17:80.  
 326. Q 27:44. *lujjat min al-bad'*  
 327. Cf. Q 20:39.  
 328. Q 2:58; 4:154; 5:23; 7:161; 9:25.  
 329. Cf. Q 2:71 and *passim*.  
 330. Cf. Q 2:210 and *passim*.  
 331. Cf. Q 17:80.  
 332. Cf. Q 2:210 and *passim*.  
 333. Q 33:27; 48:21.  
 334. Cf. Q 25:74.  
 335. Cf. Q 46:9.  
 336. *áyat al-húwiya*  
 337. Q 27:44. *al-lujja al-ahadiya*  
 338. Q 31:13. Cf. Q *passim*.  
 339. Cf. Q 6:35.  
 340. Cf. Q 3:39 and *passim*.  
 341. Q 27:79.  
 342. Cf. Q 2:71 and *passim*.  
 343. Q 14:26.  
 344. Q 2:93 and *passim*.  
 345. *ard al-za'farán*. A spiritual realm referred to by, for example, Ibn al-'Arabí (d. 1240) in his major work, the *Kitáb al-futúhát al-Makkiyya* on which see Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth*, p. 140.  
 346. QA: *al-bayt al-báb*; R & F11: *bayt báb*; cf. Q 2:58; 4:154; 5:23; 7:161; 9:25.  
 347. Q 28:30.  
 348. Q 59:22, 23 and *passim*.  
 349. Cf. Q 3:39 and *passim*.  
 350. Q 16:2; 20:14; 21:25. QA: *lá iláha illá aná al-'aliy*; R: *lá iláha illá huwa aná al-'aliy*; F11: *lá iláha illá huwa al-'aliy*.  
 351. Cf. Q 4:108, 126.  
 352. Q 7:204; 22:73.  
 353. Cf. Q 3:7; 12:6 and *passim*.  
 354. Cf. Q 20:27.  
 355. Cf. Q 3:47; 3:174; 19:20; 24:35.  
 356. Q 2:91 and *passim*.  
 357. Q 27:79.  
 358. Cf. Q 27:8; 2:24 and *passim*.  
 359. Q 3:7; 13:39; 43:4.  
 360. Cf. Q 12:109.  
 361. Cf. Q 9:7 and *passim*.

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362. Q 11:103 and *passim*.  
363. Cf. Q 27:8; 2:24 and *passim*.  
364. Cf. Q 27:8; 2:24 and *passim*.  
365. Cf. Q 7:157.  
366. Cf. Q 27:8; 2:24 and *passim*.  
367. Q 4:33; 33:55.  
368. Cf. Q 4:108, 126.  
369. Cf. Q 3:97; 29:6.