

The Sinaitic Mysteries: Notes on Moses/Sinai motifs in Bābī and Bahā'ī Scripture.

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Moses/Sinai motifs rooted in the Bible and the Qur'ān loom large in the massive corpus of Bābī and Bahā'ī scripture: the Persian and Arabic writings of Sayyid `Alī Muhammad, the Bāb (1819-1850), and Mīrzā Ḥusayn `Alī Bahā'-Allāh (1817-1892). In a large number of their many treatises and letters (or "Tablets," *alwāḥ*), motifs and events associated with the Judaeo-Christian and Islamic accounts of Moses' call to prophethood and his encounter with God at Horeb/Sinai, the "Mount" (*al-ṭūr*), are drawn on and expounded creatively. Both the Bāb and Bahā'u'llāh expressed their own claims in terms of the Sinai theophanies and taught that, through their manifestation, Sinaitic events had (mystically or typologically speaking) again come to pass.

In this essay attention will largely be focused upon select writings of the Bāb and Bahā'-Allāh which relate to the Pentateuchal account of Moses' call (Exodus 3:1ff.) and request to see God's glory (Exodus 33:18-23), or the qur'ānic parallels to these narratives. Key biblical and qur'ānic texts lying behind Moses/Sinai materials in Bābī and Bahā'ī sources will first be briefly surveyed. Only limited coverage will be given [66] to exegetical traditions contained in Jewish, Christian, Islamic and Shī'ī-Shaykhī literatures.

THE BIBLICAL BACKGROUND ¹

It was perhaps during the reign of Rameses II (13th century B.C.E.) that Moses, a Hebrew with an Egyptian name, "fled from Pharaoh and stayed in the land of Midian" (Exodus 2:15) where he married into the family and kept the flock of Jethro the "priest of Midian." ² According to Exodus 3:1ff., it was while Moses was working as a shepherd that he encountered God and was called to "bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt":

Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian; and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of the bush; and he looked, and lo, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, "I will turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt." When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here am I." Then he said, "Do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. (Exodus 3:1-6)

¹ All Biblical quotations are taken from the Revised Standard Version (RSV).

² The name Moses in Hebrew corresponds to an Egyptian form of the verb *mšī*, "to bear, give birth to." Midian indicates the region of northwest Arabia along the east coast of the Gulf of Aqaba. "Jethro, priest of Midian" is the name of Moses' father-in-law in Exod. 3:1, 4:18, and Chapter 18. Cf. Exodus 2:18, where he is named Reuel (his clan name?), Numbers 10:29, and Judges 4:11.

A good many modern biblical scholars regard these verses as being informed by two ancient streams of Israelite tradition: an allegedly northern "E" (Elohist) and a southern "J" (Yahwist) source. Hence, the variation in the use of the divine names --"God" translates the Hebrew 'Elohim, and "LORD" the tetragrammaton YHWH (loosely, Yahweh or "Jehovah") -- and the fact that "Horeb the mountain of God" (so "E," as [67] well as the "D," Deuteronomistic source) is elsewhere in the Pentateuch named Sinai (so "J" as well as the "P" or Priestly source).³ Etymologically Horeb signifies something like "desolate place." Not always indicative of a mountain, its exact location is unknown. This is despite the fact that at Exodus 3:1, Mt. Horeb is

³ Most modern commentators on the first five books of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) give some weight to the so-called "Graf-Wellhausen Hypothesis": loosely, the theory that the Pentateuch (Genesis to Deuteronomy) is made up of various written documents combined and revised over several centuries: that is, a "J" (Yahwist) source (9th cent. s.c.), an "E" (Elohist) source (8th cent. s.c.), a Deuteronomic Code or "D" source (7th cent. s.c.) and a Priestly Code or "P" source (5th cent. s.c.). It is in the light of such an hypothesis that Exodus 3:1-6 has been thought to combine materials from the "J" (Exodus 3:1 [the final clause]+ 2-4a and 5) and "E" sources (Exodus 3:4b+6).

located "to the west side of [lit., "the back of"] the wilderness" in territory frequented by nomadic Midianites (south Sinai peninsular?).⁴

While in Exodus 3:2, it is an "angel of the Lord" (mal'akh YHWH; alternatively, messenger of YHWH) which appeared to Moses in a flame of fire of a burning bush, Exodus 3:4 implies that it was YHWH ("the Lord") who spoke directly to Moses. As the narrative unfolds, the mysterious angel is seen to represent God (ha-'elohīm) who subsequently identifies himself as YHWH. (See Exodus 3:15.) This apparent confusion between God and his messengers is expressive of the mystery of the divine transcendence. Visually Moses had a real, though indirect, encounter with his Lord. His awareness of God was his indirect perception of Him through His messenger, who appeared in the ethereal formlessness of a flame of fire set in a burning bush which "was not consumed."

Jewish and Christian sources contain traditions of considerable interest about the identity of the divine Being(s) whom Moses encountered at Horeb/Sinai. In the Septuagint (LXX) and Hellenistic Jewish interpretation of Exodus 3:2ff., the "angel of the Lord" is distinguished from the transcendent

⁴ Much has been written about the possible location of Mt. Horeb/Mt. Sinai. See, for example, G. I. Davies, *The Way of the Wilderness*, esp. pp. 63-9 (and see bibliography).

Godhead. For Philo of Alexandria (d. c.45 C.E.) the angel/ messenger visioned by Moses was an "image of Being" or, so it seems, a manifestation of the divine Logos.⁵ According to Exodus Rabba II.5, Rabbi Johanan taught that the one who appeared in the burning bush was the archangel Michael (meaning, "who is like God," cf. Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1). Rabbi Hanina on the other hand, related Exodus 3:2 to an appearance of Gabriel. Certain rabbis, furthermore, held that whenever Michael appeared the "glory of the Shekinah" (the [68] Divine Presence) was also present. At first an angel appeared and stood in the midst of the fire, and then the Shekinah (loosely, the "Divine Presence") presence descended and spoke to Moses (cf. Deut. R. II. 34).

Early Christian writers, including Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, and Irenaeus of Lyons, interpreted Exodus 3:2ff. Christologically. The angel/divinity manifest in the burning bush was regarded as a theophany of Jesus Christ as God the Son.⁶ In his Dialogue (with the Jew Trypho; chs. 59-60; cf. 126-7), Justin insists that it was not the transcendent Father (God) who appeared in the bush, but Jesus the Son who is both the God (theos)

⁵ See Philo, De Vita Mosis I. 6b; De Confusione Linguarum 95 7; Quaest. Exod. 45.

⁶ See below and refer, for example, to Clement of Alexandria, Protrepticus I.8.; Paedagogus II.8.; Irenaeus, Adversus Haereses III.6; IV.10,20, Eusebius, Praep. Ev., XI.9ff; Ambrose, De Fide I.13.

and the angel (angelos) of Exodus 3:1-4, 17. In the same writer's First Apology (chs. 62-3), it is argued that the God who appeared to Moses was Christ the Son of God, Logos, and Godhead, who is also called an angel or apostle because (as one sent) he announced things that should be known.⁷ Gregory of Nyssa (d. c. 395 C.E.), in his magnificent *The Life of Moses*, understood Exodus 3:2ff. in terms of the doctrines of the incarnation and virgin birth of Jesus.⁸ Augustine of Hippo (d. 430 C.E.) came to develop a sophisticated trinitarian interpretation of these verses in the light of the Arian controversy. Though not averse to identifying Christ with the "angel of the Lord," he, in order to avoid Jesus being thought to be a created being, taught that "the angel was regarded as only representing the Son and speaking in his name."⁹

Many different interpretations have been given to the motif of the burning bush which was not consumed. The Hebrew word used for "bush," *seneh*, occurs only at Exodus 3:2 and in Deut. 33:16, where God is referred to as "Him that dwelt in the bush." It has a similar sound to the word Sinai and may

⁷ For details see D. C. Trakatellis, *The Pre-Existence of Christ in Justyn Martyr*, pp. 73-80.

⁸ See Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses* pp. 59-63. Cf., p. 159 notes 26-28.

⁹ I draw on and quote here from B. S. Childs, *Exodus*, pp. 84-5 referring to Augustine, *On the Trinity* V.2f.

be a deliberate literary allusion to Exodus 19:18, where God is said to have descended on Sinai "in fire." Since God and angelic beings are associated with fire in the Hebrew Bible, the burning of the bush without its being consumed is to be explained in terms of the celestial fire that accompanies the [69] divine theophany. It is the presence of the angel that causes the bush to burn and the supernatural nature of the theophany that prevents it from being consumed. ¹⁰

Seneh ("bush" in the Revised Standard Version) is probably derived from a root meaning "thorny" or "sharp" and may, as some Rabbis believed, indicate a thorn bush or bramble. Though it is impossible to determine which species of bush was intended--not that this is a matter of great exegetical importance--many different suggestions have been made. For example, the wild jujube or *Zizyphus spina Christi* (Arabic, nabs), the bramble or blackberry (*Rubus sanguineus* [sanctus]), and the shrub *Colutea istria*. There may well be some connection between the Lote-Tree (sidra) mentioned in the Qur'ān (53:14, 16; cf. 34:15, 56:27) and the biblical motif of the "burning bush." ¹¹

¹⁰ For further details see W. G. Williams, *Bush, Burning* in *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, pp. 476-7; J. Rogerson, *The Supernatural in the Old Testament*, pp. 36-38; J. Feliks, *Burning Bush* in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 4, cols. 1528-30.

¹¹ Cf. pp. 79-80 and fn. 32 below.

In early Jewish exegesis, the burning bush incident was interpreted as "an allegory of the life of Israel, who, though sorely oppressed, could not be consumed."¹² Rabbi Eliezer associated God's revelation in the lowly thorn bush with His deliverance of the oppressed Israelites. (See Exod.R, II. 5.) As a bramble, the burning bush represented Israel, and its thorns their sufferings. (See for example, Philo, Vit. Mos. I.67.) While the Christian writer Hilary of Poitiers (d. 367 C.E.) saw the burning bush which was not consumed as a type of the Church persecuted but not destroyed, the above-mentioned Gregory of Nyssa interpreted this motif as an expression of "the mystery of the Virgin" (Mary, mother of Jesus): "The light of divinity which through birth shone from her into human life did not consume the burning bush, even as the flower of her virginity was not withered by giving birth."¹³

Moses' response to God's summoning him from the burning bush, his "Here am I," is an expression of his readiness to serve and to obey. That he is commanded to remove his shoes is indicative of the holiness of the scene of the divine theophany. The expression "holy ground" (*adhmath qodhesh*; lit., "soil of holiness"), it has been observed, makes it difficult to [70] think of the rocky slopes of (the traditional) Mt. Sinai.¹⁴ ¹⁴ Christian and Muslim exegetes

¹² Childs, Exodus, 84

¹³ Gregory of Nyssa, The Life of Moses II.21 (p. 59)

¹⁴ See S. Terrien, The Elusive Presence, p.111.

have interpreted Moses' removal of his shoes as an allegory of his (or man's) turning away from things mundane in approaching God. ¹⁵ So also has Bahā'u'llāh. ¹⁶ God's declaration, "I am the God of your father[s], the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob" (Exodus 3:6a) was intended to enable Moses to realize that he had encountered the God (YHWH) who had always been worshipped by Israel's ancestors. ¹⁷ In awe before the Lord, Moses "hid his face" in his cloak being afraid to look directly at Him. (Exodus 3:6b). Biblical tradition has it that no man can see the face of God and live. (See Exodus 33:20; Judges 13:22; I Kings 19:13; Isaiah 6:2; cf. John 1:18)

The text of Exodus 3:1-6, quoted and selectively commented on above, is followed by an account of the commission of Moses (3:7-12) and by verses expressive of the revelation of the divine name:

Then Moses said to God ('elohim), "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God ('elohim) of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what

¹⁵ See for example, Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, II.22 ("...Sandaled feet cannot ascend that height where the light of truth is seen, but the dead and earthly covering of skins [cf. Gen 3:21], which was placed around our nature at the beginning when we were found naked because of disobedience, must be removed from the feet of the soul." [p. 59]); al-Ghazzalī, *Mishkat al-anwār*, p. 133.

¹⁶ See below pp. 111-112, 118.

¹⁷ Cf. Gen. 26:24; 31:5, 42, 53; 43:23; 46:1, 3, 49:25; 50:17; and Exod. 15:2; 18:4.

shall I say to them?" God ('elohim) said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM ('ehyeh 'asher 'ehyeh)." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM ('ehyeh) has sent me to you.'" God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'The LORD (YHWH) the God ('elohim) of your fathers, the God ('elohim) of Abraham, the God ('elohim) of Isaac and the God ('elohim) of Jacob, has sent me to you': this is my name for ever and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations (lit., this is my memorial for generation of generation)." (Exodus 3:13-15)

Here Moses requests that God disclose His name to the end that his mission to the Israelites will be successful. From the burning bush, the God ('elohim) worshipped by Moses' ancestors first informs Moses that He is "I AM WHO I AM ('ehyeh 'asher 'ehyeh)" (alternatively, "I AM THAT [IS WHO] I AM," "I WILL BE WHAT I WILL BE," or "I CAUSE TO BE WHATEVER I CAUSE TO BE." This mysterious phrase anticipates and throws light on the meaning of the subsequently disclosed name YHWH (see below), for the I AMs ('ehyehs [x 3]) and this most sacred name are related to the same verbal root (hayah [hawah], "to be"). The implication may be that God is One who acts in sovereign freedom, One Who is self-existent, who makes Himself known in whatever way He chooses or, among other possibilities, One Who sustains existence, or Who cannot be properly known or adequately named.

The God ('elohim) worshipped by the patriarchs also gives a more direct reply to Moses' question about His name. He declares Himself to be YHWH,

the tetragrammaton (Greek, "having four letters"). The four Hebrew consonants that make up the name of God YHWH (יהוה) are of uncertain pronunciation and meaning. After the Babylonian exile, Jews refrained from publicly uttering this holy name. It is sometimes represented by means of the well-known, artificial and hybrid transliteration *Jehovah* : which is the result of the combining of the consonants of YHWH with the vowels of the traditional substitute reading אֲדֹנָי 'adōnai (Hebrew, "Lord"). Occuring more than six thousand times in the Hebrew Bible, YHWH may indicate God as "He Who causes to be, creates or brings to pass," "He Who is," or the "Sustainer," "Maintainer," or "Establisher." Among pronunciations of יהוה the tetragrammaton proposed by modern scholars the following may be noted: y^aHw^eH (Yahweh, most commonly; so the Jerusalem Bible), Y^eHāHā, Y^eHôāH, Y^aHôH, and Y^aHāH. Details cannot be gone into here. ¹⁸ Worth noting at this point, however, is the fact that Bahā'u'llāh claimed to be the eschatological manifestation of YHWH. (For details, see below.)

At Exodus 6:2ff. there exists a tradition ("P" source) about a further revelation of God to Moses parallel to that recorded in Exodus 3:1ff. (See above.) After

¹⁸ For details, see M. Reisel, *The Mysterious Name of Y.H.W.H.*; B. W. Anderson, *JEHOVAH in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 2., p. 817. Freedman-O'Connor, 'YHWH' in *TDOT* vol. 5 pp.500-512 + see bibliography p.500.

Moses' return to Egypt [72] and his failure to persuade Pharaoh to release the Israelites, God reassures him by declaring:

I am the LORD (YHWH). I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as God Almighty (El Shaddai), but by my name the LORD (YHWH) I did not make myself known to them. I also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they dwelt as sojourners. Moreover I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold in bondage and I have remembered my covenant. Say therefore to the people of Israel, "I am the LORD (YHWH), and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians..." (Exodus 6:2b-6b)

It is here taught that YHWH used the name 'Elohim ("God") before the time of Abraham, and then made Himself known as El Shaddai (loosely, "God Almighty") to Abraham and his descendants. Israel's ancestors worshipped the same God as Moses, but they did not know His name YHWH. The God who covenanted with the patriarchs with respect to the land of Canaan appeared to Moses as YHWH and, faithful to this covenant, announced the imminent liberation of the Israelites. ¹⁹ In at least one of the Tablets (alwāḥ)

¹⁹ While the "J" strand of pentateuchal tradition has it that the worship of YHWH predated Moses (13th cent. s.c.?.; see, for example, Gen. 4:26), "later" streams of pentateuchal tradition ("P", cf. "E") consistently maintain that YHWH first made himself known by this name to Moses (Exod. 6:2-3). The name YHWH was doubtless given new currency in Mosaic circles. There would seem to be some truth in the so-called "Kenite hypothesis": the theory that YHWH was, in pre-Mosaic times,

of Bahā'u'llāh, Exodus 6:2ff. is given a mystical interpretation in the light of the mystery of Bahā' as the "greatest name" (ism-i a`zam) of God.²⁰

The account of God's revelation on Mt. Sinai recorded in Exodus 19ff. lies at the heart of the Pentateuch and of Jewish self-understanding. R. E. Clements has observed that these chapters contain three main elements: "(1) a theophany, or manifestation of God, upon the sacred mountain, (2) the making of a covenant between the LORD and Israel, and (3) the revelation of laws and instructions for worship."²¹ Though the accounts of the descent of YHWH on Sinai, and of the episode of the Golden Calf are of importance in view of their lying behind or having quranic parallels and Bābī-Bahā'ī [73] interpretations, it must suffice at this point to quote and comment on Exodus 33:18-23.

the God of the Kenites or Midianites from whom Moses learned this name (through Jethro?) The name of God 'Elohim (occurs some 2,550 times in the Hebrew Bible) is derived from the generic Semitic name for "God" or "deity," namely, El (cf. Allāh). In the Hebrew Bible El, 'Elohim YHWH and other ways of referring to God all describe the same God of the Israelites. El Shaddai (El, "God"; Shaddai, meaning uncertain) or simply shaddai (loosely, "Almighty God"; NB: Heb. shadad, "to overpower," "devastate") indicates God at certain points in the "P" pentateuchal tradition and in the Book of Job as an heritage of the patriarchal religion. The many complex issues surrounding the significance and use of these various names of God in the Hebrew Bible cannot be discussed in detail here.

²⁰ See below pp.155-7.

²¹ R.E. Clements, Exodus, p.110.

The following account of Moses' request to see God's glory has a quranic parallel ²² that informs a good deal of the Moses/ Sinai theology present in Bābī and Bahā'ī scripture and was born out of the problem of the continuing presence of God among the Israelites after their departure from Sinai:

[And] Moses said [to YHWH], "I pray thee, show me thy glory (kabôd)." And he [YHWH] said, "I will make all my goodness (tôbah) pass before you, and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD' (YHWH); and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But," he said, "you cannot see my face (pānīm); for man shall not see me and live." And the LORD [YHWH] said, "Behold there is a place by me where you shall stand upon the rock; and while my glory (kabôd) passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; then I will take away my hand and you will see my back ('ahorayim, lit., [two] back parts); but my face (pānīm) shall not be seen." (Exodus 33:18-23).

Here YHWH all but rejects Moses' request to see His "glory," the radiant fullness of His presence. It is possible for Moses to experience God's "goodness" (tôbah; the providential aspect of His being) and His "name" (YHWH, which is the locus of His identity), but direct perception of His presence or "face" (pānīm) is not possible for mortal men. (Cf., though, Exodus 33:11 where it is taught that Moses' conversation with God was of

²² Exodus 33:18-23, is loosely paralleled at Qur'ān 7:143. See below p. 81ff.

such intimacy that it took place "face to face" [pānīm el pānīm].) Ultimately, the Israelite prophet is permitted, cloistered in the "cleft of a rock" (presumably on Sinai/Horeb) and initially shielded by God's "hand," to experience the passing by of God's "glory" (kabôd) and the vision of His "back parts." Moses had an intimate, though indirect, experience of God's presence.²³ [74]

It has been noted above that the holy mountain Horeb is (indirectly) equated with Sinai in the Pentateuch. Though it is the scene of Moses' call and the site of the revelation of Israelite law, both the meaning of Sinai and its location are uncertain. As a name, Sinai may be related to that of the Semitic moon god Sin. The biblical traditions relating to the location of Mt. Sinai are conflicting and inconclusive, as are ancient and modern attempts to locate its peak. Since early Christian times the traditional site of Mt. Sinai has been in the mountainous region to the south of the peninsula of Sinai, Jebel Musa (The Mount of Moses), Jebel Katarin (The Mount of [Saint] Catherine), and Jebel Serbal being the main contenders. A location further north, around Kadesh (fifty miles SSE. of Beersheba); or in Edom, Midianite territory; or in

²³ Certain references in the Bible to the eschatological manifestation of God's "glory" (Hebrew, kabôd; Greek, doxa) are interpreted in Bahā'ī literature in terms of the advent of Bahā'u'llāh (the "glory of God").

northwest Arabia have also been argued. The apostle Paul followed ancient Jewish tradition when he located Sinai in "Arabia." (See Gal. 4:21-31; cf. Josephus, Antiquities II. 264, III. 76, Against Apion, II. 25.) But this need not be taken to indicate a location east of the Gulf of 'Aqabah. As with the "Apostle to the Gentiles," who equated Hagar (wife of Abraham) with Mt. Sinai, a plethora of allegorical interpretations of this mountain have been proposed by esoterically inclined writers among the "people of the Book."²⁴ Mystical interpretations of Mt. Sinai are quite common in the voluminous revelation of Bahā-Allāh.

The Islamic Background²⁵

Moses is more frequently mentioned in the Qur'ān (196 times) than any of the other messengers or prophets of God. He is an important figure in this Arabic holy book which was communicated piecemeal to the prophet Muhammad between (roughly) 610 and 632 C.E. A good many of the events recorded in the book of Exodus about the mission of Moses and what took place at Sinai have quranic counterparts. By making frequent reference to the opposition encountered by [75] Moses, the Prophet no doubt intended to set

²⁴ See Galatians 4:24f. Paul understood the story of the free woman Sarah's driving out of the slave woman Hagar (see Gen. 21:10, 12) as an allegory of the superior position of freedom in Christ over against the burden of Jewish legalism.

²⁵ Unless otherwise indicated all translation from the Qur'ān are taken from A. J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*.

forth object lessons for his own contemporaries. Informed by extra-biblical traditions and communicated creatively, the Moses/Sinai materials in the Qur'ān sometimes go beyond the biblical data, and at certain points reflect the experiences and self-understanding of Muhammad.

