

Thirty-Fourth Hadith: The Station of The Faithful Before God

بِالسَّنَدِ الْمُتَّصِلِ إِلَى ثِقَةِ الْإِسْلَامِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ الْكُلَيْنِي قُدَّسَ سِرُّهُ عَنْ عِدَّةٍ مِنْ أَصْحَابِنَا عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ خَالِدٍ عَنْ إِسْمَاعِيلَ بْنِ مِهْرَانَ عَنْ أَبِي سَعِيدِ الْقَمَّاطِ عَنْ أَبَانَ بْنِ تَغْلِبَ عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ قَالَ: لَمَّا أُسْرِيَ بِالنَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ قَالَ: يَا رَبِّ، مَا حَالُ الْمُؤْمِنِ عِنْدَكَ؟ قَالَ: يَا مُحَمَّدُ، مَنْ أَهَانَ لِي وَلِيًّا فَقَدْ بَارَزَنِي بِالْمُحَارَبَةِ وَأَنَا أَسْرَعُ شَيْءٍ إِلَى نُصْرَةٍ أَوْلِيَّائِي. وَمَا تَرَدَّدْتُ عَنْ شَيْءٍ أَنَا فَاعِلُهُ كَتَرَدُّدِي عَنْ وَفَاةِ الْمُؤْمِنِ؛ يَكْرَهُ الْمَوْتَ وَأَكْرَهُ مَسَاءَتَهُ. وَإِنَّ مِنْ عِبَادِي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مَنْ لَا يُصْلِحُهُ إِلَّا الْغِنَى، وَلَوْ صَرَفْتُهُ إِلَى غَيْرِ ذَلِكَ لَهَلَكَ. وَإِنَّ مِنْ عِبَادِي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مَنْ لَا يُصْلِحُهُ إِلَّا الْفَقْرُ وَلَوْ صَرَفْتُهُ إِلَى غَيْرِ ذَلِكَ لَهَلَكَ. وَمَا يَتَقَرَّبُ إِلَيَّ عَبْدٌ مِنْ عِبَادِي بِشَيْءٍ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِمَّا افْتَرَضْتُ عَلَيْهِ. وَإِنَّهُ لَيَتَقَرَّبُ إِلَيَّ بِالنَّافِلَةِ حَتَّى أُحِبُّهُ فَإِذَا أَحْبَبْتُهُ كُنْتُ إِذَا سَمِعْتَهُ الَّذِي يَسْمَعُ بِهِ وَبَصَرَهُ الَّذِي يُبْصِرُ بِهِ وَلِسَانَهُ الَّذِي يَنْطِقُ بِهِ وَيَدَهُ الَّتِي يَبْطِشُ بِهَا؛ إِنْ دَعَانِي أَجَبْتُهُ وَإِنْ سَأَلَنِي أَعْطَيْتُهُ.

With a chain of authorities reaching up to the Thiqat al-Islam Muhammad ibn Ya'qub at-Kulayni (Q) from several of our companions, from Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid, from Isma'il ibn Mihran, from Abu Said al-Qummat, from Aban ibn Taghlib, from Abu Ja'far (A) that he said, "When the Prophet (S) was taken on his [celestial] journey, he said to God: My Lord, what is the state of the believer before Thee? He replied: O Muhammad, indeed whoever humiliates a friend of mine declares a war against me and I am the swiftest of all in the aid of My friends. And I am not so hesitant in any thing that I do as when taking the life of the faithful person who hates death, and I hate to vex him. And indeed there are those amongst My faithful servants whom nothing can reform except wealth, and should I turn them towards something other than that they would perish. And indeed there are those amongst my faithful servants whom nothing would reform except poverty, and if I were to change their state from what it is they would perish. And there is nothing dearer among things that bring a servant of Mine near to Me than the obligations that I have assigned to him. And indeed he draws nearer to Me gradually through supererogatory acts until I love him, and when I love him, I become the hearing with which he hears, the sight wherewith he sees, the tongue wherewith he speaks, and the hand wherewith he holds, and if he calls Me, I answer him, and if he asks Me I grant him. [1](#)

Exposition

The verb أُسْرِيَ is in the passive sense and means being taken on a night of a journey. Al-Jawhari says:

سَرَيْتُ سُرًى وَمَسْرًى وَأَسْرَيْتُ بِمَعْنَى إِذَا سَرْتُ لَيْلًا، وَبِالْأَلْفِ لُغَةً أَهْلَ الْحِجَازِ.

Hence, a journey by night is called إِسْرَاءٌ (*isra'*). The descriptive [expression by night,' *laylan*, used with the verb *asra*] in the noble verse:

﴿سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَى بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا﴾

Glorified is He who took His servant on a night journey. (17: 1)

is either, as stated by Shaykh Baha'i,² for the purpose of indicating the short period of the night journey by the means of the indefinite (*tankir*) *laylan*, because the journey between the Masjid al-Haram and the Masjid al-Aqsa takes forty nights. Or it is based on abstraction (*tajrid*) meant for the purpose of conveying the same sense. In the phrase لَمَّا أُسْرِيَ بِالنَّبِيِّ ('when the Prophet was taken on the nightly journey') the related explanatory phrases—'towards the station of Divine proximity for instance'—have been omitted due to their being understood.

