

# Epistle of the Báb to Azal

Commonly and erroneously known as the “Will and Testament of the Báb”

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## Introduction and background:

This paper offers a provisional translation of the Epistle revealed by the Báb, for Mirza Yahya Nuri (b.1831-d.1912) known as Azal, commonly (and erroneously) referred to as the “Will and Testament of the Báb” or the “Tablet of Vicegerency”. The Epistle is three to four pages in length and revealed entirely in Arabic. The date of its revelation is sometime between mid to late 1849.

It is noteworthy to state that the Research Department at the Bahá’i World Centre in its Memorandum dated 28 May 2004 ([Tablet of the Báb Lawh-i-Vasaya, "Will and Testament": Titles of Mírzá Yahyá](#)), in response to an inquiry from an individual about this Epistle of the Báb states, “*It is important to call attention to the fact that, while in some quarters this Tablet has become known as the Will and Testament of the Báb, the Research Department has, to date, found no explicit evidence to suggest that the Báb, Himself, designated the Tablet as such.*”

Concerning the position of Mirza Yahya, the Guardian in "God Passes By" has made it, unequivocally clear that Mirza Yahya was the Báb's "nominee" and was the "recognized chief of the Bábi community" after the martyrdom of the Báb.

Abdu’l-Bahá in A Traveler’s Narrative regarding Azal’s nomination states that “...now since a great celebrity had been attained for Bahá’u’lláh in Tīhran, and the hearts of men were disposed towards Him, He, together with Mulla Abdu’l-Karim Qazvini, considered it as expedient that, in face of the agitation amongst the divines, the aggressiveness of the greater part of (the people of) Persia, and the irresistible power of the Amir-Nizam, whereby both the Báb and Bahá’u’lláh were in great danger and liable to incur severe punishment, some measure should be adopted to direct the thoughts of men towards some absent person, by which means Bahá’u’lláh would remain protected from the interference of all men. And since further, having regard to sundry considerations, they did not consider an outsider as suitable, they cast the lot of this augury to the name of Bahá’u’lláh’s brother Mirza Yahya. By the assistance and instruction of Bahá’u’lláh, therefore, they made him notorious and famous on the tongues of friends and foes, and wrote letters, ostensibly at his dictation, to the Báb. And since secret correspondences were in process the Báb highly approved of this scheme.” (Abdu’l-Bahá, A Traveler’s Narrative, pp. 15-16, translated by E.G. Browne).

Furthermore, Bahá'u'lláh in Lawh-i-Nasir states that *"The origins of this cause (ámr) were concealed from all. No one was adequately aware thereof save two souls; one of these two being named Ahmad who suffered the testimony (of martyrdom) in the path of his Lord and returned unto the ultimate abode while the other was he who was named "the Speaker" [al-Kalim - "He who (like Moses) conversed", i.e. with God] who at this moment can be found in our presence."* (Provisional translation by Stephen Lambden).

Nader Saiedi in his book "Gate of the Heart, p. 348", states that *"The elimination of the stations of vicegerency and prophethood from the Dispensation of the Báb is expressed unequivocally in gate 14 of the 6<sup>th</sup> unity of the Bayán; the Báb states that "Regarding titles, in this Dispensation no one is called by the name vicegerent (vali) and prophet (nabi)." Instead, He says, all should only be called "believers," until the day of Resurrection arrives, "When the Tree of Truth will choose to call anyone by any name He willeth," for only Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest would know who is a vicegerent and who is not. Any claim to vicegerency for Azal thus inherently violates the explicit text of the Persian Bayán. The claim by Azal's supporters that the Báb conferred the title of vicegerent upon Azal is itself an outright falsehood."*

In addition, Bahá'u'lláh on the topic of successorship in the Dispensation of the Báb states that *"In My previous Dispensation, the matter of successorship was totally obliterated from the Book of God. As all are aware, all that was revealed from the Pen of the All-Merciful was confined to the Letters and the Mirrors of the Bayán. Also, the number of Mirrors was not fixed."* (Bahá'u'lláh, *Additional Tablets and Extracts from Tablets Revealed by Bahá'u'lláh*).

Moreover, the Báb in the Persian Bayán indicates that *"from the setting of the Sun of Truth (the Báb) until the appearance of Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest, no one else's writings will be binding."* (The Báb, the Persian Bayán, gate 16 of the 3<sup>rd</sup> unity).

The Báb further states, in the Persian Bayán gate 2 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> unity, that *"The substance of this gate is that none shall encompass that which God hath revealed in the Bayán except Him Whom God shall make manifest, or the One Who is taught such knowledge by Him (man'al-lamhú ilmahú), as well as the Exalted Tree (the Báb) from which the Bayán hath emerged. For should all the oceans in the heavens and on the earth turn into ink, all the beings into pens, and all the souls into those who inscribe, they would be incapable of interpreting even a single letter of the Bayán, inasmuch as God hath destined neither a beginning nor an end for any letter thereof."* (Provisional translation by Nader Saiedi, *Gate of the Heart*, pp. 289-290).

Additionally, the Báb also foretold the appearance of Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest in the year 9. In the Arabic Bayán He says, *"Rise ye all when ye hear the name of Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest in the name of the Qa'im. Observe the difference between 'Qa'im' and 'Qayyum,' then in the year nine ye shall attain unto all good."* (The Báb, the Arabic Bayán, 6:15).

In another tablet addressed to Mulla Baqir-i-Tabrizi (d. Istanbul, c. 1881) - who was one of the Letters of the Living - in response to his question of when he would attain the presence of Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest, the Báb tells him to *“Count the numerical value of the letters of affirmation, including the tashdid (tashdid is the diacritic for a long consonant) of the letter Lam, that haply thou mayest in eight years, in the day of His Revelation, attain unto His Presence.”* (Tablet to Mulla Baqir, provisional translation by Nader Saiedi). Then the Báb assures him that if he does not attain His presence at the beginning of the year, he will certainly do so at its end. *“Know thou, however, of a certainty that His Cause is the Most Mighty (Azam) above and beyond any Mighty (Azim)<sup>2</sup> Cause, and His Remembrance is the Most Great (Akbar), beyond any Great (Kabir)<sup>3</sup> Remembrance.”* (Tablet to Mulla Baqir, provisional translation by Nader Saiedi).

