

An Analysis of the Salient Features of *Risáliy-i-Ja‘faríyyih*

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Abstract

The *Risáliy-i-Ja‘faríyyih* (see a partial provisional translation following this paper) is one of the major writings of the Báb, about a quarter in length of Commentary on the Surih of Joseph (Qayyúmu’l-Asmá). Although not exclusively, it concerns the commentary on a particular Islamic prayer for the advent of the promised Qá’im, (Ḥujjat), written entirely in Arabic. It has fourteen chapters and was revealed on or about 10 January, 1846 CE. We can be sure that this tablet was revealed towards the end of the Shíráz period of His Ministry. Despite the fact that the Báb was not incarcerated at the time of revealing this epistle, none-the-less, He was prohibited from meeting with His followers. In this tablet, He expressed the hope that the restrictions on Him will be lifted and that He will be able to teach His followers in person. The Islamic prayer for which this commentary is written is only three short phrases long. His commentary appears specifically in chapters 11, 12 and 13 of the epistle, and it quotes certain words or phrases and expounds their real meaning. It should be noted that the Báb had not formally disclosed His complete station of prophethood to the general public at the time of the revelation of this epistle. Therefore, in other chapters of the commentary, He alludes to His full station discreetly, and only those who had the necessary spiritual perception could grasp His subtle allusions.

Some of the significant themes in this work are as follows: He refers to various episodes in His ministry, including the successive tribulations that have befallen Him in Shíráz, and He comments on the meaning of the letter “Há”. On a number of occasions, He asserts that He has not attended any schools and whatever He has revealed is from God. He laments that the Shaykhís who attained His presence failed to recognize Him; He forbids any questions about the Essence of God, criticizes those philosophers who have contended that the Divine Essence is the First Cause. He further expounds that the cause of creation is the Primal Will. He asserts that His call is the same call that arose from the Burning Bush on Mount Sinai. He elucidates the meaning of the “light” in the famous verse of the Qur’án. He relates and interprets a dream He experienced on the night of 12 Muḥarram. He lauds the station of the Remnant of God (Baḡyyat’ulláh) and stresses that He has thus far disclosed only some of the truths which He possesses. He declares further that even if all the rulers of the earth were to arise against Him, they would be powerless to resist His Cause or frustrate His purpose. He declares that He yearns to lay down His life in the same manner that Imám Ḥusayn did in the path of God. He interprets in the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth chapters, the three parts of the aforementioned prayer, explicating the conditions of true prayer. In this paper some of the above points have been explicated further. A provisional translation of Chapter One follows the article.

Introductory Remarks

Contents of the Epistle

This epistle, a commentary on an Islamic prayer concerning the advent of the Promised Qá’im (He who arises), answers the questions of a seeker. It should be noted that several writings of the Báb particularly in the early period of His ministry are revealed in the form of Qur’án commentaries. Many Muslim scholars have written commentaries on the entire Qur’án or even isolated words and phrases of the Prophet or the Imáms, as they explicate the various meaning of those same phrases. It should be noted that the commentaries of the Báb are different in nature from the past. In His writings, we are not dealing with the interpretive paraphrase of

successive generations of believers, but with the corpus of His own written works, revealed in an entirely new light. Ascertaining the authenticity of the Sacred Text is no longer an insoluble issue as it was in previous Dispensations, when it was virtually impossible to know which parts of the Scripture accurately represented the Prophet's words and which passages took the form of paraphrase, interpretation, or even error due to the vagaries or the oral tradition.¹ The general features of this epistle are given below:

Its Name

Risáliy-i-Ja'faríyyih. Apart from this name, it is known as “Sharḥ-i Du‘á’-i-Gḥaybat” or “Commentary on the Occultation Prayer”, “Saḥífih-i Ja'fariyyih”, and “Tafsír-i-Há”, i.e. Interpretation of the Letter “Há”. The tablet derives its name from Imám Ja‘far, the truthful. In the first few years of His Ministry, the Báb named His writings after the fourteen Immaculates, i.e. the Prophet Muḥammad; Fáṭimih, the Prophet’s daughter; ‘Alí, the Prophet’s son-in-law, cousin, and the first Imám; Ḥasan son of ‘Alí, the second Imám; Ḥusayn son of ‘Alí, the third Imám; this is followed by Imám Ḥusayn's son and after him by his descendants who form the rest of the Immaculates. This epistle is named after the sixth Imám whose name is Ja‘far.

- **Length:** About one hundred pages
- **Language:** Arabic
- **Time and Place of Revelation:** In the month of Muḥarram, 1262 AH or January, 1846, in Shíráz.
- **Name of the Addressee:** Unknown
- **Chapters:** Fourteen
- **Manuscript:** The author of this paper has not come across an authentic text of the epistle in the original language either in hand-written or in printed form²
- **Significance:** It clarifies the meaning of “occultation”. The compelling tone of the epistle will allow us to appreciate its spiritual value.

Significance of the Risáliy-i-Ja‘faríyyih

The following list is a compilation of several indicators pointing to the importance of the epistle:

1. First and foremost, Bahá’u’lláh has quoted in the *Kitáb-i-Íqán* (Book of Certitude) from this epistle (KI 231).
2. The Guardian has listed in the *Dawn-Breakers* under the title of “the Most Important Writings of the Báb,” 23 items from among the best-known works of the Báb. In that list, Risáliy-i-Ja‘faríyyih is item number ten.³
3. The length of the epistle and the significant nature of the material presented makes it worthy of our attention.
4. Selections from this epistle are among the few writings of the Báb that A.L.M. Nicolas has translated, discussed and published in the introduction to his French translation of the Persian Bayán.⁴
5. The early claims of the Báb which form the basis for His later claims are expounded in this epistle.
6. He calls Himself “Ḥujjat” meaning the “Testimony” or “Proof” in this epistle. If we pay close attention, we discover that His future claims to be the Qá’im and an independent Manifestation of God are subtly set out in this epistle.

Background Information

Background information which is briefly stated below allows us to gain a better understanding of the contents of this epistle.

The Qá’im and Mihdí in Islám

The Qá’im and Mihdí are central to the religion of Islam and its belief-system. Muslims believe that Muḥammad is the last prophet. However, they believe in the return of a few holy figures. Sunnis believe in the advent of the Mihdí; the Shí‘ahs believe in the appearance of Qá’im. Many signs and portents are associated with the appearance of these promised figures. Among them are: to restore true religion; to herald the end of one age and the beginning of

another; to witness the coming of a living guide to bring humanity back to the straight path; to hear two trumpet blasts; to witness the days of judgement and resurrection.