The expression مَا حَالُ الْمُؤْمِنِ means, 'what station and worth does the believer have before Thee?' In the expression مِنْ أَهَانَ لِي وَلِيًّا conveys the sense of despising, making light of, scorning, vilifying:

أَهَانُهُ: أَي اسْتَخَفَّ بِهِ وَاسْتَهَانَ بِهِ. وَتَهَاوَنَ بِهِ أَي اسْتَحْقَرَهُ. يُقَالُ: رَجُلٌ فِيهِ مَهَانَةٌ.

Apparently the prefix ل in (لي) refers to the verb, in which case it would mean making light of a believer for his faith in God and for the sake of God, the Exalted. It is also possible that it relates to *wali*; in which case, that which is meant is 'making light of in the absolute sense, for any reason whatsoever. *Wali* here means friend and intimate.

In the expression بَارَزَ، بَارِزِي means to go out:

بَرَزَ الرَّجُلُ يَبْرُزُ يُرُوزًا، أَي خَرَجَ.

And here it means to commence hostility and to go to war or to declare it.

The expression مَسَاءَتُهُ is the verbal noun (*masdar mimi*) of مَسَاءَ، meaning causing distress and vexation.

In regard to the statement:

إِنَّ مِنْ عِبَادِي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مَنْ لَا يُصْلِحُهُ إِلَّا الْغِنَى: أَي ذُلُّ وَضَعْفٌ

the authoritative Shaykh Baha'i (M) says: The rules of grammar require that the relative pronoun (*mawsul*, i.e. مَنْ) should be the subject (*ism*) and the genitive proposition and the genitive clause (*jarr wa majrur*, i.e. مِنْ عِبَادِي) its predicate (*khabar*); but it is obvious that the intent is not to say that those whom nothing but poverty can reform are some of the servants, but rather the contrary.

Therefore, it is better to consider the adverbial clause as the subject and the relative pronoun as the predicate. And although this is contrary to general usage, the like of it has been considered permissible by some, as in the statement of God, the Exalted:

﴿...وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَقُولُ آمَنَّا﴾

(Here ends his statement.)³ Perhaps in such cases the subject (*mubtada'*) is elliptical and the genitive proposition is indicative of the elision. In such a case it would also not be contrary to the rules of grammar. And it is narrated from the author of *al-Kashshaf* [i.e. al-Zamakhshari]⁴ that [in such cases] the genitive pronoun and the clause in the genitive case are interpreted to be the subject. On the basis of that which has been said, there is also no need of any interpretation.

We should know that this statement, here, is meant to dispel a doubt and to answer a question that might arise in the minds of some people who do not have the understanding of the perfect divine order [of creation] and the concealed Divine providence. That [doubt and question] is that if the faithful have such a worth and station before God, the Exalted, why do they fall into poverty and destitution? And if the world does not have any worth, why do some of them become rich and wealthy. It answers by saying that the states of My servants and the conditions of their hearts are different.

There are some whom nothing except poverty would reform, and I make him poor to reform their state. And there are some whom nothing would reform except wealth and self-sufficiency, and so I make them rich. Both of these states signify the nobility, honor, and dignity that the man of faith has in the sacred presence of God, the Blessed and the Exalted.

The sentence وَمَا يَنْقَرَّبُ إِلَيَّ عَبْدٌ مِنْ عِبَادِي (‘and there is nothing dearer among things that bring a servant of Mine nearer to Me . . .’) and the following sentence describe the station of nearness of the Perfect in faith.

It is as if this *hadith*, wherein the state of the faithful is described for the Noble Messenger (S), first begins by giving a brief description of the state of the faithful in general, that whoever despises them declares war against God. Then, it divides the faithful into two classes, or rather three, in accordance

with the way of the gnostics.

One of them referred to is the generality of the faithful, from the phrase ‘And I am not so hesitant...,’ up to where He says: ‘And there is nothing dearer among things...’ That is because they detest death, and wealth and poverty causes their hearts to swerve. These two are not the characteristics of the Perfect (*kummal*) but refer to the ordinary among the faithful.

Accordingly, the literal import of the tradition poses no problem and it does not conflict with other noble traditions which state that the Sincere amongst the faithful do not have aversion for death. Hence, there is no need for the answer cited by Shaykh Bahai from the Shaykh al-Shahid (R). Anyone interested in it should refer to Shaykh Baha’i’s *Arba’in*.⁵

Secondly, the tradition describes the state of the Perfect from where it says, “There is nothing among the things that bring a servant of Mine near to Me... (وَمَا يَتَقَرَّبُ إِلَيَّ عَبْدٌ مِنْ عِبَادِي), up to the end of the *hadith*. In the view of the gnostics, these sentences relate to two different groups. One of them consists of those who obtain the nearness relating to obligatory duties (*fara’idh*) and the other consists of those who obtain the nearness associated with the supererogatory acts of worship (*nawafil*),⁶ and the closing part of the tradition refers to their station and the result of their nearness. Later, God willing, we will briefly refer to each of these two stations.

As to the word *بيطش*, al-Jawhari says that *batshah* means domination and taking by force:

الْبَطْشَةُ، السَّطْوَةُ وَالْأَخْذُ بِالْعُنْفِ، وَقَدْ بَطَشَ بِهِ بِيَطْشٍ وَيَبْطِشُ بَطْشًا.