The Báb further addresses Azal (Mirza Yahya) in Panj Shan and says *“strive to acquire higher qualifications. Perhaps thee will be enabled to render assistance to God in thy essence. And acquire spiritual qualities and radiate rays of pure ones, so that, perchance, in the Day of Resurrection (appearance of Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest), if thee will not make God, thy Lord, happy, at least thee will not make Him sad.”* (Panj Shan, p. 128, provisional translation by Ahang Rabbani). He further adds and admonishes Azal in these striking words *“and the Throne of the Truth became manifest and thee (Azal) failed to recognize Him and all things created through Him.”* (Panj Shan, p. 131, provisional translation by Ahang Rabbani).

Surprisingly, Mirza Yahya (Azal) quotes the Báb’s writing with reference to him in his book Mustayqiz. Seemingly the Báb recommended that he seek protection from other Bábis and after praising his qualities the Báb address Mirza Yahya prophetically and says (for original Arabic refer to Mahbub-i- Alam p. 332) *“Raise him with attentive love and confirm him with the winds of your attachment. Protect him from everything that might cloud the waters of his love in his self, suffocate the breath of his attachment in his essence, extinguish the fire of his nearness in his being and scatter the dust of his ensnarement in envy.”* (Making the Crooked Straight: A Contribution to Baha’i Apologetics, Jan 2002, P. 646, provisional translation by Udo Schaefer et al.).

Upon reading and examining the Epistle, although it is certainly addressed to Azal (Mirza Yahya), there is nothing in its content pointing to authority and successorship of him. His duties, as mentioned in the Epistle, are limited to preserving the unity of the Bábi community and leading them in recognizing and submitting to the Promised One of the Bayán. A duty he did not succeed in fulfilling; otherwise, he would have been, truly, the Fruit (*Thamarah*) of the Bayán and the first to believe in Him (i.e., Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest).

Like the Persian and Arabic Bayán, this Epistle too is a eulogy to Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest. In fact, it is quite clear that the station and authority of Azal is far inferior to Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest. The Epistle could be viewed as a Letter of instruction

from the Báb to Azal on how to protect, promote and manage the Bábi community following the Báb's martyrdom and before the advent of Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest.

The Epistle is an important work of the Báb, and another mighty work of the Báb in glorification of Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest. To date there is no authorised English translation of it available.

This Epistle has been available in several manuscript copies. Based on my research and findings, there are four main, yet slightly different, versions of the same Epistle publicly available to date.

I will briefly mention these four versions.

- **Azal al-Mustayqiz version:**

Manuscript facsimile published in Iran, circa 1950. Digitally reprinted. (East Lansing, Mi.: H- Bahá'i, 2002).

<https://www.h-net.org/~bahai/areprint/azal/M-R/M/mustayqz/mustayqz.htm> (pp. 378-380).

- **Azal Mutammim-i Bayán ("Completion of the Bayán") version:**

Manuscript facsimile, published Tehran, 1945?. Digitally reprinted. (East Lansing, Mi.: H- Bahá'i , 2000).

The Epistle has been included into the above work of Azal and apparently is in his handwriting.

<https://www.h-net.org/~bahai/areprint/azal/M-R/mutammim/vesayat2.gif> (p. 1).

<https://www.h-net.org/~bahai/areprint/azal/M-R/mutammim/vesayat3.gif> (p. 2).

<https://www.h-net.org/~bahai/areprint/azal/M-R/mutammim/vesayat1.gif> (p. 3).

- **Lawh-i Vasaya. (Will and Testament) Ms. in private hands version:**

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

- **The Iran National Bahá'í Archives (INBA), INBA version:**

This version of the Epistle can be found on pages 95–102 in volume 64, published in the Iran National Bahá'í Archives (INBA) series. This volume was published in B.E. 133 and contains various Writings of the Báb. Below is an extract of the Epistle from the same volume (64).

[https://bahai-library.com/pdf/v/vasaya\\_01.pdf](https://bahai-library.com/pdf/v/vasaya_01.pdf)

**A typed format of the aforementioned version will be included as an appendix to this paper.**

Sepehr Manouchehri in his paper ( [Will and Testament](#)) covered and compared the above four available versions. One point worthy of mentioning is that Sepehr Manouchehri, in comparing the four different versions, states that “*comparison of the key versions of the tablet indicates that the contents for over 91% of the tablet are either the same or similar across all versions. Areas of major difference cover just 9% of the tablet.*”

It is noteworthy to mention that the original version of this Epistle is not available, and for this reason there might be errors in the available versions.

The main purpose of this paper is to render a more accurate provisional English translation (compared to what is available to date) of this Epistle, accompanied by extensive notes and commentaries.

My provisional translation is based on the INBA version. However, to enhance my provisional translation and gain a broader perspective, I have also consulted the other three, above-mentioned, versions.

Given that available information suggests that the Beloved Báb did not assign a specific title to this Epistle, out of respect for His Exalted Being, I have likewise chosen not to use any distinguishing title for my provisional English translation.

Moreover, since the Báb, out of love, conferred various titles upon Mirza Yahya, in my provisional translation, I have used capitalization whenever there is a reference to Mirza Yahya's titles. I have done this out of respect for the Beloved Báb.

At this point, I would like to thank the following people for their help, valuable insights, and suggestions; Mr. Adib Masumian, Mr. Aryan Norozi, Mr. Daryoush Yazdani, Dr. Nader Saiedi, Dr. Omid Ghaemmaghami, Dr. Fares Hedayati, and Mr. Behrooz Ejtahed.

# Epistle of the Báb to Azal

## Provisional Translation

O Name of Eternity (Azal)<sup>4</sup>! Bear thou witness that there is none other God but Me, the Mighty, the Well-Beloved.