Imams in Shí'ah Islam

Shí'ah means "the follower". The appointment of the successor to the Prophet Muḥammad is very much in dispute. Since the Prophet Muḥammad did not have a surviving son, the Shí'ah accepted 'Alí as the first Imám and the grand-children of the Prophet Muḥammad, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, as the second and third Imáms, respectively. The rest of the Imáms are: the son of Ḥusayn and successively down the line from the descendants of Imám Ḥusayn up to the eleventh Imám, Imám Ḥasan-i 'Askarí. Uncertainties surround the appearance of the twelfth Imám, i.e. the son of Imám Ḥasan-i 'Askarí. From a historical perspective, we are confronted with several hard facts which are difficult to reject. First, Imám Ḥasan-i 'Askarí died at the young age of 28 years. Second, he had no wife, only a maid-servant. Third, when he died in the year 260 A.H, he had no grown son to appoint as his successor Imám. Fourth, he did not appoint a successor. Fifth, most chronicles state that when he died, he had no apparent heir. His possessions were consequently divided between his brother and his mother. Sixth, his relatively few followers, at least compared to other sects of Islám, were divided into fourteen different factions as a result of the prevailing circumstances. One faction believed in the existence and disappearance of the child-Imám, a point that will be discussed further below.

Imáms as Qá'im

Many Shí'ahs believed that each of the aforementioned Imáms was the Promised Qá'im who was supposed to usher in a glorious era for Islám. Based on this belief, these followers asked the Imáms if they were the promised Qá'im. The answer of the Imáms was naturally negative. They explained the several reasons why they could not qualify to be the promised Qá'im. These reasons are reported in the collections of Ḥadíth of the Shí'ahs. The prayer which is the subject of the commentary by the Báb is given by the sixth Imám (Imám Ja'far, the truthful). This prayer in essence asks God to facilitate in

granting to the faithful the knowledge of the promised Qá'im. We will discuss this prayer further below.

Twelfth Imám

Imám Ḥasan-i 'Askarí, the eleventh Imám, was imprisoned or was placed under house arrest by the Abbasid Caliph; it is reported that he died in 260 A.H. in the prison, a fact which is universally upheld and undisputed. The point of contact between Imám Ḥasan-i 'Askarí and the body of the believers was his deputy ('Uthmán-ibn-Sa'íd). When Imám Ḥasan died at the age of 28, there was overwhelming uncertainty among his followers because he had no apparent wife (he had a handmaid), and no son old enough to be appointed as his successor. To be more precise, there has been no solid evidence to believe that he had a son who was alive at the time of his death. There are some ḥadiths (verbal utterance of the Prophets and the Imáms recorded years later) which state that his maid bore him a son in the year 255 A.H., but there is no evidence that he was alive in the year 260 A.H.; on the contrary, the mounting evidence points to the opposite. This is why after the death of Imám Ḥasan-i 'Askarí his followers were divided into nearly fourteen branches, one of which accepted the child-Imám to be the successor to Imám Ḥasan-i 'Askarí as the twelfth Imám. The brother of Imám Ḥasan, whose name was Ja'far, challenged the system with which he was intimately associated and claimed that his brother did not have any child at all and claimed that Imám's possessions should be divided between him and the mother of the deceased Imám; he further claimed that he was the lawful successor to the Imám. Some people accepted his claim and followed him, forming one of the fourteen branches of the Shí'ah after the death of Imám Ḥasan. Later on, he was denounced and called Ja'far the liar, in spite of the fact that he was the most truthful person in the world.

The Minor and Major Occultations

After the death of Imám Ḥasan-i 'Askarí, it is said that the child-Imám who was hidden in an underground passage, and who was not more than five years old, appointed the deputy of Imám Ḥasan ('Uthmán-ibn-i Sa'íd) as his own deputy, through whom the believers

should communicate with him. Ná'ib means deputy. Another name for the deputy was the "Báb" (Gate) to the Imám. If we approach this matter logically, in reality, there was no legitimate, living Imám to communicate with the body of believers. It is more likely that all communications were composed and issued by the deputy himself in the name of an imaginary Imám, who did not physically exist. Uthmán-ibn-Sa'íd, just before his death, issued a letter relayed from the hidden Imám stating that he was appointing Muḥammad-ibn-i 'Uthmán (the deputy's son) as the Imám's deputy, in a similar manner by which the third and fourth deputies were appointed.⁵ Thus a span of sixty nine years lapsed. During this period no one except the deputies could communicate with the hidden Imám. This sixty-nine-year period from 260-329 A.H. is called the Minor Occultation. Near the time of the death of the fourth deputy, a letter purportedly written by the hidden Imám (twelfth Imám) was issued stating that no further deputies would be appointed; from then on the Imám would disappear completely from sight; no one could have any contact with him. From this point on the "Major Occultation" started and no specific date for the end of the situation was anticipated.

Shí'ah Íthná 'Asharí

Those who believed in the minor and major occultations of the hidden Imám were called Shí'ah Íthná 'Asharíyyih (one of the most obscure groups from amongst the fourteen branches formed immediately after the death of Imám Ḥasan-i 'Askarí (the eleventh Imám) referred to earlier. The Imám's absence left a gap which was gradually filled by the traditional authority of the 'ulamá, (the learned), the scholars of religious law, who increasingly extended and consolidated their influence over the masses of believers. To legitimize their authority, these clerics presented themselves as the general representatives of the Hidden Imám on earth. The main beneficiaries of this arrangement, who became later the core of Shí'ah Íthná 'Asharíyyih (Shí'ah twelvers), were the learned who became the de facto leaders or heirs to the Imám, both for spiritual guidance and also to receive their share of wealth which was due to the Imám. These monetary benefits were so lucrative that they dazzled the eyes of the insincere in heart. The clerics promoted this questionable arrangement, an arrangement that, strangely enough, was accepted by

some. The learned promoted the idea of “the coming of the 12th Imám” who was also the promised Qá’im at an undisclosed time in the future.

It should be noted that before the Safavid reign, the Shí’ah Íthná ‘Asharí was a minority branch in Iran. For political reasons, the Safavid kings found it prudent and convenient to promote the Shí’ah Íthná ‘Asharí sect as the state religion due to rivalry with the Ottoman empire rule.⁶ Qajar kings, because of the inherent weakness of their unjust rule, followed the same pattern. They needed the support of the learned to rule the masses.⁷ As the years passed, the questionable idea of occultation became not only part of the belief-system of every believer in Shí’ah Íthná ‘Asharí, but rather the unquestionable corner-stone of their belief. All Shí’ah came to expect the appearance of the hidden Imám who was purportedly living at the time of the end in a city called Jabulqa.⁸ This belief became so entrenched in the thoughts and minds of the people that the slightest deviation from it was considered blasphemous, punishable by either imprisonment or death.