Here, however, that which is meant is taking hold of (*akhdh*), in general, and, apparently, the general sense of ‘taking hold of is that which is meant by the word in common usage.

[A Noteworthy Point](#)

The learned Shaykh Baha’i (M) says, “The Chain of authorities of this *hadith* is *sahih* [authentic], and it is a tradition ‘well-known (*mashhur*) among the Shi’is (*khassah*) as well as the generality *Ammah*, i.e. the Sunnis], who have narrated it in their *sihah* with a slight ‘variation.’ Thereafter, he cites the tradition with a slight difference [of Wording] from their *sihah*. In the gloss on the *Arba’in*, he remarks, “One of ‘the several’ mentioned in the chain of authorities of the tradition is ‘Ali ibn ‘Ibrahim, and for this reason, this narration is *sahih*. The ‘Ammah have also transmitted it through a *sahih* chain of authorities, and this is a tradition that is *mashhur* and considered authentic by the consensus (*muttafaq ‘alayh*) of all followers of Islam.’⁷

Interpretation Of The ‘Hesitation’ Ascribed To God

We have already explained matters relating to the contempt of the faithful: earlier while expounding one of the traditions,⁸ and there is no need to repeat it here. Here we will explain some other expressions relating to the tradition.

It should be known that that which is mentioned in this noble tradition concerning the ascription of hesitation (*tardid, taddud*) to God, the Exalted, and similar other matters that are mentioned in *sahih* traditions, or rather even in the wise Divine scripture—such as the attribution of change of intent (*bada*) or testing (*imtihan*) to God, the Exalted—have been interpreted by the *ulama* in accordance with their own approach and creed. The august Shaykh Baha’i (R) has given three interpretations of it in his book *Arba’in*, to which we will refer briefly.

First, that there is a concealed condition (*idmar*) in the statement, meaning ‘if it were possible for Me to hesitate.’ Second, since it is common among people to hesitate in offending those whom they respect, a hesitation which they do not show for others, it is valid to mention hesitation as a metaphorical substitute for respect. What is meant is, ‘None of the creatures have such worth and respect before Me as a faithful person has.’

The third interpretation is that God, the Exalted, as mentioned in traditions, reveals the favors and the good news to the faithful servant at the time of death to remove his aversion towards death and to awaken in him a desire for the abode of permanence. Hence He has likened this state to the state of one who wants to subject his friend to a pain which is followed by a great benefit. Such a one hesitates as to how to inflict this pain so that the friend suffers the least. Thus he continues to appeal and allure until he obtains acceptance.⁹

An ‘Irfani Explanation

The way of the philosophers and the gnostics in this and similar issues is a different one. We shall refrain from elaborating it due to its being remote from [ordinary] understanding and will not discuss its [metaphysical] premises. We shall mention only as much as can be educative and accords with spirituality.

It should be known that all the planes of existence, from the ultimate heights of *Malakut* and the last peaks of *Jabarut* to the lowest depths of the world of darkness and prime matter, are manifestation of Divine Beauty and Glory (*jamal wa jalal*) and the degrees of the manifestations of God’s Lordship. No being has any independence of its own and everything is sheer dependence, relation, poverty, and attachment to the sacred being of the Absolute Real. All of them are absolutely subject to the sovereignty of God and submissive to the Divine commands. Accordingly, there are many references to this matter in the Qur’anic verses. God, the Exalted, has said:

﴿وَمَا رَمَيْتَ إِذْ رَمَيْتَ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ رَمَى﴾

And when thou threwest, it was not thou that threw, but God threw. (8:17)

This affirmation and negation refers to the position of *amr bayn al-amrayn*.¹⁰ It means that you have indeed thrown (the lance), but at the same time it was not your ego that performed the act of throwing independently. Rather, it was with the manifestation of the power of God in the mirror of thy existence and through the influence of His Power in the *Mulk* and the *Malakut* of thy being that the throwing occurred.

Hence you are the thrower, and at the same time it is God, Glorious and Exalted, Who is the thrower. An example of it are the noble verses of the blessed *Surat al-Kahf*, in the story of Moses and Khidr (A) where Hadrat Khidr explains the mystery behind his actions. In one case involving a defect [i.e. where Khidr makes a hole in the boat], he ascribes it to himself.

In one case, which involved perfection, he ascribes it to God. In another case, he ascribes the act to both himself and to God. In one place he says *أردتُ* (I wished), in another place *أرادَ رَبُّكَ* (Thy Lord wished), and in yet another place *أردنا* (We wished), and all of these [ascriptions] were correct.¹¹

Of the same kind is the statement of God, the Exalted:

﴿اللَّهُ يَتَوَفَّى الْأَنْفُسَ حِينَ مَوْتِهَا﴾

God takes the souls at tire time of their death, (39:42)

Although it is the Angel of Death who is charged with, according to another Qur'anic verse, the taking of the souls.

﴿يُضِلُّ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ﴾

He leads astray whoever He will and guides whoever He will. (16:93)

it is God, the Exalted, who is the guide (*al-hadi*) and it is He who leads astray (*al-mudill*), although the guides are Gabriel (Jibra'il) and the Noble Messenger (S):

﴿إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُنذِرٌ وَلِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ هَادٍ﴾

Thou are only a warner and a guide to every people. ¹²

and it is Satan who misleads.