Then I, verily, testify that there is none other God besides Me, God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. God hath created all that hath been created from the beginning that hath no beginning, and all that shall be created to the end that hath no end, for the Manifestation of His Self. This is God's command unto all who have been and shall be created from His presence. The Manifestation of His Self is in all things, as He willeth by His command. He, verily, is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

When I (i.e., the Báb) withdraw<sup>5</sup> from this Throne<sup>6</sup> (i.e., the Báb's martyrdom), recite<sup>7</sup> such verses of God as God casteth upon your heart<sup>8</sup>, as a sign of remembrance from His presence. Verily, He is the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting and recite thou on My behalf, by night and by day, and then on behalf of the faithful servants of God: "Verily, I am God; there is none other God but Me, the All-Knowing, the All-Powerful." And if thou wishest, say: "Verily, I am God; there is none other God but Me, the Sovereign, the Inaccessible."

I bear witness that verily I am He that liveth in the Abhá<sup>9</sup> Realm of Glory. Harken unto all who make mention of Me, and I am the Best of Rememberers. Whoso attaineth the presence of thy Lord's Throne (the Báb), hath verily attained the presence of God<sup>10</sup>, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. No greater reward existeth than this (i.e., attaining the presence of Him) for them, if they are of those who attained certitude.

Moreover, I testify that God is Kinder than all that is kind, the Most Kind One. He desireth to witness upon a throne that hath spoken of its Lord, the Most Glorious, by whatsoever hath been created in the kingdom by His leave. He, verily, is the Most Generous of the generous ones.

God loveth that they (i.e., bodies of deceased believers) should be covered in coffins of crystal<sup>11</sup>, and that these coffins should then be covered with the most delicate stones that have been created, in such wise that all are able to manifest this<sup>12</sup>. This is what God hath loved for those who have believed in God and His signs, if ye are able. Say: Cotton, then in shrouds of silk, then whatsoever ye are able of the sweetest (finest) stone. Even if after some days ye can offer this to the living, lest their hearts become sorrowful, so that they may thereby rejoice.

Present thyself before God with such power as thou possessest, and deliver the Cause of thy Lord unto all peoples of the world. And call to what hath been revealed in the Bayán in an exalted and glorious fashion. Make mention, in most excellent way, of those who have

believed in Me and in My words, lest there be any dissension in the Cause of God and they stray from the righteous Path<sup>13</sup>.

Should God manifest in thy days one like unto thee, he is the one who inherited the Cause of God, the One, the Peerless. But should He not manifest such a person, then be thou assured that God hath not desired to make Himself known. Therefore, entrust thou the Cause unto God, your Lord and the Lord of all worlds<sup>14</sup>.

Command thou the witnesses<sup>15</sup> who are God-fearing in their religion and who transgress not the bounds set by God. And verily, We hath taught the gems of knowledge and wisdom to the one who was with thy Lord. Inquire thou of him<sup>16</sup>, for We, verily, are the Informer. And thou shalt respect him, by thy Lord's leave, with such power as thou possesseth.

Verily, the gates of the Bayán have been ordained according to the number of all things<sup>17</sup>, yet We have manifested but eleven unities<sup>18</sup>, one unity for each temple<sup>19</sup> of the nine that preceded the ten (i.e., 19)<sup>20</sup>. Eleven<sup>21</sup> unities are a remembrance from God, the Most High, the Mighty. This is a remembrance of bounty, though all things are God's and unto Him do all return.

We command thee to obey Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest, for verily He shall come to this creation in the next Resurrection<sup>22</sup> with an Exalted and Glorious Sovereignty<sup>23</sup>. We are all servants of God and we all prostrate before Him. He doeth what He willeth by His Lord's leave. He shall not be asked of His doings, but all shall be asked of all that they do.<sup>24</sup>

Should God manifest (i.e., should Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest be made manifest) glory in thy days, then manifest thou the eight paths by God's leave with such power as thou possesseth.<sup>25</sup> Verily, He is the Most Generous of the generous ones. We have promised unto her<sup>26</sup> who bore the Throne of thy Lord one (unity) path when the Command descendeth from her presence, for verily We are the Fulfiller of promises. What God hath promised shall not fail, for He is the Most Truthful of the truthful ones.

And should God not manifest glory in thy days, then be thou patient with what hath been sent down, and alter not a single letter<sup>27</sup>, for this is God's command in the Mighty Book<sup>28</sup>. Command according to what hath been revealed and alter not the measure of anything, lest the people differ in God's religion, and they be reared until the next Resurrection according to a single path. Make mention of all that We have mentioned in thy letter, for verily We are the Mentioners.

There shall come unto thee from God's Writings seven unities<sup>29</sup>, for verily We are the Dividers. Take thou one unity for thyself, then one for each who is in the land of **Fá, 'Ayn, Khá, Alif, Mím, and Káf**<sup>30</sup>, the faithful servants of God. He who was the first unity<sup>31</sup> in the Mighty Book<sup>32</sup> shall deliver unto thee that which it behooveth God, thy Lord, to seal. Seal thou with it and distribute copies of them throughout the world.

All that this name<sup>33</sup> shall convey from Our presence is from Us; be thou, therefore, of them that command. Protect thou thyself, then protect thyself again<sup>34</sup>, then that which was revealed in the Bayán, then that which shall be revealed from thy presence, for this shall endure until the Day of Resurrection<sup>35</sup>, and all the believers shall profit thereby.

And verily, the unity of the land of **Fá** shall be delivered unto the Name of God, the Exalted (Ali)<sup>36</sup>, that he may give each a copy to those who hath My love, a remembrance from God, the Exalted, the Great. In the land of **'Ayn** unto the name of the Noble One (Nabil)<sup>37</sup> who hath aided God with what he possessed on the Day of Resurrection, and who hath, with God, an exalted station.