The biblical account of Moses' call (Exodus 3: 1 ff.) is paralleled or echoed in five Meccan suras of the Qur'ān. Since each of these quranic pericopes contain details that are present in Bābī and Bahā'ī scripture, they will be quoted in full along with occasional notes:

[1]

“And mention in the Book, Moses; he was devoted, and he was a Messenger (rasūl) and a Prophet (nabī). We called to him from the right side of the Mount (min jānib al-ṭūr al-ayman), and We brought him near in communion.” (Qur'ān 19:52-53)

God is here said to have called Moses from the righthand side of Mount Sinai and to have communed intimately with him (from the "burning bush"?). As elsewhere in the Qur'ān, Mt. Sinai (or Horeb) is simply called "the mount[ain]" (al-ṭūr, the common Aramaic word for mountain and a loan word in Arabic; cf. Qur'ān 7:142 [cited below], the only occasion where the Arabic al-jabal [the mountain] is used for Mt. Sinai). The expression "Mount Sinai" does, however, occur twice in the Qur'ān at 23:30 and 95:2 (as ṭūr sinā'and

ṭūr sinin respectively, Sinai existing in two Arabic forms).²⁶ The significance of the fact that God called Moses from the "right[hand] side" of Mt. Sinai is not immediately obvious. This detail is probably rooted in Exodus 3:1 where Moses is said to have led Jethro's flock "to the west side" (Revised Standard Version) or simply "[far] side of the wilderness" (Hebrew, achar ha-midbar) in the region around Mt. Horeb/Sinai. It is implied that Moses saw the burning bush and was called by God from the righthand or western side of the holy mountain [76] as he faced it. (Cf., apart from the qur`anic texts cited below, Qur`ān 20:80.) Some Muslim commentators have argued that references in the Qur`ān to the "right side" of Mt. Sinai are figurative or indicative of the "right," or blessed, region around this mountain. Others, as will be seen below, have understood such details mystically in terms of the interior reality and state of Moses.

[2]

"Hast thou received the story, of Moses? When he saw a fire (nār), and said to his family, `Tarry you here; I observe a fire. Perhaps I

²⁶ For details see, J. Obermann, "Koran and Agada," p. 30f; A. Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Koran*, pp. 184-5; 206-7. As Jeffery points out (p. 185) the form s̄ānān at Qur`ān 95:2 is a modification of sinā' "for the sake of rhyme." The word ār occurs ten times in the Qur`ān (2:60, 87: 4:153; 19:53; 20:82; 23:20; 28:29, 46; 52:1, and 95:2).

shall bring you a brand from it, or I shall find at the fire guidance.' When he came to it, a voice cried, `Moses, I am thy Lord ('inni anā rabbuka); put off thy shoes (na'layka); thou art in the holy valley, Towa (bi'l-wād al-muqaddas ṭuwā). I Myself have chosen thee; therefore give ear to this revelation. Verily I am God; there is no god but I ('innani anā Allāh lā ilāha illa anā); therefore serve Me, and perform the prayer of My remembrance ... ' (Qur'ān 20:9-14).

Details are contained (and a situation is presupposed) in these verses which are not explicit in the Hebrew Bible. Moses' family were with him on a journey when the Israelite prophet observed a fire some distance away. The group was apparently lost and in need of comfort and guidance. Approaching what evidently turned out to be the fire (nār) of the burning bush, Moses heard a voice--the voice of the Lord (rabb)-- who proclaimed His identity, commanded him to remove his shoes in view of his being in a holy valley named (?) ṭuwā, declared His oneness, and called him to service and prayerful remembrance (cf. Exodus 3:3-6). The expression "Holy Valley" (al-wād al-muqaddas) can be explained in the light of Exodus 3:5b, where Moses is told to take off his shoes because he is standing on "holy ground," but the significance of the explanatory ṭuwā has long been and remains problematic (occurring only at 20:12, above, and 79:16, see below). Taken as a name of the (Sinaitic) "Holy Valley," it may be related to the Aramaic/ Syriac [77] tūrā

("mount"; cf. the quranic use of *ṭūr* for Mt. Sinai).²⁷ The obscurity of the word has led to its being given a variety of nonliteral interpretations. Al-Ghazālī (d. 1111 CE) understood the phrase "Holy Valley" to be symbolic of the "World of Holy Transcendence" as a mystic stage attained by prophets who have doffed the "[two] sandals" of the "two worlds" (the limitations of this and the other spiritual world).²⁸ The Shiite Sufi `Abd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī (d. c. 1330 C.E.), expressing the views of Ibn al-'Arabī, the "Great Shaykh," interpreted Qur'ān 20:12b in the following manner:

Take off thy sandals: namely, your soul and your body, or your two (temporal) forms of existence, since when one is free from soul and body, one is free from both (temporal) forms of existence. That is: As soon as one is free, through the spirit (*rūḥ*) and the inner mystery (*sirr*), from the properties and characteristics of the soul and the body, so that one is united with the holy spirit, then one is free from the soul and the body (also) through the heart (*qalb*) and the breast (*ṣadr*), since the general connection (with them) is severed, their actions are released, and one has escaped their properties and activities. God calls the soul and the body sandals and not garments. If one were not free from intimate contact with both, one could not become united with the sacred sphere. The condition (however, on which it depends) is that of becoming united. God gives to Moses the command that he is to devote himself exclusively to him, in the sense of his words: "And remember the name of thy Lord, and devote

²⁷ See H. Gätje, *The Qur'ān and its Exegesis*, p. 283, note 11.

²⁸ Refer, Al-Ghazālī, *Mishkat al-anwār*, p. 133.

thyself completely to Him" (Sura 73:8). It is therefore almost as if the connection of Moses with the sandals (of the soul and the body) still exists. This connection permits his feet, that is, the lower self, just as the breast designates the place of the heart, to sink into the ground. Consequently, they stand back away from the spiritual and inner turning-point to the holy, and for this reason God commands Moses to free himself from them in order to enter the realm of the spirit. Appropriately, God gives a reason for the necessity of removing the sandals, in his words: Thou art in the holy valley, *ṭuwā*, that is, in the world of the spirit, which is free from the actions of [78] linking (through the soul and the body) the characteristics of transient things and the material bonds. This world is called *ṭuwā* because the stages of the kingdom of God (*malakāt*) are concealed (*ṭuwā*) in it, while the heavenly and earthly bodies stand under it. ²⁹

[3]

"When Moses said to his people, 'I observe a fire (*nār*), and will bring you news of it, or I will bring you a flaming brand (*shihāb qabas*), that haply you shall warm yourselves.' So, when he came to it, he was called: 'Blessed is He who is in the fire, and he who is about it (*bārika man fī'l-nār wa man ḥawlahā*). Glory be to God, the Lord of all Being! Moses, behold, it is I, God (*'innahu anā Allāh*), the All-Mighty, the All-Wise... ' (Qur'ān 27:7-9).

²⁹ Al-Kāshānī [Ibn al-'Arabī], *Tafsīr*. . . cited Gätje, *The Qur'ān*, pp. 234-5. See Ibn al-'Arabī, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, vol. 2, p. 35. Soul and body in the first line of Gätje's translation render *nafs* (having also the sense of "personality," "consciousness," etc.) and *badan*, respectively.

Here Moses' motive for approaching the "fire" (burning bush) he has observed is to "bring news" of its source or provide his company with a flaming brand with which to light a fire and warm themselves Exodus 3:3, it is worth noting at this point, implies that Moses traveled in the direction of the burning bush in order to satisfy his curiosity; to see a "great sight" or determine why the bush was "not consumed."

The phrase apparently uttered by the Divine Being[s] in the midst of the burning bush, "Blessed is He who is in the fire, and he who is about it," could be translated such that a plurality of divine beings is associated with the Sinaitic fire. Either the initial, or both the initial and second occurrence of "he who" (man), in this phrase, could have a plural meaning. A certain ambiguity, reminiscent of that surrounding the mention of first an "angel/messenger" (mal'akh) and then God (YHWH) as the speaker from the burning bush (at Exodus 3:2ff.) seems to exist. In the light of such rabbinic interpretations of Exodus 3:2 as have been noted above, it is possible that God (the Shekinah presence) is intended by "He who is in the fire" and that angels (or an archangel such as Michael) is alluded to in the words "he/those who are [round] about it [the fire]." God alone might be intended, God and one or more angelic beings, or simply one or more angelic beings. George Sale [79] translated Qur'ān 27:8 in the following way: "And when he [Moses] was come

near unto it [the fire], a voice cried to him, saying, Blessed is he who is in the fire, and whoever is about it ..." And he commented: "Some [Muslim commentators] suppose GOD to be intended by the former words, and by the latter, the angels who were [allegedly] present; others think Moses and the angels are here meant, or all persons in general in this holy plain, and the country round it." ³⁰

[4]

"So when Moses had accomplished the term and departed with his household, he observed on the side of the Mount [Sinai] (min jānib al-ṭūr) a fire (nār). He said to his household, "Tarry you here; I observe a fire. Perhaps I will bring you news of it, or a faggot (jadhwa) from the fire, that haply you shall warm yourselves." When he came to it, a voice cried from the right bank of the watercourse [valley] (min shāā al-wād al-ayman) in the sacred hollow [spot] (fī'l-buq`a al-mubāraka) coming from the Tree (min al-shajara): "Moses, I am God (ʿinni anā Allāh), the Lord of all Being." (Qurʾān 28:29-30).

Further details of interest are contained in this account of the call of Moses. It is pictured as having taken place after Moses had "accomplished the term" of his marriage agreement with Jethro. (See Qurʾān 28:22-28; cf. Exodus 2:15b22.) The burning bush is referred to as a "tree" (al-shajarat) and located at the "right bank" (shāṭī) of the "watercourse" (or valley, al-wād) in a "sacred hollow" or "holy spot [place, region]." Coming from the "tree" the divine voice announced, "Moses, I am God, the Lord of all Being."

³⁰ George Sale, *The Koran*, p.283, note 1.

The Arabic word used for the burning "bush," namely *shajarat*, occurs in various contexts some twenty-five times in the Qur'ān. This word, for example, describes the Edenic "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Qur'ān 2:33; 7:18, 21, etc.). Also, it seems, the "tree of life" as the "tree of eternity" (*shajarat al-khuld*, Qur'ān 20:118). Mention is made of the infernal "tree of Zaqqūm" (*shajarat al-zaqqūm*, Qur'ān 80] 37: 62ff; 56:52; 44:43) which has its "roots in hell" and of Jonah's "tree of gourds" (*shajarat min yaqīn*) (Qur'ān 37:146; cf., Jonah 4 6ff.).³¹

Of particular interest are those quranic texts which associate various kinds of trees with Mt. Sinai. The Prophet Muhammad not only swore, "By the Mount [Sinai] (*wa'l-ṭūr*)" (Qur'ān 52:1), but "By the fig (*wa'l-ṭīn*) and the olive (*wa'l-zaytūn*) and Mt. Sinai (*wa ṭūr sinīn*) and this land secure (*al-balad al-amin*)" (Qur'ān 95:1-3). Reference is made in Qur'ān 25:20 to a "tree (*shajarat*) issuing from the Mount of Sinai (*ṭūr sīnā'*) that bears oil and seasoning for all to eat" (olive groves around Mt. Sinai?). The celebrated "Light Verse" reads as follows: "God is the Light (*nūr*) of the heavens and the earth; the likeness of His Light is as a niche (*mishkat*) wherein is a lamp (*miṣbāḥ*), the lamp in a glass (*zujāja*), the glass as it were a glittering star (*kawkab durrī*) kindled from a Blessed Tree (*shajarat mubāraka*), an olive

³¹ See further Qur'ān 17:62; 57:71; 16:10, 70; 55:5; 36:80; 27:61; 31:26; 14:29, 31; 48:10.

(zaytāna) that is neither of the East nor of the West, whose oil (zayt) well nigh would shine, even if no fire (nār) touched it; Light upon Light (nūr `alā nūr)." (Qur'ān 24:35) Though the evidence is inconclusive these verses have been taken as indicative of the view that the Sinaitic tree--the "burning bush"--was an olive.

In the treatises of Muslim mystics and in Shī'ī traditions attributed to the Imams, the tree from which Moses heard the voice of his Lord has been symbolically interpreted; sometimes in terms of the mystic senses given to the "Light Verse" (cited above) and/or to the various quranic references to such trees as the "Lote Tree" (sidrat) (See Qur'ān 34:16; 56:8ff.; 52:27ff.; 53:1-18; cf. 14:24ff).³² In the writings of Bahā'u'llāh, the Sinaitic tree is often equated

³² On the Shī'ī interpretation of the "Light Verse," see Gätje, *The Qur'ān*, pp. 243-245. Cf. al-Ghazālī's *Mishkat al-anwār*. The English word lotus/lote-tree loosely describes a number of dissimilar plants and shrubs or trees: including the water lily of Egypt and Asia (*Nymphaea lotus*, *Nelumbium speciosum*), the Jujube Tree (*Zizyphus lotus*), and the Wild Jujube (*Zizyphus spina Christi*) which allegedly supplied the material for Christ's crown of thorns. The Arabic sidra, often translated "Lote-Tree" perhaps indicates the Wild Jujube, or some other wild thorny shrub. The fact that the sidra figures in the mystical visions of the Prophet Muhammad (see Qur'ān 53:1ff.) may well be related to the references in Rabbinic literature to God's having manifested himself in the Burning Bush, understood to have been a lowly thorn-bush. In a plethora of Islamic sources the mundane "Lote-Tree" of the Qur'ān is pictured as a celestial tree of wondrous qualities and proportions. For further details, see *Encyclopaedia Judaica* articles, Burning Bush (Vol. 4) and Jujube (Vol. 11); Ibn al-'Arabī, *Shajarat al-kawn*, esp. p. 32ff.

with the tree that is "neither of the East nor the West" (of the "Light Verse") and with the "Lote Tree."

It is also worth noting at this point that the twenty-eighth sura of the Qur'ān (cited above) contains passing reference to the call of Moses and its mysterious location: "Thou [Muhammad] wast not upon the western side (jānib al-gharbāl [of Mt. ^[81] Sinai] when We decreed to Moses the commandment (qaḍaynā ilā mūsā al-amr, or "We decreed the commission to Moses") nor wast thou of those witnessing ...Thou [Muhammad] was not upon the side of the Mount (jānib al-ṭūr) when We called [to Moses]..." (Qur'ān 28:44, 46a). The point is that the Prophet Muhammad knew of sacred events of the past through divine inspiration.

[5]

"Hast thou received the story of Moses? When his Lord called to him in the holy valley (bi'l-wād al-muqaddas), Towa (ṭūwa): `Go to Pharoah; he has waxed insolent. And say, "Hast thou the will to purify thyself, and that I should guide thee to thy Lord, then thou shalt fear?'... "(Qur'ān 79:15-19)

Exactly the same Arabic expression is used here to locate the scene of Moses' call as is used in Qur'ān 20:12, "the holy valley, Towa." Moses is commissioned to go to Pharoah and induce him to turn towards God, to the end that the captive Israelites might be liberated. (Cf. also, Qur'ān 26:10ff.)

There are, then, five major and a number of minor references to the first part of the biblical account of the call of Moses (Exodus 3:1ff.) in the Qur'ān. Not all the details present in the Hebrew Bible are registered in the sometimes novel qur'ānic midrash.

Qur'ān 7:143 and the Sinaitic theophany

It is at Qur'ān 7:143, that the biblical account of Moses' request to see the glory of God (Exodus 33:18-23) is partially paralleled:

And when Moses came to Our appointed time and his Lord spoke with him, he said, `Oh my Lord, show me, that I may behold Thee!' Said He, `Thou shalt not see Me; but behold the mountain (al-jabal) -- if it stays fast in its place, then thou shalt see Me.'

And when his Lord revealed Him to the mountain (tajallā rabbuhu li'l-jabal) ⁸²

He made it crumble to dust; and Moses fell down swooning.

So when he awoke, he said, `Glory be to Thee!

I repent to Thee; I am the first of the believers." (Qur'ān 7:143).

Here Moses requests a direct vision of his Lord. It is not directly stated, as in Exodus 33:18a, that Moses asked to see God's "glory," though this may be implied. Exodus 33:19 (see above) is not paralleled, but the first part of the quranic version of God's response to Moses' request is in line with Exodus 33:20; direct vision of God is not possible. The biblical reference to Moses' standing "upon a rock," and being placed in "a cleft of the rock," when the

divine "glory" passed by (Exodus 33:21-2) probably lies behind the mention of God's theophany before or "to the mountain" (ilā al-jabal; Sinai or a nearby peak?). The impossibility of Moses having direct experience of God is underlined by the fact that the mountain before which God was revealed was reduced to dust. Having witnessed this event Moses fell down in a swoon. On recovering his senses, he glorified his transcendent Lord, confessed his folly, and declared his long-standing faith.

In Qur'ān 7:143, the mode of the Divine theophany before the mountain is expressed by means of the Arabic verbal form *tajallā* (derived from *jalā*, to make clear), which Arberrv (cited above) translates "revealed Him." Particularly in view of the mention of the divine "glory" (Hebrew: *kabôd*) in Exodus 33:18ff., the use of this verb might imply the radiant glory of the divine disclosure.³³ The verse in which *tajallī* ('self-manifestation', divine "Theophany") occurs has been variously understood by Muslim commentators and Western translators of the Qur'ān. It is not entirely clear whether God's direct or indirect manifestation is intended; *tajallā* could imply God's personal appearance, the manifestation of His radiant "glory," or the

³³ The verbal form *tajallā* indicates the brightness of oncoming day at Qur'ān 92:2. Cf. also, Qur'ān 7:186, 59:3, and 91:3. Generally speaking *tajallī* signifies God's revealing himself or manifesting his glory.

theophany of an angelic being representative of Him. George Sale translated the line under discussion as follows: "But when his LORD appeared with glory in the mount, he reduced it to dust." [83]

In an important Shīṭī tradition attributed to Imām Ja'far al-Şādiq (d. c. 705 C.E.), the theophany before the mountain is explained in terms of the appearance of an allegedly proto-Shiite cherub (or angelic being):

"The Cherubim (al-karūbiyyūn) are a [celestial] people of our party created in primordial times (min al-khalq al-awwal). God established them behind the [divine] Throne (al-`arsh). If the light (nār) of but one of them should be distributed among the people of the earth, it would assuredly suffice them... When Moses asked his Lord what he asked [i.e., to see Him], He [God] commanded one of the Cherubim and it manifested itself unto the mountain (fa-tajallā li'l-jabal) and reduced it to dust." ³⁴

On similar lines is the exposition of Qur'ān 7:143 in an Arabic recension of Muhammad b. `Abd-Allāh al-Kisāṭ's *Qīṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* ("Tales of the Prophets," c. 1200 C.E.):

³⁴ Translated from Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, Vol. 13, pp. 223-4. See also, Bahā'u'llāh, *Kitāb-i Iqān*, p. 61; trans., pp. 50-51. The כְּרֻבִים Hebrew plural K^{er}ūbīm = cherubim (sing. כְּרֻב, K^{er}ūb = cherub), in Arabic is Karūbiyyūn (pl. sing = Kar[r]ūb). The Cherubim are mentioned over twenty times in the Hebrew Bible (e.g. Gen 3:24; Exod. 25:18; Psalm 18:10; Exekiel Chs. 1 & 10, etc) and once in the New Testament (Hebrews 9:5). Qur'anic references would seem to be related to the *muqarrabūn* or "those brought nigh" unto God/ the Divine Throne (see 4:172; 7:114; 26:42; 56:11, 88; 83:21, 28 cf. 3:45).

"God commanded the angels of heaven to present themselves to Moses, and they passed before him in ranks. As he witnessed their different forms and the magnificence of their shapes, fear and trembling overcame him; and Gabriel passed his wing over Moses' heart to quieten his fear. Then Gabriel stood on the summit of the mountain and ascended to heaven." ³⁵ Moses, we are led to believe, witnessed the Sinaitic manifestation of a whole heavenly host, including Gabriel whose calming act should be viewed as an anti-anthropomorphic paraphrase of the biblical mention of God's shielding Moses from His "glory" with His own "hand." (Exodus 33:22b)

In literatures representative of Islamic mysticism, the Sinai theophany outlined in Qur'ān 7:143 has been given a variety of psychological, spiritual, or symbolic interpretations. Various Sufi exegetes have, from medieval times, understood this verse in the light of sometimes complex theories about the modes of the divine theophany (*tajallī*) and of mystical states experienced by wayfarers on the spiritual path. In, for example, the *`Awārif al-ma'ārif* of Shihāb ad-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ `Umar al-Suhrawardī (1145-1234 C.E.), *tajallī* (theophany) is defined as "the manifestation of the sun of the reality (*ḥaqīqa*) of God [84] out from the clouds of humanity" and, as in many other Sufi writings, regarded as of three kinds: 1) the *tajallā* of the [divine] Essence (*tajallī dhāt*), 2) the *tajallī* of the [divine] attributes (*tajallī ṣifāt*), and 3) the *tajallī*

³⁵ al-Kisā'i, *The Tales of the Prophets of al-Kisa'i*, p. 237.

of the [divine] actions (tajallī af āl). In reverse order, the mystic wayfarer may have interior experience of these modes of the divine theophany. Suhrawardī comments on the tajallī of the divine Essence (tajallī dhāt) in terms of Moses' Sinaitic experience of God's self-revelation (tajallī; in Qur'ān 7:143), the Israelite prophet being archetypal of the advanced mystic. That Moses fell into a swoon as a result of the divine theophany is related to the complete nullification or annihilation (fanā') of the qualities of existence, and the attaining of that abiding permanency (baqā') at which the spiritual being beholds the essence (dhāt) of the Eternal God through His Light. Having attained the state of mystical nullification (fanā'), Moses' request to see God signaled his attaining permanency in God (baqā') as a result of the tajallā of the light of the Divine Essence (dhāt) on the "Mount" (ṭūr) of the human aspect (nafs) of his existence. ³⁶

Kalim : "He who conversed with God"

At the beginning of Qur'ān 7:143, it is said that God conversed with Moses: "and his Lord spoke with him" (wa kallamahu rabbahu), and at Qur'ān 4:162 that: "unto Moses God spoke directly" (kallama Allāhu Mūsā taklīman). (Cf.

³⁶ See as-Suhrawardī, *ʿAwārif al-ma'ārif*, pp. 79, 80. Sufi speculations about the modes of the divine theophany (tajallā) are commented upon or reflected at many points in Bābī and Bahāī scripture. See for example Bahā'u'llāh, *Lawḥ-i Salmān* in *Majmū'a yī alwāḥ-i mubāraka*, p. 124ff. (esp. p. 140).

also Qur'ān 2:254; Exodus 33:11 and Deuteronomy 34:10.) It was in view of these references that in Islamic literatures Moses came to be entitled "He who conversed with God" (kalīm Allāh). This epithet is frequently accorded Moses in Bābī and Bahā'ī scripture--apart from its being given to Bahā'-Allāh's brother Mīrzā Mūsā, Aqā-yi Kalīm (doubtless because he was on intimate terms with Bahā'u'llāh and a staunch Bahā'ī, as well as on account of his name).

