

## Reflections on Some Messianic Prophecies in Shaykhi Works

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While working on a Russian translation from the original Persian of Siyyid Kázim's treatise "Usul-i-'Aqá'id" ("The Basic Principles of Belief"),<sup>1</sup> I noticed certain correspondences between the messianic prophecy Siyyid Kázim quotes and the time periods, dates and names related to the Bábí and Bahá'í Faiths symbolically expressed. The prophecy in question is actually a passage within a broader account of eschatological events described in Chapter 5 of Siyyid Kázim's treatise.<sup>2</sup> When I realized that this whole chapter was in fact Siyyid Kázim's Persian translation of the corresponding part (Chapter 5) of Shaykh Ahmad's "Hayát al-Nafs" ("The Life of the Soul") – for some miraculous reason incorporated into Siyyid Kázim's work – I turned my attention to Shaykh Ahmad's "Hayát al-Nafs" in Arabic.<sup>3</sup> Studying this part of the "Hayát al-Nafs" only reinforced my previous impression of the correspondences between the prophecy concerned and Bábí and Bahá'í history, as such correspondences became even more apparent to me in the Arabic text. The sources for this study are from the collection of the St. Petersburg Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences ("the Hayát al-Nafs", manuscripts: A 706, B 4276, B 1895,<sup>4</sup> its Persian translation by Siyyid Kázim, lithograph: Pk 213, and the "Usul-i-'Aqá'id," lithograph: Ps II 157).<sup>5</sup>

The present writer is well aware of the skeptical attitude of some people, especially scholars, towards prophecy. By sharing

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my ideas, I have not the least intention of trying to convince skeptics of the significance of prophecy, and even less so of the validity of my interpretations. This is only an attempt to trace and highlight correspondences which, in my view, exist between the dates and facts symbolically referred to in the prophecy and the events of Bábí and Bahá'í history. Obviously, the suggested interpretation is not authoritative.

Since the language of prophecy is symbolic, it would be useful to first consider its characteristics. Though in the works available to me this language is mostly treated in relation to revealed Scripture, it is relevant to approach it as a general phenomenon, assuming that its basic features must apply to the symbolic language of traditions as well. The mathematician-philosopher William S. Hatcher defines it as a “metaphorical, extramathematical language.”<sup>6</sup> Concerning the differences between this language and the language of science, he writes:

The language of science is deliberately *linear* – eschewing metaphor and multiple meaning – and *minimalist* – accepting the objective existence of only those nonobservables strictly necessary to an explanation of observable configurations (which, as it turns out, is still quite a bit). Thus, the strengths of science are clarity, precision, and applicability (practicality). Its limitations derive primarily from its partialness (specialization, fragmentation), relative incompleteness, and general lack of a global vision...

In contrast to the language of science, the language of revelation is *nonlinear* (extensive use of metaphor and multiple meaning) and *maximalist* (as rich as possible, freely referring to nonobservables)... Thus, the strengths of revelation are its adequacy and its completeness, but its limitations (from the human point of view) lie in its complexity and the consequent frequent lack of an obvious linear meaning for a given portion of the revelatory text. The student of revelation must be prepared to struggle to understand the different levels of meaning enfolded in the revelation.<sup>7</sup>

Hatcher amplifies his analysis of these differences by the following point:

Mathematical language puts a premium on exactness and precision of expression. Ideally, a mathematical language is totally formalizable in such manner that every grammatically well-formed expression has only one logical meaning. In this sense, mathematical language is *linear*: text (syntax) is already linear, and if we avoid metaphor and multiple meaning in our lexicon, then our semantics will also be linear. In this case, each syntactical sign *is* its own meaning. It is precisely such totally linearized languages that are used, for example, in computer programming.<sup>8</sup>

To summarize Hatcher's viewpoint: the language of science in which every expression or sign has only one logical meaning is linear. It is characterized by clarity and precision. On the contrary, symbolic language, in which an expression has multiple meaning, is non-linear. It is characterized by metaphor and complexity. It would be relevant to add that one of the definitions of the term "linear" is "having only one dimension." Regarding problems of interpreting the symbolic language of prophecy Michael Sours says the following:

Some people argue that prophecies must be fulfilled exactly in every detail, but examples of prophetic fulfillment in the Bible show that this is not the case... This is not to say that the details of prophecy are not important. Sometimes these details raise issues that help clarify the nature of fulfillment, but in many instances the details are intended to make the message relevant to the time when the prophecy was first revealed...

In the *Book of Certitude*, Bahá'u'lláh teaches that Scripture is written in two kinds of language, one 'unconcealed and unveiled' so 'that it may be a guiding lamp and a beaconing lamp' and another that is 'veiled and concealed, so that whatever lieth hidden in the heart of the malevolent may be made manifest and their innermost being be disclosed'...<sup>9</sup>

To perceive the concealed meaning of prophecy one must acknowledge the symbolic nature and spiritual significance of the words used. If prophecy is interpreted literally, and it is imagined that such events will literally happen, then one may expect a truly extraordinary sign and proof that requires little or no spiritual discernment to recognize and acknowledge it.<sup>10</sup>

On the multiple meaning of prophecy Sours says:

...some prophecies may be both literal and symbolic. In most cases, however, prophecy is symbolic...Many verses in Scripture can have several meanings. In connection with the interpretation of Scripture and sacred traditions, Bahá'u'lláh cites a saying of Imám Sádiq...: 'We speak one word, and by it we intend one and seventy meanings'...<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, although there may be many meanings in a verse of Scripture, it is important not to confuse *significant* meanings with *any* meaning.<sup>12</sup>

A good example of how the days referred to in the context of the same prophecy may have to be reckoned differently is best illustrated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá's interpretation of a Zoroastrian prophecy of which Shoghi Effendi wrote:

As a further testimony to the greatness of the Revelation identified with Bahá'u'lláh may be cited the following extracts from a Tablet addressed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to an eminent Zoroastrian follower of the Faith: "Thou hadst written that in the sacred books of the followers of Zoroaster it is written that in the latter days, in three separate Dispensations, the sun must needs be brought to a standstill. In the first Dispensation, it is predicted, the sun will remain motionless for ten days; in the second for twice that time; in the third for no less than one whole month. The interpretation of this prophecy is this: the first Dispensation to which it refers is the Muhammadan Dispensation during which the Sun of Truth stood still for ten days. Each day is reckoned as one century. The Muhammadan Dispensation must have, therefore,

lasted no less than one thousand years, which is precisely the period that has elapsed from the setting of the Star of the Imamate to the advent of the Dispensation proclaimed by the Báb. The second Dispensation referred to in this prophecy is the one inaugurated by the Báb Himself, which began in the year 1260 AH and was brought to a close in the year 1280 AH As to the third Dispensation – the Revelation proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh – inasmuch as the Sun of Truth when attaining that station shineth in the plenitude of its meridian splendor its duration hath been fixed for a period of one whole month, which is the maximum time taken by the sun to pass through a sign of the Zodiac. From this thou canst imagine the magnitude of the Bahá'í cycle – a cycle that must extend over a period of at least five hundred thousand years.<sup>13</sup>

In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, the differentiated method of interpreting time periods employed for this prophecy is explained in the following way:

Concerning the passage in the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh in which the Guardian quotes 'Abdu'l-Bahá's interpretation of the prophecy referring to the times when the sun would stand still in the heavens, he wishes me to explain that the days referred to in this prophecy have to be reckoned differently. In the Scripture of various religions there are to be found frequent references to days, but these have been considered as indicating different period of time, as for instance in the Qur'án a day is reckoned as one thousand years. The first ten days in the above mentioned prophecy represent each a century, making thus a total of one thousand lunar years. As to the twenty days referring to the Bábí Dispensation each of them represents only one lunar year, the total of twenty years marking the duration of the Revelation of the Báb. The thirty days in the last dispensation should not be reckoned numerically, but should be considered as symbolizing the incomparable greatness of the Bahá'í

Revelation which, though not final is none-the-less thus far the fullest revelation of God to man. From a physical point of view, the thirty days represent the maximum time takes by the sun to pass through a sign of the zodiac. They thus represent a culminating point in the evolution of this star. So also from a spiritual standpoint these thirty days should be viewed as indicating the highest, though not the final stage in the spiritual evolution of mankind.<sup>14</sup>

The above interpretation is based on three different approaches to the calculation of days within the same prophecy and clearly indicates that interpretation does not necessarily require a uniform approach to all parts of a text. The application of different systems of reckoning should not be confused with the inconsistency of method detracting from its validity. Rather, it should be seen as a differentiated approach.

Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kázim present the messianic prophecy to be considered here in relation to the eschatological concept of "return" (*raj'a/raj'at*), traditionally understood in Shi'ih Islam as the return of the Prophet Muhammad and the twelve *Imáms*, including the "Hidden Imám," known as the *Qá'im*. The Bahá'í notion of the "return" is best expounded by the Prophet-Founder of the Bahá'í Faith in His *Book of Certitude*:

*Strive therefore to comprehend the meaning of "return" which hath been so explicitly revealed in the Qur'án itself, and which none hath as yet understood. What sayest thou? If thou sayest that Muhammad was the "return" of the Prophets of old, as is witnessed by this verse, His Companions must likewise be the "return" of the bygone Companions, even as the "return" of the former people is clearly attested by the text of the above-mentioned verses...*

*Wherefore, should one of these Manifestations of Holiness proclaim saying: "I am the return of all the Prophets," He verily speaketh the truth. In like manner, in every subsequent Revelation, the return of the former Revelation is a fact, the truth of which is firmly established. Inasmuch as the return of the Prophets of*

*God, as attested by verses and traditions, hath been conclusively demonstrated, the return of their chosen ones also is therefore definitely proven...*

*Therefore, those who in every subsequent Dispensation preceded the rest of mankind in embracing the Faith of God, who quaffed the clear waters of knowledge at the hand of the divine Beauty, and attained the loftiest summits of faith and certitude, these can be regarded, in name, in reality, in deeds, in words, and in rank, as the “return” of those who in a former Dispensation had achieved similar distinctions...*

*From these statements therefore it hath been made evident and manifest that should a Soul in the “End that knoweth no end” be made manifest, and arise to proclaim and uphold a Cause which in “the Beginning that hath no beginning” another Soul had proclaimed and upheld, it can be truly declared of Him Who is the Last and of Him Who was the First that they are one and the same, inasmuch as both are the Exponents of one and the same Cause...<sup>15</sup>*

Thus, the “return” in the Bahá’í Faith is understood allegorically. Bahá’u’lláh is identified with the Imám Husayn “returned,” not in the sense of His being the return of the same person.<sup>16</sup> Interestingly, there is even a correspondence between their names. Bahá’u’lláh’s name is Husayn-‘Alí, while that of Imám Husayn was Husayn b. ‘Alí. Accordingly, the Báb, whose name was ‘Alí-Muhammad, is identified with the Qá’im.<sup>17</sup>

The prophecy we are going to discuss falls into the category of eschatological accounts which provide clues to the time frame within which the events relating to the messianic figure/figures are going to happen as well as to the circumstances of these events. Sours refers to such prophecies in the following passage:

Many prophecies, rather than offering direct and explicit evidence that Bahá’u’lláh is a Manifestation of God, provide clues relating to the circumstances of His life and the age in which He was destined to appear. In many instances, it is only by first recognizing the

station of a Manifestation that one realizes that He has fulfilled prophecies.<sup>18</sup>

Let us now consider the first portion of the prophecy in question, bearing in mind that it is expressed in a symbolic non-linear language. Non-linear implies “having more than one dimension” and “not (arranged) in a straight line,” i.e., it conveys multiple meanings and the described events do not unfold sequentially. All the dates and time periods in the prophecy are calculated in lunar years. Let me start by quoting the two slightly differing versions of Siyyid Kázim’s Persian translation one of which is incorporated into his “Usul-i-Aqá’id” as mentioned above:

بلند کند روز و شب را باشد لکن حقت عالی هفت سال...مده ملکش  
تا ای نکه یک سال بقدر ده سال شود زیرا که حقت عالی امر می کند فلک را  
که سرعت نکند و بطی می شود حرکت فلک در آن سالها تا این که مدت  
پنج چاه و از سالهای معروف در زمان ما شود پس چون هفتاد سال ملکش  
سیدنا از حکومت حضرت قائم علیه السلام بگذرد خروج می کنند نه سال  
و مولانا الحسین علیه السلام با هفتاد و دو نفر از شهدای کربلا و با  
ملای که...پس چون هفتاد سال بگذرد شهید می کند حضرت قائم علیه  
السلام را زنی...بچاوی از سنک بربالای بام می ایستد و چون آن  
بزرگوار از آن کوچه عبور می کند آن ملعونه سنک را فرو می آورد پس چون  
بزرگوار از عالم فنا ارتحال فرماید حضرت امام حسین علیه السلام آن  
اورا تاجه یزید فرموده پس قائم بامر شود... [حیوة النفس در ترجمه  
فارسی از سید کاظم رشتی]

...مدت ملکش هفت سال باشد لیکن حق تعالی بلند کند روز شب را تا  
می کند این نکه یک سال بقدر ده سال می شود زیرا که حق تعالی امر  
فلک را که سرعت نکند و بطی می شود حرکت فلک در آن سالها تا این که  
مدت ملکش هفتاد سال از سالهای معروف در زمان ما پس چون پنج چاه و نه  
سال از حکومت حضرت قائم علیه السلام بگذرد خروج می کنند مولی نا و  
سیدنا الحسین علیه السلام با هفتاد و دو نفر از شهدای کربلا و با  
ای که...پس چون هفتاد سال بگذرد قائم علیه السلام را شهید می کند مل  
زنی...به هاوی از سنک بربالای بام می ایستد چون آن بزرگوار از آن  
کوچه عبور فرماید آن سنک را فرو می آورد و پس چون آن بزرگوار از عالم  
فنا ارتحال فرماید حضرت امام حسین علیه السلام اورا تاجه یزید فرموده  
[117]س قائم بامر شود... [اصول عقاید از سید کاظم رشتی، ص. پ

The duration of His kingdom will be seven years. But the True and Exalted [God] will prolong days and nights so that a year will become equal to ten years. Because the True and Exalted [God] will command the



sphere[s] not to move fast. And the movement of the sphere[s] will slow down in those years so that the duration of His kingdom will become seventy years counting by the years known in our time. Finally, when fifty nine years pass from the reign of His holiness the Qá'im, may peace be upon Him, our Lord and our Master Husayn (lit.: the Husayn), may peace be upon Him, will arise with the seventy two martyrs of Karbila and with angels... Thus, when seventy years pass a woman... will martyr His holiness the Qá'im, may peace be upon Him... She will stand on a roof with a mortar of stone and as that Noble person passes by that street that cursed woman will throw that stone down [on Him]. Consequently, when that Noble person departs from [this] perishable world His holiness *imám* Husayn, may peace be upon Him, having set up His burial arrangements, will then rise for the Cause.<sup>19</sup>

Now I will quote the corresponding part of the Hayát al-Nafs in the original Arabic from the three manuscripts available in the collection of the St. Petersburg Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, which have minor and insignificant variations:

...مدة ملكه سبع سنين يطول الله الایام و اللیالی حتى تكون السنة  
 بقدر عشر سنين لان الله سبحانه یأمر الفلك باللبوث فتكون مدة  
 فاذا مضى تسع و خمسون السنین من مدة سبعین سنة قدم له  
 ع... فاذا تمت السبعون السنة یمیت الحجّة سنة خرج الحسین  
 فتقتله امرأة من بنی تمیم... بجاون صخر من فوق سطح و هومتجاوز فی  
 الطریق فاذا مات تولى تجمیذ الحسین ع ثم تقوم بالأمم...  
 [حیوة النفس] MS: A 706. P. 17/a

The duration of His kingdom is seven years. God prolongs the days and nights that a year (lit. the year) may become equal to ten years. Because God, may He be praised, commands the sphere[s] to slow down (lit.: tarry). Thus the duration of His kingdom [will be] seventy years [counting] by these years. And when fifty nine years pass/elapse Husayn, may peace be upon Him, will come forth... So, when the seventy years are completed a woman from the Baní-Tamím murders the Proof [of God], she kills Him... with a mortar of stone

from a rooftop as he passes along/crosses the road. And when He dies Husayn, may peace be upon Him, will set up His burial arrangements. After that [Husayn] will rise for the Cause...