Similarly, it is the Divine breath that sounds the trumpet of Hadrat Israfil through the blowing of Israfil.

From one viewpoint, what are Israfil, 'Izra'il and Jibra'il and Muhammad (S) as well as other prophets and the entire realm of being in comparison to the kingdom of the Absolute Sovereign and the irresistible Divine will that anything may be ascribed to them? All of them are manifestations of the Divine Power and Will:

﴿وَهُوَ الَّذِي فِي السَّمَاءِ إِلَهٌ وَفِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَهٌ﴾

And it is He who in heaven is God and in earth is God. (43:84)

From another viewpoint, that is, from the aspect of multiplicity and the order of causes and means, all the means are appropriate in their own place and the perfect order of creation is regulated through a system and hierarchy of means, causes and effects.

And if the smallest of causes and means is withheld from doing its work the entire wheel of existence will come to a halt. And were it not for the relation of the temporal to the eternal, through the determined means and intermediaries, the path of Divine effusion (*fiyd*) would be intercepted and the stream of Divine mercy would be cut off.

If someone were to attain to this refreshing fountainhead of faith through the study of the fundamentals and the preliminaries, established in their own place, especially in the *'irfani* books of the eminent [urafa'] and the books of the Chief of Philosophers and the Best of Islamic Philosophers (*Sadr al-hukama' wa al-falasifah wa afdal al-hukama' al-Islamiyyah*, i.e. Sadr al-Muta'allihin, known as Mullah Sadra), and should this teaching enter his heart, these doors would be opened for him and he would find that at the plane of gnostic discovery all these ascription are valid and there is not the slightest trace of the metaphorical in them.

Since some of the angels, charged with the souls of the faithful and the taking of their sacred souls, behold the stations that the faithful possess in the sacred presence of God, the Exalted, and, on the other hand, when they observe the aversion of the faithful [towards death], they get into a state of hesitation and indecision. It is this very state that God, the Exalted, has attributed to Himself, in the same way that He has ascribed the taking of souls, the guidance and the misleading to Himself.

In the same way as those are correct on the basis of the mystic creed, this one is also valid. However, attaining to this fountain requires a fairness of talent and a sound and subtle taste. And God is the All-knowing and He is the Guide.

This point should not remain unmentioned that since the reality of existence is the very reality of

perfection and completion, that which is defective and ugly is not attributable to God, the Exalted, and is not the object of creation (*maj'ul*), as is established in its own place. Hence the closer the effusion (*fayd*) to the horizon of perfection and the more devoid it is of weakness and deficiency, its relation to God is more complete and its ascription to the Sacred Being truer.

Conversely, the more predominant is the darkness of finitude and non-existence, and the more numerous the limits and inadequacies, the weaker is a thing's relation to God and the more remote its attribution. That is why the acts of origination and creation have been more often ascribed to God in the language of the *Shari'ah* and the transient *mulki* acts less often. Should an open eye and an awakened heart be able to distinguish inadequacy from perfection, the ugly from the fair, and the good from the evil, it would then understand that although the entire realm of being is the manifestation of Divine efficiency and related to God, all the Divine acts are perfect and beautiful and none of the defects and evils are attributable to His Sacred Being.

That which is called 'attribution by accident' (*intisab bi al-arad*) in the jargon of the philosophers (*hukama'*) (*R*) is a rumor at the plane of preliminary teaching and philosophy. This notion, in the present context, contains certain fallacies, and it is better to refrain from discussing them here.

Our main purpose in discussing this point was, firstly, to dispel certain false doubts that may arise in the mind of the ignorant person devoid of the knowledge of the higher teaching.

Secondly, the aim was to explain that the hesitation and conflicting motives [mentioned in the tradition], as they happen to some beings of the *Malakut*, are more validly ascribed to God, than the events that occur in this [corporeal] world.

Thirdly, the aim was that a person possessing the gnosis of the realities should again distinguish between the aspect of perfection and deficiency in this hesitation and vacillation of motives, and attribute the aspect of perfection to God and negate the aspect of deficiency in relation to Him.

Another Interpretation Of The Tradition Of Hesitation

There is another interpretation of the noble tradition relevant to this context, which had come to the mind of this incapable author. And that is that the servants of God are either the gnostics and the *awliya'* who are engaged in the journey towards God and on the path of the people of the heart. This group of servants are absorbed in the Divine and in love with the unique Divine Beauty. The Sacred Essence of God is the *kiblah* of their attention and yearning, and apart from Him they do not behold any of the worlds, even themselves and their own perfection.

Or they are those who are immersed in the adornments of the world and sunk in the darkness of the love of glory and wealth, and the faces of their hearts are turned towards their own ego and egohood, without paying any attention to the world of the sacred and the celestial company of intimacy and love. These–

they are the ones who have turned away from the Names of God (وهم الملحدون في أسماء الله).

And the third group are the believers who attend to the world of the sacred in accordance with the light of their faith and they abhor death in proportion to their attention to this world. God has referred to these opposing attractions towards the *Mulk* and the *Malakut*, towards the Divine and the creation, towards the Hereafter and the world, as hesitation as attraction towards two opposite sides is present in hesitation. It is as if He were saying that this *Mulki* and *Malakuti* attraction is not present in any existent the way it is present in the faithful servant.