The khuṭba al-Ṭutunjiyya ("Sermon of the Gulf")

In the light of the above, it will be convenient to note at this point that there exists a sermon attributed to Imām `Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661 CE), the "Sermon of the [River] Gulf" (al-khuṭba al-Ṭutunjiyya), which (in certain recensions) contains reference to the eschatological manifestation of God as the [85] One Who conversed with Moses ³⁷

"Anticipate ye the revelation (zuhūr) of Him Who conversed with Moses (mukallim mūsā) from the Tree [Burning Bush] upon the Mount [Sinai] (min al-shajarat `alā al-ṭūr)." ³⁸

³⁷ Not recorded in the *Nahj al-balāgha*, this sermon is found in a variety of Shī'ī sources including Rajab al-Bursī, *Mashāriq anwār al-yaqīn fī asrār amīr al-mu'minīn*, pp. 166-170. Certain Shī'ī and modern Western scholars have doubted its authenticity, though it was very highly regarded and esoterically interpreted by various Shī'ī theologians, mystics and philosophers.

³⁸ Text, al-Bursī, *Mashāriq*, p. 168. I use here Shoghi Effendi's translation as cited in *Bahā'u'llāh, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 42.

Regarded as authentic by Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsā'ī,³⁹ and commented upon at length by Siyyid Kāzīm Rashtī,⁴⁰ as well at times as the Bāb,⁴¹ this apparently "extremist" (ghuluww), cosmologically-oriented sermon has contributed to the Bābī-Bahā'ī theology of the Sinai theophany. In one of his epistles of the Acre (ʿAkkā') or West Galilean period (1868-1892), Bahā'-Allāh quotes from it one sentence of particular interest and asserts that it was divinely inspired:

"Say: `O people! Hast thou forgotten that which was uttered by one of the chosen ones of old [Imām `Alī when he said, `Anticipate ye the revelation of the One Who conversed with Moses from the Tree upon the Mount.' This is an utterance taught him [Imām `Alī by the

³⁹ See Shaykh Aḥmad, Epistle to Mamād Mīrzā, in Majmū'at al-rasā'il, Vol. 30, pp. 260-270.

⁴⁰ Sayyid Kāzīm's Sharḥ al-khuṭba al-ṭutunjiyya ("Commentary on the Sermon of the Gulf") is a lengthy and detailed commentary on `Alī's sermon. A lithographed edition was produced in Iran in 1270/1853-4. However, the text and commentary in the published version ceases at a point prior to the line about the manifestation of the One Who conversed with Moses. It is not clear whether the text of the published work is incomplete or whether the commentary itself was incomplete.

⁴¹ The Bāb did not comment on the whole of the Sermon of the Gulf but quoted from it a number of times in his writings. His commentary on a statement of Sayyid Kāzīm in his "Commentary on the Sermon of the Gulf" (See fn. 40, above. Cf. Fāḍil-i Māzandarānī Tārīkh-i zuhūr al-ḥaqq, vol. 3, p. 288) is not available to me.

Messenger of God [Muhammad] on the part of He Who sent him and aided him through the Faithful Spirit." ⁴²

The following lines from a Prayer of the Signs (Du'ā al-simāt) also attributed to Imām `Alī and partly rooted in Deuteronomy 33:2 are likewise of importance to the student of the background of the Bābī-Bahā'ī Sinaitic theology: ⁴³

“And by Thy glory (majd) which appeared on Mount Sinai (sinā') and through which Thou conversed with Thy servant and Thy messenger, Moses son of `Imrān (Amram)! And by Thy rising up in [Mount] Seir (sā'ir) and Thy manifestation in Mount Paran (jabal fārān)! And by the myriads of holy ones (ribwāt al-muqaddasān) and the hosts of the sanctified angels!“ ⁴⁴

In this prayer, any hint of God's direct manifestation or communion with Moses is ruled out. It was through His "glory" that God appeared on Sinai and communicated with Moses. Mentioned in the Bible though not the Qur'ān, Mt. Seir and Mt. Paran are spoken about in various Shī'ī sources usually

⁴² From an epistle of Bahā'u'llāh to a certain Ṣādiq, cited in Fāḍil-i Māzandārānī, *Asrār al-athār*, Vol. 5, pp. 153-4. The "Faithful Spirit" (rūḥ al-amin) mentioned here signifies Gabriel or the "Holy Spirit" (cf. Qur'ān 26:193).

⁴³ Cf., S. Lambden, "The Islāmo-Bahā'ī Interpretation of Deuteronomy 33:2," p. 24ff.

⁴⁴ Translated from the text cited in Mīrzā Na'īm Iṣfahānī, *Istidlāliyya*, p. 65.

connection with the missions of Jesus and Muhammad (cf. Deut. 33:2; Habb. 3:3; Jud. 5:4-5).⁴⁵ [86]

THE SHAYKHĪ BACKGROUND

Bābī-Bahā'ī doctrine and scriptural exegesis has its most immediate and central roots in early Shaykhism, a school of Shī'ī theosophy deriving from the above-mentioned Shaykh Aḥmad al-Ahsā'ī (d. 1826) and Sayyid Kāẓim Rashī (d. 1259/1843). In certain of the books and treatises of these two learned Muslims Moses/Sinai motifs in quranic texts and traditions ascribed to the Imāms are variously interpreted. Often utilizing an allegorical or mystical hermeneutic their frequently imamologically-informed comments form an important background aspect to the Bābī-Bahā'ī materials. The following few notes must suffice to give an indication of the richness of early Shaykhī exegesis.

In an epistle to a certain Mullā `Alī Tawba'ī (written in 1211 A.H., 1796/7 C.E.) Shaykh Aḥmad responded to a number of questions which required that

⁴⁵ For some details see my article referred to in fn. 43 above and cf., H. Corbin, "The Configuration of the Temple of the Ka'bah," p. 223. Mt. Paran is quite frequently mentioned in the writings of the Bāb and Bahā'u'llāh (especially in the poetry of the latter).

he explain Moses/Sinai motifs.⁴⁶ Asked about the significance of various trees mentioned in the Qur'ān he wrote: ⁴⁷

And the Tree (shajarat) which is in the "Holy Vale" (al-wād al-muqaddas) and the "Tree issuing from the Mount of Sinai (ṭūr sīnā)" [Qur'ān 25:20] is the Primordial Reality (al-awwalī) through which the [divine] Word (al-kalām, or Speech) had precedence. The "Holy Vale" is the "Tranquil Soul" (al-nafs al-muṭa'inna) and the "Mount" (a-ṭūr) is the obedient, patient body (al-jasad al-muṭī' al-sābir). And the "Holy Vale" is [also] the secure [or perfect] heart (al-qalb al-salīm) and the "Mount" the upright intellect (al-'aql al-mustaqīm). ⁴⁸

Having thus indicated the mystical import of the Sinaitic "Tree," "Holy Vale," and "Mount," the Shaykh quotes a saying to the effect that the "Tree" planted on Mount Sinai is possessed of the essential human quality of reason (or animal rationality, al-hayawānī al-nāṭiq). It is, he states, a "Tree" symbolic of the "substance (or essence) of Noble Man" (hayūlā al-insān al-kaṛīm). Drawing on some rather arcane traditions, [87] the Shaykh also comments on the "Tree" of Qur'ān 25:20, in the light of its having been set in the zodiac by Balṣiyāl[?] ibn Ḥūr, the bearer of the "Dome of Time." An herbal substance

⁴⁶ This epistle is contained in al-Aḥsāṭ, Jawāmi' al-kalim, Vol. I, part two, pp. 1-68.

⁴⁷ Refer, epistle to Mullā 'Alī in Jawāmi' al-kalim (henceforth JK), Vol. 1, p. 24ff.

⁴⁸ Epistle to Mullā 'Alī in JK, Vol. 1, p. 25.

(al-ḥashīsha) associated with this cosmic "Tree" (shajarat) -- represented by the obscure cryptogram produces pure gold when treated alchemically: ⁴⁹



After making detailed comments on the "trees" mentioned in Qur'ān 14:24ff, Shaykh Aḥmad explains the significance of the "Holy Vale" and the "Holy Land." Partly reiterating earlier remarks he writes:

... the "Holy Vale" (al-wād al-muqaddas) is the "Secure Heart" (al-qalb al-salām) which is filled with contentment (al-riḍā') and submission (al-taslīm). The "Holy Land" (al-arḍ al-muqaddas) is the "tranquil, satisfied, contented soul." The "Holy Vale" is the "House of procreation and marriage" (bayt al-tawlūd wa'l-tanākuḥ) and the "Purple Lights" (al-anwār al-firfiriyya). The "Holy Land" is the "New Body" (al-jasad al-jadīd). ⁵⁰

Reference is then made to a tradition in which mention is made of there being nine "evils" on earth; ten mountains; the mountain (al-jabal) on which God spoke directly with Moses (see Qur'ān 4:164), sanctified Jesus, took Abraham for a friend (khalāl), and reckoned Muhammad as one beloved (aBāb); four birds (cf. Qur'ān 2:262); the thirty days completed with ten (see

⁴⁹ See *ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

Qur'ān 7:142); the shoes which Moses doffed (see Qur'ān 20:12); twelve as the number of new moons; and the four sacrosanct months.

A great many symbolic senses are given by Shaykh Aḥmad to the "ten mountains." They form an interrelated hierarchy of "realities" rooted in this world but so spanning celestial realms as to express a mystical cosmology. First and foremost among these "ten mountains" stands the "mountain" of the "heart of the believer," the "Boundary of the cardinal [88] points" (muḥaddad al-jihāt), the "Supreme Heaven" (al-sāqūra al-`ulyā), the "Vehicle of Causes" (markab al-`ilal;), the "Sciences of How? and Why?" (`ulūm al-kayf wa'l-limā), the "Elevated, All-Merciful Throne" (`arsh al-istiwā al-rahmānī), and the "Supreme Panorama" (al-manẓar al-a`lā);

Second: the "Bosom of Knowledge" (ṣadr al-`ilm), the "Chair extended before the heavens and the earth" (al-kūrsī al-wāsi` li'l-samāwāt wa'l-arḍ), and the "Book Inscribed" (al-kitāb al-maṣṭūr);

Third: the "Heaven of Security" (samā' al-amān), the "Peace of Faith" (salīm al-imān), the "Star of Saturn" (burj al-kaywān), the "Mountain of the theophany of the Light and the Proclamation" (jabal zuhūr al-nār wa'l-isti'lān), the "Compliance of the Merciful" (muṭā' al-rahmān), the "Path of the Heart" (tarīq al-janān);

Fourth: the "Treasury of Knowledge" (khizānat al-`ilm), the "Repository of the Decree" (wi'ā` al-ḥukm), the "Locus of knowledge" (maẓhar al-`ilm), the "Veil of Chrysolite" (or Emerald) (ḥijāb al-zabarjad), and the "Firmament of the Assisting Star" (falak al-kawkab al-is`ād);

Fifth : the "Mountain of Power" (jabal al-sawa), the "Scene of the wrath of the Angel of Death" (maẓhar al-qahr al-`azrā`ī), and the "Crimson Veil" (ḥijāb al-ḥamrā');

Sixth: the "Mountain of the Second Principle (or: Essence) (jabal al-hayūlā al-thāniyya), and the "Pulpit of Bountiful Existence" (minba' al-wujūd al-fayyḍā);

Seventh: the "Mountain of Spiritual Existence" preserved in the Divine Treasuries" (jabal al-akwān al-malakātiyya al-mafūz fā'l-khazā'in al-ilāhiyya);

Eighth: the "Mountain of CIPHERED Tabernacles sent down according to a known decree" (jabal al-hayākil al-raḥamiyya al-manzila bi'l-qadr al-ma'lūm);

Ninth: the "Mountain of Life (jabal al-ḥayāt) in whose shade living beings (al-ḥayawānāt) are enlivened"; and tenth, "Mount Sinai" (jabal al-ṭūr) and "[Mount] Qāf" (al-qāf).

The complexity of the Shaykh's interpretations of Mount Sinai and motifs associated with it may be gathered from the fact that he understood

this "mountain" to have varied and diverse senses in terms of its multifarious terrestrial and celestial poles of being. ⁵¹ [89]

In his *Sharḥ al-ziyāra al-jāmi`a al-kabīra* and in other treatises, Shaykh Aḥmad comments on Qur`ān 7:143, in the light of the tradition that it was a proto-Shī`ī Cherub that was manifested before Moses and shattered the mountain. It was an infinitesimal portion of the "light of the [divine] Veil" (nār al-sitr) or the "light of [God's] Grandeur" (nūr al-`azīmat) related to God's seventy thousand "veils of Light" and to the light of the Imams that beamed forth before Moses from the mysterious cherubic "Speaker." It was in view of Imām Ja'far a-`ādiq's having stated that "God manifested himself (tajallī) unto his servants through his Speech [or Word] (al-kalām) but they did not see Him [God]" that the Shaykh also taught that God's theophany before the "mountain" was the theophany of "the Speaker" (al-mutakallim) through His "Speech" (al kalām) and not God's personal manifestation. In the form of "light," the divine "Speech" was revealed upon the "mountain" which is, on one level, symbolic of the "heart" of Moses. While, furthermore, Moses' Sinaitic experience of God was a mystical experience of a mere glimmer of the Divine Light, Imām Ja'far had an experience of its fullness whilst wrapt in

⁵¹ Refer *ibid.*, pp. 26-7.

prayer. Both literalistic and mystical interpretations of Qur'ān 7:143 are present in the vastly erudite writings of Shaykh Aḥmad.⁵²

At various points in his lengthy and frequently abstruse Commentary on the Sermon of the Gulf (Sharḥ al-khuṭba al-Ṭutunjiyya), Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī touches upon Moses/Sinai motifs. Commenting on Imām `Alā's words, "He [God] created the oceans (al-biḥār) and the mountains (al-jibāl)," he has much to say about the "mountains." He not only adds further details about the "ten mountains" listed above but, for example, refers to: the "mountain of iron" (jabal al-ḥadād); a "mountain under which the mine of mercury (or quicksilver, ma'dan al-zaybaq) flows" ; the "mountain of yellow cornelian" (jabal al-`aqīq al-aṣfar); the "mountain of red ruby" (jabal al-yāqāt al-aḥmar); the "mountain of the mine of gold" (jabal ma'dan al-dhahab) which is the "seat of the beams of the [90] sun" (mara ashi``at al-shams) related to the "Mount of Moses" (ṭūr mūsā), the "Locale of Jesus" (manzil `īsā), the "Ark of Aaron" (tābāt ḥarūn), the "Well of Daniel" (bi'r danyāl) and the "Station of Assent" (maqām al-iqbāl); the "mountain of lead" (jabal al-usrub) with an exterior of iron and an interior of gold; Mount Qāf; the "Mountain of Light" (jabal al-nār); the "Mountain of the

⁵² See Shaykh Aḥmad, Sharḥ al-ziyāra, Vol. IV, p. 195ff; idem., Risāla in JK, Vol. 1, pp. 139-41, and in Majmū'at al-rasā'il, Vol. 30, pp. 60-66. Cf. Sharḥ al-ziyāra, Vol. III, pp. 361-2.

One [God]" (jabal al-aḥad; the "Mountain of Najāf" (jabal an-Najāf, in Iraq); Mt. Sinai; Mt. Seir; and Mt. Paran.⁵³

What Sayyid Kāẓim has to say about "Mount Sinai" (jabal ṭūr sīnā') is expressive of the importance of Najaf as the place where the shrine of Imām `Alī is located: "As regards Mount Sinai, outwardly and inwardly it is the `hill of Najāf' (rubwa al-Najāf)." Though he acknowledged that this mountain was traditionally located in Syria or the "Holy Land" he explained this in terms of a part of the "mountain of Najāf" (jabal al-Najāf) having become detached and reconstituted piecemeal in the "land of Syria" (arḍ al-Shām). The "mountain of Najāf" is a part of the "mountain" on which God held converse with Moses, sanctified Jesus, took Abraham for a "Friend" and reckoned Muhammad one "Beloved." It is the "greatest of the mountains of the world" closely related to Mt. Sinai, Mt. Seir, and Mt. Paran.⁵⁴ Following Shaykh Aḥmad, the Sayyid considered "Mount Seir" (jabal sā`īr) to be the scene of Jesus' "sanctification" and intimate converse with God--he located it in the Hedjaz (Western Arabia)--and an "edifice" (or dome, qubba) which was "with Moses and like a throne." The mountain on which God took Abraham for a Friend was either a hill on the slope of Mt. Mina (near Mecca) where a mosque is built or another mountain in Jerusalem, (Ilya) the Holy City, in Palestine. Allegedly a mountain

⁵³ Refer Rashī, Sharḥ al-khuṭba al-ṭutunjiyya, p.66ff.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

near Mecca, Mount Paran (jabal al-fārān) was the place where "sanctified myriads" (ribwāt al-muqaddasān) of angels beyond the ken of the Cherubim appeared to Muhammad. ⁵⁵

The proto-Shīṭī Cherub and the Sinaitic theophany.

In the course of expounding various lines of the Sermon of [91] the Gulf, Sayyid Kāzīm also makes occasional reference to Qur'ān 7:143 and to the tradition about the proto-Shīṭī Cherub. Commenting on God's having singled out the Prophet Muhammad from the "Supreme Center" (al-buḥbūḥat al-'ulyā) in the light of Qur'ān 3:33 and other traditions, he speaks of the "heart" (al-qalb) and the "Logos-Self" (al-nafs) as pivotal realities. The core of the being of the Prophet Muhammad is his transcendent "Logos-Self" (al-nafs) which is the locus of the divine Theophany (al-mutajallā bi'l-aḥadiyya) as the "Self of God" (nafs Allāh). When God created Imām `Alī this elevated "Self" was manifested in him for both he and the Prophet are associated with the same created, though divine, "Self" (nafs) and "Essence" (dhāt). It was Imām `Alī who conversed with Moses from the Sinaitic Tree (al-shajarat) and uttered the words "I, verily am God." He was the one who appeared "before and to Moses through his Light" as one of the "men of the Cherubim." The

⁵⁵ See *ibid.*

theophany (tajallā) of Imam `Alī unto Moses from the "Tree" was "the essence of the theophany of God" (`ayn tajallā Allāh) within the Israelite Prophet. ⁵⁶

In further explaining the significance of the theophany unto Moses, Sayyid Kāim states that the proto-Shī`ī Cherub mentioned by Imām Ja`far (see above) is symbolic of the "Self of Moses" (nafs māsā). He has disclosed this "mystery" in view of the fact that an theophany (al-tajallā) unto something is only possible through the "self" (nafs) of that thing. ⁵⁷ On similar lines is the Sayyid's teaching that the number and names of the angelic host of the Cherubim are the same as those of the prophets (al-anbiyā): "That man [Cherub] who revealed himself unto Moses (tajallā li-mūsā) such that Moses fell down in a swoon [see Qur`ān 7:143] was named Moses." On another level however, the Cherubic being who appeared to Moses was the reality of such Prophets as the "First and Last Adam" (adam al-awwal wa'l-ākhir). ⁵⁸ The

⁵⁶ Ibid p.92.

⁵⁷ Ibid p.94.

⁵⁸ Refer ibid., p. 94. The Sayyid follows what Shaykh Aḥmad has to say in Sharḥ al-ziyāra, Vol. III, p. 361, namely that God created His Prophets in the image of a specific Cherub and gave them corresponding names. The Shaykh wrote: "Thus Noah... bore the image and name of one of them [the Cherubim], that is to say, Noah was named with his name; and Abraham bore the image and name of one of them. Moses also bore the image and name of one of them, and that was the one which "revealed its glory before the mountain" (tajallā li'l-jabal [Qur`ān 7:143] at the time when Moses asked his Lord that which he asked [to see Him] and reduced it to dust. Jesus likewise bore the image and name of one of them [the Cherubim]. It was by

Cherubim are the archetypal realities of the prophets possessed of an essential oneness. Moses thus experienced the theophany (tajallā) of his [92] celestial "Self" (nafs) as a Cherub who may be thought of as Imam `Alī or one of the prophets who partake of the same pleroma of reality. The theophany (tajallī) was the disclosure of an infinitesimal glimmer of the radiance that emanated from the angelic body of a Cherub numbered among the messengers "possessed of Divine Authority" (ulū al-`amr). ⁵⁹ Alternatively, the theophanic radiance which shone forth before Moses on Sinai may be thought of as the "Light" (nūr) of Muhammad and his family. ⁶⁰

In the light of the above, it will be evident that both Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kāẓim often gave symbolic or mystical interpretations to Moses/Sinai motifs -- sometimes in line with those set forth by such Sufi mystagogues as Ibn al-`Arabī, and frequently informed by Shī`ī imamological speculations. On one level Mount Sinai all but becomes the interior reality of Moses or the inmost heart of the believer, and the theophany on the Mount the shining forth of the Divine Light upon it.

virtue of that Cherub that Jesus was able to cure the blind and the leprous and revive the dead."

⁵⁹ See *Ibid* p.264.

⁶⁰ Refer *ibid.*, p. 316. For further details see Rashtī, *Sharḥ al-khuṭba al-Ṭutunjiyya* pp. 102, 105, 116, 143, 161, 68, 186-7, 252, 263, 273, 285, 293, 299, 324, 337-8, 348.

The founding fathers of the Shaykhī movement were criticized by their more rigidly orthodox Shīī contemporaries for their allegedly unwarranted allegorism. In, for example, the *Tiryāq-i firāq* (Discriminating antidote [for poisons]) of `Abd al-Ṣamad ibn `Abd-Allāh al-Ḥusaynī al-Māzandarānī written in 1301 A.H./1883 CE., the mystically-oriented Shaykhī interpretation of Qur'ān 7:143 is singled out for critical comment.⁶¹ The Bāb and Bahā'-Allāh, however, both drew on and creatively expounded early Shaykhī nonliteral interpretations of this and other texts and traditions relating to Moses' Sinaitic experiences.

WRITINGS OF THE BAB [pp. 92-109]

During the period of his prophetic ministry (1844-1850), the Bāb wrote a great many books, treatises, and letters in the Arabic and Persian languages. As indicated below, only a few of these largely unpublished, unedited,

⁶¹ Cf., V. Rafati, "The Relationship of Shaykhī Doctrines to the Religious Thought of the Bāb," unpublished paper, p. 6.

In the preceding pages only a fraction of Sunnī and Shīī sources covering issues of central interest have been referred to. For some important further details and observations see, for example, Ibn al-`Arabī, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-karām*, Vol. 1, pp. 447-9 (on Qur'ān 7:143, etc.) Vol. 2 pp.33-36 (on Qur'ān 20:12, etc.) Nwyia P., *Le tafsir mystique attribué à Ga`fār Sādiq* (esp., pp. 196-7); Sirat C., *Un midras juif . . .* and Vajda, G., *Le Probleme . . .*

unstudied, and often [93] abstruse writings will be referred to here, despite the fact that a good many of them contain materials of central interest.