Of special note is the fact that the two other manuscripts are even more specific. They both have “from/since them” referring to the “seventy years”:

...مدة ملكه سبع سنين يطول الله الایام و اللیالی حتی تكون السنة  
 بقدر عشر سنين لان الله سبحانه یامر الفلك للبوث فتكون مدة  
 تسع و منه فاذا مضی من هذه السنين سبعین سنة قم ملكه  
<sup>20</sup> علیه السلام... فاذا تمت السبعون خمسون سنة خرج الحسين  
 صخرة<sup>21</sup> وت و قتله امرأة من بنی تمیم... بج اون السنة اتی الحجّة ع الم  
 من فوق سطح و هومتج اوز فی الطریق فاذا مات علیه السلام تاتی  
 لتج هیزه الحسين ع ثم یقوم بالأمر...  
 [حیوة النفس]MS: B 4276. P. 48/b

The duration of His kingdom is seven years. God prolongs the days and nights that a year may become equal to ten years. Because God, may He be praised, commands the sphere[s] to slow down. Thus the duration of His kingdom [will be] seventy years [counting] by these years. And when fifty nine years pass/elapse from (since) them Husayn, may peace be upon Him, will come forth. So, when the seventy years are completed death comes to the Proof [of God], may peace be upon Him, a woman from the Baní-Tamím kills Him... with a mortar of stone from a rooftop as he passes along/crosses the road. And when He dies Husayn, may peace be upon Him, will administer His burial arrangements. After that [Husayn] will rise for the Cause...

Compare it with the part in question from the third manuscript:

تسع و منه!...فتكون ملكه سبعین سنة من هذه السنين فاذا مضی  
 ة خرج الحسين علیه السلام...خمسون سن  
 [حیوة النفس]MS: B 1895. P. 19/b

...Thus the duration of His kingdom [will be] seventy years [counting] by these years. And when fifty nine

years pass/elapse from (since) them Husayn, may peace be upon Him, will come forth...

This prophesy is briefly summarized as follows by Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ahsá'í in his "Sharh al-Ziyára al-Jámi'a al-Kabira":

سنة فى مدة سبع سنين سبعين...قلنا قىام القايئم اولاً و هو حىكم  
 حى على اكثر الروايات لان السنة فى زمانه بعشر سنين و اذا مضى  
 سنة خرج الحسنى ع و تسع و خمسون ملكه  
 MS: D 702. P. 33/a

...We said that the rising of the Qá'im is first and He will rule seventy years during a seven year period, according to most versions [of the traditions]. Because a year in His time is ten years. And when fifty nine years pass/elapse from/since His reign Husayn, may peace be upon Him, will come forth.

A correlating prophecy is quoted by Siyyid Kázim-i-Rashtí in his "Risáliy-i-Bahbahániyyih." For convenience' sake, we can refer to it as "prophesy 2" and to the prophesy from "Hayát al-Nafs" as "prophesy 1". In the aforementioned work Siyyid Kázim states:

وى طهر الأرض بسيف قايئمهم روحى فداه فبعد ذلك يرجعون الى الدنيا  
 بن ابى طالب علىهما السلم الحسنى بن على فاول من يرجع منهم هو  
 ثم يرجع بعد خروج القايئم علىهما السلم بتسع و خمسين سنة  
 حولانا و سيدنا على عليه السلم لىصرة ابنه الحسنى علىهما السلم و  
 دنيا تسعة و ثلثمائة سنة يبقى فى ال  
 MS: B 4269. P. 72/b

And [God] will purify the earth by the sword of their<sup>22</sup> Qá'im, may my spirit be a sacrifice for Him. And after that they<sup>23</sup> will return to the physical world. The first of them to return fifty-nine years after the rising of the Qá'im, may peace be upon Him, is Husayn b. 'Alí b. Abí Tálib, may peace be upon both of them. Then our Lord and Master – 'Ali, may peace be upon Him, will return to support His son – Husayn, may peace be upon both of them, and will stay in the physical world for three hundred and nine years.

Since we are not concerned in this paper with linguistics or mathematics, and, given the fact that the language of prophecy

is symbolic and non-linear rather than scientific, it would be proper to consider also that “fifty-nine” sounds in Arabic as “nine and fifty”. Thus, in a more literal translation (of numbers), the passage from prophesy 1 will appear in the following way:

The duration of His kingdom is seven years. God prolongs the days and nights...Thus the duration of His kingdom [will be] seventy years...And when nine and fifty years pass/elapse from/since them Husayn...will come forth.

The key phrase from prophesy 2 will assume the following form:

...The first of them to return nine and fifty years after the Qá'im...is Husayn b. 'Alí...

All the numbers in the passages from both prophecies are significant with respect to periods and dates in Bábí and Bahá'í history. Leaving alone number 50 for the time being, let us consider seven, nine, and 70. The Báb was martyred during the seventh year of His mission (which corresponds to the end of “the Qá'im's kingdom” in symbolic language). Shoghi Effendi writes: “On the evening of the very day of the Báb's execution, which fell on the ninth of July 1850 (28<sup>th</sup> of Sha'bán 1266 AH), during the thirty-first year of His age and the seventh of His ministry...”<sup>24</sup>

Getting back to prophesy 2 (see above), if we add nine to the year 1260 AH (the year of the Báb's declaration, i.e., the “rising of the Qá'im for His mission”) we will come to 1269 AH – i.e., the time when Bahá'u'lláh (Husayn-'Alí) first received His revelation in the Siyáh-Chál prison. Referring to this event Shoghi Effendi points out:

During nine years, as foretold by the Báb Himself, swiftly, mysteriously and irresistibly the embryonic Faith conceived by Him had been developing until, at the fixed hour, the burden of the promised Cause of God was cast amidst the gloom and agony of the Siyáh-Chál of Tihrán...His<sup>25</sup> imprisonment lasted for a period of no less than four months, in the middle of which the

“year nine” (1269), anticipated in such glowing terms by the Bab, and alluded to as the year “after Hin” by Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ahsá’í, was ushered in, ending with undreamt-of potentialities the whole world.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, the numbers seven and nine should be understood literally, as they perfectly match the historic periods. But if we look further into the passage from prophecy 1, we may discover that it contains more information than it appears: “the duration of His kingdom [will be] **seventy** years...And when **nine**...years pass/elapse from/since then Husayn...will come forth.” “Nine” years passing/elapsing from/since “70” (understood as a year)<sup>27</sup> will lead us to 79 – the year of Bahá’u’lláh’s declaration, which took place in the month of Dhi’l-Qadih 1279 AH (May 1863) in the Garden of Ridván in Baghdad.

The above prophecies also clearly indicate that Husayn b. ‘Alí will outlive the Qá’im and that He will rise for His Cause after the Qá’im’s death. The Qá’im will be martyred, while Husayn b. ‘Alí will outlive Him. These indications perfectly fit into the historic context and particularly into the circumstances of the ascension of the Báb and Bahá’u’lláh.