Verily, We have lifted from them who have fulfilled their obligations of one-fifth<sup>38</sup> in the Bayán, and from their descendants, as a bounty from Our presence, for We are the Bestower of bounties. And verily, in the land of **Khá** it shall be delivered unto the name of the Most Truthful, the True One (Saddiq Saddeeq)<sup>39</sup>. And in the land of **Alif** it shall be delivered unto the name of the Mighty, the Merciful (Izzi' Rahim)<sup>40</sup>. And in the land of **Mím** unto them that are there of the assured ones. And in the land of **Káf** it shall be delivered unto the Name of thy Lord, the Munificent, the Most Munificent, the Ever-Munificent (Jawad al-Jaweed)<sup>41</sup>.

It is not permitted for anyone to possess more than one unity, and all shall rejoice therein. And as for the verses of God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting, together with the Tablets, preserve them and give them not save unto the sincere servants of God. Verily the creation of the heavens and the earth and whatsoever lieth between them, shall not compare with one unity, were any to be among them that comprehend.

And seek thou refuge in God from all the oppressors, until God manifests from His presence that wherein they shall rejoice. Say: He is the Subduer over His creation, and He is the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. And should the name of Secure (Aman)<sup>42</sup> be among the assured ones, deliver thou unto him a unity<sup>43</sup> from the supreme temples (Hayakal-i-Kubra), that he may aid thee in the Cause of God with the power he possesseth.

Verily, We have appointed as the distributor of the Tablets him<sup>44</sup> who transcribeth the verses of God, that he may deliver the most glorious thereof unto the Peerless<sup>45</sup> and Most Exalted One, and thereafter take unto himself a supreme temple, whereupon every possessor of a right shall receive his due from those who expectantly await from God.



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<sup>2</sup> Azim, in the Abjad system, is numerically equal to 1020, and Azam is numerically equal to 1011. The difference is 9.

<sup>3</sup> Akbar, in the Abjad system, is numerically equal to 223, and Kabir is numerically equal to 232. The difference is 9.

<sup>4</sup> Azal is one of the titles of Mirza Yahya (b.1831-d.1912) that could have been derived from this Epistle or other Tablets of the Báb addressed to him. In addition, to this title, the Báb gave him the title of Thamarah (ثمره, the "Fruit"). The Báb refers to Bahá'u'lláh (Mirza Husayn-Ali, Mirza Yahya's half-brother) as "*the Brother of the Fruit (Akhu'th- Thamarah), 238*" (Panj Shan p. 6). 238 is equal to Husayn-Ali entitled Bahá'u'lláh. Apart from the above two titles, Azal's other known titles are: Vahid (Peerless, unique), Nur (Light), Mír'at (Mirror).

It is noteworthy to mention that the Báb never designated the title of "Subh-i-Azal" (the Morn of Eternity) to Mirza Yahya. The word Subh-i-Azal, appears in an Islamic tradition which is called Hadith-i-Kumayl (Kumayl was a devoted student of the first Imam, Ali), and a portion of the Hadith is quoted by the Báb in the "Dala'il-i-Sab'ih." (Bábiyyih Publication, p. 58).

In Panj Shan, in a Tablet addressed to Azal, the Báb emphasizes the fact that indeed He is "the Morn of Eternity" and that all believers without exception are merely mirrors who have no illumination of their own. He states, "*Today, from the inception of the Revelation of the Bayán until the advent of Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest, all attainment of exaltation by anyone is a token reflection of the exalted station of the Point of Unity and the Dayspring of the Morn of Eternity. How beloved it hath been, and continueth to be, before God that in each Revelation pure mirrors will reflect the Tree of Truth. But the mirrors are not illumined by themselves, independent of the Primal Will, for had they been radiant by themselves, they would have been speaking before the Day of Revelation.... All the mirrors abide by His bidding, return unto Him, utter His glory, and seek shelter beneath His shadow.*" (Panj Shan, p.135, provisional translation by Nader Saiedi).

<sup>5</sup> In the "INBA" version it is "نَقَطَعُ" in other versions it is "انقطع." I have adopted the latter as correct.

<sup>6</sup> Body as a vessel that carries the soul. In its strict sense refers to the body and remains of the Manifestation of God.

<sup>7</sup> In the "INBA" version it is "يَتْلُو" (he recites). In the "Azal al-Mustayqiz" and "private hands" version it is "تتلو" (you recite). However, in the "Azal Mutammim-i Bayán" version it is "تتلوا" (you recite). Most certainly "you recite – that is Mirza Yahya" makes more sense and should be the correct term to use. Hence, I have translated it as "you recite."

<sup>8</sup> In the "INBA" and "Azal Mutammim-i Bayán" version this word is "his heart" (فؤاده). In the Azal "al-Mustayqiz" and "Private hands" version it is "your heart" (فؤادك). I have translated it as "your heart," as it aligns more closely with the intent of the passage, although the version (INBA) that I have based my provisional translation on states "his heart" (فؤاده).

<sup>9</sup> The Báb is indicating to Azal that in the next Revelation, the Báb would appear as "Baha" (Glory), and Azal should turn towards Him if he wants to remain a letter of affirmation (Nader Saiedi, Gate of the Heart, p. 350). Moreover, Azal should fix his gaze upon the Abhá realm of glory as the Báb continues to live in the Abhá Kingdom.

<sup>10</sup> Although the Báb is not among us physically (after His martyrdom), but He continues to live in the Abhá kingdom spiritually. Since it is not possible to meet God, then meeting His Manifestation is like meeting Him (God).

<sup>11</sup> This is also in line with what the Báb has revealed in gate 12 of 5<sup>th</sup> unity in the Arabic Bayán for the deceased. In the Báb's philosophy, crystal represents the maturation or perfection of dust to stone and then to crystal. Although this crystal has reached its perfection, it still has the agency of dust in it. It emulates the journey of a human from start/birth (imperfection) to when his spirit leaves his body and the progression of his soul in the worlds of God in the realm of unseen.

<sup>12</sup> The Báb instructs Azal on how the deceased (believers including Himself) should be buried with dignity and grandeur.

<sup>13</sup> Here the Báb instructs Azal to promote the cause of God and fully follow what has been revealed by the Báb (collectively). Azal should act as a bonding force between the Báb's believers to prevent discord and dissension amongst them.

