

The Manifestation of the Mystery¹

16 May 2025

Introduction:

The advent of the Báb marks the dawn of a new chapter in the evolution of humanity. In His writings, He identifies the moment of His declaration as the dawn of the Day of Resurrection. This alone reveals the profound truth that His Revelation has ushered in a new stage in the spiritual journey of humankind. One of the luminous reflections of this reality in His writings is the association of the year of His declaration with the unveiling of the Mystery (سرّ: Sirr)². In mystical texts, much has been said about the Mystery and its various stages. The first book revealed by the Báb after His declaration—the Commentary on the Sūrah of Joseph—is imbued with allusions to this Mystery.

But what is this Mystery that has now emerged from concealment, made manifest and resplendent before all? This brief article seeks to explore that sacred theme in a concise manner.

- **The Time of the Descent of Revelation upon the Báb's Heart**

To understand the concept of Sirr (the Mystery) and why the Manifestation of the Mystery coincides with the year 1260 AH (1844 CE), it is essential to acknowledge that, in the writings of the Báb, the time of His declaration is never treated as identical with the descent of divine revelation upon His heart.

This distinction reveals that within His worldview, the notions of religion and Prophethood undergo a profound and transformative evolution. The breadth of this subject cannot be fully addressed here due to the limitations of space. However, it is necessary to examine when the Báb became endowed with divine knowledge, when He became conscious of His truth, station, and mission, and at what moment the divine revelation is sent down upon His heart.

In truth, the writings of the Báb offer diverse expressions concerning this matter. These varying accounts reflect His manner of speaking in veiled or symbolic language, according to the level of spiritual understanding of the people surrounding Him. The true essence of this issue is clearly explained in the Persian Bayán. But before

¹ Originally written in Persian by **Dr. Nader Saiedi** and published in *Payám-i-Bahá'í* (May 2019, No. 474, pp. 27–40), this article has been translated, adapted, and annotated by **Mohammad Norozi**.

² This word, without the doubling of its consonant, equals 260 in the Abjad system.

presenting that explanation, it is helpful to consider some of the key references made by the Báb regarding the time He received divine knowledge and revelation.

- **The First Revelation: The Commentary on the Sūrah of al-Baqarah³ (the Cow)**

The earliest indication of this event pertains to the revelation of the Commentary on the Sūrah of the Cow. According to the Báb, the writing of this commentary began on the very night that Siyyid Kāzim Rashti⁴ passed away in Karbala⁵. The Báb designates that night as the moment when divine knowledge was bestowed upon Him. In this passage, He declares:

“O God! Thou art witness that on the day I intended to write that Book, I beheld in a dream that the Holy Land (Karbala) became as particles and ascended into the heavens. Then, it all came before My house and stood firm. Thereafter came news of the passing of the noble and learned friend, My teacher—may God’s mercy be upon him.”

In this vision, the Báb relates that the land of Karbala — not merely the house of His teacher — disintegrated into particles, rose upward, and then reassembled before His own blessed house in Shíráz. This vision occurred on the night of the 9th or 10th of Dhu’l-Hijjah⁶, 1259 AH (30th or 31st of December, 1843 CE), approximately four months and twenty-five days before His declaration on the 5th of Jumádá al-Awwal⁷, 1260 AH (22 May 1844 CE).

- **The Book of al-Fíhrist⁸ (Index)**

It is also important to refer to another testimony in the Báb’s work "Kitáb al-Fíhrist", wherein He states:

“And indeed, it is He who bore the knowledge of Kāzim—peace be upon him—during the sacred month, after he passed away and ascended to the presence of God in that very month.”

Here, the Báb explicitly states that He became the bearer of Siyyid Kāzim’s spiritual knowledge in the sacred month of Dhu’l-Hijjah, following the latter’s passing. Both

³ Al-Baqarah (البقرة) is the second and longest chapter (Sūrah) of the Quran. It consists of 286 verses (āyāt).

⁴ Sayyid Kāzim bin Qāsim al-Ḥusaynī ar-Rashtī (سيد كاظم بن قاسم الحسيني الرشدي), mostly known as Siyyid Kāzim Rashtī (b1793 CE), was the son of Siyyid Qasim of Rasht, a town in northern Iran. He was appointed as the successor of Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsa’i, and led the Shaykhī movement until his death (31 December, 1843 CE).

⁵ Karbala is a major city in central Iraq. Karbala is one of the main political, spiritual, and cultural hubs of Shi’a Islām. The city is best known as the location of the battle of Karbala in 680 AD between Imām Husayn and his band of several dozen followers, and several thousand soldiers led by General Umar ibn Sa’d.

⁶ Dhu’l-Hijjah is the twelfth and final month in the Islamic calendar.

⁷ Jumádá al-Awwal (also known as Jumāda l-Ūlā and Jumāda I) is the fifth month of the Islamic calendar.

⁸ The Kitáb al-Fíhrist (كتاب الفهرست), meaning "The Book of the Index," is a significant early work by the Báb, composed on 15th Jumada II 1261 AH (21st June 1845 CE) following His pilgrimage to Mecca. This text serves as an autobiographical catalogue, listing His writings up to that time, detailing titles, subsections, and, to some extent, their contents. It provides invaluable insight into the Báb's literary output and spiritual mission.

accounts appear to indicate that the beginning of the Báb's divine knowledge was associated with the death of Siyyid Kāzim Rashti and the transfer of the spiritual station of "Bábiyyat (gathehood)" to Him.