Let us now proceed on to the second part of the prophecy in the Hayát al-Nafs beginning with its Persian translation by Siyyid Kázim:

ویزید بن معاویہ و عبید اللہ بن زیاد... و کسان ی که با فاعال قبیحی  
 ایشان را ضعیف کردند از اولین و آخرین لعنة الله علیهم اجمعین پس  
 همگی ایشان را حضرت امام حسین علیه السلام بقتل رساند و از جمیع  
 خالفین و دوستان قصاص کند و بسویار می کند کشتن را در میان  
 ایشان تا این که مجتمع شوند بر آن حضرت جماعت اشرار و بقیه کفار  
 تا این که غالب می شوند و آن بزرگوار را محاصره می کنند در بیت الله  
 الحرام پس چون امر بان حضرت شدید شود خروج می کند سفا  
 امیر المؤمنین علیه السلام با ملای که برای نصرت فرزند کرامی خود  
 مکتب می کنند آن یکشده اعدای دین و رؤسای منافقین را و پس م  
 بزرگوار با فرزند عالی مقام خود مدت سیصد و نه سال  
 پس آن حضرت را شهید نمایند چنان که اصحاب کهف مکتب نمودند  
 لعن الله قاتلیه و باقی می ماند حضرت امام حسین علیه السلام قائم  
 تا این که استمدت ملک آن حضرت پنجاه هزار سال بدین الله و  
 می بنده ابروی خود را بدست مالی از شدت کبر سن...  
 [حیوة النفس در ترجمه فارسی از سید کاظم رشتی]

ومحشور می شود یزید ابن معاویة... و عبیدالله ابن زیاد... و کسانى كه بافعال قبیحه ایشان راضی شدند از اولین و آخرین لعنة الله علیهم را حضرت امام حسین علیه السلام بقتل اجمعی پس همگی ایشان رساند و آن جملكی قصاص کند و بسیار می کند کشتن را در میان منافقین و دوستان ایشان تا اینکه مجتمع شوند بر آن حضرت جماعت اشرار و بقیه کفار از اطراف زمین از هرجهت تا اینکه غالب می شود و آن م پس چون امر با آن حضرت بزرگوار را محاصره می کنند در بیت الله الحرام شدید شود خروج می کند سفاح امیر المؤمنین علیه السلام با ملایگه برای نصرت زور دیده کرامی خود پس بکشد اعدای دین و رؤسای مکت می کند آن بزرگوار با فرزندان عالی مقام منافقین را و چنانکه اصحاب کعبه مکت سال و نه سال<sup>28</sup> خود مدت شش صد لعن الله قاتله و باقی ت را شهید نماید پس آن حضرت نمودند مدت ملک می ماند حضرت امام حسین علیه السلام قائم بدین الله تا اینکه می بنید ابروی مبارک خود را با آن حضرت پنجاه هزار سال دستمال از شدت کبر و بزرگی سن... [اصول عقاید از سید کاظم رشتی، 117ص].

My translation of the above passage based on both versions is as follows, with different readings indicated by a forward slash:

And Yazíd b. Mu'áviyyih and 'Ubaydu'lláh b. Ziyád...and those who were content with their abominable actions from the first to the last, may God curse all of them altogether, will assemble. Then His holiness *imám* Husayn, may peace be upon Him, will put them all to death and execute vengeance upon every single of them. He will slay many adversaries/hypocrites and their companions until a party of enemies and the remaining unbelievers/unbelievers from every side, from every corner of the world band together against His holiness in a way that they prevail [over him] and besiege that Noble person in the Sacred House of God. When the situation becomes increasingly grave for His holiness then the "Generous," the Commander of the Faithful, may peace be upon Him, will come forth with angels to assist His precious son/ solace of the eyes. Then He will kill enemies of the religion and the leaders of the hypocrites. That Noble person will stay (lit.: tarry) with His highly honored son for a period of three hundred and nine years as did (lit.:

tarried) the companions of the Cave. Then His holiness will be martyred, may God curse His murderers/ murderer. And His holiness *imám* Husayn will stay firm in the religion of God, and the duration of His holiness' kingdom is **fifty thousand years**, until He covers (lit.: ties) His brow/blessed brow with a towel (handkerchief?) from extreme old age.

Before we compare this passage in Siyyid Kázim's Persian translation with its Arabic original let us clarify certain points. "The Generous/Blood-shedder" (Saffáh) is an epithet describing *imám* 'Ali (whose other epithet is "the Commander of the Faithful"). *Imám* al-Báqir is quoted as saying:<sup>29</sup>

ابن: هل تدري من الممن تصر والسفاح؟ يا جابر الممن تصر الحسين قال ج  
<sup>30</sup>(عليه السلام) والسفاح أمير المؤمنين (عليه السلام)

Jábir said: Do you know who is the Victorious (al-Muntasir) and the Generous (al-Saffáh)?' – 'O Jábir, the Victorious is al-Husayn (may peace be upon Him) and the Generous is the Commander of the Faithful (may peace be upon Him).

"The companions of the Cave" is an allusion to Koran 18:24/25: "And they tarried in the Cave three hundred years, and to that they added nine more."<sup>31</sup>

Let us now turn our attention to Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ahsá'í's original text of the passage in the "Hayát al-Nafs" based on the three manuscripts:

ابن زياد... و من رضی<sup>32</sup> و یحشر له یزید ابن معاویة و عبدالله  
 بافعا لهم من الاولین و الاخرین لعنة الله علیهم اجمعین فیقتلهم  
 الحسین ع و یقتص من هم... حتی یجتم ع علیہ اشرار الناس من کل  
 ناحیه... فاذا اشد به الامر خرج السفاح امیر المؤمنین علی ابن ابی  
<sup>33</sup>سلاّم لنصرته مع الملائكة فیقتلون اعداء الذین ظالبا علیہ ا  
 و **سنة ثلاث مائة** علیهما السلام **یمکث علی مع ابنه الحسین و**  
**کما لبث اصحاب الکهف** ثم یضرب علی قرنہ و یقتل لعن **سینین** تسع  
**خمسون الف سنة** الله قاتله و یبقى الحسین ع قایماً بدين و مدت  
 بعصاة من شدت الکبر<sup>34</sup> حتى یربط حاجبی  
 [حیوة النفس] MS: B 4276. P. 48/b-49/a

As for the other two manuscripts, I will quote only the lines which contain some minor differences from the above version:

...فسيقتلون اعداء الدين ويمكث على مع ابنه الحسين روحى فداها  
 اب الكهف ثم يضرب كما لبث اصح ثلاث مائة سنة و تسع سنين  
 على فرقته ويقتل لعنه الله قاتله و يبقى الحسين ع قائمًا بدين الله  
 حتى انه يربط حاجبيه بعصابة من شدة خمسون الف سن قادمة ملكه  
 الكبير

[حياة النفس]MS: A 706. P. 17/a-b

...فسيقتلون اعداء الدين ويمكث على على السلم مع ابنه الحسين  
 كما لبث اصحاب مائة سنين و تسع سنين ثلاث على السلم  
 الكهف ثم يضرب على فرقته ويقتل لعن الله قاتله ويبقى الحسين  
 حتى انه ليربط خمسون الف سن قايماً بدين الله و مدة ملكه  
 حاجبيه بعصابة من شدة الكبير

[حياة النفس]MS: B 1895. P. 19/b

Following is a translation of the above passage based on the three MS versions, with different readings indicated by a forward slash:

And Yazid b. Mu‘aviyyih and ‘Ubaydu’lláh b. Ziyád ...and those who were content with their actions from the first to the last, may God curse them all, will assemble. Then *imám* Husayn, may peace be upon Him, will kill them and avenge upon them...until the enemies of humankind from every region band together against Him...When the situation becomes increasingly grave for Him then ‘Alí b. Abí Tálíb, the Generous, the Commander of the Faithful, may peace be upon Him, will come forth with angels to assist Him. Thus, they will kill enemies of the religion. And ‘Alí will stay (lit.: tarry) with Husayn, His son, may peace be upon both of them/may my soul be a sacrifice for both of them, for three hundred years and nine years as did (lit.: tarried) the companions of the Cave. Then ‘Alí will be struck upon His head/horns, may God curse His murderer. And Husayn, may peace be upon Him, will remain supreme over the religion of God. And the period of His kingdom/period is fifty thousand years until He covers (lit.: ties) His eyebrows with a bandage from extreme old age.

The same message is conveyed by the passage in Siyyid Kázim’s “Risáliy-i-Bahbahániyyih” already quoted:



أيهم روحى فداه فبعد ذلك يرجعون الى الدنيا ويظهر الأرض بسيف ق  
 بن ابى طالب عليهما السلام الحسين بن علي فاؤل من يرجع منهم هو  
 وخمسين سنة ثم يرجع بعد خروج القايءم عليه السلام بتسع  
 جولانا و سيدنا على عليه السلام لئصره ابنه الحسين عليهما السلام و  
 35 سنة تسعة و ثلاثمائة بقى فى الدنيا

MS: B 4269. P. 72/b

And [God] will purify the earth by the sword of their Qá'im, may my spirit be a sacrifice for Him. And after that they<sup>36</sup> will return to the physical world. The first of them to return fifty nine years after the rising of the Qá'im, may peace be upon Him, is Husayn b. 'Alí b. Abí Tálib, may peace be upon both of them. Then our Lord and Master – 'Alí, may peace be upon Him, will return to support His son – Husayn, may peace be upon both of them, and will stay in the physical world for **three hundred and nine years**.