<sup>14</sup> Here (the whole paragraph) the Báb speaks about a person who is hidden. This person may choose to introduce Himself to Azal or may decide to stay hidden. If He takes the former decision then the leadership of the Bábi community will be His. If that person takes the latter decision (that is, to stay hidden) then the Azal should leave the matter to God and witnesses of the Bayán will take the leadership.

Nader Saiedi provides further insight into this matter and states, "*in Panj Shan, the Báb speaks of the leadership of His community, after His own death, in terms of two figures. One He calls "Yahya" and the other He calls by the enigmatic name, "Son of Ali" (that is, Husayn- Bahá'u'lláh in one of His tablets testifies that He is the "Son of Ali" mentioned in the Báb's statement in Panj Shan). The former is the nominal leader, while the latter is the hidden one.*"

The Báb further states in Panj Shan, pp. 255-256 (Provisional translation by Nader Saiedi):

*"This, verily, is that which We promised thee, ere the moment We answered thy call. Wait thou until nine will have elapsed from the time of the Bayán. Then exclaim: 'Blessed be God, the most excellent of Makers!' We also answered aforetime, that ere the year Ta' (9), it behoveth that two signs from the past, revealed by God in the Book, would be manifested in the year Vav (6). One of them is the prophet Yahya (John), and the other is the Son of Ali, the true and exalted Imam."*

The Báb then tells Azim, the addressee of the tablet, that "*He has made one of these two figures known to him and that he should search the world to find and recognize the other. He asks Azim to obey the outward leader and to seek out the hidden leader, until the year 9, which would be the time of the advent of the Promised One.*" (Nader Saiedi, *Gate of the Heart*, p. 348).

Again, the Báb in Panj Shan says that "*before the year 9, before the completion of the Primal Point in the womb of contingency, two Mirrors would reflect God: the prophet Yaha (John)' and Husayn, the son of 'Ali. He then says that God has made one known to Azim and orders him to search out the other among the Bábis.*" (Panj Shan, p. 280, provisional translation by Nader Saiedi).

<sup>15</sup> 'Shohada' is the actual term that was used here. In the Bábi dispensation, Shohada-i-Bayán (witnesses of the Bayán) are those who the Báb designated as the proof of His Cause till the advent of Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest (The Báb, the Persian Bayán, gate 16 of 6<sup>th</sup> unity and gate 19 of 7<sup>th</sup> unity). The Báb also employs in His writings words such as 'Letters' and 'Mirrors' (Huruf va Maraya). In the Báb's writings believers are called "Witnesses," "Letters" and "Mirrors" (The Báb, the Persian Bayán, gate 14 of the 6<sup>th</sup> unity). He designated the first eighteen who believed in Him "The Letters of the Living." He Himself took the title of Nughteh (نقطه) and Nughteh Oula (نقطه اولی, Primal Point) amongst His other titles.

<sup>16</sup> Reference to Aqa Siyyid Husayn-i-Yazdi (d. 1852) who was among the first eighteen Letters of the Living. The Báb refers to him as "Aziz," meaning "Dear." He served as the scribe and amanuensis of the Báb and was His companion during His imprisonment in Mah-Ku and Chihriq.

And since he possessed all the knowledge about the Báb's writings, Mirza Yahya is directed to refer to him for assistance in understanding the Báb's writings. Azal also confirmed this fact in his book AL\_Mustayqiz, p. 386 [ms386.jpg (650x1260)], where the Báb again tells Azal to seek knowledge from Aqa Siyyid Husayn-i- Yazdi (Please note that the name of Siyyid Husyan in the very Tablet is coded under two numbers 74 (سید, Siyyid) and 128 (حسین, Husyan). The two numbers, when added together, equal 202 (Rab, رب: God). The Báb sometimes quotes this number at the end of His name (Ali Muhammad, which is also numerically equal to 202) to seal His writings. This also shows how immensely He loved His scribe, Aqa Siyyid Husyan-i-Yazdi. All these point to the limited knowledge of Azal about the Báb's writings. With the martyrdom of Aqa Siyyid Husyan-i-Yazdi in 1852, Azal was left alone in terms of understanding the true meanings of the Báb's writings.

<sup>17</sup> The term used is Kullu Shay. According to the Abjad system the word is equivalent to 361 (19 x 19). The Báb also constructed the Bayán (both Persian and Arabic) based on this concept in addition to the Badi calendar. Number 19 plays an important role in the Bábi faith. The Báb used this number to convey His spiritual message to His followers. On one hand, the word "vahed" (unity) is numerically equal to 19, and on the other hand represents unity (that is number 1). In a way "all things" point into one Entity, God. Moreover, the word "Bismillah al-Rahman al-Rahim" (in the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful) consists of 19 letters. The Báb changed this word into Bismillah al-Amna al-Aqdas (in the name of God, the Inaccessible, the Most Holy) which also consists of 19 letters.

<sup>18</sup> The Báb only revealed a total of 11 completed unities (vaheds) x 19 gates (Bábs) = 209 in the Arabic Bayán. However, He revealed a total of 8 completed unities (vaheds) x 19 gates (Bábs) + 10 gates (Bábs) of the 9<sup>th</sup> vahed) = 162 in the Persian Bayán.

The Báb, purposely and not by accident, did not reveal the eight remaining unities of the Arabic Bayán. Firstly, the Báb in the Arabic Bayán in gate 10 of the 9<sup>th</sup> unity (this is where the Persian Bayán ends). Secondly, the Báb specifies that at this point this much was revealed and then proceeds to say that the revelation of the Arabic Bayán will be continued "by Myself" until a full eleven unities are completed and that, at a future time, its revelation will be continued until it comprises a full nineteen unities. *"But fix your gaze on that which God hath revealed. Indeed, this is what hath hitherto been revealed, and I myself shall manifest eleven (Alif and ya'). And should it then be His will, ye shall witness what is equivalent to the number of all things (kullu shay)." (The Báb, the Arabic Bayán, gate 10 of 9<sup>th</sup> unity).*

<sup>19</sup> Haykal or temple in the writings of the Báb stands for the Manifestation of God (or the Perfect Human). It consists of 5 straight lines (outer being) and 6 chambers (inner being). Adding the two numbers together will give us 11 that is equal to Huva (هو: He – God) according to the Abjad system. The word Huva in Arabic consists of the letter H (هـ) and V (و). In the Abjad system the former is equal to 6 and the latter to 5.