The Bāb's early and lengthy Arabic Commentary on the Sura of Joseph (Tafsīr sūrah Yūsuf, also known as the Qayyūm al-asmā' [loosely, Stature of the names], written mid 1844) contains a large number of verses that are informed by Sinaitic imagery and motifs.⁶² In the very first chapter of this complex work, its author refers to his revelation as the truth which was concealed in the Mother Book (umm al-kitāb) on Mount Sinai (al-ṭūr) and to himself as the Greatest Word (al-kalimat al-akbar) commissioned about or raised up from the Sinaitic Fire (al-nār, loosely, the "Burning Bush").⁶³ In subsequent chapters, the Bāb frequently invites terrestrial and celestial beings to hearken unto the proclamation of divinity ("I, verily, am God...") uttered from the mystic Sinai which is the heavenly sphere of revelation and the abode of the occulted (Most Great) Remembrance (of God) (dhikr Allāh,

⁶² In the pages to follow, I shall refer to the pagination of a well written (though occasionally textually unsound) unpublished ms. of the Qayyūm al-asmā' (henceforth QA) dated 1323 A.H./1905 6 C.E. I have also consulted the copy transcribed by Mīrzā Āqā Khān Kirmānī contained in the Browne collection [ms. F11] of Cambridge University Library. Unless otherwise indicated all translations from Persian and Arabic sources are my own.

⁶³ See QA I p.1.

the hidden and expected Imam) with whom he identified and with whose voice he often spoke:

O ye people of the [celestial] Throne! Hearken unto My Call [raised up] from about the [Sinaitic] Fire (al-nār), "Verily, I am God, no God is there except Me."... The Remembrance (al-dhikr) standeth firm upon the unsullied Path through the upright line about the [Sinaitic] Fire.⁶⁴

Hearken unto the Call of thy Lord [raised up] upon Mount Sinai (jabal al-sīnā'), "Verily, there is no God except Him. And I, verily, am the Exalted One (al-'alā), veiled in the Mother Book according to the decree of God." ⁶⁵

O people of the Throne! Hearken unto My Call from about the [Sinaitic] Fire (an nār), in the leaves of these branches, for God hath inspired me [to utter the words], "I, verily, am God, no God is there except Me. I am the Remembrance (al dhikr), the [letter] "H" (al hā') which hath been sent down in the "Night of Power" (laylat al qadr) in the midst of the [Sinaitic] Fire (al nār). ⁶⁶ [94]

O people of Paradise! Hearken unto the Call of God from the leaves of the Branch of Camphor about this Tree (al-shajarat) [situated on] the Mount (al-ṭūr), "I, verily, am God, no God is there except Him." ⁶⁷

⁶⁴ QA. 17: 56. Cf., The Bāb, Selections [Henceforth SWB], p.65.

⁶⁵ QA. 19: 62 trans., SWB, p. 70 (adapted). The Sura 19 of the Qayyūm al-asmā' is entitled "The Sura of Sinai."

⁶⁶ QA. 24, p. 79. The reference to the letter al hā' being sent down in the "Night of Power" refers to the hā' of the expression "We sent it down" (anzalna-hu) in Qur'ān 97:1. Cf. The Bāb, Tafsīr laylat al qadr, ms.

⁶⁷ QA 27:91.

O Concourse of Lights! Hearken unto My Call from this Crimson Leaf upon this Snow White Tree (al-shajara al-bayḍā) in this Mount Sinai (al-ṭūr al-sīnā'), "I, verily, am God, no God is there except Me..."

O people of the realm of Unknowing! Hearken unto My Call from the tongue of the Bāb, this Arabian Youth who crieth out in Sinai (al-sīnā') according to the melody of the Point of Praise (nuḡṭat al thanā'), "God, no God is there except Him." ⁶⁸

O ye people of the Throne! Hearken unto My Call from the Point of the Gate (nuḡṭat al bāb). God, verily, hath inspired me in Mount Sinai (al-ṭūr al-sīnā') from the region of this Tree (al-shajarat) [to say], "I verily, am God, no God is there except Me." ⁶⁹

O ye peoples of the earth! Hearken unto My Call, from the precincts of this Tree (al-shajarat) which blazeth through the preexistent [Sinaitic] Fire (al nār): "There is no God but Him." ⁷⁰

O people of the realm of the Unseen (ʿamā, lit., cloud of unknowing)! Hearken unto the Call of God from the Tree (al-shajarat) upon the Mount (al-ṭūr), and upon whose leaves the birds are in motion, "I, verily am God, Lord of the worlds." ⁷¹

⁶⁸ QA 28:98.

⁶⁹ QA 50:195.

⁷⁰ QA 51: 199.

⁷¹ QA 57: 226. Cf. also., pp.227,228-9.

God, verily, inspired Me in the Primordial Mount (al-ṭūr al-awwal) through the tongue of His Beloved with the hidden mystery about the Gate (al-bāb), "I, verily, am God, no God is there except Him."⁷² Say! through the tongue of thy Lord--no God is there except Him--in this Mount Sinai (al-ṭūr al-sīnā) about the Crimson Word (kalimat al-ḥamrā) uttered from the Exalted Tree (al-shajarat al-`ulyā): "I, verily, am God, no God is there except Him."⁷³

These verses of the Qayyūm al-asmā' form but a small proportion of the many passages in which either the Bāb or the [95] Remembrance (dhikr) are pictured as having uttered various forms of God's declaration from the Sinaitic Fire, or Tree (Burning Bush). The relationship between the Bāb, the Remembrance (dhikr), and God is so intimate that the former can invite humankind to "the Truth" by revealing the words, "I, verily, am God." It is not that the Bāb made an early or direct claim to divinity, for at various points in the Qayyūm al-asmā' he underlines his station of servitude and his position as the "Gate" (bāb).⁷⁴ Indeed, as indicated below, the Sinaitic declaration of divinity is explicitly stated in early Shaykhī literature to have been the prerogative of such exalted Imāms as `Alī seen as the locus of the divine Self (nafs) or Essence (dhāt) of God--though not the absolute, unknowable

⁷² QA 88: 354.

⁷³ QA 105: 421.

⁷⁴ QA Cf. D. MacEoin, "Early Shaykhī Reactions to the Bāb and His Claims" in Momen, *Studies in Bābī and Bahā'ī History*, Vol. 1, p. 16ff.

Godhead. The frequency and significance of the voicing of the words, "I, verily, am God," or the like, seems to be hinted at in the forty fourth sura of the Qayyūm al asma' where it is stated: "The likeness of some of the verses of this Book is as the likeness of the Word of the Mount (kalimat al-ṭūr) in the Qur'ān. In very truth, it hath not been revealed except by God, the Single, the One, the Incomparable." ⁷⁵

Directly related to his claim to have uttered the declaration of divinity on Mt. Sinai in view of his intimate relationship with, or identity with, the Remembrance (dhikr) is the Bāb's claim to have cried out unto or conversed with Moses:

O ye people of [the realm of] Extinction (maḥw)! Hearken unto My Call from the Point of Brightness (nuḡṭat al saḥw), from this Arabian Youth [the Bāb] Who, by the leave of God, cried out unto Moses on Mount Sinai (al-ṭūr sīnā'). ⁷⁶

Indeed, We conversed with Moses by the leave of God from the Tree (al-shajara) on the Mount (al-ṭūr). ⁷⁷

I caused the Remembrance (al-dhikr) to cry out in the two Mounts (al ṭurayn)... God hath not decreed that anything stand between me

⁷⁵ QA. 94, p. 376. It is intimated at QA. 41, p. 154 that the Qayyūm al-asmā' was not wholly expressive of the Bāb's "station of servitude."

⁷⁶ QA 41:153.

⁷⁷ QA. 53 : 208, trans. SWB, p. 72 (adapted). Cf., also QA. 61: 244...

[the Bāb] and the Most Great Remembrance (al-dhikr al akbar). ⁷⁸

[96]

Elsewhere in the Qayyūm al-asmā', the Bāb takes the place of Moses as the one called in the "Holy Vale"--for the Bāb, a mystic or celestial realm--or the "servant" to whom God communicated through certain "Letters of the Divine Oneness" (the Imāms as qabbalistic loci of inspiration?):

So give ear when Thou [the Bāb] receivest inspiration from Thy Lord in the "Holy Vale" (bi'l wād al muqaddas) through the Point of Fire (nuqṭat al-nār) in the zenith of Ice (kabīd al-thalj). ⁷⁹

The Bāb equated both himself and the Remembrance ⁸⁰ with the Sinaitic Tree (shajarat) which, for him, symbolized the sphere of the Divine Oneness (al-aḥadiyya) and the locus of inspiration centered in their inmost hearts (fu'ād):

⁷⁸ QA. 25:85 At several points in the Qayyūm al-asmā' the Bāb uses the dual Arabic form of "Mount" (tūrayn, "two Mounts"). See, for example, QA., p. 74; p. 105; p. 438. His frequent use of the Arabic dual form is related to his claim to stand between the "two worlds" as the "Gate" (bāb) and to rather complex Shaykhī speculations rooted in the Sermon of the Gulf attributed to Imām `Alī.

⁷⁹ QA. 20:64. In this surah of the Qayyūm al-asmā', the Bāb also refers to the Remembrance (dhikr) being protected in view of him being cast "beyond the Crimson Abyss in the World of Unknowing" (qulzum al-ḥamrā' fī `ālam al-`amā) and concealed in the "Pole of Splendor" (quṭb al bahā') on Mount Sinai (ṭūr al- sīnā').

⁸⁰ On the identity of the terms dhikr (Remembrance) and bāb (Gate), see article by Todd Lawson in this volume.

O People of the earth! Fear God on account of this Leaf sprung up from the Tree of the Divine Oneness (shajarat al-aḥadiyya). ⁸¹

I, verily, am the Tree (al-shajara) in the Mount (al-ṭūr) and He Who speaketh (al-manṭuq) from the Manifestation (al-zuhūr) of the Living One, the Self Subsisting. ⁸²

O people of the Throne! Hearken unto My Call raised nigh unto the Shrine (al-ḍarīḥ) and uttered by the tongue of this Tree (al-shajara) planted in the Exalted Mount (al-ṭūr)... "I, verily, am God, no God is there except Him." ⁸³

This is assuredly the Tree of the Inmost Heart (al-shajarat al-fu'ād) upon Mount Sinai (al-ṭūr al-sīnā'). ⁸⁴

The Most Great Remembrance (al-dhikr al-akbar) is this Blessed Tree (al-shajarat al-mubāraka) dyed crimson with the oil of servitude. ⁸⁵

The Remembrance of God (dhikr Allāh) is in the Blessed Tree (al-shajarat al-mubāraka). So hearken unto the Call of God: "I verily, am God, no God is there except Me." ⁸⁶

⁸¹ QA. 27, pp. 95-6. Cf. QA. p. 53, "God created Joseph and his brothers from the Blessed Tree of the Divine Unicity (al-shajara al-aḥadiyya al-mubāraka)

⁸² QA 92:367.

⁸³ QA. 94, p. 372; using a variant reading from ms. BB15 and Nicolas 107 I (the latter being a ms. originally in the possession of A.L.M. Nicolas), both mss. now held at the Bahā'ī World Center, Haifa.

⁸⁴ QA 108:432.

⁸⁵ QA 28:99.

⁸⁶ QA 73:298.

O ye people of Paradise! Hearken unto the Call of God from the wondrous tongue of this Remembrance (al dhikr) ..."I, verily, [97] am God, no God is there except Me." ... He, verily, is the Blessed Tree (al-shajarat al-mubāraka) on Mount Sinai (al-ṭūr al-sīnā') sprung up from the Land of Glory (arḍ al bahā). ⁸⁷

The Remembrance of God (dhikr Allāh) is in the Blessed Tree (al shajara al mubāraka). So hearken unto the Call of God, "I, verily, am God, no God is there except Me." ⁸⁸

At several points in the same work, the Sinaitic Fire (al-nār) seen by Moses is spoken about and equated with the Divine Light (al-nūr) which, according to Shaykhā and other sources, accompanied the theophany (tajallī) on the Mount (al-ṭūr). Once again, both the Bāb and the Remembrance (dhikr) are in various ways associated with the Sinaitic Fire and/or Light:

Say: ... I, verily, am the Fire (al nār) of the Speaker (al-kalīm) nigh unto the Mount (al-ṭūr). The Tree (al-shajara) hath proclaimed: "No God is there except Him" and God beareth witness unto Me. ⁸⁹

Say: I, verily, am the Light (al-nūr) which was, in very truth, made manifest upon the Mount (al-ṭūr) of the Inmost Heart (al-fu'ād). ⁹⁰

⁸⁷ QA 75:306. Cf . QA. 76:309 and fn. 79 above.

⁸⁸ QA 110:440.

⁸⁹ QA 85:342.

⁹⁰ QA 23:76.

Such, verily, as gaze upon the Light (al-nūr) manifest before the Mount (al-ṭūr), concealed, in very truth, above the sphere of Glory (minṭaqat al-bahā'), are privy to the ancient Mystery of God, and shall, with Our permission, gaze upon the Light (al nār) before the Mount (al-ṭūr) made visible in the Dawning Place of Manifestation on the part of the Bāb. ⁹¹

O ye people of the earth!...This is assuredly the Light (al-nūr) which shone forth in the Dawning Place of Manifestation upon the Mount (al-ṭūr) ... This is the [Fire] (al-nār) which was, in very truth, revealed upon the Mount (al-ṭūr). ⁹²

I, verily, am the [Sinaitic] Fire (al-nār) emanating from the Mount (al-ṭūr) ...

I, verily, am the Light (al-nūr) above the Mount (al-ṭūr)... [98] I, verily, am the [Sinaitic] Speaker (al mutakallim) in the two stations (al maqāmāyn) [who uttered the words], "No God is there except God alone; no God is there except Him." ...

I, am the Flame (or, Fire; al-nār) of that [supernal] Light (al-nūr) that glowed upon Sinai (or, "the Mount"; al-ṭūr) in the gladsome Spot (lit., land of exhilaration; arḍ al-surūr), and lay concealed in the midst of the Burning Bush (lit., Fire; al nār). ⁹³

⁹¹ QA 28: 101.

⁹² QA. 78: 318; using a variant reading from ms. BB15, p. 171, and Nicolas 107 l. See note 83 (above).

⁹³ QA. 93: 374, 375 partial trans. by Shoghi Effendi in SWB, p.74.

O people of the Abyss of the Divine Unity! Harken unto My Call from the Point of the Fire of the Divine Theophany (al mutajallā) shining upon your inmost hearts. ⁹⁴

This is assuredly the Mystery of Mysteries (sirr al-asrār) which was concealed about the [Sinaitic] Fire.

This is assuredly the Light of Lights (al-nūr al anwār) in the midst of the Mountains (al-jibāl) to the right hand side of the Throne beyond Mount Qāf. ⁹⁵

He [the Bāb] is the Light (al-nūr) in the Mount (al-ṭūr) and the Mount (al-ṭūr) in the Dawning Place of Manifestation (maṭla` al-ḡuhūr) who [or which] was, by the leave of God, the Exalted, concealed in the Point of Rapture (nuḡṭat al-surūr) upon the Mountain of the Ice of Manifestation (jabal thalj al-ḡuhūr). ⁹⁶

This is the Remembrance of God (dhikr Allāh) that crieth out from the Tree dyed crimson and sprung up through the Oil which blazeth forth on account of the Fire (al-nār). This is the Light of God (nār Allāh) in the Fire (al-nār) encompassed by the [celestial] Water (al-mā'). ⁹⁷

This Remembrance (al-dhikr) is assuredly the Light (al-nūr) in the Mount of Manifestation (al-ṭūr al-ḡuhūr) ... Say: "I, verily, am the Light (al-nār) in the Point of Manifestation (nuḡṭat al-ḡuhūr). ⁹⁸

⁹⁴ QA 105: 420.

⁹⁵ QA 109: 432.

⁹⁶ QA 109:438.

⁹⁷ QA 60: 238.

⁹⁸ QA 67: 274.

The quranic account of Moses' request to see God and the theophany before the mountain (Qur'ān 7:143; see above) as exegetically "rewritten" and mystically interpreted in the Qayyūm al-asmā'is fundamental to the Sinitic theology of the Bāb. Apart from claiming to be the Mount (al-ṭūr) where the [99] Divine Theophany (tajallā) took place, the Bāb identified both himself and the Remembrance (dhikr) as the agents of this theophany. ⁹⁹

Reflecting early Shaykhī speculations he, furthermore, associated the Light (al-nūr) of the Sinitic theophany with the Veil(s) surrounding God and with the celestial "Muhammadan Light" which emanates from the heavenly body of Imām `Alī and is the locus of the archetypal Fāṭima:

I, verily, am the mystery of the theophany (al-sirr al-mutajallā) above the Line (al-saṭr) secreted under the Yellow, Flashing Veil [of Divinity] concealed about the [Divine] Throne... Thou, assuredly, cried out in the Mount (al-ṭūr) and wast the Point of the Gate (nuḡṭat al-bāb) situated about the Tree (al-shajara) planted in the Land of the Unseen (`amā' = lit., `The Divine Cloud'). ¹⁰⁰

This is assuredly the Light (al nār) upon the Mount (al-ṭūr), the [Sinitic] Theophany (al-mutajallā) of the [divine] Names (al-asmā') in the Concourse of Manifestation (maṭlā' al-zuhūr)... the mystery of the [Sinitic] Theophany (al-mutajallā) [which emanated] from the

⁹⁹ We read at QA. 24: 81, "...I, verily, am the Mount (al-ṭūr) in the Mount (al-ṭūr) where its theophany took place...".

¹⁰⁰ QA 91:364.

Body of the Exalted `Alī (jism al `alawī), the Light (al-nūr) treasured up in the form of a Dove in the Fāṭimid Center (kabd al fāṭimah). ¹⁰¹

In the one hundred seventh sura of the Qayyūm al-asmā, the Bāb is identified as the Cherub (see above) who was the agent of the divine Theophany:

O people of the Throne! Hearken unto My Call... from this Arabian Youth, the Cherub [who appeared] on the Mount of Glory (ṭūr al-bahā'), "I, verily, am the True One, no God is there except Me, the Exalted." ¹⁰²

His Sinaitic role is underlined in the following lines from sura fifty three in which allusion is made to Qur'ān 7:143:

Indeed We conversed with Moses by the leave of God from the Tree (al shajara) on the Mount (al-ṭūr). And We revealed an [100] infinite-simal glimmer of Thy Light (al-nār) upon the Mount (al-ṭūr) and [unto] such as were upon it, whereupon the mountain (al-jabal) was crushed and became floating dust particles, and Moses fell down swooning. ¹⁰³

A particularly interesting exegetical "rewrite" of Qur'ān 7:143 is contained in sura sixty eight of the Qayyūm al-asmā':

¹⁰¹ QA 108: 431-2.

¹⁰² QA 107: 429.

¹⁰³ QA 54: 208. trans. SWB :72 (adapted).

When we raised up the sincere ones in the precincts of the Mount (al-ṭūr), they asked Us about the Cause (al-amr). Say: God cannot be seen! But, O people! Gaze upon Me! And if your inmost hearts remain firm after you have, in very truth, gazed upon Me, then shall you see the servant (al-`abd, the Bāb) in a state of unsullied and upright servitude. And when the Remembrance (al-dhikr) appeared in glory (tajallā) upon the mountain (al-jabal) through that Word (al-kalima), they hearkened unto my Call from the precincts of the [Sinaitic] Fire (al-nār): "God, no God is there except Him." But is there any among you who withholdeth his acceptance, by setting himself apart from God? [Nay!] Indeed, the mountains (al-jibāl) were crushed to dust and the inmost hearts fell down prostrate before God, the Ancient. ¹⁰⁴

Here it is sincere souls who, having been elevated to the mystic Sinai, enquire after the "Cause"; possibly the whereabouts of the Hidden Imām. They are informed that they can only indirectly vision God or identify with the Bāb if their hearts remain firm after experiencing the theophany of the Remembrance (dhikr). When the Remembrance "appeared in glory" (tajallā) upon the mountain through the divine Word, they heard the declaration of divinity, but proved unable to sustain its impact. The "mountains" of their inmost hearts were crushed, and they swooned away. Moses is replaced by "sincere souls," the Remembrance (dhikr) becomes the agent of the Divine Theophany (tajallī) through the "Word" (kalimat), and the "mountain" (jabal)

¹⁰⁴ QA 68: 278.

crushed to dust becomes the "mountains" (al-jibāl) of the hearts of souls incapable of [101] sustaining an encounter with the Remembrance (dhikr). It is indicated that identification with the Bāb is no easy matter: it presupposes identification with the Remembrance, who represents the Godhead.

In two adjacent suras of the Qayyūm al-asmā', the Bāb explains that the Sinaitic episode (al-ḥadīth) of the "Call of Moses" detailed in the Qur'ān (see above) had come to pass again. This is in view of his claim to be in communication with God and in receipt of divine revelation. As the Gate, the Bāb pictured himself as having mystic access to the celestial sphere, or Holy Vale, where Moses encountered God. He heard anew the Sinaitic declaration of divinity and uttered again the "I, verily, am God ..." (or the like) as one in intimate communion with the Remembrance or the Being who spoke from the Fire:

O Solace of Mine Eyes! Say: The episode surrounding the mystery of Moses, the Speaker (al-kaḥīm), hath, by the leave of God, the Exalted, again come to pass.

O people of Contention! Harken unto the Call of God ... "I, verily, am God, and He is the True One, no God is there except Him." ... Say: I, verily, am the Crier (al munādī) situated, by the leave of God, the Lord of the Throne and of the Realm of the Unseen (`amā' lit., `Divine Cloud') in the [Sinaitic] Fire. I, verily, am the senant of God (`abd Allāh). So doff thy sandals, relinquish the two

worlds (lit., the two limits; al-ḥaddayn). Thou, verily, art in the "Holy Vale" (al wād al muqaddas) concealed (maṭwiyy^{an}) in this Bāb.' ¹⁰⁵

O Solace of Mine Eyes! Say: The episode of Moses upon Mount Sinai (al-ṭūr al-sīnā) hath again come to pass through the appearance of the Glorious Light (al-nūr al bahā'), for Thy Lord hath called out unto Thee in the "Holy Vale" (bi'l wād al-muqaddas) ... And He hath enabled Thee to see something of His mighty signs by virtue of the Light (al-nūr) [which emanateth] around the [Sinaitic] Fire (al-nār). ¹⁰⁶ [102]

The Sinaitic theology of the Qayyūm al-asmā' not only has typological and realized eschatological aspects to it, but it embraces a futurist eschatology as well. In the following paragraph, from surah twenty-eight, the Bāb indicates that the Sinai theophany (tajallī) described in Qur'ān 7:143 will have a future realization:

O Solace of Mine Eyes [qurrat al-`ayn]! Stretch not Thy hands wide open in the Cause, inasmuch as the people would find themselves in a state of stupor by reason of the Mystery; and I swear by the true, Almighty God that there is yet for Thee another turn after this Dispensation (al-dawra).

And when the appointed hour hath struck, do Thou, by the leave of God, the All Wise, reveal from the heights of the Most Lofty and Mystic Mount (al-ṭūr al-akbar) a faint, an infinitesimal glimmer of Thy impenetrable Mystery, that they who have recognised the

¹⁰⁵ QA 76:310.