What is special about this part of the prophecy, which is based on the Koranic verse, is that “309” features in it as a split number consisting of two separate numbers of years/year periods: three hundred years and nine years (see above). The noun it modifies (“years”) occurs twice – following the “three hundred” and the “nine”: ثلاثمائة سنة و تسع سنين “three hundred years and nine years,” while from a grammatical stand-point a compound number (309) should be treated in Arabic as one single unit with the modified noun that follows it occurring once: ثلاثمائة و تسع سنين “three hundred and nine years.” In the Koranic verse which the prophecy alludes to – though generally understood to indicate a single number (309) – nine is also separated from 300: “And they tarried in the Cave three hundred years, and to that they added nine more.” All these factors considered it is reasonable to suppose that nine has a special value attached to it in this prophecy and that it stands on its own (which of course does not preclude 309 from being significant too). This also serves as a confirmation of the validity of the method we employed earlier, which consisted of splitting “fifty nine” into “nine” and ‘fifty” (years) and considering each unit on its own merits. In other words, this part appears to hold a clue to unraveling the riddle behind the whole prophecy, based largely on a special

symbolism of “nine” within the compound numbers the prophecy contains.

Now let us reflect more deeply upon the following lines and the message they convey, focusing on the numbers, names and name combinations involved:

Then *imám* Husayn...will kill them and avenge upon them... When the situation becomes increasingly grave for Him then 'Alí...will come forth with angels to assist Him...And 'Alí will stay with Husayn...for three hundred years and nine years...

In summary, it conveys the following message: “Husayn (who is mentioned first) is joined by 'Alí and they stay together for three hundred years and nine years.” Taken symbolically, this forms a name combination, which is highly significant, for it corresponds to Bahá'u'lláh's name: “Husayn” plus “'Alí” is “Husayn-'Alí.” The prophecy tells us that “Husayn + 'Alí (Husayn-'Alí, i.e., Bahá'u'lláh) will stay for 309 years.” We have already seen that numbers expressing temporal realities in non-linear language do not necessarily refer to a time period and can also indicate a year (cf. “70” which we interpreted as a reference to the year 1270). Accordingly, if we apply “309” to a year it would be logical to take it to imply 1309 AH, which is the year of Bahá'u'lláh's ascension. Consequently, viewed from this angle, the hidden message of the prophecy appears to fit perfectly into the context of historic realities becoming transparent and fully meaningful: Husayn-'Alí (Husayan + 'Alí), i.e., Bahá'u'lláh stays in this world until 1309. In his account of Bahá'u'lláh's ascension, Shoghi Effendi wrote:

...His general condition grew steadily worse...which at last culminated in His ascension...on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of Dhi'l-Qa'dih 1309 AH (May 29, 1892), eight hours after sunset, in the 75<sup>th</sup> year of His age.<sup>37</sup>

If we look further into the quoted passage from the prophecy, we may discover that it contains even more information, given the fact that a message conveyed in symbolic (non-linear) language can well have several layers of meaning. This assumption is supported by the earlier conclusion that “nine” which is separated from “300” has a

special value attached to it within the compound number “309.” Therefore it must play a special role. But what is the significance of nine here? The clue to the riddle appears to be in the sentence itself: “And ‘Alí will stay with Husayn ...for three hundred years and nine years...”

We have already considered the names in their combination. Let us now analyze them separately. The name “‘Alí,” by which the Báb often referred to Himself, is the first component of His compound name: ‘Alí-Muhammad. Husayn is the first component of Bahá’u’lláh’s name: Husayn-‘Alí. The first part of the prophecy (see above) clearly indicated that Husayn would outlive ‘Alí, while the second part tells us that ‘Alí will stay with Husayn for...nine years. If ‘Alí is taken to imply ‘Alí-Muhammad the Báb and Husayn – Husayn-‘Alí Bahá’u’lláh, then a correspondence with historic realities will become apparent. Between the Báb’s declaration in 1260 AH and Bahá’u’lláh’s first receiving His revelation in 1269 AH, a period of nine years elapsed (see above) or to put it metaphorically, for nine years Husayn[-‘Alí Bahá’u’lláh] abided under the shadow of ‘Alí[-Muhammad the Báb]’s Revelation before the birth of His own Revelation. To quote Shoghi Effendi, Bahá’u’lláh was in “active and exemplary discipleship in the service of the Báb”:

At a time when the Cause of the Bab seemed to be hovering on the brink of extinction, when the hopes and ambitions which animated it had, to all human seeming, been frustrated..., the Divine Promise enshrined within it was about to be suddenly redeemed, and its final perfection mysteriously manifested. The Bábí Dispensation was being brought to its close (not prematurely but in its appointed time), and was yielding its destined fruit and revealing its ultimate purpose – the birth of the Mission of Bahá’u’lláh...

During nine years, as foretold by the Bab Himself, swiftly, mysteriously and irresistibly the embryonic Faith conceived by Him had been developing until, at the fixed hour, the burden of the promised Cause of God was cast amidst the gloom and agony of the Siyah-Chal of Tihiran. “Behold,” Bahá’u’lláh Himself, years later, testified..., “*how immediately upon the*

*completion of the ninth year of this wondrous, this most holy and merciful Dispensation, the requisite number of pure, of wholly consecrated and sanctified souls has been most secretly consummated.” “That so brief an interval,” ...”should have separated this most mighty and wondrous Revelation from Mine own Manifestation is a secret that no man can unravel...Its duration had been foreordained...*

The Shah's edict, equivalent to an order for the immediate expulsion of Bahá'u'lláh from Persian territory, opens a new and glorious chapter in the history of the first Bahá'í century... The process which it set in motion, gradually progressing and unfolding, began by establishing His Cause for a time in the very midst of the jealously-guarded stronghold of Shí'ah Islam, and brought Him in personal contact with its highest and most illustrious exponents; then, at a later stage, it confronted Him, at the seat of the Caliphate, with the civil and ecclesiastical dignitaries of the realm and the representatives of the Sultan of Turkey, the most powerful potentate in the Islamic world; and finally carried Him as far as the shores of the Holy Land, thereby fulfilling the prophecies recorded in both the Old and the New Testaments... With it, may be said to have begun the last and most fruitful of the four stages of a life, the first twenty-seven years of which were characterized by the care-free enjoyment of all the advantages conferred by high birth and riches, and by an unflinching solicitude for the interests of the poor, the sick and the down-trodden; followed by nine years of active and exemplary discipleship in the service of the Báb; and finally by an imprisonment of four months' duration, overshadowed throughout by mortal peril, embittered by agonizing sorrows, and immortalized, as it drew to a close, by the sudden eruption of the forces released by an overpowering, soul-revolutionizing Revelation.<sup>38</sup>

Let us now move to the closing lines of the second part of the prophecy:

Then 'Alí will be struck upon His head..., may God curse His murderer. And Husayn... will remain supreme over the religion of God. And the period of His kingdom/period is **fifty thousand years** until He covers (lit.: ties) His eyebrows with a bandage from extreme old age. (cf. above)

This passage brings us back to the circumstances of the death of 'Alí and Husayn. Once again, it is emphasized that 'Alí will be murdered/martyred and that Husayn will die a natural death at an old age. Husayn will outlive 'Alí and continue to promote their common Cause, staying firm in the religion of God after 'Alí is martyred. His kingdom will last for 50,000 years. In linear language, the syntax of the last phrase would imply that Husayn will first reign for 50,000 years and then die upon the completion of this period. But in the symbolic non-linear language in which the prophecy is told, the story does not unfold sequentially. Thus, several different messages can be conveyed simultaneously. Consequently, one plane of meaning may be understood to refer to the short-term perspective, i.e., to the lives of 'Alí and Husayn on earth, while another conveys a long-term picture, i.e., Husayn's spiritual Kingdom. Once 'Alí and Husayn are identified with the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, respectively, the correspondences between the first plane of meaning and reality become apparent. That the described short-term events match completely the circumstances of the earthly lives of the Bab and Bahá'u'lláh is so obvious to anyone who is familiar with the history of the Bábí and Bahá'í Faiths that the issue does not need further elaboration. As for the meaning of "the 50,000 years of Husayn's kingdom" one can assume that a year here implies 10 years as indicated in the beginning of the prophecy ("...the True and Exalted [God] will prolong days and nights so that a year will become equal to ten years."). By multiplying 50,000 by 10, we get 500,000 (years) which correspond to the duration of Bahá'u'lláh's Cycle as interpreted by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in relation to the Zoroastrian prophecy (see above).