The Shaykhí School and the doctrine of Fourth Pillar

The period of occultation persisted for ten centuries. With the approach of the Islamic millennium (1260 A.H.), a messianic fervor was felt in every corner of Iran. The Shaykhí School which was established by Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá’í started examining the fundamentals of Islam. There are five fundamentals of Shí’ah belief:

1. The unity of God (“*towhid*”)
2. Acceptance of Muḥammad as the Prophet of God
3. The return to God and the resurrection (*Ma’ád*)
4. The justice of God
5. Belief in the Imáms as successors of Muḥammad

The Shaykhí School scrapped the two principles of the justice of God and the resurrection (*Ma’ád*), arguing that the first two tenets include these points. However, they added one more principle to the remaining three, an addition that reduced the principles of the religion to four only:

1. The unity of God
2. Belief in the Prophet
3. Belief in the Imáms
4. The “Fourth Pillar”

This fourth pillar referred to the “Perfect Shí'ah” who was communicating with the Hidden Imám. Both Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í and Siyyid Kázim were considered to be the “fourth pillar” of the faith or the “Báb” to the Hidden Imám, although they never claimed such a station. Furthermore, they did not teach that the Hidden Imám was alive in a physical form. They coined the terminology of “huriqalya” which was a pseudo-physical-form; somewhere between physical and spiritual; sometimes it is called the Imaginal Realm. They said that the Imám existed the form of “huriqalya.”

The Báb – the Nature of His Claim

In the year 1260 A.H. the Báb appeared among the Shí'ah, who had solidified this core, unshakable belief, unsupported by any divine revelation, and lacking any rational or spiritual proof. The Twelvers firmly believed that the promised Qá'im was living in an invisible city. Some of the learned had even composed treatises describing their descriptions of this city with its bizarre, if not surreal, scenarios. The Báb's claim to prophethood had to break and expose this great wall of vain-imaginings that had solidified the Shí'ah belief over the years. His approach was no different from the prophets gone before Him. All past prophets revealed the essentials of their religion gradually. The Prophet Muḥammad in the Qur'án revealed: “They will not believe on him though the example of those of old hath gone before” (Hedjar 15:13).⁹ Also: “Such is God's method carried into effect of old; no change canst thou find in God's mode of dealing” (Fath-The Victory 48: 23). Following this method of conveying His message to a people steeped in vain-imaginings, the Báb at the inception of His revelation, conveyed two parallel messages: One for those sincere believers who were not shackled with superstitious notions and who followed the inspired promptings of their heart. For these believers, the former message was stated subtly from the beginning. The other message was intended for those

fundamentalists who relied on the distorted expectations derived from past traditions. For example, the Báb in His “first and mightiest” book, the Qayyúmu’l-Asmá (Commentary on the Surih of Joseph) says for the benefit of the first group:

O YE kinsmen of the Most Great Remembrance! This Tree of Holiness, dyed crimson with the oil of servitude, hath verily sprung forth out of your own soil in the midst of the Burning Bush, yet ye comprehend nothing whatever thereof, neither of His true, heavenly attributes, nor of the actual circumstances of His earthly life, nor of the evidences of His powerful and unblemished behaviour. Actuated by your own fancies, you consider Him to be alien to the sovereign Truth, while in the estimation of God He is none other than the Promised One Himself, invested with the power of the sovereign Truth, and verily He is, as decreed in the Mother Book, held answerable in the midst of the Burning Bush...
[SWB 52]

To the second group, He calls Himself “the Gate”:

GLORIFIED is He besides Whom there is none other God. In His grasp He holdeth the source of authority, and verily God is powerful over all things. We have decreed that every long life shall in truth suffer decline and that every hardship shall be followed by ease, that perchance men may recognize the Gate of God as He Who is the eternal Truth, and verily God shall stand as witness unto those that have believed. [SWB 47]

And

Verily I am the ‘Gate of God’ and I give you to drink, by the leave of God, the sovereign Truth, of the crystal-pure waters of His Revelation which are gushing out from the incorruptible Fountain situate upon the Holy Mount. And those who earnestly strive after the One True God, let them then strive to attain this Gate. [SWB 50]

The first quote is directed towards the sincere in heart and the second and the third quotes are directed towards the fundamentalists.

It is obvious from the second and third quotes that He calls himself the “Báb” or the “gate.” Outwardly whenever He spoke about His station, He intended the “gate”. Most Shí'ah assumed that He meant by the “gate” the gate to the Hidden Imám, whereas what He intended in reality was the gate to a “Personage” who was yet unknown, as has been described by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in *A Traveller's Narrative* [TN 4]. In the entire *Risáliy-i-Ja'faríyyih*, in several passages He has disavowed having knowledge of the realm of the Unseen, but in reality, whatever He has written has been revealed by God. This is similar to following statement in Qayyúmu'l-Asmá:

VERILY We made the revelation of verses to be a testimony for Our message unto you. Can ye produce a single letter to match these verses? Bring forth, then, your proofs, if ye be of those who can discern the one true God. I solemnly affirm before God, should all men and spirits combine to compose the like of one chapter of this Book, they would surely fail, even though they were to assist one another [SWB 43]

Opposition of the ‘Ulamá (The Learned)

The ‘Ulamá enjoyed unchallenged leadership for one thousand years. They fulfilled collectively the role of the deputy of Imám without directly claiming it. Now in light of the Báb’s claim that He was the lawful representative of the Hidden Imám, the learned had to surrender the position that they had arrogated to themselves. In so doing, for the first time in their history, the Báb questioned their legitimacy and placed their leadership under threat. This is the main reason why the learned were among the first to oppose the Báb. Bahá’u’lláh in *the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* says:

Reflect, O Shaykh, upon the Shí'ih sect. How many the edifices which they reared with the hands of idle fancies and vain imaginings, and how numerous the cities which they built! At length those vain imaginings were converted into bullets and aimed at Him Who is the Prince of the world.
[ESW 119]

Also:

O Hádí! The blind fanaticism of former times hath withheld the hapless creatures from the Straight Path. Meditate on the Shi'ih sect. For twelve hundred years they have cried "O Qá'im!", until in the end all pronounced the sentence of His death, and caused Him to suffer martyrdom. [ESW 163]

In one of His tablets Bahá'u'lláh has revealed:

Since the people are perceived as being weak and veiled by idle fancies, therefore the Sun of Reality hath appeared as an atom and the everlasting ocean hath appeared as a drop. Thus hath the Primal Point appeared assuming the name of "gatehood." Even so, the people were discontent with this lower station, how much more were they discontent by the claim of velayyat (Vice-regency, Guardianship), whereas all these stations were created by Him.¹⁰ (Provisional Translation by Foad Seddigh)

Bahá'u'lláh in one of His Tablets says:

It is known to thee that the commentary on the Surih of Joseph hath been revealed according to the prevailing understanding of the people of that time. This hath been for reason of pure bounty, that haply the wayward and the ignorant would become transported to the realm of knowledge, because much of that which hath been stated therein is the truth of the matter for the people of the Qur'án. Had it been revealed according to that which God hath desired, no one would have accepted and remained faithful.¹¹ (Provisional Translation by Foad Seddigh)

'Abdu'l-Bahá in one of His Tablets says:

Thou asked about the twelfth Imam. This supposition hath never existed in the material world; it was only a notion confined to the unseen world, lacking corporal existence. Some Shi'ah leaders devised a scheme for the protection of the weak amongst their followers to give Him a physical identity ...¹² (Provisional Translation by Foad Seddigh)

The Báb in His book *The Seven Proofs* says:

Consider the manifold favours vouchsafed by the Promised One, and the effusions of His bounty which have pervaded the concourse of the followers of Islam to enable them to attain unto salvation. Indeed observe how He Who representeth the origin of creation, He Who is the Exponent of the verse, 'I, in very truth, am God', identified Himself as the Gate [Bab] for the advent of the promised Qá'im, a descendant of Muḥammad, and in His first Book enjoined the observance of the laws of the Qur'án, so that the people might not be seized with perturbation by reason of a new Book and a new Revelation and might regard His Faith as similar to their own, perchance they would not turn away from the Truth and ignore the thing for which they had been called into being... [SWB 119]

'Abdu'l-Bahá in *A Traveller's Narrative* has written:

He began to speak and to declare the rank of Bábhood. Now what He intended by the term Báb [Gate] was this, that He was the channel of grace from some great Person still behind the veil of glory, Who was the possessor of countless and boundless perfections, by Whose will He moved, and to the bond of Whose love He clung. And in the first book which He wrote in explanation of the súrih of Joseph, He addressed Himself in all passages to that Person unseen from Whom He received help and grace, sought for aid in the arrangement of His preliminaries, and craved the sacrifice of life in the way of His love. [TN 4]

As one may gather from the above quotes, the main reasons that the Báb started His ministry with a lesser claim was due to the lack of spiritual capacity and understanding among the people. He needed, consequently, time to prepare them for the acceptance of His ultimate station and revelation. From the observation of such a lesser claim, a claim that was rejected by the learned, and through their instigation by the majority of the people, we can safely extrapolate the dangerous outcome if He had disclosed His complete message and station at the beginning. It is for the same reason that we notice in

the Risáliy-i-Ja'faríyyih, which was revealed in the early period of the Báb's ministry, these two types of statements, intended for the sincere, on the one hand, and the superstitious on the other hand.

The Occultation Prayer

An inquirer asked the Báb to clarify the meaning of the prayer from the 6th Imám regarding the Testimony of God, which is also known as the prayer of occultation. In response to his request, the Báb revealed the "Commentary on the Prayer of Occultation." The Prayer is very short and has three lines only:

O my God! Make known to me Thyself! Shouldst Thou enable me not to recognize Thyself, I would not be able to recognize Thy Prophet.

O my God! Make known to me Thine Apostle! Shouldst Thou enable me not to recognize Thine Apostle, I would not be able to recognize Thy Proof.

O my God! Make known to me thy Proof! Shouldst Thou enable me not to recognize Thy Proof, I would stray from my religion.

It should be noted that "testimony" or "proof" is generally a reference to the revelation; but "Testimony" or "Proof" refers to the Manifestation of God, or the promised Qá'im.

The Báb's approach in Answering the Question of "Occultation"

The question of "occultation", the story of whether the Hidden Imám was alive or dead, was a complex question, that required clarification because of its perplexing nature. However, the Báb does not make any attempt to explain it in historical terms; rather, as we will see later in the Risáliy-i-Ja'faríyyih, He explains that the "occultation" occurs when man departs from his everlasting condition at the time of his creation by God. He says that God created mankind in His own image. The Báb identifies occultation with the existential station of forgetting the divine revelation within

the human soul, which requires prayer in order to regain true self-consciousness and to return to his original spiritual condition and thereby gain purity of heart, thereby discovering the truth.

Major themes in the *Risáliy-i-Ja'faríyyih*

Without pretence to being exhaustive, the following is a list of the major themes presented in the epistle:

1. The meaning of the recognition of God
2. True belief in the unity of God (*towhid*)
3. Explanation of the Primal Will
4. The interpretation of “iláh”
5. The claims of the Báb
6. The testimony and proof of His mission
7. The inward meaning of the martyrdom of Imám Ḥusayn
8. That all things are in the hands of God: His decree, revelation and the source of His knowledge
9. Why He changed his mind and did not go to Karbilá (*badá*)
10. Opposition of some of the believers
11. The interdiction for man of asking God about creation
12. The true nature of man
13. The meaning of occultation
14. The interpretation of the letter “Há”
15. The testimony of some of the learned about Him

A Brief Summary of Each Chapter

Since the *Risáliy-i-Ja'faríyyih* is a commentary on the occultation prayer, we might expect the Báb to devote the entire fourteen chapters to the commentary. But even with a cursory glance at the tablet, we observe that the commentary appears only in chapters 11, 12 and 13. Each of these chapters is devoted to the commentary of one third or one line of the original prayer and a fourth line is added

by the Báb Himself to this prayer in chapter 14. However, the material presented in other chapters is necessary for the understanding of these four chapters. In other words, these four chapters without the other ten chapters would be incomplete. We will present in the following section the important themes treated in each chapter. The Báb Himself has specified the beginning and end of each chapter and also has given a title for each chapter.

A Brief Summary of Chapter 1

Title: The Discourse of Illumination and the Glorification of God

- He states that even Himself cannot adequately praise God.
- He reveals several prayers and meditations.
- He states that everything is/was an act of God, whether seekers travelling to find Him, their acceptance of His claim, the humiliation He endured, opposition to Him, etc.
- He alludes to a verse of the Qur'án: "They plotted but God plotted: and of plotters is God the best." (Anfals, The Spoils 8:30)
- He admonishes the inquirer by stating: "Beware, beware! lest thou look upon any other thing except thy essence of being Certainly, it is your duty to examine the promptings of your inner heart and its command." (Provisional Translation by Foad Seddigh)
- He reminds the inquirer that the condition of occultation is the station of falling into the abyss of particularistic essence and forgetting one's real existence which is the true reality or spiritual reality of human beings.

A Brief Summary of Chapter 2

Title: Divine Admonition

- This chapter is an admonition to the inquirer who the Báb encourages to heed His words and to rely upon God such that

he becomes liberated from doubts and temptation. The Báb argues that the matter is confined to two alternatives: either it is true or false. If he follows the Báb, he follows God; should he reject His claims, he follows Satan. The inquirer is reminded when the truth is disclosed to a fair-minded person, he should not reject it, but when falsehood is mixed with truth, no one would accept it.

- The Cause of God is like a light that illumines everything. Now He possesses the Word of God and it sheds light like the sun.
- He is the possessor of God's testimony and revelation; it is incumbent on everyone to accept Him without further questioning.
- The Báb says that He possesses the Testimony of God which is the Truth. Should the seeker reject it, then he has no sure handle/firm cord to grasp the truth. Consequently, if any other "truth" is presented to him, he has no alternative but to reject it.
- He refers to some Shaykhís who accepted Him and then changed their mind. Now they worship Satan.
- He speaks kindly about Siyyid Ja'far Kashfí (the father of Siyyid Yaḥyá Dárábí, Vahíd). For Siyyid Ja'far and for Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í, He beseeches God's mercy.
- He admonishes the seeker that he should have the right attitude. He says: "Behold the One Who calleth thee unto God. Should He possess an incontrovertible testimony from His Lord in such manner that none is able to produce the like thereof, His cause would then be proven to be true and there would be no doubt about it. Obey then His words and ask not why or wherefore . . . Shouldst thou acknowledge His testimony thou wouldst have no place to flee to, save to obey Him, even if He calleth night day, poison sugar, false true, and knowledge ignorance"¹³

A Brief Summary of Chapter 3

Title: An Introduction to the Transcendent Glory of God

- He forbids questions about creation because all doors to the realm of Divinity are closed. Whoever asks such questions has committed an unforgivable sin.
- Since all roads are barred to the direct recognition of God, the seeker should strive to ascertain His good-pleasure.
- He refers to Himself as “the Point” (Nuḡṡih). To the seeker He says if you know the references to the Point and follow it, you will attain unto all knowledge. (Actually He refers to the Primal Will). He refers to the philosophers who called God the First Cause/Uncaused Cause. He says it was the Primal Will that created the world of existence; the Primal Will created itself. He refers to this realm as that of the Manifestations of God. He refers in a subtle way to His ultimate station.