¹⁰⁶ QA 77:314.

radiance of the Sinaitic Splendor (al-ṭūriyyūn fī'l sīnā') may faint away and die as they catch a lightning glimpse of the fierce and crimson Light (al-nūr) that envelops Thy Revelation. And God is, in very truth, Thine unfailing Protector. ¹⁰⁷

God is here pictured as exhorting the Bāb not to divulge the fullness of His Mystery in view of the ultimate realization of another cycle (al-dawra) of disclosure. It is implied that, at the eschatological consummation, God will reveal a mere glimmer of His ethereal and crimson Light (al-nār) from the supreme Sinai, causing the mysterious denizens of this sphere-- lit., "the Mountites in Sinai" (al-ṭūriyyūn fī'l sīnā')-- to swoon away before its sublimity. Bahā'u'llāh, as will be seen below, has interpreted these and other lines of the Qayyūm al-asmā' in terms of His own manifestation and claim to be the Bābī messiah figure "Him whom God shall make manifest" (man yuzhiru-hu Allāh), whose advent is so frequently dwelt upon in the Bāb's later writings.

In the light of the foregoing, it will be clear that in his earliest major work, the Qayyūm al-asmā', the Bāb pictured himself as hearing or voicing anew the Sinaitic declaration of [103] divinity. This in view of his conviction that he was in communion with and spoke with the voice of the Remembrance (dhikr) who, in the Sinaitic sphere of revelation, represented the Godhead. Like Moses, the Bāb spoke of himself as having been called in the Holy Vale (al-

¹⁰⁷ QA. 28, pp. 101 2., last paragraph trans. by Shoghi Effendi in SWB, p. 53.

wād al-muqaddas). On one level he and/or the Remembrance (dhikr) are, mystically speaking, the manifestations of the Sinaitic "Tree" (shajarat), "Mount" (ṭūr), "Fire" or "Flame" (nār), or "Light" (nūr), "Speaker" (kalīm), "Cherub" (karūb), and "Theophany" (tajallī). For the Bāb, Sinaitic events associated with the call of Moses and his request to see God had been mystically repeated in the light of his being commissioned to occupy the role of Gate (bāb). In line with early Shaykhī sources (see above), the Bāb exhibited a tendency to allegorize Moses/Sinai motifs in illustration of spiritual events connected with his person and mission. In the Qayyūm al-asmā' and other writings of the Bāb, it is often the case that Sinaitic events and motifs symbolize revelatory experiences outwardly comparable to those of Moses, but inwardly located in heavenly spheres and associated with the person of the Bāb. The Mount (ṭūr), for example, is not simply a peak in the Sinai peninsula but symbolizes the interior realm of the heart (fu'ād) where God's theophany (tajallī) might be experienced. The Sinaitic Tree from which the voice of God was heard is symbolic of such as are inspired with His word, and of the celestial pole from which divine revelation originates. In the Qayyūm al-asmā' (cited above), the Bāb, like Moses, is exhorted to doff his (two) sandals which symbolize the "[two] limits" (al-ḥaddayn, of this world and the other?) in view of his occupying the position of Gate (bāb) or being one concealed

(maṭwiyy^{an}, cf. Ṭuwā) in the Holy Vale (al wād al-muqaddas) which symbolizes that role.

The Bāb's Epistle Between the Two Shrines (Ṣaḥīfa bayn al-ḥaramayn) (early 1845) is basically an Arabic treatise written in reply to questions posed by the leading Shaykhī, Mīrzā Muhammad Ḥusayn, Muḥīṭ-i Kirmānī. ¹⁰⁸ Toward the beginning of this epistle its verses are referred to as having been sent [104] down from "the Sinaitic Tree" (shajarat al-sīnā'). ¹⁰⁹ Subsequently, the Bāb describes himself as a Leaf "sprung up from the Sinaitic Tree." ¹¹⁰

In the following lines it is indicated that one who desires to identify with the Bāb should be prepared for an inner experience of the Divine Theophany mentioned in Qur'ān 7:143:

And if thou desirest in the inmost reality of thine essence to enter the Way of this [divine] Decree then journey upon this Crimson Path and hearken unto the call of the Dove [the Bāb] in the breezes of this snow white Dawn which is as the call from the Tree (al-shajara) situated on Mount Sinai (al-ṭūr al-sīnā [namely]: "God, no God is there except Him." And thou shalt, furthermore, direct thyself unto the Glory of the [divine] Splendor (jalāl al-bahā') in the Snow

¹⁰⁸ I have consulted and translated from the ms. of the Ṣaḥīfa bayn al-ḥaramayn contained in the Browne collection (ms. F7[9]) of Cambridge University Library, and referred also to another unpublished ms. (photocopy in my possession). Page references indicate the Browne collection ms.

¹⁰⁹ Refer Ṣaḥīfa bayn al-ḥaramayn, p. 5.

¹¹⁰ See ibid 49 and cf. also pp.53,82.

White Land in a humble and submissive state like unto the crushing of the particle (dharra) on Mount Sinai [within thyself] through the Theophany (tajallī) of the Light of the Inmost Heart (nūr al fu'ād). ¹¹¹

Written for Sayyid Yaḥyā Darābī, the son of the well known Shī'ī writer Shaykh Ja'far Kashfī (d. 1850), the Bāb's Commentary on the Sura of the Abundance (Tafsīr Sūrat al-kawthar [Surah 108 of the Qur'ān], written 1845 6) contains several paragraphs of considerable interest. In its second introduction, the Bāb refers to his revealed verses as a proof from the Remnant of God (baqiyyat Allāh, the expected Imam) and, among other things, pronounces a woe against such as are oblivious of the fact that the "Sinaitic Tree" (shajarat al-ṭūr) had been planted or sprung up in his bosom.¹¹²

Commenting on the first letter "K" (kāf) to occur in this sura, the youthful Sayyid relates it to the "Word" (kalimat) and to a variety of Sinaitic motifs:

Now the letter kāf signifieth the Primordial Word (kalimat al-awwalā) before which the Greatest Depth ('amq al akbar) was held in check. It cried out in praise of its Creator in the seventh Citadel [105] of the Snow White Thicket in the Divine Realm (al-lahūt). It signifieth the Word (kalimat) which shone forth on Mount Sinai (tajallat `alā al-ṭūr

¹¹¹ Ibid., p.68 and see further pp.103, 106f., 115,121.

¹¹² Refer, Tafsīr Sūrat al-kawthar (Browne collection MS Or. F 10 [7], Cambridge University Library), f. 7b 8. Cf. also f.13, 14b.

al-sīnā') and cried out from the Crimson Tree (shajarat al-ḥamrā'), from the right side of the Mount (yamīn a-ṭūr) in the blessed Spot (al buq`at al-mubāraka) in the Land of Divine Power (ar al jabarāt). It is the Word (kalimat) which shone forth (tajallat) above the Ark of the Testimony (tābūt al-shahāda) in the Pillar of Fire (`amūd al-nār) upon Mount Horeb (jabal hūrīb) in the Land of the Kingdom (ar al malakāt). It signifieth the Word (kalima) which shone forth (tajallat) upon Mount Paran (jabal fārān) through the myriads of holy ones (ribwāt al-muqaddasīn) beyond the ken of the Cherubim in the Clouds of Light (ghamā'im al-nūr) shed upon `Alī standing in the human realm (al- nāsūt). ¹¹³

Here the divine Word (kalima) is associated with the Divine Theophany (tajallā) and declaration of divinity uttered in the traditional hierarchy of metaphysical spheres each of which has its "Sinaitic dimension." A similar theology informs the following lines of the Bāb's qabbalistic explanation of the letter "h" (hā') of the "he is" (huwa) of Qur'ān 108:3:

Then [the letter hā'] signifieth the Everlasting Ipseity (huwiyya al-Aḥmadāniyya) which beamed forth from the Primordial Ipseity (huwiyya al-ūlā) and gave utterance, unto and through its own Self, to the Primordial Word in the Self of the Tree (nafs al-shajarat) upon Mount Horeb (jabal hūrīb) in the Holy Vale (al-wad al-

¹¹³ Tafsīr Sūrat al kawthar, f.16(a). Text emended (one line is omitted in the Browne collection MS; see fn. 112 above) in the light of the text in Iran National Bahā'ī Archives (henceforth INBA), Xerox collection, Vol. 53, p. 207. Also using a variant reading in a ms.in the hand of Nabīl ibn Nabīl, p. 21, held at the Baha'ā World Center.

muqaddas), through a [Sinaitic] Tree (shajara) planted in the center of the Land of Divine Power (arḍ al jabarūt). ¹¹⁴

Also, along similar lines, is the following paragraph in which the letter "a" (alif) of the definite article of "the cut off" (al abtar) is expounded in terms of the Sinaitic theophany (tajallā) of the "Greatest Name" of God:

"Now the letter alif signifieth the Supreme Name (ism al a'lā) unto and through which God shone forth (tajallā). He made it the station [106] of His own Self (nafs) in [the realm of] the [divine] Accomplishment (al-adā'), and the Decree (al-qaḍā') and the Genesis (al-badā') . . . It signifieth a Name unto and through which God shone forth (tajallā) by means of His right hand. He made it the station of His own Self (nafs) on the level of the [divine] Purpose (al-irāda) in [the realm of] the Decree (al-qaḍā'), the Glory (al bahā'), the Splendor (al-sanā'), and the Praise (al-thanā'), to the end that it might cry out from and through His Self (nafs), from the Blessed Tree (al-shajarat al mubāraka) in the Holy Vale (al-wād al-muqaddas) at the right side of the Mount: "God, no God is there except Him...

Then [also the letter *alif* signifieth] the hidden, treasured, greatest, pure, purifying, and blessed Name of God unto and through which God shone forth (tajallā) by means of the lights of the Triune Names (asmā' al thulth). And He made its first station in the [sphere of] the [divine] Glory (al bahā'), its second station in the [sphere of] Praise (al-thanā'), its third station in Mount Sinai (al-ṭūr al-sīnā'), and the station of His own Self (nafs) in the [realm of] the [divine] Decree (al qaḍā') and that of Genesis (al-badā'). By virtue of it was

¹¹⁴ Ibid., fol. 29(a).

His Light (nūr) made manifest on Mount Paran (jabal fārān) through the myriads of holy ones (ribwāt al muqaddasīn) and upon Mount Horeb (jabal hūrīb) through the hosts of the angels of the [divine] Throne and of the heavens and the earth, as well as upon the Cuppola of Time (qubbat al-zamān) through the forner and latter systems, and upon the Mount (al-ṭūr) through the Blessed Tree (al-shajarat al-mubāraka) [as the words], "O Moses! God is my Lord and your Lord. No God is there except Him, the Lord of all the worlds. ¹¹⁵

Without going into details, the purport of these difficult lines appears to be that God made His supreme or greatest name (here Allāh, beginning with the letter alif?) the locus or equivalent of His own "Self" and the intermediary through which His theophany (tajallī) was realized in a descending hierarchy of spheres. These are partly informed by that section of the Shīṭī Prayer of the Signs quoted below and by Qur'ān 7:143. [107]

The *Commentary on the Sura of Abundance*, furthermore, contains several paragraphs in which the Bāb underlines the absolute transcendence and incomprehensibility of God and rules out any notion of a direct theophany (tajallī) of His exalted Essence. Qur'ān 7:143 is quoted and explained in terms

¹¹⁵ Ibid., f.30 (a b). The expression "Triune Names" (asmā' al-thulth) here may be an allusion to the three letters which form the word Allāh (God) or which are to be found in the formula "There is no God but God" (lā ilāha ilā Allāh), namely, alif, lām, and hā'. In at least one of the Bāb's writings, the Greatest Name is identified with the glorious Theophany on Mount Sinai (INBA, ms 6003c, pp. 173 188).

of the manifestation of the proto Shiite Cherub spoken about by Imam Ja`far Ṣādiq (see above). Only seventy select Israelites were capable of sustaining the theophany of this Cherub who represented the "Self" (nafs) of God. (cf. Exodus 24:9ff.) Direct vision of God is not possible. ¹¹⁶

While the tradition about the Cherub being the agent of the Divine Theophany is occasionally quoted and commented upon literally in early (pre 1848) Bābī scripture, ¹¹⁷

The Bāb ultimately came to identify himself (as the expected Imam or Qā'im, or as one claiming independent prophethood and subordinate divinity) with the "Lord" (rabb) who addressed Moses from the Burning Bush. In one of his epistles to Muhammad Shāh (d. 1848) we read:

When Moses... asked God that which he asked [to see Him], God revealed His glory (tajallā) upon the Mountain (al-jabal) through the Light of one belonging to the party of `Alī [the Cherub] just as hath been made clear in that famous tradition [of Imam Ja`far] ... By God! This was my Light (nūrī for the numerical value of my name [ʿAlī Muhammad; i.e., 202] corresponds to that of the name of the "Lord" (rabb, also 202). Thus God, praised be He, said, "And when

¹¹⁶ See *ibid.*, f.9(b)ff..

¹¹⁷ See for example, *Tafsīr sūrat al-baqara* on Qurʾān 2:55 and 2:108; *Tafsīr al-hā'* [I] in INBA, Xerox collection Vol. 14, p. 245 ; "Letter to a student" in *ibid.*, xerox coll., Vol. 14 (item 13), pp. 395ff.

He revealed His glory (tajallī) before the Mountain... "(Qur'ān 7:143b) ¹¹⁸

According to Qur'ān 7:143, Moses asked to see "his Lord" (rabbuhu). It was "his Lord" who "revealed His glory" (tajallā). Since the abjad numerical value of rabb (Lord) and the name `Alī Muḥammad are both 202, the Bāb identified himself as the source of the theophany (tajallī) before the Sinaitic mountain. The theophanic Light (nūr) of the proto-Shiite Cherub was ultimately the Light of the Bāb. [108]

Finally, but by no means exhaustively, in connection with the rich legacy of Sinaitic materials in the writings of the Bāb, it may be noted that in the Persian Seven Proofs (Dalā'il-i sab`ah, c. 1849-50) allusion is made to the Bāb's having fulfilled that line of the Sermon of the Gulf (Khuṭba al-ṭutunjiyya) in which the eschatological manifestation of the Sinaitic Speaker (mukallim) is predicted:

And among the utterances which conduce to tranquillity of heart [as a proof of the Bāb's mission] is the pronouncement of the Commander of the Faithful [Imām `Alī] recorded in the Sermon of the Gulf at the point where he saith: "Anticipate ye the revelation of

¹¹⁸ Text translated from *ibid.*, Xerox coll., Vol. 64 (pp. 103/5126), p. 109 110. Cf. Taherzadeh, SWB. pp. 11, 17 for a partial translation of this "Epistle of the Bāb to Muhammad Shāh." Cf. Qur'ān 29:69 and Arabic Bayān 2.1., where the Bāb is addressed by God (so it seems) as "O letter of al-rā' and al-bā' (rabb, Lord?)."

He Who conversed with Moses from the Tree upon the Mount, for He shall assuredly be outwardly unveiled and publicly celebrated." It is evident [from the pronouncement in the "Sermon of the Gulf"] that naught hath nor shall be manifested in Him but the mention of "I, verily, am God, no God is there except Me" ¹¹⁹

In view of his adaptation of the Sinaitic declaration of divinity such that it included the words "... no God is there except Me," the Bāb reckoned that the prophecy attributed to Imām `Alī had found fulfillment. In his Qayyūm al-asmā' and innumerable other writings of his last years, the Bāb frequently and in various contexts uttered the words, "I, verily, am God, no God is there except Me" (or the like). ¹²⁰ It was his conviction that the eschatological "Day of God" had come to realization and that he was a manifestation of Divinity.

As, furthermore, "Divinity" and "Lordship" were conferred by the Bāb on certain of his major disciples, they too made exalted claims. ¹²¹ The Bābī cycle came to be seen as the cycle of the manifestation of Divinity in the person of the Bāb and the leading Bābīs. The eschatological "encounter with God" (liqā' Allāh) mentioned in the Qur'ān found fulfillment through the Bāb

¹¹⁹ Dalā'il-i Sab'a (Persian), n.p. [Tehran] n.d [Azalī ed.], p. 46.

¹²⁰ Certain of the Bāb's writings contain lengthy invocations in which their author frequently lays claim to divinity.

¹²¹ For some details reference should be made to Bahā'u'llāh's Lawḥ-i sarrāj (printed in Ishrāq Khāvarī, Mā'ida-yi āsmānī 7: 4-118) and to MacEoin, "Hierarchy, Authority and Eschatology," pp. 109-113.

and the "pleroma of Divinity" manifested by his exalted disciples on the "Day of God." It is in this context, and in [109] view of the Bāb's assertion that the Bābī messiah, "Him whom God shall make manifest" (man yuzhiru-hu Allāh), shall utter the words "I, verily, am God, no God is there except Me" ¹²² that certain of Bahā'u'llāh's exalted claims are to be understood. Both the Bāb and Bahā'u'llāh claimed divinity by uttering adapted versions of the Sinaitic declaration of divinity, though they did not thereby claim identity with the absolute Godhead. They saw themselves as pure mirrors reflecting the divinity of the transcendent and unknowable Lord and as manifestations of the eschatological advent of Divinity. ¹²³

WRITINGS OF BAHĀ'U'LLĀH [pp.109-160]

During the forty year period 1852-1892, Bahā'u'llāh wrote or dictated in excess of fifteen thousand Persian and Arabic "Tablets" (alwāḥ), some of them titled "revelations" of considerable length. Selected passages within this massive corpus of as yet little studied and largely unpublished Bahā'ī scripture will be discussed in loose chronological order.

Of the major writings of Bahā'u'llāh, only one nineteen line Persian poem, The Sprinkling of the Divine Cloud (Rash-i `amā), dates from prior to its

¹²² Persian Bayān VIII. 1. See SWB, pp. 97 8, and below p. 151.QA 85:354.

¹²³ See further below, pp. 149-150.

author's exile to Iraq. This exquisite piece, composed in a dungeon in Tehran in late 1852, contains Sinaitic imagery in its sixteenth couplet. Bahā'u'llāh bids his fellow Bābās observe his exalted status and power of revelation in the following terms:

Observe the Fire of Moses (ātish-i mūsā)!
Behold the Snow-White Brightness (bayḍa[t]-i bayḍā)! See thou
that the Sinaitic Bosom (sāna-yi sīnā') streameth forth from the
Radiant Palm (kaff-i sanā). ¹²⁴

It is indicated that within his mystic being Bahā'u'llāh manifested the Sinaitic Fire and Moses' white hand. (See Exodus 4:6-7 and Qur'ān 7:105, etc.) The radiance that shone forth from the "Sinai" of Moses' "bosom" (or interior self) shines [110] forth from the "Palm" or "Hand" of the person of Bahā'u'llāh. Such claims are made in many of the poetical and other writings of Bahā'u'llāh, some of which will be quoted below. ¹²⁵

The `Iraq Period (1853-1863).

The Tablet of All Food (Lawḥ-i kull a-a'ẓam) is basically a mystical commentary on Qur'ān 3:93, written just prior to Bahā'u'llāh's withdrawal to Iraqi Kurdistan (late 1853 or early 1854) and primarily addressed to Hājī

¹²⁴ Rashḥ-i `amā', line 16. Text in Ishrāq-Khāvarī Mā'ida-yi āsmānī (Henceforth MA), Vol. 4. (pp. 184-186), p.186.

¹²⁵ For further details and a full provisional translation of the Rashḥ-i `amā', see S. Lambden, "An Early Poem of Mīrzā Ḥusayn `Alī Bahā'u'llāh."

Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn Narāqī (d. c. 1881), a Bābī. ¹²⁶ Though Sinaitic motifs are present at several points in this Arabic epistle the following paragraph is of particular interest: ¹²⁷

Since, at this moment, the fire of love surgeth in the heart of al-bahā' (Bahā'u'llāh), the Dove of Servitude singeth in the Heaven of the Divine Cloud, the Bird (lit., Hoopoe; hudhud of Light warbleth in the midst of the firmaments, the Sinaitic Tree (shajarat al-ṭūr) burneth of itself through the Fire (nār) of its own self above the Ark of the Testimony (tābūt al-shahāda) beyond (Mount) Qāf [in] the Land of Realization (ar al-imdā'), and the Ant of Servitude (nimlat al-`ubūdiyya) hideth in the Vale of the Divine Oneness (wādī al-aḥadiyya) in this "Night" with mystic fidelity, I desire to [further] expound that verse [Qur'ān 3:93]. ¹²⁸

Here Bahā'u'llāh relates his God-given power to expound the Qur'ān to his ability to transcend earthly limitations and identify with the Sinaitic sphere of his celestial Self. The "Sinaitic Tree" of his spiritual Self is located beyond the mythic Mount Qāf and, like the Burning Bush which was not consumed, generates its own spiritual "Fire" in the "Land of Realization." As the "Ant of Servitude" faithful to the primordial covenant, Bahā'u'llāh takes mystic refuge

¹²⁶ For further details and a full provisional translation of the "Tablet of All Food," see S. Lambden, "The Tablet of All Food."

¹²⁷ See my provisional translation of the "Tablet of All Food" in the article mentioned in fn 126, pp. 30, 32, 33.

¹²⁸ Text in MA 4:274.

during the dark "night" of the period following the Bāb's martyrdom in the Sinaitic "Vale of the Divine Oneness" where divine guidance is available just as it was for Moses. Such, without going into details, appears to be the sense of these somewhat abstruse lines. [111]

During the period of his residence in Sulaymaniyyih in the mid-1850s, Bahā'u'llāh was invited by resident Sufis to compose an ode in the meter and rhyme of Ibn al-Farād's "Ode Rhyming in the Letter Tā' " (Qaṣīda al-tā'iyya) or Poem of the Way (Naẓm al-sulūk). This led him to compose around 2,000 Arabic verses and to select 127 of them for circulation. These verses came to be known as the "Ode of the Dove" (al-Qaṣīda al-warqā'iyya). Well characterized as a "fusion of Sufi mysticism with Bābī theological and eschatological teachings," ¹²⁹ the Ode of the Dove lauds a divine feminine Being who is the locus of prophetological perfections and the beloved celestial "Self" of Bahā'u'llāh (so it seems). Composed in about 1855, the first part of the Ode of the Dove associates the divine Beloved with Moses/Sinai motifs and events. In line 5, her radiance (lum'a) is said to have been responsible for the manifestation of the Sinai of Eternity (ṭūr al-baqā'), and her brilliance (ghurra) the cause of the theophany (tajallī) of the Sinaitic Light of

¹²⁹ So J. R. Cole in his excellent essay "Bahā'u'llāh and the Naqshbandī Sufis." Bahā'u'llāh's "Ode of the Dove" is published in MA, Vol. 4, pp. 197-209 and in Athār-i qalam-i a`lā, Vol. 3, pp. 196-215 (+ Commentary).