Let us now return to the first part of this prophecy and the related prophecy from the "Risáliy-i-Bahbahániyyih" to consider a number for which no interpretation has so far been

suggested, i.e., “50” in the following lines of the respective eschatological accounts:

...Thus the duration of His (i.e., the Qá'im's) kingdom [will be] **seventy** years...And when **nine and fifty** years pass/elapse from/since them Husayn...will come forth...And when He dies Husayn...will set up/administer His burial arrangements.

...The first of them to return **nine and fifty** years after the Qá'im...is Husayn b. 'Ali...

It was suggested earlier that “nine years elapsing from 70 (understood as a year)” indicated (12)79 AH, i.e., the year of Bahá'u'lláh's declaration, which marks the beginning of His mission. The starting point for this calculation is 1270 AH. However, the other prophecy implies that “nine” and “50” may also be counted from the beginning of the Báb's mission (1260 AH), who is identified with the Qá'im. The underlying logic behind all our interpretations is based on the fact that events when expressed in non-linear language are not necessarily sequential and the message has different levels of meaning enfolded in the text which coexist without precluding one another. It has already been shown that nine years calculated from 1260 AH lead to a significant date in history, i.e., 1269 AH (the time when Bahá'u'lláh first received His revelation), confirming the validity of the assumption that 1260 AH should be taken as a starting point from which to reckon “50” as well. This would lead one to another significant date, the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, marking a period which embraces the Ministry of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh as the Twin Manifestations of God (from the Báb's declaration until Bahá'u'lláh's ascension 49 years and six months  $\approx$  50 years elapsed) described by Shoghi Effendi in the following way:

Inaugurated by the Báb, culminating in Bahá'u'lláh, anticipated and extolled by the entire company of the Prophets of this prophetic cycle, this period has, except for the short interval between the Báb's martyrdom and Bahá'u'lláh's shaking experiences in the Siyáh-Chál of Tihrán, been characterized by almost fifty years of continuous and progressive Revelation — a period which by its duration and fecundity must be regarded

as unparalleled in the entire field of the world's spiritual history.<sup>39</sup>

Another significant 50 year period can be identified elapsing from the time of the Báb's execution (1266 AH) until His remains finally arrived in the Holy Land – not precluding the previous interpretation. Shoghi Effendi writes:

Assisted by another believer, Háji Sháh Muhammad buried the casket beneath the floor of the inner sanctuary of the shrine of Imám-Zádih Zayd, where it lay undetected until Mirzá Asadu'lláh-i-Isfahani was informed of its exact location through a chart forwarded to him by Bahá'u'lláh. Instructed by Bahá'u'lláh to conceal it elsewhere, he first removed the remains to his own house in Tihrán, after which they were deposited in several other localities such as the house of Husayn-i-'Ali-yi-Isfahani and that of Muhammad-Karím-i-'Attár, where they remained hidden until the year 1316 AH (1899), when, in pursuance of directions issued by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, this same Mirzá Asadu'lláh, together with a number of other believers, transported them by way of Isfahán, Kirmánsháh, Baghdad and Damascus, to Beyrut and thence by sea to 'Akka, arriving at their destination on the 19<sup>th</sup> of the month of Ramadan 1316 AH (January 31, 1899), fifty lunar years after the Báb's execution in Tabriz.<sup>40</sup>

The quoted passage from Shoghi Effendi clearly shows that the arrangements for the transportation of the Báb's remains, their protection and temporary concealment until they were finally laid to rest in the Holy Land were made under Bahá'u'lláh's direct instruction, Who literally "administered" the Báb's burial. Thus, the phrase from the prophecy: "And when He dies Husayn...will set up/administer His burial arrangements" (see above) fits well into historical context.

It would be fair to say that the predictions contained in Shaykh Ahmad's eschatological account are not unique to his work and can be found in other sources. Moreover, his prophecy is composed of parts which can be traced back to the "Bihár al-Anvár" by Majlisí, "Usul-i-Káfi" by Kuliní, and

“Aválim al-‘Ulum va-l-Ma‘árif” by Shaikh Bahrainí, which are cited in many other works. Thus, in Moslem traditions there exist numerous references to seven and/or nine and/or 70 years of the Qá’im’s/Mahdí’s life or reign, for example:

41 <sup>41</sup> عى ش خمسأ أو سبعا أو تسعا

[The Qá’im/Mahdi] lives five or seven or nine;

إذا قام القايء...و ىمكث على ذلك سبع سنين كل سنة عشر سنين من  
42 <sup>42</sup> سنينكم هذه

When the Qá’im arises...He will stay for this reason seven years, each year being these ten years of yours;

فإذا تمت السبعون أتى الحجة الموت. يراد بهذه السبعين أن الحجة  
القايء المهدي (ع) يبقى في الحكم سبعين عاماً ، ولابد أن هذا منطلق من  
الخبر الذي سمعناه في فصل سابق من أنه يبقى سبع سنين ، كل  
سنة كعشر سنين من سنينكم  
43 <sup>43</sup> ، فهو يبقى سبعين سنة هذه ، إذ

So, when the seventy years are completed death comes to the Proof [of God]. These seventy imply that the Proof, [Who is] the Qá’im, Mahdí, may peace be upon Him, will stay in power for seventy years. This meaning undoubtedly follows from the tradition which we heard in the previous part, i.e., that ‘He stays seven years, and every year is like these ten of your years,’ in this case He will stay for seventy years.

بني فإذا تمت السبعون السنة أتى الحجة الموت فتقتله امرأة من  
ون صخر من فوق سطح وهو متجاوز في الطريق فإذا مات بج...تميم  
44 <sup>44</sup> (تولى تجهيزه الحسين (عليه السلام

So, when the seventy years are completed death comes to the Proof [of God], a woman from the Baní-Tamím kills Him...with a mortar of stone from a rooftop as he passes along/crosses the road. And when He dies Husayn, may peace be upon Him, will administer His burial arrangements.

References to Husayn being the One who administers the Qá’im’s burial are frequent too:

أن هذا الحسين قد خرج حتى لا يشرك المؤمنون فيه وأنه ليس بدجال ولا  
شيطان، والحجة القايء بين أظهرهم فإذا استقرت المعرفة في قلوب



جاء الحجّة الموت فيكون الذي علىه السلام المؤمنين أنه الحسين  
 رته الحسين بن علي في غسله ويغسله ويحمله ويحمله في ح<sup>45</sup>

Truly, this Husayn has come forth that believers may have no doubt in Him, that He is neither the Anti-Christ nor Satan. And the Proof [Who is] the Qá'im is among them. And when the recognition of the fact that He is really Husayn, may peace be upon Him, is well established in the hearts of the believers death comes to the Proof. And Husayn b. 'Alí becomes the one Who washes Him, shrouds Him, embalms Him and puts Him into His grave.