A Brief Summary of Chapter 4

Title: Mentioning the prayer of Occultation.

- He identifies the reference for the occultation prayer and attributes it to Imám Ja‘far Šádiq.
- He affirms that the knowledge of religion is for man to know himself and to know that which God has endowed the being of man.
- In the beginning, the creation of man was perfect. In the beginning man was self-sufficient. He possessed all required knowledge for this existence. Then he deviated from the original condition of his creation.
- He reminds the seeker that all sins will be forgiven except questions about the origin of creation.
- A true believer has such a high station that it would be impossible to fully describe.

- Once the believer accepts the interdiction not to inquire of God concerning creation, then certain conditions are incumbent upon anyone who supplicates God: to recognize the oneness of God; to acknowledge His names and attributes; to recognize for oneself and others His commands and interdictions. Once the seeker possesses this knowledge, his prayer will be answered.

A Brief Summary of Chapter 5

Theme: The Dawning of the Morn of Eternity

- It starts with the Qur'anic verse: (Qasas, The Story 28:30) “And when he came up to it, a Voice cried to him out of the bush from the right side of the valley in the sacred hollow, “O Moses, I truly am God, the Lord of the Worlds”, followed by Ikhlas-The Unity 112:1-4: “SAY: He is God alone: God the eternal! He begetteth not, and He is not begotten; And there is none like unto Him.”
- What follows is a lengthy chapter concerning the true meaning of the *Towhid*.
- Unacceptability of asking God a question concerning creation.
- The real meaning of the recognition of God.
- At the end of the chapter, he reiterates a discourse by Imám Riḍá on the unity of God in one of his debates.
- True recognition of the essence of God is impossible except by God Himself.
- If anyone says that he manifests God, he has lied.
- The names and attributes of God apply to the realm of creation.

A Brief Summary of Chapter 6

Theme: Of the Mystery of Eternity

- This is also one of the longer chapters of the epistle. This chapter starts by quoting the famous verse from the Qur'án (Nur, Light 24: 35): “God is the LIGHT of the Heavens and of the Earth. His Light is like a niche in which is a lamp – the lamp encased in glass the glass, as it were, a glistening star. From a blessed tree is it lighted, the olive neither of the East nor of the West, whose oil would well-nigh shine out, even though fire touched it not! It is light upon light. God guideth whom He will to His light, and God setteth forth parables to men, for God knoweth all things.” He explains the real meaning of this verse and then continues with a dream of His own.
- He interprets the light referred to in the above verse to be the Primal Will.
- Whoever claims that he has “known” the reality of the Prophet Muḥammad runs the risk of claiming His station. In other words, we cannot know or understand the true stations of the Manifestations of God.
- Whoever calls upon God has a duty to know the Prophet Muḥammad.
- He explains that on 12 Muḥarram 1262. A.H. (February, 1845) He had a dream. He dreamt there were many books around Him. When He opened one of them, He saw dust from the tomb of the Imám Ḥusayn inside a paper wrapping. On opening it, He saw sacred writing in red ink at the end of which was a star bearing the inscription: “I leave all my affairs in Thy hand”. He tried to memorize the sacred verses, but when He awoke He had forgotten everything except four words, one of which was “Ma‘śúd”. He interprets this word by explicating the letters that compose the word.
- He mentions that at the time of writing of this chapter, it was 14 Muḥarram, four days after the anniversary of the martyrdom of Imám Ḥusayn, and He was grief stricken. He

then relates what Imám Ḥusayn uttered while standing by the tomb of his grandfather, the Prophet Muḥammad, at the time of His leaving Medina for Kúfih where martyrdom was awaiting him.

A Brief Summary of Chapter 7

Theme: The Beautiful Names of God

- The subject is the recognition and interpretation of the beautiful names of God.
- He mentions the verse from the Qur'án (Al Araf 7:180): "Most excellent titles hath God: by these call ye on Him, and stand aloof from those who pervert his titles. For what they have done shall they be repaid!"
- Whatever thing has a name is a manifestation of one of God's names.
- God desired to be known by creating the divine names and attributes.
- This ḥadīth is quoted from the Imáms: "We are the beautiful names of God; nothing will be accepted by God except through our recognition."
- One of the names of God is "huvá" (= He is God). It is the great name of God. "Huvá" consists of two letters of "Há = ه" and "vav = و". The number associated with the letter "há" is 11. With a point in front of it, it becomes 110, the number of the Báb's name 'Alí. He claims that this beautiful name of God refers to Him. He encourages the seeker to cling to this beautiful name, that is, to cling unto Him.
- The Qur'án mentions: "He is the great announcement" whom you have turned against. This refers to the Báb.
- He quotes a tradition stated by Ráhib from Imám Ja'far Ṣádiq who said there were eight letters, four in the heaven and four on the earth that the Qá'im will interpret. Ráhib asked for two of the four. Ṣádiq's response was that he would let him know

all four. The first one is the divine unity (there is no God save God); the second is the Prophet Muḥammad; the third refers to the Imáms; the fourth refers to the Shí'ah. The Báb says that the Shí'ah means the perfect man. (One of the titles of the Báb was the “fourth support” or “forth rukn”). He says that one of His titles is the intermediary between the hidden Imám and the believers.

A Brief Summary of Chapter 8

Theme: The Great Signs of God

- He quotes the verse from the Qur'án (Sád 38: 67-70): “SAY: this is a weighty message, From which ye turn aside! Yet had I no knowledge of what passed among the celestial chiefs (Concourse on High) when they disputed; Verily, it hath been revealed to me only because I am a public preacher.”
- He calls Himself the “weighty message,” i.e. Great Announcement, mentioned in the above verse. He affirms that He places all His trust on “the Remnant of God”. The expression of “Remnant of God” appears in the Shí'ah traditions (ḥadīth) not in the Qur'án. The Báb refers to it in the Qayyumu'l-Asmá.
- He addresses the seeker as “O he who has insight!” He draws his attention to the Shí'ah tradition that the Qá'im speaks the words: “The Remnant of God is beneficial to you”. He says the Remnant of God is guiding Him.
- He quotes a tradition from Imám 'Alí who says: “The enlightened recognition of me is the same as the recognition of God”. In the visitation prayer of Imám 'Alí this verse appears: “Whatever is decided by the “Testimony of God” is the unalterable decree.” He reminds the seeker that the allusions made here are finer than a chalice filled with clear wine.
- He says there is a commonly accepted tradition that says should a man die without recognizing the Imám of his time, he has died the death of jáhiliyyih, i.e. a reference to the days of ignorance of the idol worshippers in pre-Islamic Arabia.