On the one hand he is averse to death due to his attention towards the realm of *Mulk*, and on the other hand the Divine gravity draws him towards Itself in order to bring him to, his perfection. Hence God, the Exalted, is averse to do him offence which is equal to his remaining in the world of *Mulk*, and he himself is averse to death. However, other people are not such, because the *awliya'* do not have any *Mulki* attraction, and those immersed in the world do not possess any *Malakuti* attraction.

The meaning of attribution of these opposing attractions to God is the same as mentioned in the former interpretation. In this context the great researcher and the majestic Sayyid, Mir Damad, [13](#) and his honored disciple have made certain disclosures whose mention will further prolong this discourse.

God's Reforming Of The State Of The Faithful Through Poverty And Wealth

From that which is stated in this noble tradition, that nothing will reform some of My servants except poverty and should I deprive them of it they would perish, and similarly there are some who will be reformed by wealth and sufficiency and will perish without it, it is known that whatever God, the Exalted, bestows upon the faithful, whether it is wealth or poverty, health or malady, safety or trepidation, and other such things, is for the reform of the state of the faithful and the purification of the state of their hearts.

And this noble tradition is not contrary to the many traditions that have been narrated pertaining to the intensity of the afflictions of the faithful through maladies and pains, poverty, destitution and other tribulations. For God, the Exalted, with His expansive mercy and all-encompassing grace, is like a physician and a kind nurse Who makes everyone refrain from the world in some particular way.

At times, He gives wealth to someone and at the same time involves him in other afflictions in accordance with the strength and weakness, perfection and inadequacy of his faith. Rather, He surrounds wealth and riches with afflictions in such it manner as to turn him away from the world and the love for it. The temperament of this person is such that were he to be made poor, perhaps due to his seeing felicity in wealth and property and considering the worldly people its felicitous, he would turn to the world and perish for ever in its pursuit.

But when it is made accessible to him and, for the sake of restraining him from falling in love with it, it is surrounded by troubles and inner and outer distresses, he would turn away from the world. One of our great masters (D) used to say concerning having several wives that one imagines it to be for the sake of the world and attention towards it; but when one is afflicted with it one finds out that it is one of the great masterpieces (of legislation), which makes one leave the world and abandon it in the very course of entry into it.

Thus God, the Exalted, afflicts the faithful at times with poverty, reforming them and turning their hearts away from the world and giving them consolation. At times He afflicts them with wealth and riches, and while one imagines them to be enjoying the world's bounties and having a good time, they are really afflicted with distress, tension, visitations and tribulations. At the same time, the tradition does not conflict with the fact that the poor among the faithful have a great merit before God, the Exalted, as is known from the traditions. We have explained some of the things pertaining to this topic under one of the earlier traditions. [14](#)

The Nearness Relating To Obligatory And Supererogatory Acts And Their Result, In Accordance With The Approach Of The Wayfarers

It should be known that for the wayfarer on the path of God and the emigrant from the dark house of the self to the real Ka'bah, there is a spiritual journey and a gnostic wayfaring whose origin is the habitat of the self and egoism and whose stages are the planes of finitude pertaining to 'the horizons and the souls' and the *Mulk* and the *Malakut*, which have been referred to as 'the veils of darkness and lights.'

إِنَّ لِلَّهِ سَبْعِينَ أَلْفَ حِجَابٍ مِنْ نُورٍ وَظُلْمَةٍ.

Verily, for God there are a seventy thousand veils of light and darkness. [15](#)

These are the lights of being and the darkness of finitude, or the lights of *Malakut* and the darknesses of *Mulk*, or the darkening pollutions of carnal attachments and the pure lights of the attachment of the heart. These seventy thousand veils of light and darkness are at times summarily referred to as the seven veils, as narrated in relation to the opening *takbirat* from the Pure Imams, that they remove a veil with every *takbirah*, [16](#) and as is also narrated concerning the subject of prostration on the earth of the shrine of al-Husayn, may my soul be ransomed for him, that prostration on it removes the sevenfold veils. [17](#)

And a famous gnostic says:

هفت شهر عشق را عطار گشت

ما هنوز اندر خم يك كوچه ايم

Attar has roamed through the sevenfold cities of love, While we are still in the bend of a lane. [18](#)

These in the microcosmic Man have been referred to as the sevenfold subtleties (*lata'if*) [19](#) and sometimes their number is reduced to three inclusive veils, referred to as the 'threefold realms' of 'the horizons' (*afaq*) and 'the threefold planes' of the souls (*anfus*), [20](#) and at times to the thousand fold stages well known among the wayfarers. At times they have been divided, in one consideration, to a hundred and, in another consideration, to ten stages.

The perfect 'arif Shaykh Shahabadi (D) used to assign ten stations for every stage from among the stages of the wayfarers, and in this new and original division there would be in all a thousand stations. And Hadrat Ibrahim, the Friend of the Beneficent (A) has expressed his spiritual journey, as reported by God, the Exalted, [in the Qur'an] as consisting of threefold stages, one of which is called 'the Star,' another 'the Moon,' and the third 'the Sun.'[21](#)

In fine, the origin of the spiritual journey is the dark house of the self, and its stages are the planes and levels of the *horizons and the souls*. Its destination is the sacred Being of God with all the Names and the Attributes, at first, for the Perfect Man, and lastly as that wherein all the Names and the Attributes dissolve, and every name, attribute, and definition belongs to something else.