<sup>20</sup> The accurate description of this sentence is that; each temple has nineteen (vahed/unity=19) degree (11 x 19). This means, nineteen temples which is the same as eleven unities (19 x 11). The discussion of 19 temples is beyond the scope of this paper. However, detailed explanation about the 19 temples can be found in the Báb's Tablet to Dayyan, called the Tablet of Nineteen Temples (Lawh-i-Hayakil-i-Vahed).

The main point discussed in the above-mentioned Tablet that is relevant here is that the Báb identifies these temples with His Primal Unity, but the last temple ends with the name Huval-Mustaghith that is the name of Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest. Numerically Huval-Mustaghith is equal to 2052, but the Báb pointing to the fact that nineteen years corresponds to the Primal Unity of His Dispensation, the year of Mustaghith will be realized and it is when Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest will reveal His identity. In other words, the Báb cycle will be concluded in 19 years which is equal to 19 temples.

<sup>21</sup> Huva (هو: He-God) in the Abjad system equals to 11. See note 19 for detailed information.

<sup>22</sup> Qiyamat or resurrection in the writings of the Báb is the instance when the next Manifestation of God appears and proclaims His Mission. This is another reference to Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest (i.e., Bahá'u'lláh).

<sup>23</sup> Another reference to Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest.

<sup>24</sup> In this paragraph the Báb instructs Azal to obey Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest (i.e., Bahá'u'lláh). He also reminds Azal that Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest has the full authority above all and all should obey him including Azal.

<sup>25</sup> The Báb instructs Azal to write the remaining eight unities, **only**, after the appearance of Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest. It should be noted that the Báb in the Persian Bayán made it very clear that from the time of His martyrdom (setting the Sun of Truth) till the appearance to the next Manifestation (i.e. Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest) no one else's writings will be binding (the Persian Bayán, gate 16 of the 3<sup>rd</sup> unity). Either Mirza Yaha believed that Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest has already manifested or not. If the former is true then he should not have rejected Bahá'u'lláh's claim and only with His permission he should have started to write the remaining eight unities. And if the latter is true, then he should have not written the remaining eight unities. Interestingly, Azal attempts only to complete some of the remaining gates of the Persian Bayán "Mutammim al-Bayán (Completion of the Bayán)" and not the Arabic Bayán that the Báb was instructing him to do in this Epistle.

Nader Saiedi, in Gate of the Heart p. 346, provides further insight into this portion of the Epistle *"However, manifesting the eight paths, as mentioned in the Báb's Tablet, may well refer to something completely different than completing the text of the Bayán. The Báb uses the word "paths" (manahij) in two senses. One sense refers to the unities of the Bayán, and the other to the entire Bayán as the Path of God and His laws. The Báb's reference to manifesting the eight "paths" after the appearance of the Promised One may refer instead to making public or distributing the eight copies of the Bayán that the Báb had sent to Azal, commanding him to give them to eight individuals who are identified in the letter. The accuracy of this reading is supported by the Báb's statement, in that letter, that God has promised one of these eight paths to the Báb's mother. This must refer to the copies of the Bayán sent to Azal for distribution at a time when Bahá'u'lláh would allow it."*

<sup>26</sup> Reference to the Báb's blessed mother.

<sup>27</sup> The Báb further instructs Azal to be patient and not alter even a single letter of the Báb's writings, should the advent of Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest does not take place in his own life time.

<sup>28</sup> The "Book" is the record of the revealed Word of the Manifestations of God.

<sup>29</sup> The Báb informs Azal that seven (7) works of His shall be dispatched to him. Since the Báb uses the word unities, He may have been referencing seven chapters of the Bayán. Number seven also carries a spiritual weight with it. His name "Ali Muhammad (علي محمد)" consists of seven letters (A, L, I, M, H, M, D). Sometimes at the end of His writings the Báb would refer to Himself as "The Possessor of seven." Number seven also signifies His 7<sup>th</sup> year of revelation which was His final year before His martyrdom. Additionally, the numerical value of the letters of affirmation, excluding the tashdid of the letter "Lam" [referring to the phrase of affirmation (الله) in the declarative testimony of Divine Unity] also equals to 7.

<sup>30</sup> Fars, Iraq (in Arabic this word starts with 'Ayn), Khurasan, Azarbaijan, Mazandaran, Kerman (or less likely Kashan). The Báb in the gate 4 of the 6<sup>th</sup> unity of the Persian Bayán designated the regions of Azerbaijan, Mazandaran, Fars, Iraq, and Khorasan as special areas.

<sup>31</sup> In the INBA version, which my provisional translation is based on, there is a margin note saying "*The intended meaning is Baqir.*" In my opinion, this person must have been Mulla Baqir-i-Tabrizi one of the Letters of the Living. "*He was present at the Conference of Badasht (1848), and between 1848 and 1850 he visited the Báb while He was imprisoned in Chihriq.*" (Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh: Volume 2*, George Ronald: Oxford, 1977, p. 146).

*"He began serving as an emissary of the Báb delivering communications on His behalf from Chihriq across Persia and the Báb was able to provide funds to support his travels in the role."* (Abbas Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, Kalimat Press: Los Angeles, 2005, p. 284 and p. 383).

<sup>32</sup> The "Book" is the record of the revealed Word of the Manifestations of God. This is also a reference to the Báb's Cause (Bábi Faith). Sometimes the Báb refers to Himself as the Living Book. Also, the Báb in the Persian Bayán talks about the "*Living Book*," which He identifies as "Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest."

<sup>33</sup> Mulla Baqir-i-Tabrizi.