A Brief Summary of Chapter 9

Theme: The Great Bounties of God

- He quotes a verse from the Qur'án (Rahman 55: 13): “ Which then of the bounties of your Lord will ye twain deny?”
- He interprets the verse that the greatest favours of God are the kindred of Muḥammad and the Shí'ah Imáms. He calls Himself the last light from the kindred of the Imám. Then He describes five stations for them. He expresses His wish to be living near the tomb of Imám Ḥusayn.
- He enters into detailed and complex numerical tafsir (deriving explanations from numerical assignments to words according to Abjad letters) related to these stations.

A Brief Summary of Chapter 10

Theme: The Explanation of the Beginning and the End. i.e. of this World and the Next

- This is the longest chapter in the epistle. It expounds the beginning of man's life and its end. i.e. the status of man at his creation and his return to God at the end of his earthly life. He also explains the real inner meaning of the martyrdom of the Imám Ḥusayn, as distinguished from his obvious physical martyrdom. The writing of this chapter coincided with the tenth day of Muḥarram, the date of the martyrdom of the Imám Ḥusayn. He discusses the divinity of the Imám Ḥusayn. He quotes one reputable ḥadīth from ibn-i-'Abbás, who stated that when Imám Ḥusayn was leaving Mecca for Iraq, he saw the archangel Gabriel holding Imám Ḥusayn's hand. Gabriel said that whosoever has supported the Imám, it is as though he has supported God. The Báb explains the inner/hidden meaning of the martyrdom of Imám Ḥusayn, i.e. the people would shed tears for Me in My afflictions (the Báb) at the hands of My enemies. The martyrdom of the Imám Ḥusayn was the fulfilment of the first blast on the trumpet. A Qur'ánic verse says there will be two blasts of the trumpet.

- He explains the mystery of the number of 72, i.e. the number of companions of the Imám Ḥusayn at the time of his martyrdom. The Báb relates these verses to His life.
- He explains the mystery of the tenth of Muḥarram when the Imám Ḥusayn was martyred in the year 61 A.H. He says that it was on a Friday. He relates the events surrounding the martyrdom to Himself. He refers to His condition at the hands of His enemies which is more grievous than that of Imám Ḥusayn. If the Imám Ḥusayn received 950 wounds from bows, arrows and spears, the Báb maintains that His suffering is greater.
- He refers to the words of Javád Valiání the Khuvár as the lowing of a calf. He says that he and people like him among the learned who opposed the Báb could not reveal even a single verse. He affirms that He could conquer the east and the west. Then He states His desire for martyrdom. These verses Bahá'u'lláh has quoted in the Kitáb-i-Íqán:

Likewise, in His interpretation of the letter "Há," He craved martyrdom, saying: "Methinks I heard a Voice calling in my inmost being: 'Do thou sacrifice the thing which Thou lovest most in the path of God, even as Ḥusayn, peace be upon him, hath offered up his life for My sake.' And were I not regardful of this inevitable mystery, by Him, Who hath my being between His hands even if all the kings of the earth were to be leagued together they would be powerless to take from me a single letter, how much less can these servants who are worthy of no attention, and who verily are of the outcast... That all may know the degree of My patience, My resignation, and self-sacrifice in the path of God." (KI 231-232)

- He makes no claim except servitude. He says He has revealed 10 books and 4 epistles. In order to stress the potency of His writings and lack of capacity of the majority of people to appreciate His spiritual authority, He states that any ordinary man who could have one of His 14 books and epistle in his hands would have conquered the world.

- He mentions that if a member of the learned (*'ulamá*) writes a simple epistle on some minor aspect of Islam, thousands of people will follow him. The faithful believe that the repudiation of such an epistle would be tantamount to repudiation of God. Although His Cause is like the sun at its zenith, the people do not pay any attention to Him and arise to oppose Him vehemently. The Báb laments the spiritual blindness of such people.
- He ends this chapter with 61 lines of a poem modelled on the battle cry of the Imám Ḥusayn.

A Brief Summary of Chapter 11

Theme: Commentary on the First One-Third of the Prayer (First Line of the Prayer)

- God's knowledge encompasses all things. Its outward, plain sense meaning is the same as its inner meaning and vice versa. Only God Himself knows the true meanings of the divine verses.
- He begins with the interpretation of the first word of the first line of the prayer and expounds the letters of the alphabet that form the word. It starts with "alláhuma = اللهم", "O my God!" He interprets the letters of the alphabet "alif", "lám", "há", "mim", etc. which form the first word. For an example, in the interpretation of "alif," He gives different elucidations to the letter alif, the standing alif that refers to the Manifestation of God (This letter of alphabet looks like a vertical line – thus "standing alif").
- He addresses the seeker stating that to recognize God two processes are involved: one through your own manifest being. This cannot be accomplished by posing questions. The second process is to recognize God through your essence of being (*máhíyyat*). This can be done only through lowliness and by accepting one's weakness and God's decree. He further explains that the recognition of God through the first process involves man's eternal station; the second process involves the

station of servitude. From this explanation one may gather that He says that to know God, one has to show meekness and then follow the Manifestation of God who reflects the Primal Will without questioning His words or deeds.

- He states that true recognition of God will not be complete without the recognition of the Manifestation of God; the recognition of the Manifestation of God is not complete without the recognition of His vice-regent; the recognition of His vice-regent is not complete except by recognizing “the peerless Shí’ah”. By “the peerless Shí’ah,” He means the Báb.

A Brief Summary of Chapter 12

Theme: Interpretation of the Second Third (Second Line of the Prayer)

- This chapter starts with a prayer referring to the unity of God.
- This chapter interprets mainly the recognition and station of Muḥammad, the Manifestation of God.

A Brief Summary of Chapter 13

Theme: Interpretation of the Third One-Third (Third line of the Prayer)

- The main theme of this chapter is the “testimony/proof” which He establishes as the revelation of the divine verses.
- He mentions a letter which He received from someone named Muḥammad Ja’far, which originally He did not intend to answer because this individual was attempting to debate Him and to test His authority and knowledge. He answers that it would not be possible for Him to make such a claim if He did not have the required testimony. The only other person who would make such a claim would be a person who is devoid of intelligence. He says He has revealed voluminous works without resorting to cognition because it came immediately through divine revelation. He says that He has not attended

schools, but that He possesses the key to the door of all knowledge.