Splendor (nār al-bahā'). ¹³⁰ Line 8 contains allusions to the quranic accounts of the call of Moses mystically understood:

The very Countenance of Guidance was guided by the Light of her Countenance;

It was through the Fire of her effulgent face that the Self of the Speaker (Moses, nafs al-kalām) was purified. ¹³¹

In his Persian commentary on select parts of the Ode of the Dove, Bahā'u'llāh himself expounds this line by setting forth an interesting allegorical account of Moses' call. His comment begins: ¹³²

When Moses purified and sanctified the "foot" (rijl) of His Heavenly Self (lit., Merciful Self; nafs-i raḥmāniyya) which had been deposited in the human temple (haykal-i bashariyya) from the [two] "sandals" (na`layn) of incidental imaginings and drew out the "Hand" of Divine Power from the "Fold" (or "Bosom"; jayb) of Grandeur within the "Cloak" (ridā') of Nobility, he arrived at the [112] holy, goodly, and blessed "Vale" (wādī) of the heart (qalb) which is the seat (lit., locale; buq`a) of the throne (ʿarsh) of the All-Enduring Theophany (tajallī-yi samadāniyya) and the scene of the Mighty and Lordly Proclamation (taḥallā). And when he reached that region of the Mount (arḍ-i ṭūr) which formed an expanse to the right side of the Luminous Spot (buq`at-i nūr), he inhaled and caught the

¹³⁰ Qaṣīda..., line 5. Text in Bahā'u'llāh, Athār-i qalam-i a`lā (henceforth AQA), Vol. 3:198.

¹³¹ Ibid., line 8. Text in AQA, Vol. 3, p. 197.

¹³² As indicated the full text of Bahā'u'llāh's commentary on select words and lines of the Ode of the Dove is printed in AQA, Vol. 3.

fragrance of the Spirit from the Eternal Dawning-Place and perceived the Lights of the Eternal Presence from all directions, though directionless. ¹³³

It is here presupposed that Moses' doffing of his "sandals" was his detaching himself from the "incidental imaginings" of his lower self, such that the "foot" of his Divine Self was purified. His snow-white "hand" symbolizes the Divine Power which he manifested from the interior "fold" or "bosom" of the "cloak" of his nobility. The Sinaitic "Vale" entered by Moses was the mystical sphere of his "heart" where he experienced the Divine Theophany (tajallī). From the region of the "Mount" within himself, he caught the fragrance of the Holy Spirit and perceived the "Lights" of divinity. Qur'ān 7:143 is interpreted as an allegory of Moses' interior identification with his Divine Self.

Bahā'u'llāh's mystical midrash continues:

From the warmth of the fragrance of divine love and the "flames" (or firebrands; qabasāt) of the faggots (jadhwāt) of the [Sinaitic] Fire of the Divine Oneness the "Light" of the Divine Identity ("He [God]-ness"; huwiyya) was ignited and blazed forth in the "Lamp" (miṣbāḥ) of His [Moses'] heart, after the veils of the "glass" of [limited] selfhood ("I-ness"; aniyya) had been removed. And after the effacement of the[se] opposing [internal] stations [within Moses] had been realized, he arrived at the "Vale" of Everlasting

¹³³ Text in AQA 3:197.

Awareness (wādī saḥw-yi abadiyya) through [drinking deep of] the Wine of Reunion with the Peerless Countenance and the Pure Beverage of [attainment to] the Eternal Presence. ¹³⁴ [113]

These lines are rooted in Qur'ān 20:9ff., 27:7ff., and 28:29ff. (cited above) and in the "Light Verse" (Qur'ān 24:35). Moses, perceiving a "Fire" (nār), desired to approach what he thought was a "burning brand" ([shihāb] qabas) or a "faggot" (jadhwa) in the hope of gaining warmth or guidance. For Bahā'u'llāh this episode symbolizes Moses' being warmed and set ablaze within himself by the divine love such that his divine identity (huwiyya) subsumed his personal identity (aniyya). With the effacement of this limited selfhood, Moses attained the Sinaitic "Vale" (wādī) which symbolizes a state of perpetual sobriety or mindfulness, inasmuch as he had drunk of the mystic "wine" of union with the divine.

Further developing the same allegory, Bahā'u'llāh continues:

On account of [His] enraptured yearning for the Attainment of God's Presence (liqā'), He [Moses] became aware of the City of Eternal Delight (madīna-yi dhawq-i baqā'); "He entered the City at a time when its inhabitants were heedless," [Qur'ān 28:15a], observed the "Fire" of the Pre-Existent God (nār allāh al-qadīm), and beamed forth through the "Light" of Almighty God (nār Allāh al-a`zam; cf. Qur'ān 24:35; 21:48) just as He [Moses] said to His household, "Tarry ye here; I observe a fire." [Qur'ān 20: 10a, 27:7a, 28:29a].

¹³⁴ Text in *ibid.*, p. 197-98.

And when He [Moses] discovered and beheld the Countenance of Guidance leading unto primordial subtleties in the "Tree" (shajara) which is neither of the East nor of the West [see Qur'ān 24:35a], the perishable, ephemeral Visage [within Moses] (wajh-i fāni-yi ghayriyya) was ennobled and glorified through attainment unto the permanent All-Enduring Visage (wajh-i bāqi-yi aḥmadiyya) For He could perceive the transcendent, wondrous Visage of Guidance in the blazing "Fire" that was hidden in the inmost hearts [of celestial souls like Moses] (af'ida-yi ghaybiyya). It is thus that He [Moses] said: "... or I shall find at the fire guidance." [Qur'ān 20:10b]. ¹³⁵

Spiritually desirous of attaining the divine Presence, Moses, we are informed, became aware of a celestial "City" ^[114] symbolic of the state of "permanent abiding" (in God) (baqā'). On entering this "City," or attaining the highest mystical goal, he perceived the Sinaitic "Fire" and radiated its "Light" (cf. Exodus 34:29ff.) as implied in Qur'ān 20:10a, spiritually interpreted. Having identified with the "Tree" mentioned in Qur'ān 24:35 (seen as the Sinaitic "Tree"), he discovered the "Visage of Guidance" as a result of which he transcended the mystical state of fanā' ("nullification" of human limitations) and assimilated that of baqā' ("permanent abiding" in God). The mysterious "Visage of Guidance" was mirrored in the Sinaitic Fire hidden in the "inmost hearts" of great souls like Moses, as alluded to in Qur'ān 20:10--reflected in line 8 of the Ode of the Dove--in terms of Moses' vision of the "Visage of

¹³⁵ Ibid., p.198.

Guidance" in the "Fire" of the Sinaitic "Tree" within the Israelite Prophet and his transition from the state of fanā' to that of baqā' which is the highest goal of classical Islamic mysticism. ¹³⁶

In the latter part of his commentary on line 8 of the Ode of the Dove Bahā'u'llāh quotes Qur'ān 36:80--"[the God] Who produced fire (nār an) for you out of the Green Tree (al-shajarat al-akhar)"--and underlines the depths of mystic wisdom hidden in this verse. Then, commenting on and developing his spiritual interpretation of Moses' Sinaitic experiences, he adds:

By all that hath been mentioned of the level of guidance and the [mystical] stations of the purification of the self [within] (nafs) on the level of Moses . . . naught is intended save the manifestation of these glorious theophanies (tajalliyāt) in the exterior world ('ālam-i zāhir). In reality that Holy One [Moses] hath ever been and will ever continue to be guided by the Guidance of God. Nay rather! It was from Him that the very Sun of Guidance beamed forth and the Moon of the Divine Bounty was made manifest. From the depths of His being the [Sinaitic] "Fire" (nār) of Divinity (huwiyya) was ignited and from the "Light" (nār) of His brow the all-enduring radiance (ḍiyā-yi aḥmadiyya) was illumined. The very utterance of [115] that Holy One when questioned by Pharoah about the one killed serveth to resolve any doubts [in this respect] for He [Moses] replied:

¹³⁶ Cf. A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 142ff. (+ Index). Worth consulting in terms of the connection between the theology of the "Face" or "Visage" (wajh) and the Sinaitic "Fire" (nār) is the Bāb's unpublished Commentary on the Tradition, "We are the Face of God" (Tafsīr nahnu wajh Allāh) contained in INBA MS 6006C., pp. 69-70 (Photocopy in my possession).

"Indeed, I performed [that deed; i.e., murder or manslaughter] and was reckoned among such as erred. And I fled from you because I feared you [Pharaoh]. But my Lord gave me wisdom and numbered me among the Messengers." [Qur'ān 26:20-21]. ¹³⁷

Bahā'u'llāh here makes it clear that Sufi-type interpretations of Moses' Sinaitic experiences, in which Moses becomes archetypal of transformations within his "self" or of the advanced mystic, do not really apply to Moses the great Prophet of God. The esoteric interpretations he has given to quranic texts are to be understood in terms of the manner in which theophanic disclosures (*tajalliyyāt*) are appropriated on a worldly level. As a Messenger of God, Moses was himself the locus of the Sinaitic Fire or Light. Outwardly he was a self-confessed murderer, but inwardly a Messenger of God favored with wisdom. ¹³⁸

Moses/Sinai motifs occur in several further lines of the Ode of the Dove. At line 42, allusion is made to Qur'ān 20:10 when the Sinaitic Fire of the Divine Beloved is depicted as being of far greater moment than the mere "firebrand" (*qabasa*) seen by Moses:

¹³⁷ Text in AQA 3:198.

¹³⁸ It should be noted that Moses' murder of the Egyptian overseer is given a variety of--sometimes esoteric--interpretations in Bahā'ī scripture.

Compared to the Light of my mystery, the mystery of existence is
but an ant;

Beside the Fire of my love, the blazing Fire is but a firebrand. ¹³⁹

In line 46, the female Beloved is pictured as the Divine Being whose
theophany before the mountain is described in Qur'ān 7:143:

At my glance the Moses of Eternity (mūsā al-baqā') swooned away;
And at my radiance the Mount (ṭūr) among mountains (al-jibāl)
crumbled to dust. ¹⁴⁰ [116]

Her theophany was so stunning that even the archetypal Moses in the most
elevated mystic state of "permanent abiding" in God fell into a swoon and the
very Sinaitic Mount was levelled. According to line 100, the supernal brilliance
of the Sinai Theophany was as naught compared to the glory of the Heavenly
Maiden. Bahā'u'llāh has his Divine Beloved declare:

The most-glorious splendor of the Mount (abhā bahā' al-ṭūr)
seemeth to Me mere dross;
The most-brilliant radiance of the Light (asnā ḍiyā' al-nūr)
appeareth to Me but a shadow. ¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Qaṣīda, line 42. Text in AQA, Vol. 3, p. 203. Cf. the interlinear comment of Bahā'u'llāh.

¹⁴⁰ Qaṣīda, line 46. Text in *ibid.*, p. 204. Cf. the interlinear comment of Bahā'u'llāh

¹⁴¹ Qaṣīda, line 100. Text in *ibid.*, p. 210. See further Qaṣīda, line 43(b), (Text AQA, Vol. 3, p. 204) and line 111 (Text in *ibid.*, p. 211) and the lengthy comment of Bahā'u'llāh on line 117 (Text in *ibid.*, p. 212).

Moses/Sinai motifs are associated with the Divine Beloved in a good many other poetical and mystical writings of Bahā'u'llāh dating from the period of his withdrawal in Kurdistan (1854-1856) or the following few years. In the fifteenth couplet of his Persian Ode "The Cupbearer of the Invisible Eternity" (c 1855), Bahā'u'llāh's celestial Beloved is pictured as one about whom the "Mount of Moses" (ṭūr-i mūsā) circumambulates.¹⁴² In another poem Moses is said to have hastened to meet her on Sinai: "Out of love for her cheek, Moses hasteneth in the Mystic Mount (ṭūr-i ma`anī)." ¹⁴³ She is said to have appeared from the Sinaitic sphere--"The Beloved came with the flame of [Mt.] Paran (shu`lay-i fārān) from the most elevated Lote-Tree (sidra-yi a`lā)"-- and to have been manifested through the Sinaitic "Fire", the archetypal "Moses," and the "Trumpet of 'I am Divine' " (the words of the Sinaitic declaration of divinity).¹⁴⁴ In a forty-one-couplet Persian poem, Bahā'u'llāh underlines the loftiness of her discourse in the following terms: "From her `Tree,' I heard that subtlety which Moses did not hear from the Lote-Tree on Sinai (sidra-yi sīnā')." ¹⁴⁵ So powerful is the fiery "water" of the stunning Divine Cupbearer

¹⁴² Refer, *Sāqā az ghayb-i baqā'*, line 10. Text in MA, Vol. 4, p. 210.

¹⁴³Text in MA, 4:176-78 (line 7[a] of the poem beginning, *Bā jānān jān hamā daryāft...*).

¹⁴⁴ Text in MA, 4:179-30. See lines 1 and 4. Cf., also line 17.

¹⁴⁵ Text in MA, 4: 188, 192. See line 27.

(sāqā) that but a "firebrand" (jadhwa) ignited from its flame in the Sinaitic Lote-Tree would suffice to throw one hundred Imranite Moseses into a state of bewildered astonishment. ¹⁴⁶ Celebrating the spiritually intoxicating and eschatological [117] consequences of the Divine Beloved's rhythmic chant "O He!" (yā hū), Bahā'u'llāh in yet another Persian poem associates the burning of the "firebrand" (jadhwa) of this invocation on Sinai with the "Moses of the soul" (mūsā-yi jān) falling into a swoon on the "Mystic Mount" (tūr-i ma'anī). ¹⁴⁷

In explaining the mysteries of the "Light Verse" (Qur'ān 24:35) in his Commentary on the Detached Letters (of the Qur'ān) Tafsīr ḥurūfāt al-muqatta`ah (c. 1857-8?), Bahā'u'llāh sets forth an interesting mystically oriented account of the call of Moses which begins: ¹⁴⁸

When Moses had completed the appointed term in the Midian of Origination (madyan al-inshā'), He returned to His people and entered the environs of Sinai in the Holy Vale (wādī al-quds) at the right side of the spot of Paradise (buq`at al-firdaws) nigh unto the Shore of Eternity (shāṭī al-baqā'), whereupon He heard the [divine] call from the Supreme Realm, from the retreat of the Divine Ipseity (shaṭr al-huwiyya):

¹⁴⁶ See the poem beginning Sāqā bidih ābā... in MA, 4:192-4, line 4. Cf. also line 11.

¹⁴⁷ See the poem beginning, Mastand bulbulān zi naghmay-i yā hāy-i ā in MA, Vol. 4, pp. 194-6, lines 5-6.

¹⁴⁸ The text of Bahā'u'llāh's Commentary on the Detached Letters is printed in MA, Vol. 4, pp. 49-80. Cf., the more reliable text in INBA. Xerox coll., Vol. 36 (also consulted).

"O Moses! Behold! What dost thou see? I, verily, am God your Lord and the Lord of-Thy fathers Ishmael, Isaac, and Jacob."

Moses then veiled his face out of fear of God, the Mighty, the Powerful, the Self-Subsisting. ¹⁴⁹

This paragraph is rooted in the quranic accounts of the call of Moses, and in Qur'ān 7:143. Moses' appointed term in Midian symbolizes a period of mystic initiation or "origination." The Holy Vale is located to the "right side" of Paradise and the form of the declaration of divinity is indebted to Qur'ān 7:143 and 2:133 (where mention is made of "God of thy fathers Abraham, Ishmael, and Isaac....").

After mentioning Moses' veiling his face, Bahā'u'llāh's account continues as follows:

Again was He [Moses] summoned before the Shore of the Ocean of [the Divine] Grandeur in the Crimson Dome (qubbat al-amrā):
"Lift up, O Moses, your head!"

[118] And when He lifted it up, He saw a Light (nūr) blazing and radiant from the Furthest Tree (shajarat al-quṣwā) in the Green Vale (wādī al-khuḍrā'). Thus was He guided unto the Most Great Guidance through the Fire (nār) kindled from the Lote-Tree of Eternity (sidrat al-baqā'). He then doffed the [two] sandals of base passion (na`layn al-hawā') and detached Himself from the latter stage (the hereafter) and [from] this first stage (this world).

All this is that which God had decreed for Him [Moses], even as thou hast been informed in the [scriptural] Tablets. Thus

¹⁴⁹ Text in MA, 4: 53-4.

was His Cause raised up and His remembrance exalted. He [Moses] was among those who, through the Lights of the [Sinaitic] Fire, turned their faces towards the paths of justice. Such is that which was ordained for Moses, son of `Imrān [Amram], in the Dome of Time (qubbat al-zamān), if thou are of such as are informed. Unto this beareth witness the Paran of Love (fārān al-ḥubb) upon the Paran of Fire (fārān al-nār) in the Horeb of Holiness (hūrīb al-quds) and the Sinai of Nearness (sīnā' al-qurb), if thou shouldst scan the Scrolls of Justice with the eye of God. ¹⁵⁰

Going beyond the quranic accounts, Bahā'u'llāh here has God summon Moses from the celestial sphere and command him to lift up his veiled face. On so doing, Moses visions the Light emanating from the Sinaitic Tree depicted as the "Furthermost Tree" in a green or verdant "Vale." He was thus guided to the Sinaitic Fire kindled in the "Lote-Tree of Eternity" and doffed both his sandals on approaching it (an act symbolic of his detachment from all limitations). Such events were foreordained and are described in Scripture. The very Sinaitic realities witness their veracity.

Having outlined in esoteric tone the episode of the call of Moses, Bahā'u'llāh goes on to relate these Sinaitic events to the person and call of the Prophet Muhammad and to the Light Verse (Qur'ān 24:35). He states that the countenance of the Arabian Prophet beamed with the "Light of the Divine Oneness" (nār al-aḥadiyya). The "Fire of the Divine Ipseity" (nār al-huwiyya)

¹⁵⁰ Text in *ibid.*, p. 54.

was kindled in his "Self" (nafs) and the "Fire [119] of the Lote-Tree" (nār al-sidrat) blazed forth in his breast. In a state of spiritual rapture he, like Moses, heard the call from the "Tree of humanity" (shajarat al-insān) in his being in the form: "He, verily, is Thou Who art God, the King, the Protector, the Mighty, the Holy." As the mouthpiece of God, Muhammad experienced and proclaimed his divinity within the Sinai of his celestial "Self."

This, Bahā'u'llāh says, Muhammad wanted to communicate to the Jews. He desired that his contemporaries understand that Sinaitic events had again come to pass within his "Self" and that he occupied an exalted station. If the Jews could realize that the "mysteries of the Divine Oneness (asrār al-aḥadiyya) now shone forth in the "Tree of his Self" (shajarat nafsihi), they would be able to detach themselves from "the Fire (al-nār) which was revealed in glory (tajallat) in the Sinai of the Decree (sinā' al-ḥukm) unto the Moses of the Cause (mūsā al-amr)" and convert from Judaism to Islam. It was to this end that God inspired Muhammad with the Light Verse, which was "a proof unto those who were given the Torah and a guidance unto those who were guided by the Lights of Guidance in the Muhammadan Lote-Tree" (sidrat al-Muhammadiyah, the Prophet Muhammad). ¹⁵¹

¹⁵¹ See *ibid.*, pp. 54-5.

In the Commentary on the Detached Letters, Bahā'u'llāh further teaches that God commanded Moses to inform his followers about the advent of the Prophet Muhammad, to announce unto the Jews "this [Islamic] Sinai in this Aḥmadian [Sinaitic] locale (al-buq`a al-Aḥmadiyya, the Prophet Muhammad)." This is indicated in the following quranic verse: "We, verily, sent Moses with our signs [and the command to]: `Bring the people from the darkness unto the light (an-nār) and announce unto them the Days of God.'" (Qur'ān 14:5) Bahā'u'llāh also explains that while Moses was guide by the "Fire of the [Sinaitic] Tree in the region of the right side of the Vale" and was among those who entered the "blessed locale" (al-buq`a al-mubāraka), the Prophet Muhammad was [120] capable of transforming fire (nār) into light (nār) and guiding whomsoever he desired unto this light. Key terms in the Light Verse are symbolic of the being of the Arabian Prophet:

Then know that the position (or station; maqām) of the "Niche" in this verse is His Self (nafs), the "Lamp" His resplendent heart and the "Glass" His sanctified [human] temple (haykal) in which the luminary of the Divine Oneness beams forth. The "light" (al-nār) shines forth and radiates from Him [Muhammad] and from Him derives the splendor of all who are in the heavens and upon earth.¹⁵²

¹⁵² Text in *ibid.*, p. 55.

For Bahā'u'llāh, Moses' Sinaitic experience of God took place again in the being of the Prophet Muhammad whose exalted status is indicated in the Light Verse. The Sinaitic "Tree" and "Fire" correspond to the "Blessed Tree" or Olive and to the "Light"--viewed as the Muhammadan Light (nār al-Muhammadiyya) - of Qur'ān 24:35. ¹⁵³

Originally entitled the "Scroll of Fāṭimah" (Ṣaḥīfa-yi Fāṭimiyya) and consisting of a collection of Persian and Arabic utterances couched in the form of the "Divine Saying" (ḥadīth qudsī), a few of Bahā'u'llāh's subsequently titled "Hidden Words" (Kalimāt-i maknānih, c. 1857-8) utilize Moses/Sinai imagery. ¹⁵⁴ In the sixtieth Arabic Hidden Word, Bahā'u'llāh exhorts the "Son of Man" (ibn al-insān, human beings collectively) to mystically repeat the miracle of Moses' snow-white hand. By putting his "hand" into the divine "bosom" (jayb), man may experience the radiant theophany of God from his own bosom:

O Son of Man!

¹⁵³ See further Commentary on the Detached Letters, text in *ibid.*, p. 55ff.

¹⁵⁴ For the text of The Hidden Words, see *Majmā'ay-i alwā-i mubāraka* (Henceforth, MAM), p.17ff. (Arabic), 373ff. (Persian). Shoghi Effendi's English translation of the text has been published many times. In the notes to follow, I refer to Bahā'u'llāh, *The Hidden Words* (London: Bahā'ī Publishing Trust, 1932[1975]).

Put thy hand into My bosom, that I may arise above thee, radiant and resplendent. ¹⁵⁵

The sixty-third Arabic Hidden Word reads as follows: [121]

O Son of Man!

The light (al-nār) hath shone on thee from the horizon of the sacred Mount (al-ṭūr) and the spirit of enlightenment (rūḥ al-sanā') hath breathed in the Sinai of thy heart. Wherefore free thyself from the veils of idle fancies and enter into My court, that thou mayest be fit for everlasting life (al-baqā') and worthy to meet Me (al-liqā'). Thus may death not come upon thee, neither weariness nor trouble. ¹⁵⁶

The implication is that human beings should, having experienced the light of the Divine Theophany in the Sinaitic sphere of their hearts (presumably in mystic preeternity), purify themselves so as to be fit for immortal life and the eschatological encounter with God.