Numerous prophetic references to “309 years” are also found in the sources:

السلام عليّه عن ابن محبوب ... عن جابر الجعفي قال: سمعت أبا جعفر  
 والله لي لم يكن منا أهل البيت رجل بعد موته ثلاثمائة سنة ويزداد يقول:  
 وكم يقوم القائم: بعد القائم قلت: قال؟ متي يكون ذلك: تسعاً قلت  
 ثم يخرج المنتصر الذي الدنيا وهو<sup>46</sup> تسع عشرة سنة: قال؟ في عالمه  
 السلام في طلب بدمه ودم أصحابه في قتل ويسيبي الحسين عليّه الح<sup>47</sup>  
 حتّي يخرج السفاح وهو أمير المؤمنين

Narrated through Jābir al-Ju'fī from...Ibn Mahbub, who said: I heard Abu Ja'far,<sup>48</sup> may peace be upon him, say the following: By God, verily a man from among Us – members [of the Prophet's] household, will rule three hundred years after His death 'and to that He will add nine more.' I said: When will this happen? He said: After the Qá'im. I said: How long will the Qá'im stay (lit.: stay upright) in His world? He said: Nineteen years.<sup>49</sup> Then there will arise in the world the Victorious Who is the Husayn, may peace be upon Him, and seek vengeance for Him (i.e., the Qá'im) and His companions. Thus He will kill and enslave until there arises the Generous Who is the Commander of the Faithful;

وعلى بن عبدالله...از امام محمد باقر روایت نموده که گفت قائم آل محمد  
 در این مدت مالک کل زمین خواهد بود سیصد و نه سال پادشاهی خواهد  
 کرد و در روی زمین همان قدر که اصحاب کهفرا مدت خواهد بود تا روزی که  
 که هر روزش برابر پیدا شوند... در روایت دیگری هفت سال سلطنت کند  
<sup>50</sup> ده روز باشد و هر ماهش برابر ده ماه و هر سالش برابر ده سال خواهد بود

And 'Alí b. 'Abdu'lláh...narrates from *imám* Muhammad Báqir Who said: The Qá'im of Muhammad's Family will be the ruler over the whole earth during that period. He will rule for three hundred and nine years and will be on earth as long as the companions of the Cave [did] until the day they were found...In another version He will reign for seven years and each of these days will equal ten days, each of the months will equal ten months, each of these years will equal ten years.

The sources also clearly indicate the period of 50,000 years:

...عن أبي عبد الله عليه السلام أنه قال حين سئل عن اليوم الذي ذكر  
و هي كرة "في يوم كان مقداره خمسين الف سنة" الله مقداره في القرآن  
رسول الله صلى الله عليه و آله فيكون ملكه في كرتة خمسين ألف  
سنة<sup>51</sup>

[It is narrated] from Abu 'Abdu'lláh,<sup>52</sup> may peace be upon Him, who when asked concerning the day whereof the measure God mentioned in the Koran in the following way: 'in a day whereof the measure is fifty thousand years,'<sup>53</sup> said: 'this is the return of the Messenger of God, may peace be upon Him and His family,' thus, His reign upon His return will be fifty thousand years.

And finally references to "Husayn covering His eyes at an old age" are also found in the traditions:

عن أبي جعفر عليه السلام قال : إن أول من يرجع لچاركم الحسين عليه  
سنة<sup>54</sup> من الكبرالسلام فيملك حتى تقع حاجباه على

[It is narrated] from Abu Ja'far, may peace be upon Him, [Who] said: 'The first one to return is your protector<sup>55</sup> Husayn, may peace be upon Him, and He will rule until His eyebrows fall down upon His eyes from old age';<sup>56</sup>

: إن أول من يكر في الدرجة الحسين... عن أبي عبد الله عليه السلام  
بن علي عليه السلام ، ويمكث في الارض  
أربعين سنة حتى يسقط حاجباه على عيني<sup>57</sup>

[It is narrated] from Abu 'Abdu'lláh, may peace be upon Him, [Who said]: 'verily, the first one to come

back upon the return [of the family of the Prophet] is Husayn b. 'Ali, may peace be upon both of them, and He will stay on earth for forty years<sup>58</sup> till His eyebrows fall down upon His eyes.'

Thus every part of Shaykh Ahmad's prophecy which we have considered in this article is found elsewhere and the prominent religious thinker simply collected them from well-known sources. However, when the eschatological events related in different traditions are put together precisely the way Shaykh Ahmad did in his account, the correspondences between the predictions and Bábí and Bahá'í history become most apparent:

The duration of His kingdom is seven years [the Báb was martyred during the 7<sup>th</sup> year of His mission]. God prolongs the days and nights that a year may become equal to ten years. Because God, may He be praised, commands the sphere[s] to slow down. Thus, the duration of His kingdom [will be] seventy years [counting] by these years. And when nine and fifty years elapse since them Husayn, may peace be upon Him, will come forth [ $1270 + 9 = 1279$  – the year of Bahá'u'lláh's declaration;  $1260 + 9 = 1269$  – the year when Bahá'u'lláh first received His revelation;  $1260-1309$  ✽ 50 years – the Ministry of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh as the Twin Manifestations;  $1266-1316$  – 50 years elapsing from the Báb's execution until His remains arrived at their permanent destination]. So, when the seventy years are completed death comes to the Proof [of God], may peace be upon Him, a woman from the Baní-Tamím kills Him... with a mortar of stone from a rooftop as he passes along the road. And when He dies Husayn, may peace be upon Him, will administer His burial arrangements [Bahá'u'lláh outlived the Báb, Who was martyred, while Himself died a natural death; Bahá'u'lláh took care of the remains of the Báb]. After that [Husayn] rises for the Cause [Bahá'u'lláh rose for the Cause after the Báb's martyrdom]...

And Yazíd b. Mu'áviyyih and 'Ubayd'u'lláh b. Ziyád... and those who were content with their actions from the

first to the last, may God curse them all, will assemble. Then imám Husayn, may peace be upon Him, will kill them and avenge upon them...until the enemies of humankind from every region band together against Him [Bahá'u'lláh challenged the old world order by His powerful new teaching and the 'enemies of humankind' joined their efforts to oppose Him on a global scale]...When the situation becomes increasingly grave for Him then 'Alí b. Abí Tálib, the Generous, the Commander of the Faithful, may peace be upon Him, will come forth with angels to assist Him ['Husayn joined by 'Alí' is a reference to Bahá'u'lláh (Husayn-'Alí)]. Thus, they will kill enemies of the religion [Bahá'u'lláh prevailed over His enemies]. And 'Alí will stay with Husayn, His son, may peace be upon both of them, for three hundred years and nine years [Bahá'u'lláh (Husayn-'Alí) stayed in the world till 1309 first receiving his Revelation nine years after the martyrdom of 'Alí ('Alí-Muhammad), the Bab] as did the companions of the Cave. Then 'Alí will be struck upon His head ['Alí-Muhammad, the Bab was martyred], may God curse His murderer. And Husayn, may peace be upon Him, will remain supreme over the religion of God [Bahá'u'lláh (Husayn-'Alí) outlived the Báb and continued Their twin mission]. And the period of His kingdom is fifty thousand years [ $50\,000 \times 10 = 500\,000$  years – duration of Bahá'u'lláh's cycle] until He covers His eyebrows with a bandage being well advanced in age [Bahá'u'lláh died a natural death at an old age].

In conclusion, let us summarize the main points above. The prophecy being considered, which was put together by Shaikh Ahmad from different traditions, reveals a picture of real historic events disguised in symbolic non-linear language. It is largely based on a play upon the numbers and names following in a certain significant, but not necessarily sequential, order. The numbers and names form meaningful combinations in a manner that does not preclude their components from conveying separate messages as well. A special role is accorded to the number "nine." Thus one can identify indications of the following events and time periods in Bábí and Bahá'í history:

1. The Báb will be martyred;
2. He will be martyred during the 7<sup>th</sup> year of His mission;
3. Bahá'u'lláh will outlive the Báb;
4. Bahá'u'lláh will take care of the Báb's remains;
5. After the Báb's martyrdom Bahá'u'lláh will rise to continue Their twin ministry;
6. Bahá'u'lláh will challenge the old world order by His powerful new teaching;
7. Bahá'u'lláh will face fierce opposition;
8. Bahá'u'lláh will prevail over His enemies, live until an old age, and die a natural death;
9. Indications of years and periods:
  - a.  $1270 + 9 = 1279$ : the year of Bahá'u'lláh's declaration;
  - b.  $1260 + 9 = 1269$ : the year when Bahá'u'lláh first received His revelation;
  - c. 1309: the year of Bahá'u'lláh's ascension;
  - d. 1260-1309✽50 years: the Ministry of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh as the Twin Manifestations;
  - e. 1266-1316: 50 years elapsing from the Báb's execution until His remains arrived at their permanent destination;
  - f.  $50,000 \times 10 = 500,000$  years: the duration of Bahá'u'lláh's cycle.<sup>59</sup>

Finally, the present writer is aware of the possible objections to his interpretations on the grounds that the correspondences suggested in the article could be seen as mere coincidences or assumptions. The only counter-argument I can put forward to my opponents is that such numerous "coincidences" within a short passage of text raises the question of an underlying objective reality. As for the assumptions, as long as I have been consistent in my assumptions (which I believe I have) they are at least not arbitrary. It would be relevant to remember that

Shaykh Ahmad — given his spiritual status acting under a divine inspiration or guidance — could have consciously or unconsciously presented a prophecy in a manner which would include an account of real future events.