- **The Spiritual Significance of Symbol and Timing**

However, these utterances are not merely historical records. Rather, they are expressed with divine wisdom and in accordance with the capacity of the people of that time to understand. The Báb spoke of His knowledge and station only to the extent that the hearts of that age could endure. Nevertheless, even in these passages, the true essence of His message is conveyed through symbolic language.

In the vision of the disintegration and reassembly of Karbala, there lies a subtle and profound symbol. Though at first glance, it may appear that the subject is the transmission of knowledge from the late Siyyid Kāzim to the Báb, the Báb does not describe merely the collapse and ascent of Siyyid Kāzim's home. Instead, the entire city of Karbala — with all its spiritual and historical significance — becomes as dust, ascends, and reconstitutes itself before the threshold of the Báb.

This transformation points to a greater reality that the entire spiritual legacy of the past age was being gathered, elevated, and then reborn in the presence of the new Manifestation. The imagery thus reveals a mystical and cosmic shift, ushering in a new era of divine revelation, foretold and symbolically prepared for by the passing of the former leader.

This event is no coincidence. On the contrary, the Báb is conveying a truth of profound significance that not only was the house of Siyyid Kāzim Rashti transformed into particles and lifted to the heavens, but even the Shrine of Imám Husayn⁹—the heart of Karbala—was elevated, dissolved, and then reconstituted in the presence of His own sanctified dwelling.

In other words, this vision represents not only the transference of the knowledge of Siyyid Kāzim but also the essence and inner reality of Imám Husayn to the Báb. As we shall later observe, Karbala, in the writings of the Báb, becomes a symbol of truth itself and the mystery of Islam, a spiritual reality that now becomes fully embodied in His own person, and which finds its manifestation in the year 1260 AH (1844 CE)—the Year of His declaration.

In this statement, profound mystical concepts are also implicitly conveyed, though only a few are mentioned. **The first point** is that, although Karbala is traditionally the "Sacred Land" (أرض مقدس: Arḍ-i-Muqaddas), the Báb's statement makes it clear that with this

⁹ Imám Husayn, who was born in 626 CE in Medina and martyred in 680 CE at the Battle of Karbala, is one of the most revered figures in Islám, especially in Shi'a tradition. He was the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, the son of Imám 'Alī and Fāṭimah al-Zahrā', and the third Imám in Twelver Shi'ism.

new dispensation, even the meaning of sacredness itself is transformed. While “the Sacred Land” often refers to Karbala in His writings, in a spiritual sense, it may also refer to Shíráz¹⁰, and later to Tehrán¹¹, where the new revelation unfolds its power. **The second point** is the reality of Return¹² (رجعت: Raj‘at), which is presented symbolically in this statement.

The third point is that the Báb speaks of the elevation and exaltation (ارتفاع: irtifā‘)¹³ of Karbala, followed by its establishment in Shíráz. However, it is important to note that the use of the term "elevation" here is not incidental; rather, it expresses the concept of the dialectical transformation of religions. This is the very meaning conveyed, for instance, in the Persian Bayán, wherein the exaltation of the Bayán is described as the ascent unto Him Whom God shall make manifest. *"The elevation of the Bayán is none other than the ascent unto Him." (the Persian Bayán 3:3).*

Finally, one must also give heed to another subtle matter that in His early writings, the Báb at times refers to Siyyid Kázim as 'My teacher' — a phrase which not only bespeaks the Báb's grace and reverence toward him, but also conveys a mystical significance. The Báb received his knowledge not through study or tutelage, but suddenly and divinely, by virtue of His station. On a deeper level, this echoes a profound spiritual idea, also conveyed by Siyyid Kázim to his students that the Prophet Muhammad is the teacher of Imám ‘Alí¹⁴, and simultaneously, Imám ‘Alí is the teacher of Muhammad—a concept expressing the reciprocal unity of divine figures.

The Báb Himself has written an exegesis on this concept, which expresses a subtle point that Imám ‘Alí, by virtue of His celestial headship and the knowledge of “what was” (ماكان), which transcends time and space, brings this knowledge into the realm of history and the material world. He is thus regarded as the one who imparted the knowledge of “what will be” (مايكون) – that is, the knowledge of the temporal world to Prophet Muhammad.

In the same manner, Sayyid Kázim Rashtí's knowledge is but a reflection of the divine, heavenly knowledge of the Báb, which, with His permission, becomes manifested in the

¹⁰ Birthplace of the Báb.

¹¹ Birthplace of Bahá'u'lláh (بهاء الله, meaning "the Glory of God").

¹² In Shi'a Islám, especially within Twelver Shi'ism, raj‘at is the belief that certain holy figures—particularly the Twelfth Imám, and Imám Husayn—will return to life before the Day of Judgment to establish justice and defeat their enemies.

¹³ In the Writings of the Báb, the term ارتفاع (irtifā‘)—commonly translated as "elevation," "removal," or "abrogation"—carries a highly dialectical and theologically nuanced meaning, especially when viewed through the lens of divine revelation and progressive religious truth. At its core, ارتفاع (irtifā‘) in the Báb's usage does not simply mean "cancellation" or "destruction", but rather a dynamic transformation—the transcendence of a former stage through its fulfillment in a higher, more complete form.

¹⁴ Imám ‘Alí who was born in 600 CE and died (assassinated in Kufa) in 661CE, is one of the most central and beloved figures in Islamic history — especially in Shi'a Islám, where He is considered the first Imám and the rightful successor to the Prophet Muhammad.

period of concealment (زمان بطون) in the temporal world, revealing a portion of this divine knowledge in a manner suited to the intellectual capacity of the people of His time.