Islamic theologians and mystics have, on the basis of certain Qur'ānic texts (for example, Qur'ān 7:172ff. and 20:115), written about God's taking of a covenant with human souls in primordial times or in mystic preeternity, a covenant which mankind came to forget or ignore. In his seventy-first Persian

¹⁵⁵ Text in MAM, p. 29; trans., Bahā'u'llāh, *The Hidden Words*, p. 18. In the quranic account (20:18-25; 28:33-36) of the episode of the epiphany on Mount Sinai, there is mention of two signs that were given to Moses so that he could demonstrate his power to Pharaoh: his rod that turned into a serpent, and his hand which turned white when he drew it out of his jayb (bosom, sleeve, cloak).

¹⁵⁶ Text in *ibid.*, p. 30, trans., Bahā'u'llāh, *The Hidden Words*, P. 19.

Hidden Word, Bahā'u'llāh alludes to this ancient covenant and refers to the region where it was made as "Mount Paran" (jabal fārān, mystically, Mt. Sinai) in the "hallowed precincts of Zaman" or the "blessed [Sinaitic] locale of Time" (buq`a-yi mubāraka-yi zamān):

O My Friends!

Call ye to mind that covenant (`ahd) ye have entered into with Me upon Mount Paran, situate within the hallowed precincts of Zamān. I have taken to witness the concourse on high and the dwellers of the city of eternity yet now none do I find faithful unto the covenant. Of a certainty pride and rebellion have effaced it from the hearts, in such wise that no trace thereof remaineth. Yet, knowing this I waited and disclosed it not. ¹⁵⁷

Though this Hidden Word cannot be discussed in detail, it should be noted that `Abdu'l-Bahā has commented on it in ^[122] several of his epistles. In one Arabic letter, he identifies the covenant made on Mt. Paran with that made with all human souls outside of time (cf. zamān). The great Messengers of God make a covenant about the Prophet who will succeed them: "Consider Moses, He who conversed with God. Verily, upon Mount Sinai, Moses entered into a Covenant regarding the Messiah [Jesus] with all those souls who would live in the day of the Messiah. And those souls, although they appeared many centuries after Moses, were nevertheless--so far as the

¹⁵⁷ Text in *ibid.*, p. 394; trans., Bahā'u'llāh, *The Hidden Words*, pp. 46-7.

Covenant, which is outside time, was concerned--present there with Moses. The Jews, however, were heedless of this and remembered it not, and thus they suffered a great and clear loss." ¹⁵⁸ In a Persian letter, this same covenant is identified as that made by the "Supreme Pen" (Bahā'u'llāh) in the primordial Sinaitic realm; "the Blessed Spot (buq`at-i mubāraka), the Paran of the love of God (fārān-i muḥabbat Allāh), the Dome of Time (qubbat-i zamān)." ¹⁵⁹ What `Abdu'l-Bahā apparently had in mind was his father's covenant appointing him as the head of the Bahā'ī community, for in another Persian letter he writes: "This Covenant and Testament is that which the Blessed Beauty [Bahā'u'llāh] made with the Supreme Pen in the Holy Land in the shade of the Tree of Life and which became known after his ascension [in 1892]." ¹⁶⁰ Mount Paran in the Sinaitic sphere of the "Dome of Time" is interpreted as the "Holy Land"; the Mount Carmel/'Akkā-Haifa area (mystically, the "New Sinai"), where Bahā'u'llāh wrote his Book of My Covenant (Kitāb al-ahdī) appointing `Abdu'l-Bahā his successor. ¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ Translation cited from 'Abdu'l-Bahā, Selections, p. 207.

¹⁵⁹ Persian text cited in Payām-i bahā'ī, No. 25, p. 4

¹⁶⁰ Text in MA, Vol. 2, p. 56

¹⁶¹ For some further details about the interpretation of this Hidden Word, see Payām-i bahā'ī, No. 25, p. 4. Cf. MA, 9:133.

Bahā'u'llāh's well-known Book of Certitude (Kitāb-i āqān, c. 1861-2) contains an interesting paragraph about the mission and rejection of Moses. It begins:

And when His [Abraham's] day was ended, there came the turn of Moses. Armed with the rod of celestial dominion (‘aṣa-yi amr), adorned with the white-hand of divine knowledge (bayā-yi ma‘rifat [123] and proceeding from the Paran of the love of God (fārān-i muḥabbat-i ilāhiyya), and wielding the serpent of power and everlasting majesty (thu`bān-i qudrat wa shawkat-i aḥmadāniyya), He shone forth from the Sinai of light (sīnā'-yi nūr) upon the world.

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Here motifs associated with Moses' Sinaitic encounter with God and miraculous powers are, in Sufi fashion and by means of genitive expressions, made vehicles for the expression of the mystic greatness of the Israelite Prophet.

In illustration of God's manner of testing his creatures, Bahā'u'llāh also narrates the story of Moses' murder of an Egyptian and of his flight to Midian where he entered the service of Shu`ayb, (the biblical Jethro in many Islamic sources):

While returning [from Egypt to Midian], Moses entered the holy vale (wādī-yi mubāraka), situate in the wilderness of Sinai, and there beheld the vision of the King of Glory (sulṭān-i aḥadiyya) from the

¹⁶² Text in Kitāb-i iqān, pp. 8-9; trans., Bahā'u'llāh, The Kitāb-i iqān, The Book of Certitude, p. 8

"Tree that belongeth neither to the East nor to the West." [Qur'ān 24:35] There he heard the soul-stirring and spiritual call from the lordly and enkindled Fire, bidding him to shed upon Pharaohic souls the light of divine guidance. ¹⁶³

The Burning Bush is here the "Tree" neither of the East nor the West of the Light Verse, from which Moses beheld the "Sovereign of the Divine Oneness" or (loosely) "King o Glory." Read in context, it will be evident that Bahā'u'llāh' account spills over into allegory and goes beyond the quranic texts. ¹⁶⁴

Like the Book of Certitude, Bahā'u'llāh's Arabic epistle to the Bābī Sayyid Ja`far Yazdī, the Sura of the Counsel (Sūrat al-nush, c. 1861-2) opens with an account of the rejection of various past messengers of God. The account of Moses' ca]l reads as follows: ¹⁶⁵

Then . . . We sent Moses . . . We caused Him to attain unto the Precinct of Holiness (shāi al-quds) in the seat of Paradise (buq`at [124] al-firdaws) and enabled Him to enter the Sinai of the Cause (sīnā' al-amr) and the Horeb of the Spirit (hūrīb al-rūḥ). Then We cried out unto Him from beyond the 70,000 veils; from the Lote-Tree of Eternity (sidrat al-baqā') by the majestic ocean of the fathomless deep: "O Moses! I, verily, am God, Thy Lord and the Lord of Thy fathers, Ishmael, Isaac and Jacob." This is My Beauty

¹⁶³ Text in *ibid.*, p. 42; trans., *ibid.*, p. 35 (adapted).

¹⁶⁴ For full details, see text pp. 41-3; trans., pp. 35-6.

¹⁶⁵ A good but not very legible text of Bahā'u'llāh's Sura of the Counsel is contained in INBA. Xerox coll., Vol. 36, pp. 242-68 and an incomplete and unreliable text in the same series Vol. 87, pp. 127. I have consulted both texts, but shall refer to the former only in the notes to follow.

(jamālā) which We have unveiled before Thee. So behold! What dost Thou see?" Thus have We bestowed Our Bounty upon Thee and completed Our favor unto Thee. Thou shouldst become inflamed with this [Sinaitic] Fire (al-nār) that perchance, in the Days of God, the people might be set ablaze with the fire of love (nār al-ḥuḥb). ¹⁶⁶

Here, as in the Commentary on the Detached Letters (see above), Moses' call is transcendentalized. It is understood to have been Moses' visionary experience of the God of the patriarchs. Moses heard God's call from beyond the seventy thousand veils which, according to a well-known Islamic tradition, surround Him. He had a vision of the unveiled Beauty (jamāl) of God (cf. Qur'ān 7:143) and was commissioned to communicate to his contemporaries something of the radiance of the Sinaitic Fire (al-nār) and to infuse into their hearts the fire of love, to the end that they might be receptive to truth in eschatological times when God, the Sinaitic Speaker, will be manifested. As in other writings of Bahā'u'llāh, the Sinaitic Fire is reckoned to have been the fire of the love of God experienced by Moses. Moses' mission is to communicate this "fire" of love for the Sinaitic Divinity to his contemporaries.

¹⁶⁶ Text in INBMC (= Xerox coll.) Vol. 36, pp. 247-8.

His vision was an esoteric experience of the eschatological Savior or the person of the Bāb. ¹⁶⁷

In the Sura of the Counsel and other writings, Bahā'u'llāh pictures the call to prophethood of various messengers of God in Sinaitic terms. Noah for example, is said to have come from the "Paran of Light" (fārān al-nār) only to have been rejected by his contemporaries. ¹⁶⁸ In the Sura of Patience (Sūrat al-Ṣabr, 1863) the call of the prophet Job is expressed in the following terms:

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... We gave him [Job] refuge in the shade of the Tree of Holiness (shajarat al-quds) in his inmost heart (fu'ād). We caused him to witness the [Sinaitic] Fire (al-nār) which was ignited and beamed forth in his inmost reality and We manifested the theophanic glory (tajallaynā) before him, through and unto his own Self (nafs) and made him to cry out in the blessed region of the Throne (buq`a lit., spot or locale) of God (fī buq`at Allāh burika awlihā) [cf. Qur`ān 27:7ff.], "He, verily, is God, thy Lord and the Lord of all things. Wherefore is He One, Powerful, Self-Subsisting."

And when his [Job's] face was illumined by the Fire (al-nār) which blazed forth within him, We clothed him in the garment of

¹⁶⁷ Cf. text in *ibid.*, p. 248, where Bahā'u'llāh states: "Then We commanded him [Moses] that he should mention unto them [his contemporaries] My [God's] Days; the moment to come (min ba`da al-ān) [cf. Qur`ān 38:88] when veils shall be burned away through Our power and the Countenance of the Spirit (al-ṭal`at al-rūḥ) shall come in clouds of light [cf. Qur`ān 2:210] with the name of `Alī [`Ali Muhammad, the Bāb]; as [thou knowest] if thou art of those that are informed." Here Moses' mission is to announce unto the peoples the eschatological advent of the Bāb.

¹⁶⁸ See text in *ibid.*, p. 244.

prophethood and commanded him that he direct the people unto the Shore of Bounty and Grace. ¹⁶⁹

Like that of Moses, Job's call was his interior experience of God. The suffering prophet experienced the Divine Theophany (cf. Qur'ān 7:143) and went forth with beaming countenance having been illumined by the Sinaitic Fire within himself.

Towards the end of his days in Baghdad, Bahā'u'llāh composed a considerable number of poetic, devotional, and rhythmic writings that all but spell out his claim to independent prophethood and leadership of the Bābā community. Certain of these writings are rich in Moses/Sinai motifs. In "Rejoice! Rejoice! Rejoice! O Glad Tidings" (Halih Halih Halih, Yā bishārat, late 1862 or early 1863?) for example, we read:

The Maid of Eternity came from the Exalted Paradise; . . .
 With Snow-White Hand, with Raven Locks, like the Dragon [rod
 in the form of a serpent] of Moses she came; . . .
 With Guiding Light from the Morn of Meeting [with God], with
 Mount Sinai she came; ...
 This Eternal Countenance came with Snow-White Hand from the
 Divine Command ... ¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ Text in Ishrāq Khāvarī, *Risāla ayyām-i tis`ah*, p. 282

¹⁷⁰ For the text and full provisional translation, see Lambden, "A Tablet of Bahā'u'llāh of the Late Baghdad Period."

Possibly composed around the same time are the following select lines from an unpublished poetic composition which may have been written by Bahā'u'llāh for his disciple Darvāsh Sidq-`Alī Qazvīnī (d. `Akkā c. 1880 ?): [126]

The Sinaitic Lote-Tree crieth out with the tongue of "I, verily, am God";

So, Blessed be thou who hast hearkened unto its melodies.

The Divine Fire blazeth forth from the Sinaitic Lote-Tree

And saith to the Moses of spirit, "I, verily, am God, thy God and the God of all the worlds";

So, Blessed be thou who hast, through the ear of Reality, hearkened unto its intimate discourse and hast, through the eye of the Fire, visioned such flames as are within it.

This is the Tree of Holiness which hath been planted in the Sinai of the Spirit and crieth out, "He, verily, is God, no God is there except Him";

So, Blessed be the one who hath hearkened unto its sweet songs, sought shelter beneath its shade, and derived sustenance from its fruits. ¹⁷¹

Like the Bāb, Bahā'u'llāh came to express his claim to Prophethood by representing himself as the Sinaitic "Tree," "Fire," and "Speaker." A good many writings of the late Baghdad and early Adrianople (Edirne) period are written in a rhyming Arabic prose and express a Sinaitic theology which

¹⁷¹Text (beginning Shams-i jamāl-i ilāhī.) in INBA, Xerox coll., Vol. 32: 31-4 (lines 4, 12 and 25).

echoes that of the Qayyūm al-asmā'. Of interest in this respect are the following extracts from an untitled epistle:

Say: O People! Hearken unto the Call of God from this Elevated and Blessed Tree (shajarat, Bahā'u'llāh) which hath sprung up from the Land of Holiness..." He, verily, is God, no God is there except Him." Thus was the [divine] Command made manifest from the Tree of Fire (Burning Bush, or shajarat al-nār) in the Luminous [Sinaitic] Seat (lit., Locale of Light; buq`at al-nūr) . . .

Say: He hath revealed His glory (tajallā) upon this Tablet (lawḥ) through the Beloved Lights of Holiness (anwār al-quds).

Say: When God revealed His glory upon the Mountain it was crushed to dust ... but God made this Tablet the scene of His Theophany (tajallā) at this moment. He revealed His glory (tajallī) upon it through the Ancient Beauty (jamāl al-qadām, Bahā'u'llāh) in accordance with that which was manifested from this Pen. ¹⁷² [127]

Among other points of interest it should be noted that Bahā'u'llāh here contrasts the inability of the Sinaitic mountain to withstand the Divine Theophany with his power of revelation as the vehicle of the Divine Theophany.

The Constantinople-Adrianople Period (1863-1868).

Several important writings of Bahā'u'llāh date from the four-month period that he spent in Constantinople (Istanbul) during the latter part of 1863.

¹⁷² Text in INBA, Xerox coll., Vol. 36, p. 24. Cf. also the epistles of Bahā'u'llāh in *ibid.*, pp. 87-8 (to the sister of Hajī Sayyid Muhammad) and p. 93 (to Sayyid Muhammad Kāzīm in al-Şād [Isfahān]).

The well-known Mathnawī of over three hundred couplets was composed during these months at the Ottoman capital. ¹⁷³ Like several of the poetic writings of the late Baghdad period, it is rich in Moses/Sinai imagery. In line 15, the Divine Beloved is pictured as the source of the Sinaitic light: from her "cheek" the "lights of the Mount" (anwār-i ṭūr) may be witnessed. ¹⁷⁴ The Divine Beloved alludes to the tremendous spiritual power of Bahā'u'llāh's not-yet-fully-disclosed revelation in the following terms at line 184ff.:

O Bahā'u'llāh! As Thy Fire was kindled, the harvest of the existence of the lovers was burned up. A single spark from such a Fire Thou didst cast upon the hearts. And lo! one-hundred thousand Lote-Trees Thou didst cause to spring up upon Sinai. Thus within every heart there appeared many a Lote-Tree.

O Moses! Thou shouldst hasten to this spot, rushing headlong so that Thou mayest behold with all Thy being the mystic fire of God and thus escape from the Copts. ¹⁷⁵

If Bahā'u'llāh disclosed the full measure of the Sinaitic "fire" of his revelation human hearts would be devastated. A mere spark of this "fire" is powerful enough to kindle onehundred-thousand Sinaitic Lote-Trees. It could result in Lote-Trees springing up in all human hearts such that seekers after

¹⁷³ The text of Bahā'u'llāh's Mathnawī is printed in AQA, Vol 3, pp. 160-192.

¹⁷⁴ See Mathnavī, line 15, in AQA, Vol. 3, p. 161. Cf., line 41 in *ibid.*, p. 164.

¹⁷⁵ Mathnavī, lines 184-187, in AQA, Vol. 3, p. 178.

truth--symbolized by Moses--could envision the Beloved One, and thus escape from the forces of the lower self or ungodliness--symbolized by the Copts (that is, Egyptians, enemies of Moses). [128]

Symbolizing the spiritual wayfarer, Moses is addressed by the Divine Beloved at line 197ff. of the Mathnawī. He is exhorted to come up to the "Mount of the Beloved" (ṭūr-i jān) bereft of "shoe" (na`l) and "cloak" (rāda'), or "naked" (ʿuryān) of the trappings of this world. This, so that he might be initiated into the "secrets of the [Sinaitic] Fire" (asrār-i nār), "the Fire which emergeth from the ringlet of the Friend" (zulf-i yār) and which consumes all (limited) aspects of the lover's being. It was the "Fire" of the "ringlet" of the Divine Beloved that was manifested on Mount Paran (fārān, symbolically, Sinai). ¹⁷⁶

As in the Ode of the Dove, several lines of Bahā'u'llāh's Mathnawī picture the Divine Beloved as manifesting the perfections of Moses and the glory of Sinai to a superlative degree. The "staff" or "rod" (ʿaṣā') of Moses, it is indicated, was derived from the tree of an orchard or fashioned from water and clay. That of the Heavenly Maiden, on the other hand, was a "sword" in the "Hand of the Absolute" which originated with the "Command of the Absolute." It is associated with the Sinaitic Fire kindled from her Flame and

¹⁷⁶ See Mathnavī, lines 197-201, in AQA, Vol. 3, pp. 179-80.

capable of burning away the veils of perfidy and falsehood. The Fire of Moses was manifest from the Lote-Tree of the Divine Beloved. It was her bosom which was the mystic Sinai and her Fire that was the Sinaitic "Light of the Friend" (nār-i dāst). She manifested the Snow-White Palm or Hand and enshrined the Mount in her heart. ¹⁷⁷

It has been noted that Bahā'u'llāh associates the "ringlets" (zulf) of the Divine Beloved with the flames of the Sinaitic Fire. Though most likely written considerably later than the Mathnavī, there are a number of his writings in which his own "ringlets," "locks," and "tresses" of hair are linked with Sinaitic imagery. In one epistle he speaks of his hair as "My Messenger," "My Phoenix," "My Cord," and "My Veil" while introducing paragraphs expressive of his position as intermediary between God and man. While Sufi poets celebrated [129] the tresses of the Divine Beloved, Bahā'u'llāh came to express his claims in terms of the symbolic senses of his flowing locks of hair:

My hair is My Phoenix. Therefore hath it set itself upon the blazing fire of My Face and receiveth sustenance from the garden of My Countenance. This is the station wherein the Son of `Imrān [Moses] removed from the feet of selfish desire the coverings of attachment

¹⁷⁷ For full details, see Mathnavī, lines 202-219, in AQA, Vol. 3, pp. 180-182. See also lines 109 (p. 171); 119 (p. 172); 232 (p. 183); 266 (p. 186); and 319 (p. 192).

to all else but Him and was illumined by the splendors of the Light of Holiness in the undying Fire kindled by God, the Potent, the Gracious, the Ever-Forgiving.

O denizens of the everlasting Realm! Let your ears be attentive to the stirrings of this restless and agitated hair, as it moveth upon the Sinai of Fire, within the precincts of Light, this celestial Seat of divine Revelation. Indeed, there is no God besides Me ...¹⁷⁸

Every single hair of Mine head calleth out that which the Burning Bush uttered on Sinai. ¹⁷⁹

As the Being who spoke from the Burning Bush or Sinaitic Fire Bahā'u'llāh pictures his hair as having uttered the declaration of divinity heard by Moses.

During the almost five years that Bahā'u'llāh resided at Edirne (Adrianople, between 1863 and 1868), he wrote or dictated a large number of revelations and gradually disclosed the full measure of his claims. Many of the epistles written during these years contain paragraphs expressive of a Sinaitic theology and expound such eschatologically oriented verses of the Qayyūm al-asmā' and other writings of the Bāb as have already been discussed.

¹⁷⁸ Translation from an inclusion accompanying a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to Mr. James Norquay, dated February 4, 1981. Extracts from this "Tablet" of Bahā'u'llāh were read at a Bahā'ī Convention held in the United States when some locks of Bahā'u'llāh's hair were presented as a gift from Shoghi Effendi (see [American] Bahā'ī News, No. 121 (Dec. 1938) p. 11 [including an older translation]).

¹⁷⁹ From Bahā'u'llāh's Tablet to Napoleon III (early `Akkā period), partly trans. by Shoghi Effendi, as cited in Bahā'u'llāh, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 53..

Qur'ān 7:143 and that paragraph of the twenty-eighth Sura of the Qayyūm al-asmā' related to this verse are interpreted in terms of Bahā'u'llāh's manifestation as the following select annotated translations must suffice to illustrate: [130]

a) From the Sura of the Servants (Sūrat al-`ibād, c. 1864):

... And when the set time of concealment was fulfilled, We manifested from behind the myriad veils of light an infinitesimal glimmer of a light of the lights of the Face of the Youth, and lo, the dwellers of the Realms above fell into a swoon ... ¹⁸⁰

Bahā'u'llāh here alludes to his advent in terms of the theophany of the light of his "Face" which caused celestial souls to swoon away. It is implied that the eschatologically oriented paragraph of Qayyūm al-asmā', Sura 28, found fulfillment during the Baghdad period of his ministry, when only a few Bābās were privy to his divine status.

b) From the Sura of the Robe (Sūrat al-qamīṣ, c. 1865):

O Delight of the Spirit! The polytheists have been in doubt about Thy Cause, despite the fact that We enabled Thee [Bahā'u'llāh] to cry out in the accents of the Remembrance (al-dhikr) before the

¹⁸⁰ Text in AQA, Vol. 4, p. 25; trans. Bahā'u'llāh, Gleanings, pp. 74-5 (No. XXXI; adapted).

Dawning-Place of Light in this Theophany (al-*zuhūr*) which hath beamed forth in this Mount (al-*tūr*) ...

O denizens of Existence! Harken unto the melodies of God in the midst of the Garden of Paradise from the Lote-Tree of Holiness (sidrat al-quds; Bahā'u'llāh) planted in the Land of Za'farān (Saffron) by the Hand of the All-Merciful.

Say: By God! A single melody therefrom caused the Theophany (tajallī) of the Light (al-nūr) to appear upon the Elevated Mount, on the Sinai of Holiness (sīnā al-quds) beyond the Abyss of Intimacy (lujjat al-uns) before Moses, the Speaker, situate in the Heights of Eternity nigh unto the Lote-Tree of the Extremity through this Blazing, Yellow [Sinaitic] Fire (al-nār). "I, verily, am God, thy Lord and the Lord of thy forefathers. Verily, He hath encompassed all the worlds." ¹⁸¹

It is here presupposed that Bahā'u'llāh speaks with the voice of the Remembrance whose advent is anticipated by the Bāb at various points in the Qayyūm al-asmā'. Like the Remembrance, he reveals verses from the "Mount" of his being in the new Bahā'ī theophany or dispensation (*zuhūr*). From [131] the "Land of Saffron (zafarān)"--by which the saffron colored Sinaitic Light or the town of Adrianople might be indicated ¹⁸²--he, as the "Lote Tree of Holiness," voices divine melodies. Through him the theophany of the Sinaitic Light was realized before Moses (cf. Qur'ān 7:143), for he

¹⁸¹ Text in AQA 4:34,36

¹⁸² See further below, p.130ff.

proclaimed his divinity from the all-encompassing blazing, yellow light of the Sinaitic Fire.