After that, the wayfaring human being overcomes his ego and egoism and leaves the house of the ego and passes through the stages and planes of finitude in his search of the real goal and his quest of the Divine, by transcending each of these and piercing through the veils of darkness and light, tearing his heart away from all beings and existences, and purging the Ka'bah of the heart of its idols with his Wall-like hand, and, when all the stars and the moons and the suns set and disappear from the horizon of his heart and the orientation of his heart, undisturbed by attachment to any other, becomes single, unified, and divine, and the state of his heart [like that of Abraham, as described in this verse]:

﴿إِنِّي وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ﴾

I have turned my face towards Him no created the heavens and the earth. (6:79)

to become annihilated in the Names, the Essence and the Acts, then, in this state, he would become lost to himself, attaining total obliteration and absolute swoon. Then the Divine takes charge of his being, and he hears with the Divine hearing, sees through the Divine vision, holds with the hand of Divine power, and speaks with the Divine tongue. He beholds through the Divine and sees nothing except God. He

speaks through the Divine and says nothing but the Truth, becoming blind, deaf and dumb to the non-Divine, his eye and ear are open to nothing except the Truth.

This station is not attained except through the gravity of the Divine and the spark of the fire of love, the flame of eternal love, which brings him close to the threshold of proximity to the Divine. Through that pulse of Divine attraction, which follows from [the Divine] self-love, he is helped so as not to stumble in this valley of bewilderment and so as not to fall victim to *shath* and the like, which are remnants of egoism. And in this tradition there is a reference to these two, in His words:

وَأَنَّهُ لِيَتَقَرَّبُ إِلَيَّ بِالنَّافِلَةِ حَتَّى أُحِبَّهُ.

And he gradually draws nearer to Me through the *nawafil*, until I love him.

The drawing near of the servant is through the spark of yearning (*'ishq*), and the pulse of Divine gravity from love (*hubb*):

تا که از جانب معشوق نباشد کششی

کوشش عاشق بیچاره جایی نرسد

Until there is not an attraction from the Beloved's quarter, The efforts of the poor lover do not get anywhere. [22](#)

S

Hence the ultimate of nearness through the *nawafil* is total *fana'*, absolute dissolution and complete obliteration, and its result is 'I become the hearing wherewith he hears...' And after this complete *fana'*, total obliteration, absolute annihilation, and complete swoon (*sa'q*), at times the eternal grace comes to his aid, bringing him to himself and returning him to the domain of his own self, whereat he finds himself in the state of awakening (*sahw*) and the state of intimacy (*uns*) and serenity (*tumaninah*) comes upon him, whereat the glories of Beauty and Majesty dawn upon him.

In this state of consciousness, to him are revealed the Attributes in the mirror of the Essence (*dhat*), and in them the fixed archetypes (*a'yan thabitah*) and their requisites. The state of the people of the path of gnosis at this station is also like their first station, in that its fixed archetype is subject to a certain Name. Its annihilation is in the same Name as well as its survival. In the state of *sahw* also the same Name is disclosed to him and the disclosure of the fixed archetype subject to the same Name is obtained by him.

The Secret Of The Variance Among The Prophets In Respect Of Prophethood

Hence for the Perfect Man (*insan al-kamil*), who is subject to the Greatest All-inclusive Name, the absolute disclosure of the fixed archetypes and their accompanying requisites is obtained from eternity to eternity. Revealed also to him are the states and potentialities of all the existents and the character of their wayfaring as well as the pattern of their fulfillment (*wusul*).

The robes of the seal of prophethood and ultimate prophecy, which is the consequence of absolute disclosure, fit his fair and upright stature. Each of the other prophets, in accordance with the Name they manifest and in proportion to the capacity and vastness of its domain, obtain the disclosure of the archetype subject to that Name. The degree of the perfection and deficiency of their ministry, its degree of nobility, and its vastness and narrowness, derive therefrom and are subject to their respective Divine Names, as discussed in detail by us in the treatise *Misbah al-hidayah*.[23](#)

In fine, after that the state of recovery occurs following the obliteration, his being becomes divine and God, the Exalted, observes other existents in the mirror of his beauty, or, rather, it occupies the same plane as that of the Divine Will (*mashiyyah*). For the Perfect Man, is on the same plane as the Absolute Will (*mashiyyah*) and his spirituality becomes the same as the manifestation of Divine efficiency.

In such a state God, the Exalted, sees through him, hears through him, and holds by his means, and he himself is the irresistible Divine Will, the perfect intent, and knowledge-in-act (*'ilm fili*). Hence God hears by him, sees by him,... and so on and so forth to the end of the *hadith*. [The same matter is referred to in the following tradition] and others like it:

عَلِيٌّ عَيْنُ اللَّهِ وَسَمْعُ اللَّهِ وَجَنْبُ اللَّهِ.

‘Ali is the eye of God, the hearing of God, and the Divine proximity.[24](#)

Hence the nearness of the obligations of *sahw* is consequent to the obliteration, and its result is that which you have heard. The *Sahw* consequent to obliteration is a state other than this state of negligence of ours. That plurality, consequent to absolute *fana'*, is different from the plurality in which we are immersed. That is because plurality is a veil for us that hides the Divine Face, while for them it is a mirror of epiphany, [as stated by ‘Ali:]

مَا رَأَيْتُ شَيْئاً إِلَّا وَرَأَيْتُ اللَّهَ مَعَهُ وَفِيهِ وَقَبْلَهُ وَبَعْدَهُ.