The second verse regarding the beginning of the Bab's knowledge and revelation is directly related to the experience of Imám Husayn. We observed that even the event surrounding the passing of Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī was, in essence, connected to Imám Husayn. However, in many of these discussions, Imám Husayn plays a central and pivotal role.

The most famous of these instances is the Bab's blessed words in Sahīfih- 'Adliyyih¹⁵. In the Sahīfih- 'Adliyyih, the Báb explains the source of His divine knowledge and the way revelation began to flow through Him. He writes:

"Know that the appearance of these verses, these supplications, and divine sciences comes from a dream in which I beheld the severed head of the pure One, Imám Husayn (peace be upon Him), detached from His sacred body, along with the heads of the near ones. I drank seven draughts of blood out of the fullness of love from that noble head. It is from the blessing of His blood that My chest has been expanded, to contain such firm verses and mighty prayers. Praise be to God who caused Me to be nourished by the blood of His Proof, and made it the truth of My heart—and thus was [this revelation] sent down amid tribulation." (Sahīfih- 'Adliyyih, p. 14).

Here once again, Karbala—the site of Imám Husayn's martyrdom and the severance of His blessed head—plays a central symbolic role in the beginning of divine inspiration.

But unlike the previous vision—where the physical city and shrine of Karbala are dissolved and transported to Shíráz—in this dream, the spiritual essence of Husayn Himself is internalized by the Báb. The blood, in mystical symbolism, is the inner truth (bāṭin) of a being—the heart of their identity. And for this reason, in the language of mysticism, He is the embodiment of the fu'ād, the innermost heart, or the essence of being. The drinking of Imám Husayn's blood, as the perfection of love, is in truth an expression of the reality of love—in which the lover and the Beloved become one.

In this sacred dream, we witness the symbolic return (raj'at) of Imám Husayn in the person of the Báb, as the inner truth of the martyr is reborn in the new Manifestation.

The Báb's own words, as recorded in the Sahīfih- 'Adliyyih, explain the true meaning of His vision. At the end of the passage, He states: *"And praise be to God who caused Me to drink the blood of His Proof, and made it the truth of My heart."*

¹⁵ The Sahīfih-'Adliyyih (Epistle of Justice) is another notable work by the Báb. This Persian text elaborates on the concept of divine justice, emphasizing the Báb's role in upholding and manifesting this attribute of God. While specific details about the composition date and context are less documented, the Sahīfih-'Adliyyih contributes to understanding the Báb's theological perspectives and his articulation of justice within the framework of his mission.

This means that the blood of Imám Husayn is the truth of the Báb's innermost heart, for that blood is nothing other than the inner essence—the heart—of Imám Husayn Himself.

The idea that blood symbolizes sacred truths has been echoed even by modern sociologists such as Émile Durkheim¹⁶, who noted in his writings that in ancient traditions, individuals would mix their blood to seal covenants—a symbolic act representing the sanctity of the bond, affirmed by a divine power.

Yet beyond sociological symbolism, the Báb's statement in the Sahīfih- 'Adliyyih reveals a profound mystical truth that also finds reflection in the Gospel. In the New Testament, Christ identifies Himself as the true sustenance, the heavenly food sent down to nourish the souls of humanity. In John 6:53–58, Christ proclaims that eternal life is granted only to those who eat His flesh and drink His blood.

"For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him." (John 6:55-56).

Just as the Gospel's language conveys mystical unity between the divine and the human, the Báb's vision of drinking seven draughts of the blood of Imám Husayn expresses not only a mystic union but also carries symbolic meaning.

It is evident that these seven draughts are, at once, a symbol of the Báb Himself—His blessed Name being composed of seven letters (على محمد - 'Alí Muhammad)—and, as He Himself hath uttered, He is the "Essence of the Seven Letters." At the same time, they are a sign of the seven stages of creation¹⁷ through which His Being hath been made manifest.

Thus, the vision communicates both the union of love with Imám Husayn and the spiritual structure of divine manifestation. There are many mystical subtleties in this vision, but here we shall focus on a few.

First, the Báb explicitly connects the vision of drinking the blood of Imám Husayn to His own acceptance of trials and tribulations. He concludes the passage with: *"And thus was the tribulation sent down upon Me."*

¹⁶ David Émile Durkheim (15 April 1858 – 15 November 1917) was a French sociologist. Durkheim formally established the academic discipline of sociology and is commonly cited as one of the principal architects of modern social science, along with both Karl Marx and Max Weber.

¹⁷ In the writings of the Báb, particularly in the Persian Bayán, the seven stages of creation are outlined as the divine processes through which all existence emanates from the Unknowable Essence. These stages are: **Will** (Mashiyyat) – The initial divine impulse or intention, **Determination** (Irādah) – The specification of that will, **Destiny** (Qadar) – The unfolding of the divine plan, **Decree** (Qadā') – The establishment of the divine command, **Permission** (Idhn) – The granting of the capacity for existence, **Term** (Ajāl) – The appointed duration of existence, and **Book** (Kitāb) – The manifestation of the divine will in creation.

Sahīfih- ‘Adliyyih was penned in early 1262 AH (1846 CE), likely in the second half of Muharram¹⁸, a time of immense personal suffering. In another text written just days prior, entitled "Commentary on the Prayer of Occultation¹⁹", the Báb elaborates on the connection between the martyrdom of Imám Husayn in Muharram and His own spiritual martyrdom in that same sacred month.