- He makes the interesting statement that He is one of the students of Siyyid Kázim. In this epistle and elsewhere, He has mentioned that He has not acquired the knowledge that is current amongst the learned. This statement should not be taken as an affirmation that he acquired knowledge from Siyyid Kázim, but rather it confirms his former teacher's great station by paying him homage. We know that He stayed for seven months only in Karbilá; he did not attend the Siyyid's classes on any regular basis in that city.
- He exhorts the seeker to give His greetings to His followers. He states that He knows no word issuing from the realm of the Unseen, but whatever He needs to know is given to Him by God.
- To anyone who would debate the Báb, He advises that He would not answer any question unless it met certain criteria. The seeker should fall among three classes of people (For the sake of brevity, no further explanation about three classes could be given here). He then provides twelve admonishments from Imám 'Alí who has taken them from Torah. He explains each one in turn.

A Brief Summary of Chapter 14

Theme: Avoiding Unbelievers and Those who show Enmity to the New Cause

- He adds a fourth line to the occultation prayer which reads: "O my God! Make known to me the Gate to Thy Testimony! Shouldst Thou not enable me to recognize Thy Gate, I would go astray." The Báb has argued that the greatest testimony is the revelation of divine verses. According to the Shí'ah, the Testimony is the Twelfth Imám.
- Whoever doubts the command "Avoid the enemies of the Cause," will bring misery on himself and become the enemy of God.

- Almost half of the chapter is devoted to quoting the testimonials from four people who have supported the truth of His Cause. These four people are Shaykh Aḥmad-i Aḥsá'í, Siyyid Kázim Rashti, 'Abdu'l-Kháliq, and Muḥammad 'Alí Qazvíní.

Conclusion

In this paper *Risáliy-i-Ja'faríyyih* was introduced and its essential characteristics was given. Furthermore, for its better understanding, relevant background information was introduced and analyzed. A brief content of each of its fourteen chapters was presented.

Acknowledgement

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NOTES

¹ Nader Saiedi, *Gate of the Heart*, (n.p., Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008), pp. 37-41.

² This study is based on a particular manuscript of the *Risáliy-i-Ja'faríyyih* created from three different hand written unpublished manuscripts which the author of this paper could find; they are as follows:

1. Manuscript in the Iranian National Baha'i Archives (INBA #60) pp. 57-154
2. Manuscript in the Iranian National Baha'i Archives (INBA #98) pp. 48-111
3. Manuscript in the Babi collection of Princeton University Manuscript #228; pp. 1-60

It seems it is adequate for the sake of this study. There are nearly three hundred textual variations and differences in these three manuscripts; these errors which cause the variations in the three manuscripts have arisen from the carelessness of those who transcribed them and were not intentional. This study is a first step towards further studies and research

to be done in the future in order to prepare an authentic manuscript for the epistle.

- ³ Nabil-i A'zam, Mullá Muḥammad Zarandí, *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabil's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahá'í Revelation*, translated and edited by Shoghi Effendi. (New York: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1932), p. 669.
- ⁴ A.L.M. Nicolas, *Síyyid 'Alí Muḥammad dit le Báb*. (Paris: Librairie Critique, 1908), pp. 17-25.
- ⁵ These individuals were known as 'Gates' (Abwáb). The first was ('Uthmán-ibn-Sa'id Umarí (260-265 A.H.); the second Muhammad-ibn-i-'Uthmán, son of the above (265-305 A.H.); the third was Ḥusayn -ibn-i-Rúḥ Nábakhtí (305-326 A.H.); the fourth was 'Alí-ibn-i- Muḥammad Simarí (326-329 A.H.). Of these 'gates', the first was appointed by the Imám Ḥasan-i 'Askarí. The others were appointed by the then acting 'gate' with the sanction and approval of the Hidden Imám. This period extended over 69 years during which the Imám was still accessible by means of the 'gates.' This period is known as the 'Lesser' or 'Minor Occultation' (*Ghaybat-i-Sughra*). This was succeeded by the 'Greater' or 'Major Occultation' (*Ghaybat-i-Kubra*).
- ⁶ Abbas Amanat, *Iran: A Modern History*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), pp. 62-69.
- ⁷ *Ibid* pp. 199-210
- ⁸ *Jabulqa* and *Jabulsa* are two mythological cities mentioned in the *Shí'ah* ḥadīth. These cities were inhabited by archetypal believers who are waiting for the appearance of the promised Qá'im for the *Shí'ah*. According to some ḥadīth the Qá'im will inhabit these cities. Each city has 12,000 gates, each of which is guarded by 12,000 men until the Day of Resurrection when the Qa'im will appear.
- ⁹ All the quotes from Qur'an in this paper are according to its translation by J.M. Rev. Rodwell.
- ¹⁰ *La'álí Hikmat*, vol. II. (Bahá'í Publishing of Brazil, 1990), p. 60.
- ¹¹ *Ayát-i Iláhí*, vol. II, *A Compilation of Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. (Langenheim: Bahá'í Publishing Trust of Germany, 1990), p. 68.
- ¹² Assadulláh-Fadil Mázandarání, *Amr Va Khalq*, vol. II, *Mu'assisih Matbuát Amri*. (Langenheim and Tehran, Reprint by Bahá'í Publishing Trust of Germany, 141 B.E.), p. 221.
- ¹³ Todd Lawson and Omid Ghaemmaghami, eds; *A Most Noble Pattern: Collected Essays on the Writings of the Báb*. (Oxford: Bahá'í Studies Series, George Ronald, 2012), paper by Nader Saiedi, p 212.

A Commentary on the Occultation Prayer, or *Risáliy-i-Ja‘faríyyih*

The Báb

Provisional translation by Foad Seddigh

Chapter One: The Discourse of Illumination

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful! Praise be unto God Who hath testified to His Essence with His Essence that there is no God except Him Who hath been exalted through His Supreme Self over all things, Who is hidden by His transcendent revelation from all things, Who hath been without remembrance of anything from time immemorial, and Who is now the same as He hath been in the past, that there hath not been with Him the remembrance of anything. He Who is Worshipped, as the Incomparable, the Self-Subsisting, He Who made knowledge an attribute for His servants and power and might a station for His chosen Ones. He is the First without the recognition of anything and the Last without the remembrance of anything. He is manifest without the creation of anything and the innermost reality of things without the injunction of anything. Should I say that verily He is Who He is, the Excogitation and that which pertaineth to it would discredit Me; because He is not recognized by anyone except Himself and cannot be described by His creation. Should I say that Thou art Who Thou art, the Contrivance, and that which is facing it is disputing Me; because, He is not described through acclamation, nor may be