I did not see a thing without beholding God with it, in it, before it, and after it.[25](#)

The nearness of the *nawafil* may be considered as obliteration in the Names (*fana' asma'i*) and the nearness of *fara'id*, as obliteration in the Essence. Accordingly, the result of the nearness of *fara'id* becomes absolute obliteration, and its further elaboration is not appropriate to this place. Even this much was beyond the scope of these pages.

A Citation From The Most August Shaykh Baha'i

The august shaykh and gnostic, Baha'i (R) in commenting on this noble tradition in his *Arba'in*, states: "In this regard there are certain sublime statements made by the people of the heart, containing subtle points and spiritual hints which fill the olfactory sense of the spirit with their aroma and quicken the decaying bones of the specters.

None is guided to their meaning and knows their reality except someone who has given up his comforts through austerities until he comes to get a taste of them and reaches their meaning. But one who is ignorant of their secrets and deprived of the treasure of their teachings, due to his immersion in base carnal joys and being drowned in physical pleasures, is exposed to a great danger on hearing these words, and it is feared that he would fall into blasphemy and come to believe in incarnation (*hulul* and *ittihad*). And Exalted is God greatly above that:

تَعَالَى اللَّهُ عَمَّا يُفُؤُونَ عُلُوًّا كَبِيرًا.

Here at this point we will state the matter simply and accessibly so that it is near to understanding. Hence, we may say, these words represent the extreme in nearness, describing the domination of love's Sovereign on the outward and inward being of the servant. Therefore, what is meant—and God knows best—is this:

When I love a servant, I draw him to the point of intimacy and turn him towards the world of sanctity, immersing his mind in the mysteries of *Malakut* and confining his senses to perceiving the lights of *Jabarut*. In this state his feet remain steady at the station of proximity, and love so mingles with his flesh and blood that he becomes unconscious of himself. Thereat, everything else disappears from his sight until I become like his sight and hearing, as has been said:

جُنُونِي فِيكَ لَا يَخْفَى وَنَارِي مِنْكَ لَا يَخْبُو

فَأَنْتَ السَّمْعُ وَالْأَبْصَارُ وَالْأَرْكَانُ وَالْقَلْبُ

That I'm mad of Thee, is no secret, My fire, lit by Thee, won't go out,

*Thus Thou art my hearing and my sight, My body, and my heart?*²⁶

Here end his words, may God elevate his station.

A Citation From Khwajah Tusi

His Excellency, the best of the later scholars and the most perfect among the predecessors, Khwajah Nasir Tusi (Q) says, “When the gnostic is cut off from himself and joined to God, he sees all powers as vanishing in Divine power and all sciences as drowned in Divine knowledge and all wills as vanishing in His will. Then he sees all the existents and their perfections as having originated and emanated from Him. At this time God, the Exalted, becomes his hearing and sight, power, knowledge and existence. Thereupon the character of the gnostic becomes divine.”²⁷ Here end his words, may God increase the sublimity of his station.

The honored Majlisi has also made certain remarks on the issue. Their summary is that if man uses his faculties and energies in the way of Satan and carnal appetites, nothing remains of them except regret and shame. But if he spends them in the way of obedience to God, He transforms them into spiritual faculties. Then his hearing and sight become spiritual hearing and spiritual vision.

With that hearing he hears the speech of the angels, and this sight and vision are not weakened even by death. It is with this spiritual hearing and sight that he encounters the interrogation of the grave. On the contrary, those who do not possess this sight and hearing are raised blind and deaf from the dead. It is concerning this gift that God, the Exalted, has said, “I become the hearing wherewith he hears...”²⁸ These words, coming as they do from him, are not without a surprise.

Concluding Note

The august shaykh, Baha’i, says,²⁹ “This noble tradition explicitly indicates that the obligatory duties (*wajibat*) have a greater merit than the supererogatory ones (*mustahabbat*) and that there is a greater reward for their performance. And the Shaykh al-Shahid (M) and some other scholars have regarded certain cases as exceptions to it wherein the supererogatory (*sunnah*) is superior to that which is obligatory.

One of them is foregoing one’s debt altogether, which is superior to giving time to the debtor in a condition of hardship, although the first is supererogatory while the second is obligatory. Another is being the first to greet someone, which is superior to answering another’s greeting (*salam*). A third case is repeating a prayer offered individually with *jama’ah* [which according to traditions is superior to a prayer offered individually by twenty-seven degrees, whereas the repeating is supererogatory],” and such other cases. Some have disputed each of these exceptions, whose mention is not so necessary.

It should be known that the literal import of the noble tradition is that the obligations are superior to

supererogatory acts though they may not be of the same kind. For instance, the returning of *salam*, which is obligatory, is superior to a supererogatory *hajj* and the founding of a great school or the *ziyarah* of the Messenger of God, although this may appear to be somewhat improbable. Accordingly, *marhum* Majlisi (M) has said³⁰ that possibly that is restricted to acts of the same category.

However, in the presence of a proof one cannot say such a thing on mere improbability. And possibly the superiority of the obligations is to be considered as being applicable to prescribed rituals, such as prayer, fasting, *hajj*, *zakat*, and the like, not to other obligations, like giving time to a debtor in straits, returning *salam*, and so on, although this possibility is also not free of doubt. And all Praise belongs to Allah, at beginning and end.

1. Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi*, ii, 352, “kitab al-*iman wa al-kufr*,” “bab man adha al-muslimin wa ahtaqarahum,” hadith 8.
2. Al-Shaykh al-Baha'i, *Arba'in*, hadith 35, p. 296.
3. Al-Shaykh al-Baha'i, *Arba'in*, hadith 35, p. 296.
4. Al-Zamakhshari, *Tafsir al-kashaf*, i, 167, exegesis of 2:8.
5. Al-Shaykh al-Baha'i, *Arba'in*, hadith 35.
6. Author's Note: Shaykh Baha'i (r) says: “The (term) *nawafil* refers to the non-obligatory works that are performed for God's good pleasure. Its specific use to refer to prayers became customary later on.” p. 490.
7. Al-Shaykh al-Baha'i, *Arba'in*, hadith 35, p. 295. Cf. al-Bukhari, al-Sahih, vol 23, p. 22, “kitab al-*ruqaq*,” and Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 6, p. 256.
8. See the exposition of the Nineteenth Hadith.
9. Al-Shaykh al-Baha'i, *Arba'in*, hadith 35, p. 3110.
10. This phrase refers to the doctrinal position of the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) in respect of the issue of *jabr* (predestination) and *tafwid*. The phrase, meaning 'the matter between the two matters,' implies that neither *jabr* is true nor *tafwid*; the truth lies between these two extremes positions. (Tr.)
11. 18:79–82.
12. 13:7
13. Mir Damad, *al-Qabasat*, pp. 469–420; Mulla Sadra, *al-Asfar*, pp. 395. ff., “*safar*” 3, “*mawqif*” 4, “*fasl*” 13.
14. See the exposition of the Fifteenth Hadith.
15. Al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar*, vol 55, p. 25, “kitab al-*sama' wa al-alam*,” bab 5, hadith 13.
16. Al-Hurr al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol 4, p. 772, “kitab al-*salat*,” “abwab takbirat al-*ihram*,” bab 7, hadith 5: هُشَامُ بْنُ الْحَكَمِ عَنْ أَبِي الْحَسَنِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ أَنَّهُ رَوَى لَذَلِكَ عَلَةً أُخْرَى، وَهِيَ أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ لَمَّا أُسْرِيَ بِهِ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ قَطَعَ سَبْعَ حُجُبٍ فَكَبَّرَ عِنْدَ كُلِّ حِجَابٍ تَكْبِيرَةً، فَأَوْصَلَهُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ بِذَلِكَ إِلَى مُنْتَهَى الْكَرَامَةِ.
17. Al-Hurr al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 3. p. 608, “kitab al-*salat*,” “abwab ma yusjad 'alayh;” bab 16, hadith 3: مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ الْحَسَنِ، فِي الْمِصْبَاحِ، بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ مُعَاوِيَةَ بْنِ عَمَّارٍ قَالَ: كَانَ لِأَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ خَرِيطَةٌ دَبِيحًا صَفْرَاءُ فِيهَا تُرْبَةٌ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ الْحُسَيْنِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ. فَكَانَ إِذَا حَضَرَتْهُ الصَّلَاةُ صَبَّهُ عَلَى سَجَادَتِهِ وَسَجَدَ عَلَيْهِ ثُمَّ قَالَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ: إِنَّ السُّجُودَ عَلَى تُرْبَةِ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ يَخْرِقُ الْحُجُبَ السَّبْعَ.
18. Ascribed to Rumi: some attribute it to Ahd al-Rahman Jami.
19. Shahabadi (r) mention seven subtleties (*latifah*) of the human hang as follows: *nafs* (ego), 'aql (intellect), *qalb* (heart), *ruh* (spirit), *sirr* (secret, soul), *khafi* (hidden) and *akhfa* (most hidden); see *Rashahat al-bihar*, “kitab al-*insan wa al-fitrah*,” p. 177.
20. The threefold realms are the realm of physical nature (*tabi'ah*), the Imaginal realm (*mithal*), and the realm of the intellect ('aql), considered by Mulla Sadra as corresponding to the senses, imagination, and the intellect. See *Shawahid al-rububiyuh*, p. 320.
21. 6:77–79.
22. Dehkhuda, *Amthal wa hikam*, vol. 1, p– 537.
23. *Misbah al-hidayah*, pp. 192–195.
24. Al-Shaykh al-Saduq, *Kitab al-Tawhid*, p. 164, bab 22, hadith 1.

[25.](#) Al-Asfar, vol. 1, pp. 117 ;'Ilm al-yaqin, vol. I, p. 49; Kalimat maknunah. p- 3.

[26.](#) 'Arba'in, hadith 35, p. 299.

[27.](#) Sharh al-Isharat, vol. 3, p. 389, namat 9, fasl 19.

[28.](#) Al-Majlisi, Mir'at al-'uqul, vol. 10, p. 312, "kitab al-iman wa al Kufr," "bab man adha al Muslimin," hadith 8.

[29.](#) Arba'in, hadith 35, p. 302.

[30.](#) Mir'at al-'uqul, vol. 10, p. 381, "kitab al-iman wa al-kufr," "bab man adha al-Muslimin," hadith 7.

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