He explains that while Imám Husayn’s suffering was a physical martyrdom, the rejection and cruelty the Báb faced constituted a martyrdom of the soul, a piercing of the heart. Thus, in Shíráz in 1262 AH (1846 CE), a spiritual re-enactment of Karbala’s tragedy takes place. The Báb draws attention to the link between the years 261 AH (year of Karbala) and 1262 AH (1846 CE), declaring the latter to be the return and spiritual fulfillment of the former. Once again, Shíráz and Karbala are seen as reflections of one another—and indeed, in time, it is Tabríz²⁰ that comes to reenact the epic of Karbala.

Another deeply mystical point is that the Báb likens the source of divine verses to His heart (fu’ād). It is the blood flowing from this heart that serves as the ink and wellspring of the revealed words. From this sacred blood arises the four forms of divine utterance. That is, Verses (Āyāt), Supplications (Munājāt), Commentaries (Tafsīr) Philosophical and mystical discourses. In His Commentary on the Sūrah of Kawthar²¹, the Báb identifies the four rivers of Paradise—pure water, milk, honey, and wine—as metaphors for these four expressions of the divine word. He writes:

“For these rivers flow from beneath the eternal mountain, which is manifested in the heart (fu’ād), and the ink of revelation flows ceaselessly and eternally.”

Thus, the breast (innermost heart-soul) of Imám Husayn becomes mystically united with the breast (innermost heart-soul) of the Báb, and from this spiritual heart, the word of God flows forth. That is why the Báb associates His vision of drinking the blood of Husayn with the descent of sacred texts from His own being:” *And it is through the blessing of His (i.e., Imám Husayn) breath that His (i.e., the Bab) inner heart has been illumined, like these firm and immutable verses, and these unwavering supplications.”*

¹⁸ Muharram is the first month of the Islamic calendar. It is one of the four sacred months of the year when warfare is banned. It precedes the month of Safar. The tenth of Muharram is known as Āshūrā, an important day of commemoration in Islām.

¹⁹ The Commentary on the Occultation Prayer (Sharh-i-Du‘á’-i-Ghaybat), also known as the Risāliyy-i-Ja‘fariyyih or Tafsīr-i-Hā’, is one of the Báb’s seminal works, composed in the early to middle part of the first month of 1262 AH. (January 1846 CE). This treatise delves into profound theological themes, elucidating the nature of divine creation, the perfection inherent in God’s will, and the esoteric significance of the occultation of the Imám.

²⁰ The city where the Báb was martyred.

²¹ The Báb’s Commentary on the Sūrah of Al-Kawthar (Qur’an 108), is a profound and intricate exegesis that delves into the spiritual and metaphysical dimensions of the Sūrah. Composed around May 1846 for Sayyid Yahyā Darābī (Vaḥid), this commentary spans approximately 250 pages and is renowned for its detailed, letter-by-letter analysis. It is considered one of the most significant works from the Báb’s early period and offers deep insights into his theological perspectives.

The most profound mystical insight in this experience concerns the appearance of the Mystery (Sirr), which is subtly embedded within this vision. Its full explanation is reserved for later.

The third allusion in the writings of the Báb to the dawning of divine knowledge within His being is once again connected to Karbala.

In an Epistle revealed in Isfahán, the Báb recounts the events of His life leading to that point. There, He associates the beginning of divine knowledge within Himself with the time He entered Karbala. He emphasizes that this knowledge of the unseen came to Him without having studied with anyone—not even Siyyid Kázim Rashti. He declares:

"... and the knowledge of the unseen dawned upon Me at the time I entered Karbala, and it came not through learning from any soul—not even from Siyyid Kázim (peace be upon him) ..." Until it was in Karbala," the Báb supplicates, "that what Thou hadst decreed for Me of the knowledge of the unseen was fulfilled. And Thou didst nurture Me by Thy grace without My having learned from any of the scholars of that land. Yet on many a day, Thou didst allow Me companionship in the presence of one of Thy servants, whom Thou hadst made self-aware and confirmed his heart with the spirit of faith."

In the above passage, the Báb addresses God in a tone of humble prayer, declaring that it was in Karbala where the divine knowledge destined for Him was fully bestowed. He emphasizes that this enlightenment occurred not through the tutelage of any religious scholar of the land, but by God's grace alone. Nevertheless, He was at times granted the intimate presence of a devoted servant of God—one whose inner being was awakened and whose heart had been imbued with the spirit of true faith. The individual referred to here is Siyyid Kázim Rashti, the highly respected and influential Shaykhí leader with whom the Báb shared a profound spiritual connection.

It is well known that the Báb would occasionally attend Siyyid Kázim's lectures. However, as this passage reveals, their relationship transcended a conventional teacher-student dynamic; it was one of spiritual companionship—or as the Báb expresses, "mu'ānasat." In the Persian Bayán, the Báb recounts an incident when Siyyid Kázim once visited the Báb at His home, the owner of the house, considering Siyyid Kázim impure, ordered that the doorway be washed after his departure.

"Even as in the days when I Myself abode in the sacred precincts of 'Atabát (i.e., Karbala), it came to pass that when the late Siyyid entered My dwelling, upon his departure, the owner of that house, perceiving that the hand of that tree of purity had touched the door, commanded that the door be washed." (the Persian Bayán, 5:15).