<sup>34</sup> Bahá'u'lláh suggested Azal (Mirza Yahya), at the request of the Báb, to be the Báb's nominee. This was approved and accepted by the Báb. Apart from Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb, only two other people knew about this nomination. One was the Báb's scribe, Mulla Abdu'l-Karim-i-Qazvini (known as Mirza Ahmad-i-Katib) and the other was Bahá'u'lláh's full-brother, Mirza Musa (entitled Kalim). Bahá'u'lláh in Lawh-i-Nasir states that "*The origins of this cause (amr) were concealed from all. No one was adequately aware thereof save two souls; one of these two being named Ahmad who suffered the testimony [of martyrdom] in the path of his Lord and returned unto the ultimate abode while the other was he who was named "the Speaker" [al-Kalim - "He who (like Moses) conversed", i.e. with God] who at this moment can be found in our presence"* (Provisional translation by Stephen Lambden).

Every measure was taken to protect Azal from harm's way. The Báb made sure he would be safe by: first glorifying many Bábis and not just Yahya. Second by ordering Yahya several times that he should protect his life and not to endanger himself.

In fact, Azal's nomination resulted in diverting the attention of Qajar officials from Bahá'u'lláh, who was in real danger, to another person whose real identity was indeed unknown. Bahá'u'lláh always protected Azal and even was subjected to the bastinado in his stead. It is noteworthy to mention that the Báb in another tablet, again, tells Azal "*To protect yourself.*" Azal also quoted this in his book *Al-Mustayqiz*, p. 382 [[ms382.jpg \(650x1263\)](#)]. Azal, indeed, followed this instruction of the Báb to the end of his life. He was always in hiding and it was even difficult for the Bábis to have direct access to him.

<sup>35</sup> Azal's writings are only profitable to others before the advent of Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest and not after that. Basically, Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest will determine what is binding and what is not. After the Báb, He is the only person with the power to reveal verses as the next Manifestation of God.

<sup>36</sup> The name of "Ali" in the Land of "Fá" is, possibly, a reference to the Báb's maternal uncle (Siyyid Ali) who was a staunch follower of the Báb and was residing in Shiraz. His uncle is asked to send a copy to the Báb's companions in that region. He was martyred in Tehran in February 1850 with six other Bábis, known as the "Seven Martyrs" of Tehran. This also suggest that the revelation of this Epistle must have been before February 1850 (that is, mid to late 1849). The Báb was martyred by firing squad on 9<sup>th</sup> of July 1850 in Tabriz.

<sup>37</sup> In the Abjad system both Nabil and Muhammad are numerically equal (92). This person's name was surely "Muhammad" and most definitely the Báb gave him the title of Nabil to honour and possibly to protect him.

<sup>38</sup> Khums (A Shiite practice which is 20% of the total income and is regarded as the right of the Imam of the Age).

We read in the Holy Qur'án:

*"Know that whatever of a thing you acquire, a fifth of it is for Allah, for the Messenger, for the near relative, and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer ...."* (Qur'án 8:41)

<sup>39</sup> Reference to Mulla Sadeq-i-Khurasani (d.1889) who was one of the survivors of the Fort Shaykh Tabarsi upheaval.

<sup>40</sup> Sepehr Manouchehri (The Primal Point's Will and Testament, 2004) identifies this person as Mirza Abd'ul Rahim-i-Isfahani and claims he was one of the Báb's earliest amanuensis without mentioning his source. To my knowledge the Báb had three secretaries namely, Aqa Siyyid Husyan-i-Yazdi, Mula Abd'ul-Karim-i-Qazvini, and Shaykh Hassan-i-Zunuzi.

Denis MacEoin (The sources for early Bábi doctrine and history, 1992, p. 91) makes a reference to a certain Aqa Siyyid Rahim-i-Isfahani who was the copyist of one of the Azali copies of the Persian Bayán. Most probably Manouchehri mistook this person as one of the Báb's amanuensis/scribes.

<sup>41</sup> Reference to Haji Mirza Sayyid Javad-i-Karbalai (d. Kirman, 1882), a Shaykhi and Bábi-Baha'i grandson of the great Mujtahid Sayyid Muhammad Mahdi, Bahr al-Ulum (d. Najaf, 1212/1797). The Báb had referred to Sayyid Javad as one worthy to occupy the station of a Nabi (Israelite type "prophet") in every world of God, a text cited by Bahá'u'lláh in his Lawh-i Sarraj written in Edirne in about 1867 (Ishraq Khavari, ed and comp. Ma'ida-yi Asmani vol VII).

<sup>42</sup> The identity of the one who is called "Aman" remains hidden. In the Abjad system the word "Aman" is equal 92. Muhammad is also equal to 92. Most probably the real name of this person was Muhammad and the Báb conferred upon him the title of "Aman."

<sup>43</sup> In the INBA version it is stated as "من هياكل الكبرى و حدالله" and in other versions stated as "من هياكل الكبرى واحدا" اليه." I have used the later in my provisional translation as seems more accurate to me.

<sup>44</sup> Reference to Aqa Siyyid Husayn-i-Yazdi. See footnote "15" for more information.

<sup>45</sup> Reference to Mirza Yahya. Vahid (Peerless, unique) was one of the titles of Mirza Yahya that the Báb conferred upon him. The two titles, Azal (ازل) and Vahid (وحيد) are equal to the name Yahya (يحيى) in the Abjad system. If we count Yahya with two Yaa "ياء", in the Abjad system, it will be equivalent to Vahid "وحيد", and if we count Yahya with three Yaa "ياء", it will be equivalent to Azal (ازل). Vahid (وحيد) is, numerically, equal to 28 and Azal (ازل) to 38.