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## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The St. Petersburg Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences (former St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies) has a vast collection of Shaykhi manuscripts (as well as Bábí and Bahá'í). Most of the manuscripts containing works of Shaykh Ahmad Ahsá'í and Siyyid Kázim Rashtí (50 works) originated before the Báb's Declaration in 1260 AH and therefore did not pass through the hands of Karím-Khán Kirmání's followers.
- <sup>2</sup> Since the subject of this article is limited to this passage, I will refer to it as the "prophecy."
- <sup>3</sup> The "Hayát al-Nafs" is a systematic outline of Shaykhi doctrines, providing the basis for the "Usul-i-'Aqá'id."
- <sup>4</sup> The first manuscript is undated, the other two are dated respectively: 1248/1832-33, 1242/1826-27.
- <sup>5</sup> The lithographs are dated: 1276/1859, 1279/1862.
- <sup>6</sup> W. S. Hatcher, *Minimalism*, p. 12.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid, 12-13.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid, 67-68.
- <sup>9</sup> Cf. Bahá'u'lláh. *Kitáb-i-Iqán: The Book of Certitude*, p. 254-255.
- <sup>10</sup> M.Sours, *Understanding Biblical Prophecy*, p. 31-34.
- <sup>11</sup> Cf. Bahá'u'lláh, *ibid*, p. 255.
- <sup>12</sup> M. Sours, *ibid*, p. 48.
- <sup>13</sup> Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 101-102.
- <sup>14</sup> *Lights of Guidance*, p. 472.
- <sup>15</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Iqán*, p. 151. 154, 158-159, 161.
- <sup>16</sup> See *Lights of Guidance*, p. 496, 498, *God Passes By*, p. 94.
- <sup>17</sup> See *God Passes By*, p. 33.
- <sup>18</sup> Sours, *ibid*, p. 36.
- <sup>19</sup> Here and below translation mine.
- <sup>20</sup> In the MS the word is misspelled: السبوعوعون .
- <sup>21</sup> In the MS the word is misspelled: نتحاون .
- <sup>22</sup> "Their" refers to the prophet Muhammad's family/descendants — the *imáms*.

<sup>23</sup> The *imáms*.

<sup>24</sup> See *God Passes By*, p. 54 (here and below bold face mine)]

<sup>25</sup> "His" refers to Bahá'u'lláh.

<sup>26</sup> See *God Passes By*, p. 92, 104.

<sup>27</sup> The principle of interpretation applied here is similar to the one employed in the Bahá'í Writings for "the year sixty," which is identified with the year 1260, cf.: "In the year sixty, His Cause shall be made manifest, and His name shall be proclaimed" [Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitáb-i-Iqán. The Book of Certitude*, p. 253].

<sup>28</sup> This is an obvious error.

<sup>29</sup> See also *Bihár al-Anvâr*, vol. 53, p. 100. The present author thanks Kházehe Fanánápazír for sharing information about the *Bihár al-Anvâr* internet site.

<sup>30</sup> See *Bihár al-Anvâr*, vol. 53, p. 147, cf. Ha'iri. *Ilzám al-Nasíb*, vol. 2, p. 322.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. *The Koran interpreted*. Tr. with an Introduction by A. J. Arberry, p. 291.

<sup>32</sup> In the other two manuscripts the name is: عبيد الله .

<sup>33</sup> This is an obvious error (see the other two manuscripts).

<sup>34</sup> The word is obviously misspelled.

<sup>35</sup> The order of words in this compound number is strikingly unusual. The normal order is: ثلثمائة وتسع سنين.

<sup>36</sup> The *imáms*.

<sup>37</sup> See *God Passes By*, p. 221.

<sup>38</sup> See *God Passes By*, p. 91-92, 106-107 (bold face mine).

<sup>39</sup> Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 143 (here and below bold face mine).

<sup>40</sup> Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes by*, p. 274. See also A. Rabbani, *Remains of the Báb in Tihrán* // [bahai-library.com/histories/remains.bab.htm](http://bahai-library.com/histories/remains.bab.htm).

<sup>41</sup> See Amoli, 441.

<sup>42</sup> See *Ilzám al-Nasíb*, vol. 2, p. 246.

<sup>43</sup> See *Tárikh Ma Ba'd al-Zuhur*, p. 622.

<sup>44</sup> See *Ibid*, p. 616.

<sup>45</sup> See *Bihár al-Anvâr*, vol. 53, p. 94, cf. *Ilzám al-Nasíb*, vol. 2, p. 315, *Tárikh Ma Ba'd al-Zuhur*, p. 621.

<sup>46</sup> In a different version: تسعة عشر من يوم قيامه إلى يوم موته.

<sup>47</sup> See *Bihár al-Anvâr*, vol. 53, p. 145, cf. *ibid*, p. 100-101, 146-147, *Ilzám al-Nasíb*, vol. 2, p. 318, 322.

<sup>48</sup> Muhammad b. 'Alí al-Báqir (Abu Ja'far) — the 5<sup>th</sup> Shi'ih *imám*.



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- <sup>49</sup> Nineteen years elapsed between the Báb's and Bahá'u'lláh's Declarations (1260 AH – 1279 AH).
- <sup>50</sup> See Majlisi, *Tadhkirat al-Ayimma*, p. 216.
- <sup>51</sup> See *Bihár al-Anvár*, vol. 53, p. 104, cf. *Ilzám al-Nasíb*, vol. 2, p. 310.
- <sup>52</sup> Abu 'Abdu'lláh, i.e., *imám* Ja'far al-Sádiq (the 6<sup>th</sup> *imám*).
- <sup>53</sup> Cf. the Koran 70: 4.
- <sup>54</sup> See *Bihár al-Anvár*, vol. 53, p. 43-44, cf. *ibid*, 64.
- <sup>55</sup> One of the meanings of this word is "protector". See Lane, Book I, Part 2, p. 483.
- <sup>56</sup> The present author thanks Mark Hellaby for consultation on the translation of this and next quote.
- <sup>57</sup> See *Bihár al-Anvár*, vol. 53, p. 64.
- <sup>58</sup> Bahá'u'lláh's ministry on earth from the time He first received His revelation (1269 AH) until His ascension (1309 AH) lasted for 40 years. Shoghi Effendi wrote: "The ascension of Bahá'u'lláh had plunged into grief and bewilderment His loyal supporters, quickened the hopes of the betrayers of His Cause...The Instrument He had forged, the Covenant He had Himself instituted, had canalized, after His passing, the forces released by Him in the course of a forty-year ministry, had preserved the unity of His Faith and provided the impulse required to propel it forward to achieve its destiny" [*God Passes By*, p. 404 (bold face mine)].
- <sup>59</sup> As for the number "59," also indicated in the prophecy, the only interpretation I can suggest is that it might refer to the sum of both the Báb's and Bahá'u'lláh's ministries: 19 + 40 (see also below). This calculation would not be mathematical, for the 19 years of the Báb's dispensation include the 10 years which Moojan Momen defines as Bahá'u'lláh's "Messianic concealment" (see Momen, *Messianic Concealment and Theophanic Disclosure*, p. 71-88), thus already included in the 40 years of Bahá'u'lláh's ministry. Consequently, this interpretation of the 59 year period would be based on counting the 10 years twice.