Thus far, we have explored three distinct accounts concerning the commencement of the Báb's divine knowledge, all of which share a symbolic link to Karbala and the figure of Imám Husayn. Yet other episodes in His writings describe the origin of revelation

without direct reference to Karbala, one such instance being a profound dream narrated during His residence in Shíráz. In a prayer the Báb describes a vision of Imám Muhammad al-Jawād, the ninth Imám. This vision serves as a symbolic genesis of divine utterances and supplications. He writes:

“O Lord, Thou art witness that in this very house in which I now reside, I had once seen in a dream that in its centre was a tomb, covered with a shining structure. As I approached the shrine, behold, Muhammad al-Jawād emerged from the sepulchre in a form of such beauty that no act of creation could rival it. Immediately, by divine inspiration, I recognized My Imám and greeted Him. In My hand I held a fruit like the one which today Thou have bestowed upon Me. I stood facing the Kaaba in this very spot, peeled the fruit, and presented it with both hands to My Master—may My soul be His sacrifice. He took part of it and said, ‘This year, I have not yet tasted of this fruit.’ Then He ate it, and gave Me a portion as well.”

“Then from His pocket He brought out two handfuls of a sweet known among the Persians as nuql-e-hel (cardamom candy) and honoured Me with it. I received it all and ate it, from the hand of God Himself. Praise be to God, Who graced Me with such bounty, and from that time onward, by the blessing of His generosity, My heart was opened to the kind of supplications I now reveal.”

In this mystical account, the sacred figures of the past merge seamlessly with the person of the Báb. Just as Karbala is transformed into Shíráz, and just as the tomb of Imám al-Jawād, originally in Baghdad, is now seen within the Báb’s own home, so too is it through the Báb that all the Imáms and Prophets are spiritually reborn in this world.

The vision involves Imám al-Jawād, the ninth Imám, subtly alludes to the significance of Bahā’ (glory)—the divine Will that encompasses all sanctity. His emergence “in the most beautiful of forms” recalls the imagery of Joseph, Himself a symbol of perfect beauty, who in the Báb’s writings is also associated with Imám Husayn. Indeed, the “reality of this Husayn” is destined to manifest once more in Bahá’u’lláh, a future figure who is both Husayn and beyond.

The offering of the peeled fruit—possibly an orange or apple—is highly symbolic: the Báb peels it, exposing the essence, and presents it to the Imám, who acknowledges its freshness. This peeling signifies the revealing of the inner mysteries of divine knowledge. Moreover, the Báb faces the Kaaba while doing this, because the revelation of the mystery is the revelation of God.

As for the sweets—perhaps symbolizing the Persian writings of the Báb, which are considered more accessible—they reflect divine generosity in its simplest form. And the fact that Imám al-Jawād reached the rank of Imám in His youth and was martyred at the age of 25 corresponds, not coincidentally, to the age at which the Báb Himself declared His mission. Thus, the Imám is reborn through the Báb.

Having now examined four different accounts describing the first descent of divine knowledge upon the Báb, we come to a fifth and particularly precise record, which appears multiple times in His writings. This concerns mid-Rabīʿ al-Awwal²² 1260 AH (1844 CE), less than fifty days before His formal declaration.

This date is referred to explicitly in more than one tablet. For instance, in a text revealed on the first of Rabīʿ al-Thānī²³ 1261 AH (1845 CE), the Báb states in prayer:

“O Lord, Thou knowest that the first day Thou didst command Me to manifest was in the month of ‘Ayn al-Awwal (Rabīʿ al-Awwal) of the year 1260.”

Here, the word “manifest” (zuhūr) is directly tied to this date, underscoring its importance. In another passage—written while composing a Commentary on the Sūrah of Joseph—He again prays:

“O God, Thou art aware that the first day Thou didst reveal Thy verses upon My heart and didst open My breast with Thy clear signs was in the month of ‘Ayn al-Awwal, 1260.”

Most striking of all is the Book of the al-Fíhrist (Index), where He writes:

“Verily, the first day upon which the Spirit descended upon His heart was the fifteenth day of the month of Ayn al-Awwal (Rabīʿ al-Awwal). And from that day until the day when God made His signs forbidden unto you, there transpired fifteen months, as recorded in the Book.”

This indicates that the descent of the Holy Spirit began on the 15th of Rabīʿ al-Awwal, and that from that point forward, a period of fifteen months of revelation followed. The ending of this period marks a momentous occasion when God forbade the people from receiving further divine verses—due to their unworthiness and persecution of the Báb and His companions.

It was on that day, in mid-Jumādā al-Thānī²⁴ 1261 (1846 CE), that the Báb declared a five-year cessation of revelation. As a result, He revealed the Kitáb al-Fíhrist, a catalogue of all the writings revealed until that day. This marked the beginning of a sacred interlude. From that point, the Báb consistently referred the faithful to Mullā Husayn Bushrūʿī, directing their questions to him and recognizing him as one deeply learned in the first book, the Qayyūm al-Asmā²⁵.

²² Rabīʿ al-Awwal is the third month of the Islamic calendar and is significant because it commemorates the birth of the Prophet Muhammad.

²³ Rabīʿ al-Thānī is the fourth month of the Islamic calendar.

²⁴ Jumādā al-Thānī is the sixth month of the Islamic calendar.