## Appendix

### Epistle of the Báb to Azal in Arabic

انا يا اسم الازل فاشهد على انه لا اله الا انا العزيز المحبوب ثم اشهد على انه لا اله الا انا الله المهيم القيوم قد خلق الله كل ما خلق من اول الذي لا اول له وكل ما يخلق الى اخر الذي لا اخر له لمظهر نفسه هذا امر الله لمن خلق ويخلق من عنده مظهر نفسه في كل شيء كيف يشاء بامر الله هو العلام الحكيم اذ انقطع عن ذلك العرش يتلو من آيات الله ما يلقي الله على فؤاده ذكرا من عنده انه هو المهيم القيوم واتل عن نفسي في كل ليل ونهار ثم عباد الله المؤمنين انني انا الله لا اله الا انا العلام المقتدر وان شئت انني انا الله لا اله الا انا السلطان المنيع واشهد بانني انا حي في افق الابهي اسمع كل من يذكر اياي وانني انا خير الذاكرين من يحضر بين يدي عرش ربك فكانه حضر بين يدي الله المهيم القيوم ولم يكن جزءا اكبر عما حضر اذا كان من الموقنين ثم اشهد بان الله لطيف فوق كل ذي لطف لطيف يحب ان يشهد على عرش قد نطق عن ربه الابهي ما خلق في الملك باذنه انه هو اجود الاجودين يحب الله ان يسترون في اواعي مرات بلور ثم يسترون تلك الاواعي في الاحجار التي ما خلقت الطف على شان كل يستطيعون ان يظهرون هذا ما قد احب الله للذينهم امنوا بالله واياته ان انتم تستطيعون قل القطن ثم اوعية الحرير ثم ما تستطيعون من الحجر الاحلى ولو انتم بعد ايام تستطيعون ان تظهرون ذلك للذينهم احياء لثلا يكره قلوبهم وهم بذلك يفرحون واحضر بين يدي الله بما كنت عليه من المقتدرين وبلغ امر ربك الى العالمين وادع الى ما نزل في البيان بمنهاج عز رفيع واذكر بالحسنى كل الذينهم امنوا بي ثم بكلماتي لثلا يختلفوا في امر الله وهم عن الصراط ليعبدون فان يظهر الله في ايامك مثلك هذا ما يورثن الامر من عند الله الواحد الوحيد فان لم يظهر فايقن ان الله ما اراد ان يعرف نفسه فلتقونن الامر الى الله ربكم ورب العالمين جميعا وامر بالشهداء الذينهم يتقون في دينهم وهم عن حدود الله لا يتجاوزون وان من كان عند ربك قد علمنا جواهر العلم والحكمة فاستنبي عنه فانا كنا لمنبئين ولتكرمنه من عند ربك بما كنت عليه من المقتدرين وان ابواب البيان قد قدر على عدد كل شيء ولكننا ما اظهرنا الا احدى عشر واحد لكل هيكل واحد من هياكل التسعة من قبل العشر احدى عشر واحدا ذكر من عند الله العلي العظيم ذلك ذكر جود والا كل لله وكل اليه ليرجعون ولتأمرن بمن يظهره الله فانه لياتين ذلك الخلق في القيمة الاخرى بسطان عز رفيع انا كل عباد الله وانا كل له ساجدون يفعل ما يشاء باذن ربه لا يسئل عما يفعل وكل عن كل شيء يسئلون وان اظهر الله عزا في ايامك فاطهر منهاج الثمانية باذن الله بما كنت مقتدرا عليه انه اكرم الاكرمين وانا وعدنا من حملت عرش ربك بمنهاج واحد اذا نزل الامر من عندها فانا كنا لموفين ما وعد الله لا يخلف وانه هو اصدق الاصدقين وان لم يظهر الله عزا في ايامك فاصبر على ما نزل ولا تبدل حرفا فان ذلك امر الله في كتاب عظيم وامر بما نزل ولا تبدل قدر شيء لثلا يختلفون الناس في دين الله وهم كانوا الى قيامة اخرى بمنهاج واحد متربيون واذكر كل ما ذكرناه بكتابتك فانا كنا ذاكرين ويحضر من اثار الله اليك سبعة واحد فانا كنا لمقسمين خذ الواحد لنفسك ثم كل واحد لمن في ارض فاء وعين وحاء والف وميم وكاف عباد الله المؤمنين وسيوصل اليك من كان واحد الاول في كتاب عظيم ما ينبغي ان يمهرن الله ربك فامر به وكثر امثالها في العالمين وكل ما يبلغن ذلك الاسم من لدنا ذلك من عندنا فكن به من الامرين فاحفظ نفسك ثم احفظ نفسك ثم ما نزل في البيان ثم ما ينزلن من عندك فان هذا يبقى الى يوم القيمة وينتفع به كل المؤمنين وان واحد ارض الفاء يوصل الى اسم الله العلي ليؤتين كل واحد اولى محبتي واحدا ذكرا من عند الله العلي العظيم في ارض العين الى اسم النبيل الذي قد نصر الله بما ملكه يوم القيمة وكان له عند الله شانا عظيما وانا قد ارفعنا عن الذينهم قد بلغوا حدود خمسهم من حقوقهم في البيان وعن ذرياتهم فضلا من لدنا انا كنا فاضلين وان في ارض الخاء يوصل الى اسم صداق صديق وان في ارض الالف يوصل الى اسم عز رحيم وان في ارض الميم من كان هنالك من الموقنين وان في ارض الكاف يوصل الى اسم ربك الجواد الجويد لا يحل لاحد ان يملك الا واحد وكل به يفرحون وما كان من اشعار الله المهيم القيوم مع الالواح فاحفظها ولا تهب الا عباد الله المخلصين فان واحدا منها لم يعدها خلق السموات والارض وما بينهما اذا كان احد به من العارفين واستعد بالله عن كل الظالمين حتى يظهر الله من عنده ما كان به يفرحون قل هو القاهر فوق خلقه وهو المهيم القيوم وان كان اسم امان من الموقنين بلغ من هياكل الكبرى وحد الله ليتصرنك في دين الله بما كان عليه من المقتدرين وانا قد جعلنا مقسم الالواح من يكتب آيات الله ليوصلن ابهاها الى الوحيد الاعلى ثم ياخذ لنفسه هيكلا كبرى ثم ياتي كل ذي حق حقه من الذينهم من عند الله متوقعون