pointed to because of not being seen. He is sanctified! Verily His Essence leads to His Essence, His pre-existence is established by His momentary existence. He hath been barred from His creation and His Being hath been concealed in veils before His servants. Should any man say: "He is Who He is", the letter "há" leadeth to the creation and the letter "váv" to the decree; this is the proof for His being substantially cut off from others and greatly being debarred. Should he say: "He is Who He is" and I know not His Station, he hath joined partner with his Lord after knowing that he is severed from Him. Which unbelief is greater than the Word "He is"? Which trespass may outweigh that of the non-existent approaching the Absolute Existence? He is sanctified far beyond how I may describe Him without thanking Him, and beyond knowing Him without praising Him; though after denial, My words prove to be the condition of description. I swear by His Might! It is not the case; there is no path drawn between Him and anything else. I mean by denial nothing else but denial, and in remembering Him nothing else except helplessness. Sanctified is He! How great is My boldness before His Beauty and how great is My transgression in face of His majesty. In My contemplation, definitely, I hold Him sanctified from the description of all else except Him. This is My description of His majesty. With the knowledge of being debarred from Him, I hold Him Holy beyond the commendation of all else except Him and this is my praise for His Beauty. He is sanctified from this path. Should I say: "well is it with Me", I have joined partner with Him and should I say: "woe betide Me", I have become unfaithful. I know not how to express My hopelessness and which words to use to admit My transgression. Sanctified is God, the Incomparable, the Single! Should I immerse Myself in the ocean of His praise, notwithstanding being accounted amongst the infidels in His sight, it would fill My heart with such love that I would be silent and drowned in the ocean of remoteness. No by His exalted Being! Should My heart be consumed in My extreme disloyalty, by His Might! Certainly, it would not take away My pleasure for praising His greatness. However, I would be content with the burning of My heart as a result of my boldness. No by His greatness! Verily, I know that there is no path for Me to tread towards Him, not by helplessness, not by praise, not by prohibition, not by glory, not by severance, not by extreme light, not by the letter "há" and not by fleeing away from letter "váv". Sanctified is God!

That which He hath created in Me is wonderful and that which He hath inspired within Me is exalted. Once He enraptureth Me towards the horizon of the Hidden Realm and another time He annihilateth Me with the fire of non-consciousness. I know not that which Thou seekest from Me; is it My blood that Thou wishest to be spilled or is it Me Who desireth to draw Himself nigh unto Thee, then Thou drivest Me away and then by running away from Thy Might Thou punishest Me? I know not on which path Thou standest so that I can call Thee, and I know not which words to use to ask Thy favor and complain to Thee. No by Thy Might! I flee not from nearness to Thee, shouldst Thou drive Me away. No by Thy Being! I fear not Thy overpowering Might even if Thou wouldst burn Me up. No by Thy power! I have no request from anyone else except Thee even shouldst Thou make me needy towards it. Sanctified is God in His command. Whatever I experience, I will endure it within Me and there is nothing more exalted in My heart than His sovereignty. Should I flee away like a child of tender age, likewise, He would place sugar in My mouth to calm My tears, then He would place the breast of His mercy in my mouth to make me go to sleep. No by Thy might! I am not unaware of that which Thou wouldst do, and I do not busy Myself with such conditions away from Thee. I know not which object Thou dost want for Me; would it be that Thou wantest to take away My life or would it be to make My inner being happy?

I was residing in My house alone and no one had any knowledge of Me. Thou induced some people to leave their abode and Thou hast brought them to arrive at My place; then Thou revealed unto Me the decree of Thy call and bestowed upon Me Thy Proof. No sooner had Thy knowledge reached Me than Thou didst take Thy Covenant from the hearts of all those who had become aware of Thy command and made them submit to Thee to such an extent that none of them who had travelled denied My claim. Thou didst then take them back to their places of residence and Thou dispensed to Me after that the honor of travelling towards Thy Respectful House and Thou extended Thy command to the hands of Thy kings on earth in every direction until My Cause reached the east and the west and in between them. As soon as the faith of Thy servants grew stronger and everyone knew the decree of the heart, Thou made Me return from Thy Respectful House; consonant with this condition, Thou desired that mischief arise in the cities and by the inhabitants of such cities

until the opposition of them who turned against the Cause descended upon Me and the chosen ones. Then, Thou brought Me in the utmost humiliation in the presence of tyrants, then Thou inspired Me with the word of negation after affirmation in order to make Me secure from life-threatening positions. Are these not all of Thy making, O Thou the Possessor of Majesty and Favor? Verily, O my God! Thou transported Me to the supernal realm from the beginning of the Cause and Thou placed Me in different situations; then Thou placed the word of denial in the hearts of Satanic people until the enemies grabbed whatever they had written. Verily, I did not intend in what I wrote except the specific station of appointed gate-hood yet gate-hood is in reality an absolute word that falleth into limitation by such specification. By Thy Might! They did not scheme against My decree but I was swift in scheming in their affairs. If I had affirmed them like the earlier believers, they would not have treated Me with enmity. However, any affliction I suffer, I see it but as coming from Thee; because Thou hast power over its transmutation or turning it around in the best possible way. The reason that I have endured humiliation is because Thou hast been patient with Me despite having knowledge and being in the position of power. However, Thou knowest O My God that I do not like to act contrary to Thy Will and am aware of Thy patience with respect to those who art nigh unto Thee but I have no power over Thy ways for dealing with them and verily, I am not ashamed before Thee as Thou art potent to decree for Me to pursue an action and then change it without being in a position of contradiction. In such case, I will bring My action to an end even if My words might be similar to those of wrongdoers. And knowing My inner being which is intoxicated by Thy bestowals and by the wine of being thankful to Thee, I call Thee with these verses which do not trespass the limit of praise; however, they are not beyond the decree of a change of plan. Sanctified art Thou! I praise Thee in misery and distress; a praise which is shedding light, is bright, and is sanctified with the sanctity of Thy realm of eternity and Thy divine unity. I seek assistance from Thee with what Thou purposed in this book with Thy strength and power. Thou art the Generous, the All-Praised.

I bear witness to Thee with that which Thou lovest and art made happy before manifesting what is in the world of existence. Thou art the All-Informed, the Witness and Thou art sufficient unto Me as a

witness. I bear witness that there is no other God except Him alone, there is no partner with Him, and verily Muhammad, the salutation of God be upon Him and His kindred, is Thy servant; no one is like Him and He is Thy Messenger Who is exalted above being similar to anyone. He conveyed to the people that which Thou manifested within Him from Thy knowledge, and provided admonishment to the people from that which Thou inspired Him in the path of Thy love. O My God! Reward Him and His kindred as They deserve. I bear witness to the Regents of Muhammad, Thy Beloved, as Thou hast purposed for them and provided help for them in every condition through Thy bounty from Thy Own self and Thou art numbering them as letters of Thy divine unity. Verily, Thou art the All-Mighty, the All-Wise. I bear witness for their followers that which Thy knowledge surrounded them in the arc of descent and Thy mystery in the arc of ascent, for every truth with rightfulness and for every untruth with denial, and Thou art sufficient unto Me and art witness and aware unto Me. O thou who examinest this book! Beware, beware! lest thou look upon any other thing except thy essence of being when the birds invoked with melodious tunes, the peoples with the visible objects, the minds with the world of existence, and the hearts with the clear testimonies; certainly it is your duty to examine the promptings of your inner heart and its command. We are from God and towards Our Lord We shall turn and those who act should conduct themselves like this.