²⁵ The Qayyūm al-asmāʾ (The Self-Subsisting Lord of All Names) is the first major work revealed by the Báb, shortly after his declaration in 1844 CE. Often referred to as the Tafsīr Sūrat Yūsuf (Commentary on the Sūrah of Joseph), it is a profound and innovative text that reinterprets the Qurʾān, particularly Sūrah 12, through an esoteric and messianic lens. The Qayyūm al-Asmāʾ comprises 111 chapters (sūrah), mirroring the number of verses in the Qurʾān's Sūrat Yūsuf. Each chapter begins with the Bismillah al-Rahman al-Rahim ("In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful") and is composed in rhymed prose (sajʿ), emulating the Qurʾān's style.

Although this ban was intended to last five years, it continued only for about one year. Ultimately, it was the pleas of the faithful and the mercy of His compassionate heart that led the Báb to resume the revelation of the divine word once again.

Thus far, we see that within the writings of the Báb, five distinct experiences and multiple dates are mentioned regarding the descent of divine knowledge and revelation upon His heart. The very diversity of these experiences suggests that they are not merely historical moments, but rather symbolic expressions, each shaped according to the capacity of human understanding at different times.

In truth, the Báb often refers in His writings to the attainment of divine, innate knowledge (‘ilm ladunī) from His early childhood. One notable instance appears in His Commentary on the Sūrah of Jospheh, where He is introduced as a mystery veiled within the realm of divine concealment (‘amā’), and yet He declares that from the time of His youth, He was aware of His own reality. He proclaims in these words in the Sūrah of the Name:

“Say: I am the mystery in the realm of ‘amā (the realm of divine unknowability), through the Most Great Truth. Verily, I was veiled in the precinct of the Fire of Túr²⁶. And then, by God’s permission in My childhood, I was knowingly aware of Myself with the truth.”

In this powerful statement, the Báb equates Himself with the hidden mystery that once encircled the burning bush of Sinai—symbolic of the direct theophany of God. The concept of ‘amā’, this divine cloud of unknowing or pure potential, is further clarified in one of His Epistles. But what is manifestly clear is that the Báb affirms self-awareness of His divine reality from early youth, a theme also echoed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, who stated that the “sacred reality” is from the beginning aware of its own station²⁷.

Although such declarations may appear to conflict with earlier accounts of gradual unveiling or spiritual experiences, they can be harmonized when one refers to the Báb’s own explanation in the Persian Bayán, which articulates the matter explicitly: from the moment of His creation, He possessed divine knowledge and was aware of His essential reality.

“For the Tree of Reality witnesses its Own creation from within itself, knows all things, and sees them. Yet none recognize it or behold it with their own eye, for that eye is only created after the Manifestation appears among all things. It may be that in the house where He lives, neither the father, nor the mother, nor the people of the house, nor any of the creation recognize Him. Such was the case with the appearance of the Messenger

²⁶ In the writings of the Báb, the Fire of Túr, or the Fire of the Mount is a profoundly symbolic and spiritual image. It draws directly from the Qur’anic and Biblical account of Moses on Mount Sinai (Túr Sínā’), where he beholds the Burning Bush and hears the voice of God. This moment represents divine Revelation, the unveiling of the hidden through the medium of fire—pure, luminous, and awe-inspiring.

²⁷ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*. Cairo, 1329 AH, p. 109. In that work, He similarly affirms that the “sacred reality” is always aware of itself from the beginning, even before its public disclosure.

of God before His proclamation, and with the Point of the Bayán before His declaration. But His knowledge encompasses His own self and all the servants of God who walk under His shadow. From the moment the spirit is conferred upon Him, He knows His self until the end of His mission when His spirit ascends to another throne.” (the Persian Bayán 8:6).

Here, not only the Báb and “He Whom God shall make manifest,” but even Prophet Muhammad, possessed knowledge of Their identity prior to Their public declarations. They recognized the timeless nature of Their station, while awaiting the proper hour for its revelation to humanity. Thus, in the Qayyūm al-Asmā,’ the Báb affirms that He was fully conscious of His truth even as a child.

All the dates and experiences cited across His writings mark not the beginning of His divine knowledge, but rather the start of a new chapter in the preparation of humanity for His Manifestation. In these writings, the first is the last, and time becomes a mirror of timelessness and pre-eternity.

Many of these events are, intriguingly, linked with Karbala and Imám Husayn, and it is no coincidence that the Báb offers a mystical interpretation of the well-known Shi ‘i phrase, “Every day is ‘Āshūrā’²⁸.” In His interpretation, Husayn and his martyrdom are united with the timeless moment in which all times are one. In His commentary, the Báb identifies Husayn with the outpouring of divine existence, such that every day is ‘Āshūrā.’

Thus, all the dreams, visions, and dates are real, but they each reflect timeless truths that occurred before the creation of time, in the realm of divine pre-existence.

This understanding is supported by the very structure of the Báb’s greatest work, the Commentary of the Sūrah of Jospheh, which is entirely centred on dreams and visions. The story begins with Joseph’s dream as a child, in which the sun, the moon, and eleven stars prostrate before him. The Báb explains that this vision did not originate in the physical realm, but in the realm of pre-eternity (lāhūt). For the Báb, the dream holds the true reality, and the events of the material world are merely its reflection.

So too with the Báb’s own dreams—though they took place in the blessed House in Shíráz, their true origin lies in pre-eternal realms, in the depth of divine unity, where dreamer, vision, and experience are one. These dreams reveal that nothing in a prophet’s life is coincidental or mundane. Every event is a symbol, a reflection of the sacred reality.

²⁸ Āshūrā is a significant day in Islám, specifically observed on the 10th day of Muharram, the first month of the Islamic calendar. It is a day of commemoration with different meanings and celebrations among Sunni and Shia Muslims. Shia Muslims observe Āshūrā as a day of mourning to commemorate the martyrdom of Imám Husayn, grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, at the Battle of Karbala. This event is a central point in Shia tradition, and the day is often marked with rituals and reenactments to remember and learn from Husayn's sacrifice.

It is for this reason that Rabīʿ al-Awwal holds such special meaning in the Báb's writings—not only as the time of His earthly life, but as the mystic conception of His being. Although His physical birth occurred on the first of Muharram, the Báb often marks the true beginning of His life as the moment of divine conception, which He locates as nine lunar months and days prior to His birth—around the 22nd of Rabīʿ al-Awwal.

Interestingly, the Báb's declaration on the evening of the 5th of Jumādā al-Ūlā occurs exactly forty-two days after that symbolic date. The numerical value of forty-two in abjad is “balī” (yes)—an affirmation. This invites a mystical interpretation: the gap between conception and declaration represents a spiritual covenant, the mystic “yes” uttered by the Manifestation of God in response to the call of divine Will²⁹.

• The Declaration and the Revelation of the Hidden Mystery

As we have seen, the Báb's declaration on the 5th of Jumādā al-Ūlā was not the beginning of His awareness, but rather the unveiling of the mystery to the people. The reality of His being—the hidden mystery of all the prophets—had always been present but was, until then, veiled. The advent of the Báb and later Bahá'u'lláh marks the disclosure of that concealed truth.

An exquisite symbol of this is the abjad value of the word “Sirr” (the Mystery), which is 260, the same as the year 1260 AH., the year of the Báb's declaration. The Báb Himself alludes to this correlation, hinting at the cosmic significance of the number and the year.

The Qayyūm al-Asmā' is rich with these discussions on Sirr (the Mystery). The Báb refers to the four levels of the mystery found in mystical thought and associates them with the ranks of nuqṭa (point), nubuwwa (prophethood), wilāya (sainthood), and bābiyya (gatehood)—all of which, in this Dispensation, are manifested by Himself and the Letters of the Living³⁰.

²⁹ According to the Qur'ān, before the creation of the world, God gathered the essences of all things and asked them: “Am I not your Lord?” (alastu bi-rabbikum?). They responded, “Yes” (balī). The Báb references this in several of His writings, including the letter to His uncle, and notes that in abjad numerology, “balī” equals 42, which is why each chapter of the Qayyūm al-Asmā' consists of 42 verses—symbolizing this eternal covenant of affirmation.

³⁰ At the beginning of His Commentary on the Bismillah al-Rahman al-Rahim (In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful), the Báb explains that God has appointed four degrees for His own manifestation, which are known as the mysteries. These include the “Hidden Mystery” (al-sirr al-mustatir), and “the Mystery veiled by the Mystery” (al-sirr al-muqanna' bi'l-sirr). These have been interpreted variously in spiritual literature, including as Muhammad, 'Alī, Hasan, and Husayn, and broadly correspond to four universal spiritual ranks symbolized in the Bismillah as: Allāh (God), al-Rahmān (the Most Gracious), al-Rahim (the Most Merciful), and the hidden bā' (ب) or dot beneath the bā', representing the Nuqṭa (Point). These four stations manifest in the Báb's Dispensation as Himself (Nuqṭa) and the Letters of the Living.

Perhaps the most astonishing interpretation appears in His Commentary on the story of Joseph. There, He identifies Joseph with Imám Husayn, and the eleven brothers with the other Imáms. At first glance, this seems shocking—how could the Imáms cast Husayn into a well. Yet the Báb is speaking symbolically.

In this mystical commentary, Husayn's martyrdom is not just a tragedy—it represents the concealed truth of Islam, which the people of that time could not bear to hear. The well into which Joseph is cast is the abyss of divine oneness (aḥadiyya)—pure, undifferentiated divinity, beyond names and attributes.

Thus, the Imáms hide the truth of Islam (i.e., Husayn) in the well of aḥadiyya (oneness), too sublime for human eyes, and return to the world to teach in symbols. This hidden truth—this Husayn—is to remain concealed until the appointed time, when he will re-emerge as the Báb, revealed not in Egypt, but in Shíráz.

This interpretation of the story of Joseph, as revealed by the Báb—wherein Joseph is identified with Husayn, and Husayn, in turn, is identified with the Báb Himself—is intimately bound with all the sacred dreams and visions experienced by the Báb. The transmutation of Karbala into Shíráz, and the transference of the inmost heart of the Prince of Martyrs³¹ to the heart of the Báb, all proclaim the same eternal truth: that which was hidden has now become manifest in the appearance of the Báb and of Bahá'u'lláh.

But why does the Báb choose Imám Husayn as the symbol of the reality of Islám, and thus liken Himself unto Him? This is a question of profound subtlety and worthy of deep contemplation. For one might naturally have expected that the Báb would have turned to the Hidden Imám, the Promised Qá'im—especially as the Shí'ah community awaited his advent from the well of Sāmarrā³²—as the emblem of Islám's concealed truth. And yet, for reasons of divine wisdom known to Him alone, the Báb deliberately selects Imám Husayn in place of the Twelfth Imám for this sacred station.

However, one truth is clearly discernible: the Báb's interpretation, arising from the station of the 'Dawning-Place of the Heart,' subtly reveals that all the Imáms are, in reality, the Imám of the Age and the Sovereign Imám. Thus, the occultation of the Twelfth Imám is but the veiling of the inner truth of Islám itself, and the concealment of the light of all the Imáms.

That the Báb speaks of the return of Husayn in His Commentary on the Sūrah of Joseph, while outwardly being identified as the Gate to the Twelfth Imám, unveils the true meaning of Bábiyyat: that He is not merely the Promised Qá'im, but also the

³¹ Imám Husayn.

³² The "Well of Sāmarrā" is a significant site in Shi'a Islám eschatology, especially for Twelver Shi'as. It is closely associated with the 12th Imám, Muhammad al-Mahdi, who is believed by Twelvers to be in occultation (ghayba) and will return as the Mahdī, a messianic figure.

Manifestation of the reality of Islām, the very Essence of the Qur’án, and its Primal Point.

So far as human understanding may attain, the choice of Ḥusayn as the Joseph of this age—beyond his world-altering martyrdom, which mirrors the transcendent and epoch-making martyrdom of the Báb—rests upon at least two sacred foundations.

First, Husayn is the fifth figure in the line of holy personages in Islām: following Muhammad, ‘Alí, Fāṭimah, and Hasan, he stands as the fifth sacred reality. And since the word “Báb” in the numerical value of abjad equals five, which also corresponds to the letter “hā” (هـ), a symbol pointing to “Huwa” (He—God), Husayn becomes a sign of the Báb Himself.

Second, Imám Husayn serves as the symbol of the reality of Islām because the Promised One of the Bayán—He Whom God shall make manifest—will likewise bear the name Husayn. Thus, to extol Imám Husayn is, in truth, to extol both the martyred Imám and the eternal Reality from which all the Imáms derive their radiance.

For this reason, although the Báb in the Qayyúmu’l-Asmá’ speaks of the return of Husayn, in later writings He prophesies the coming of Husayn in the future. According to His blessed word, this hidden One shall appear among the Bábs in the sixth year, but shall remain veiled until before the ninth year. In every case, what the Báb reveals is the return of the essence of Islām, of the Prophet, and of the Imáms—a truth which, during the age of Islām, remained in concealment, but now, through the effulgent light of the Báb’s own heart, is made manifest and resplendent³³.

- **The Second Mode of Interpreting the “Appearance of the Mystery” in the Writings of the Báb**

Another profound exposition of the unveiling of the Mystery (Sirr) appears in an Epistle addressed by the Báb to His maternal uncle, Siyyid Muhammad. In this powerful passage, the Báb tells His uncle that because He had observed him reciting each morning the phrase: *“I believe in the Mystery of the family of Muhammad”³⁴*, He now unveils that very Mystery to him, so that his faith would not remain as mere verbal affirmation, but would become a true and realized belief.

He goes on to affirm that the Manifestation of Divinity and Lordship is itself the inner essence—the “Mystery”—of Islām, and that the Qayyūm al-Asmā’ was revealed in the

³³ Due to the limited understanding of the people of His time, Islām portrayed divine revelation in externalized forms—such as the angel Gabriel—as a medium of God’s word. The Báb, however, clarifies that divine speech emanates directly from the heart (fu’ād) of the Prophet—a heart that is itself the locus of divine identity. Similarly, the reality of the Day of Resurrection or the Meeting with God—which in Islām remained symbolically veiled—is now revealed plainly as the Day of the Manifestation of the Promised One.

³⁴ “آل محمد” (Āl Muhammad) is an Arabic phrase that translates to “The family of Muhammad” or “The household of Muhammad”. It refers to the Prophet Muhammad’s descendants and close relatives, particularly his immediate family like his wife Fatima and her descendants.

language of divine verses for this very reason. The Báb explicitly identifies this Joseph of the Qur'ānic story with the Qayyūm³⁵ (the One who stands), who is none other than Himself.

This is why, at the very outset of His declaration, the Báb began with the Commentary on the Sūrah of Joseph, which contains not only mystical exegesis but the metaphysical unveiling of His own reality. Though this article is not the space for a full exposition of this weighty matter, it is fitting to conclude with an excerpt from that very Epistle, wherein the Báb addresses His uncle in luminous words:

“Since I beheld you every morning reciting the phrase, “I have believed in the Mystery of the People of Muhammad (peace be upon Him),” I desired that the veil might be lifted, so that your deeds may reflect the words of your tongue...Hájí Siyyid Kázim (upon him be peace)... Nineteen days before the first Manifestation of the Mystery, descended to the Concourse on High at the beginning of the year 1260 AH, which was the initial dawning of the Mystery... And know that the Manifestation of the Mystery is the Manifestation of God Himself—not the appearance in the station of prophethood or guardianship, but rather the Theophany of Lordship. It is for this reason that He was made manifest through the declaration: “Verily, I am God; there is no God but Me...Know, moreover, that the numerical value of “Yusef (Joseph)” is 156, which is the same as Qayyúm, and the intent of both is the Qá’im of the House of Muhammad (peace be upon Him)—He Who is, in truth, the Ever-Abiding (Qayyúm). And it is for this reason that, at the moment of His Manifestation, He commenced by revealing the commentary on the Sūrah bearing His own name...” (Faḍl-i-Māzandarānī, Zuhūru’l-Haqq, vol. 3, p. 223).

³⁵ In the writings of the Báb, the term Qayyúm (قیوم) holds significant spiritual and symbolic meaning. Qayyúm can be interpreted as “the One who sustains,” “the One who stands,” or “the Sustainer.”