In the lines following those translated above, Bahā'u'llāh `dwells on the stunning results of his theophany before Moses. He speaks of his manifestation as that of the "Beauty of God" (jamāl Allāh) before which all souls in the dominion of God were thunderstruck or fell into a swoon. Alluding to the yellow color of the Sinaitic Light, he also pictures himself as the "Yellow Thread" (al-khayt al-ṣafrā') which he explains: "... hath beamed forth in this Heaven; divulged glory (tajallī) upon this Divine Cloud (al-`amā'), and been made manifest in crimson hue (bi-lawn al-ḥamrā') in the midst of this Eternity (al-baqā')." ¹⁸³ The implication is that the glory of Bahā'u'llāh's theophany was the radiating of the yellow Sinaitic light and the crimson Sinaitic fire mentioned in the Qayyūm al-asmā' and other writings of the Bāb.

Clear reference to Qur'ān 7:143 and to Qayyūm al-asmā' 28, is made in the following excerpt from the Sura of the Robe:

Say: By God! The Primal Beauty (jamāl al-ūlā) hath once again been made manifest and hath shed the glory (tajallī) of but an infinitesimal glimmer of a light (nār) of the lights (anwār) of His Face upon such as inhabit the heavens and the earth. And, lo, before this

¹⁸³ See for details, Bahā'u'llāh, Sura of the Robe, text in AQA, Vol. 4, pp. 36-37.

effulgent and transcendent Beauty (al-jamāl; Bahā'u'llāh), the inhabitants of the Mount (a-āriyyān) swooned away upon the Elevated Mount (al-ṭūr) after We had announced this Cause unto them in mighty, preserved Tablets. So recite thou all that which hath been revealed by Our Primal Beauty [the Bāb] in the Qayyūm al-asmā' [Sura 28] that thou mayest comprehend the secret of the Cause regarding this Mystery which was veiled behind many mysteries. ¹⁸⁴ [132]

As the return of the "Primal Beauty" manifest in the Bāb, Bahā'u'llāh claims to have divulged the glory (tajallā) of a mere glimmer of the Sinaitic lights of his Face. This stunning theophany, anticipated in the Qayyūm al-asmā', caused the mysterious Sinaites or "inhabitants of the Mount" (al-ṭūriyyūn) to swoon away.

At yet another point in the Sura of the Robe, we read:

... then purify the mirrors of thine hearts that the theophany of the lights of this Beauty (al-jamāl) may be realized ...

Say: By God! The inhabitants of the Mount (al-ṭūriyyūn) have fallen into a swoon on the Sinai of the Cause (sīnā al-amr). The denizens of the heavenly Kingdom (lit. realm of Unknowing; al-`amā'iyyūn) have taken flight before this Divine Lion [cf. Qur'ān 74:51]. Spiritual souls (al-rūḥiyyūn) expire on account of this Terror which hath unsettled all things; save those who have been seized by the Hand of the Divine Bounty on the part of One Mighty and Powerful. ¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ Text in AQA 4:50

¹⁸⁵ Text in *ibid.*, p. 56. Cf. also *ibid.*, pp. 46, 49, 52, 54.

The inhabitants of Sinai or the Mount, among other exalted beings, have been powerfully influenced by the manifestation of Bahā'u'llāh.

c) From the Sura of the Divine Bounty (Sūrat al-Faḍl, c. 1865?):

The manifestations of existence (maẓāhir al-wujūd) hath assuredly been humbled before My Sovereignty. All traces hath been obliterated before My Sign. All skins have been made to creep on account of My overpowering Majesty. Before the manifestation of the Lights of My beaming, sanctified, mighty and luminous Face, the inhabitants of the Mount (al-ṭūriyyūn) were annihilated upon the Elevated Sinai. ¹⁸⁶

Alluding to various eschatological prophecies contained in the Qur'ān and to Qayyūm al-asmā', Sura 28, Bahā'u'llāh here underlines the exaltedness of his theophany. [133]

d) From the Sura of the Wrathful One (Sūrat al-qahār, c. 1867.?):

Hearken unto that which We sent down through the tongue of 'Alā before Nabāl [the Bāb] ...

We, verily announced [in Qayyūm al-asmā', Sura 28] unto the servants [the Bābīs] Our latter manifestation [Bahā'u'llāh]. And we manifested the Mystery (as-sirr) to an infinitesimal degree such that the dwellers on the Mount (al-ṭūriyyūn) were made to expire. When We manifested Our Self once again with the name of Abhā (the Most Glorious), We decreed that the Mystery be fully disclosed. Before We manifested it, however, the dwellers on the Mount (al-

¹⁸⁶ Translated from an unpublished manuscript (photocopy in this author's possession).

ṭūriyyūn) swooned away, just as thou hast heard, for thou art one possessed of a hearing ear. But in spite of this [theophany], these souls [Bābās] did not restrain themselves. They opposed Us ... ¹⁸⁷

Part of Qayyūm al-asmā', Sura 28, is quoted here--after the first sentence translated above--and commented upon in this interesting Tablet. The "dwellers on the Mount" (al-ṭūriyyūn), who swooned away and then expired before the Sinaitic disclosure of the "Mystery" of Bahā'u'llāh's divinity, are identified as followers of the Bāb, a number of whom came to oppose the emergent Bahā'ī revelation. Bahā'u'llāh pictures himself as the return of the Bāb, with the name abhā' (the all-glorious; the superlative of bahā', glory), who gradually disclosed the secret of his theophany.

Reference to the "dwellers on the Mount" and other exalted beings is also made in the following paragraph from the Sura of the Wrathful One:

Say: O Concurrence of heedlessness! By God! This Bird is capable of warbling innumerable melodies; accent upon accent and song upon song. Should but one of them be disclosed, even to an infinitesimal degree, the spiritual souls (al-rūḥiyyūn), the dwellers on the Mount (a-āriyyān), the illumined ones (al-nūriyyūn), and also ^[134] the denizens of the heavenly Kingdom (al-`amā'iyyūn) would assuredly swoon away upon the dust of heedlessness and annihilation; save him whom God, by the Hand of Divine Favor, safeguarded through

¹⁸⁷ Translated from an unpublished manuscript (photocopy in my possession).

this Youth [Bahā'u'llāh], made manifest with the name "Abhā" in the Kingdom of Names. ¹⁸⁸

e) From the Sura of the Exposition (Sūrat al-bayān, c. 1867?)

Say: The Revelation sent down by God (lit., the latter turn; karrat al-ukhrā) hath most surely been repeated, and the outstretched Hand of Our Power hath overshadowed all that are in the heavens and all that are on the earth. We have, through the power of truth, the very truth, manifested an infinitesimal glimmer of Our impenetrable Mystery, and lo, they that have recognized the radiance of the Sinaitic Splendor (lit., the denizens of the Mount; al-ṭūriyyūn) expired, as they caught a lightning glimpse of this Crimson Light (al-nūr al-ḥamrā') enveloping the Sinai of Our Revelation (lit., the Sinaitic locale; buq`at al-sīnā'). Thus hath He Who is the Beauty of the All-Merciful (jamāl al-raḥmān) come down in the clouds of His testimony, and the decree [been] accomplished by virtue of the Will of God, the All-Glorious, the All-Wise. ¹⁸⁹

In this paragraph Bahā'u'llāh clearly links his advent with the "latter turn" or eschatological cycle anticipated in Qayyūm al-asmā' 28. With the disclosure of a mere glimmer of his "Mystery," the "denizens of the Mount" (al-ṭūriyyūn, Bābīs) expired. This in view of the theophany of the "Crimson Light" emanating from the Sinaitic "Fire" of Bahā'u'llāh's celestial Being.

¹⁸⁸ As fn. 187 above

¹⁸⁹ Text in AQA, Vol. 4, p. 110; trans., Bahā'u'llāh, Gleanings, p. 281 (No. CXXIX; adapted).

f) From Untitled Writings of the Adrianople Period:

The Mount dwellers (al-ṭūriyyūn) have assuredly swooned away on the Elevated Mount al-ṭūr). The denizens of the heavenly Kingdom (al-`amā'iyūn) upon the Transcendent Sinai have assuredly [135] expired. Indeed, all things have been disrupted within themselves save a number of the Letters of the love of My Name, the Protector, the Self-Subsisting. ¹⁹⁰

Say: By God! The Sovereign of Words hath assuredly come upon the clouds of the verses, and lo, the words of every contentious polytheist were thunderstruck . . . The dwellers on the Mount (al-ṭūriyyūn) have assuredly expired upon the Elevated Sinai before the manifestation of the Lights (anwār) of My resplendent, sanctified, mighty and luminous Face. ¹⁹¹

These quotations from major and untitled epistles of Bahā'u'llāh expressive of the fulfillment of the prophetic paragraph of Qayyūm al-asmā' 28 could easily be multiplied. Within many of his revelations of the Adrianople period, Bahā'u'llāh proclaims his mission in terms of the stunning effects of the Sinaitic theophany of his "Light" or of the divine "Beauty" of his "Face." The swooning away, or expiration, of such lofty souls as inhabit the "Mount" sometimes expresses the bewilderment of the Bābās upon coming to a knowledge of the nascent Bahā'ī revelation. Just as Moses fell into a swoon

¹⁹⁰ From an epistle of Bahā'u'llāh to Faṭḥ al-A`ẓam, text in INBA. Xerox coll., Vol. 83 (pp. 242-3) p. 242.

¹⁹¹ From an epistle of Bahā'u'llāh to Dhabīḥ, in *ibid.* (pp. 24754) p. 249.

at the time of the theophany before the mountain, so were Bābīs stupefied before the glory of Bahā'u'llāh's claim to prophethood. Some, it is indicated, died the spiritual "death" of apostasy by rejecting the revelation of the one who claimed to be the "return" of the Bāb with the name of abhā' (Bahā'u'llāh). ¹⁹²

¹⁹² In his *Lawḥ-i Sarrāj* (c. 1867) Bahā'u'llāh, it is worth noting responds to various questions relating to the position of his half brother Mīrzā Yaḥyā Nūrī (d. 1912). At one point within this lengthy Persian treatise he quotes Qayyūm al-asmā' 28, and he argues that the "latter turn" (*karrat al-ukhrā*) has come about through his revelation, and underlines the fulfillment of that line in which the Bāb anticipates the "death" or "annihilation" of the "dwellers on the Mount" (*tūriyyān*). This in order to illustrate the fall of Mīrzā Yaḥyā, the one time "Blessed Fruit" [of the Bayān] (*thamara ṭūbā*) who, he states, had been transformed into a mere "wild gourd" or "colocynth" (*hanzal*). Elevated Bābās became satanic souls and exalted Sinaites lost their lofty status as a result of failing to sustain the impact of the Bahā'ī theophany (see MA, Vol. 7:14-15. Cf., also Bahā'u'llāh, *Lawḥ-i naṣīr* in MAM [pp. 166-202] p. 192).

At a number of points in his English writings, Shoghi Effendi has referred to Bahā'u'llāh's interpretation of Qayyūm al-asmā' XXVIII. In, for example, his letter to the Bahā'īs of the West dated Feb. 8, 1934, and known as *The Dispensation of Bahā'u'llāh*, he quotes the prophetic lines from this sura as words of the Bāb addressed to Bahā'u'llāh (see p. 10). In another letter dated June 30, 1952, he refers to the birth of the Bahā'ī revelation in terms of Bahā'u'llāh's mystical experiences in the *Siyāh Chāl* dungeon in Tehran; mentioning, "The radiance of God's infant light shining within the walls of that pestilential Pit..." and adding that this was a "radiance, an infinitesimal glimmer of which [see QA. XXVIII], as the Founder of the Faith [Bahā'u'llāh], Himself, later testified, caused the dwellers of Sinai [*tūriyyūn*] to swoon away..." (See *Messages to the Bahā'ī World, 1950-1957*, p.34).

Only a few further notes can be set down at this point about passages within writings of the Adrianople period that are illustrative of the general Sinitic theology of Bahā'u'llāh's claims. There exist, for example, a large number of texts in which Bahā'u'llāh represents himself as a celestial Bird that warbles on the branches of the Sinitic Tree, or the Lote-Tree. At one point in the Sura of the Servants (Sūrat al-Aḥṣāb, c. 1864) we read: [136]

Say: The Lote-Tree of the Spirit (sidrat al-rūḥ) hath been lifted up upon the Sinai of eternity (sinā al-baqā') and upon its branches the Nightingale of Pre-Existence warbleth in the most melodious notes¹⁹³

In the Sura of Blood (Sūrat al-damm, c. 1865?) and other writings, Bahā'u'llāh speaks of Sinitic events as being repeated within his own Being:

O People! By God! I have not cried out among you out of base passion. Nay, rather! according to that which the Speaker on the Mount uttereth in My sanctified most pure heart. ¹⁹⁴

Not only did Bahā'u'llāh claim that the Sinitic voice of inspiration spoke from within his inner Self but, in such revelations as the Sura of the Pen (Sūrat al-qalam, c. 1865?), he taught that created things would themselves utter "that which the Tree of the Mount (shajarat al-ṭūr) uttered in the Land of Manifestation (arḍ al-ẓuhūr) unto Moses, the Interlocutor, in the Blessed Holy

¹⁹³ Text in AQA 4:14

¹⁹⁴ Text in *ibid.*, p. 62.

Vale," if they were influenced by "but a letter" of what was revealed through him. ¹⁹⁵

In his lengthy Tablet of the Spirit (Lawḥ al-rūḥ, c. 1866), Bahā'u'llāh refers to himself as "this Tree (al-shajara) which hath sprung up from the Sinai of the All-Merciful" (sīnā' al-raḥmān) and characterizes his revelation as "this Musk which hath been sprinkled upon this Camphor Tablet during this theophany (al-zuhūr) around which both the Seat of the Mount (lit., locale of the Mount; buq`at al-ṭūr) and the Sinai of Light (sānā' al-nūr) circumambulate." ¹⁹⁶ In his Tablet of the Execration (Lawḥ-i mubāhalah, c. 1866), he refers to himself as the "Palm [of the hand of Moses] which God made snow-white unto all the worlds" and the "Rod" (of Moses) capable of swallowing all creatures. ¹⁹⁷ He identifies himself in his Tablet of Ashraf (Lawḥ-i Ashraf, c. 1867?) as the one who enabled the followers of the Bāb to "draw nigh unto the sacred strand at the right-side (shāṭr al-ayman) of the Seat [137] (buq`a; lit., spot or locale) of Paradise [cf. Qur'ān 28:30], the region in which the [Sinaitic] Fire (al-nār) crieth in manifold accents, `There is none other God besides Me, the All-

¹⁹⁵ Text in *ibid.*, p. 261. Cf., Bahā'u'llāh, Lawḥ-i sarrāj in MA, 7:25.

¹⁹⁶ Text in AQA, Vol. 4, pp. 126, 133.

¹⁹⁷ Text in MA. Vol. 4. p. 297; also using a variant reading in ms. A00198 held at the Bahā'ī World Center. Cf., Bahā'u'llāh Khādīmū'llāh, Lawḥ-i istināq in *ibid.*, pp. 223-4.

Powerful, the Most High.' "¹⁹⁸ In this latter passage, it is indicated that identification with Bahā'u'llāh amounts to identification with the Sinaitic Fire which utters the declaration of divinity. It calls to mind one of the lines of Bahā'u'llāh's Tablet of the Youth of Paradise (Lawḥ ghulām al-khuld, c. 1863): "O beloved ones! The Fire of the Sinai of Love (nār-i sīnā'-yi `ishq) shineth resplendent." ¹⁹⁹

Bahā'u'llāh's Surah of the Kings (Sūrat al-muluk, 1867) is without doubt one of the most important writings of the Edirne-Adrianople period. Its author expresses his claims in Sinaitic terms in an address to the "kings of the earth" at the beginning of this forthright Arabic revelation:

O kings of the earth! Give ear unto the Voice of God, calling from this sublime, this fruit-laden Tree (al-shajarat) that hath sprung out of the Crimson Hill (arḍ kathīb al-ḥamrā') upon the Holy [Sinaitic] Plain, intoning the words: "There is none other God but He, the Mighty, the All-Powerful, the All-Wise." This is the [Sinaitic] Seat (lit., locale; buq`a) which God hath blessed... Within it the Call of God can be heard from the Elevated Lote-Tree of Holiness [Bahā'u'llāh]. "Fear God, O concourse of kings, and suffer not yourselves to be deprived of this most sublime grace." ²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ Text in MAM., p.214.

¹⁹⁹ Text in Ishrāq-Khāvarī, Risāla ayyām-i tis`ah, p. 98.

²⁰⁰ Text in Bahā'u'llāh Alwāḥ Bahā'u'llāh... / Kitāb-i haykal (Lithographed: Bombay 1308 A.H.) p. 210, trans. Shoghi Effendi, The Promised Day is Come p.21. For examples of the Bāb's use of the expression "Crimson Hill" see Şāḥifa bayn al-

In this address, Bahā'u'llāh clearly refers to himself as the Sinaitic "Tree" or "Lote-Tree" which is the vehicle of divine revelation. ²⁰¹He speaks of this "Tree" of his Being as having grown up from the "Crimson Hill," literally, "Land of the Red Sand Ridge" (arḍ kathīb al-ḥamrā'), and of himself as the Sinaitic "Locale" or "Spot" (buq`a). References to the Crimson Hill (kathīb al-ḥamrā'; al-aḥmar) are found in a good many of the writings of the Bāb and Bahā'u'llāh, more often than not in Sinaitic contexts. The expression appears to be rooted [138] in the idea that the heights of the "Mount" radiate the crimson light of the Sinaitic Fire. In the mystical geography of the Sinaitic realm, where revelation originates and the Divine Theophany may be experienced, stands the "Crimson Hill."

While the Bāb associates the eschatological theophany with the radiating of "the fierce and crimson Light" in the twenty-eighth surah of the Qayyūm al-asmā', Bahā'u'llāh quite frequently characterizes the Sinaitic sphere of his revelation as being in one way or another "crimson" (ḥamrā'; aḥmar). Apart from such passages from his writings as will be quoted below and which illustrate this point, it must suffice here to note that his epistle to

ḥaramayn (Browne coll. MS. F7), pp. 53, 66; Tafsīr Sūrat al-aṣr (in INBA, Xerox coll., Vol. 69), pp. 62-3. Cf., also Qur'ān 73:14.

²⁰¹ On the Sidra and Sidrat al-Muntaha see Lambden,

<http://www.hurqalya.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/baha'i%20encyclopedia/SIDRAH-SIDRAT-BE.htm>

Shaykh Kāẓim-i Samandar in which the address to the Ottoman statesman Fu'ād Pasha (d. 1869) begins as follows: "We summon thee from beyond the Sea of the Divine Grandeur, upon the Crimson Land (al-arḍ al-aḥmar) at the Horizon of the Affliction: `There is no God except Him, the Mighty, the Munificent.'" ²⁰²

The West Galilean (loosely, Acre, `Akkā period, 1868-1892).

Most of the major, and very many minor, writings of Bahā'u'llāh of the West Galilean (or Acre-`Akkā) period contain passages informed by Sinaitic imagery or motifs. During the twenty-four years that the Bahā'ī Prophet spent in western Galilee, he drew on and expounded, sometimes in great detail, both biblical, quranic, and Bābī texts that recount or relate to the call of Moses and his Sinaitic experiences.

In what must amount to several hundred of his epistles of the West Galilean (Acre, `Akkā) period, Bahā'u'llāh identified himself with "He Who conversed with Moses" (mukallim Mūsā) from the Sinaitic Tree (al-shajarat); that is, with the Divine Being whose advent was predicted by Imām `Alī in the Sermon of the Gulf (al-khuṭba al-ṭutunjiyya, see above). In one of his epistles to Mīrzā `Alī Ashraf `Andalīb, Bahā'u'llāh wrote:

²⁰² Text in AQA, Vol. 2, p. 35. See also INBA, Xerox coll., vol. 81, pp. 148-152, esp. 151, Tablet of Bahā'u'llāh to Ṣādiq.

O `Alī! He who wast named `Alī [Imām `Alī] gave thee the glad-tidings and announced unto thee this Promised Day. He said--and his saying is the truth: "Anticipate ye the theophany of Him [139] Who conversed on the Mount (mukallim al-ṭūr)." By God! This is assuredly He, and He crieth aloud. God, verily, hath come in the, shadows of the clouds [see Qur'ān 2:210], but the people hav failed to comprehend. ²⁰³

On similar lines are the following select excerpts from various other Persian and Arabic writings of the `Akkā period:

By the life of Our Lord! Today He Who conversed on the Mount (mukallim al-ṭūr) is made manifest and hath proclaimed His Word. The Hidden Mystery (sirr-i maknūn), the Treasured Secret (ghayb-i makhzūn) [i.e., Bahā'u'llāh] hath been revealed. ²⁰⁴

Say, this is the Day when the Speaker on Sinai (mukallim al-ṭūr) hath mounted the throne of Revelation (`arsh al-zuhūr) and the people have stood before the Lord of the worlds. ²⁰⁵

²⁰³ From an untitled epistle of Bahā'u'llāh/Khādīmu'llāh dated 1293 A.H./1876-7, text in MA, Vol. 7 (pp. 174-255) p. 207. In this epistle Bahā'u'llāh defends his claim to divinity (ulāhiyya). He states at one point that all the Holy Books have it that "His Holiness the Self-Subsisting (Ḥarat-i Qayyūm) [the eschatological manifestation of God] will in that `Day' give voice to the word `I am God'..." (See pp. 207-8 and cf., below p. 66f.).

²⁰⁴ From Bahā'u'llāh's Lawḥ-i ishraqāt; text in Majmū'a az alvāḥ-i Jamāl-i Aqdas-i Abhā (henceforth TB), p. 61, trans., Bahā'u'llāh, Tablets of Bahā'u'llāh revealed after the Kitāb-i Aqdas (henceforth TB [Eng.]), p. 107. Cf., also TB [Eng.], pp. 104, 111, 106.

²⁰⁵ From an epistle of Bahā'u'llāh to `Andaḡīb, text in AQA, Vol. 2 : 26; cf., also p. 28.

O Concourse of the earth! The Day of victory hath arrived, and He Who conversed on the Mount (mukallim al-ṭūr) hath been made manifest. ²⁰⁶

The second *ṭarāz* (Ornament) is to consort with the followers of all religions in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship, to proclaim that which the Speaker on Sinai (mukallim al-ṭūr) [Bahā'u'llāh] hath set forth and to observe fairness in all matters. ²⁰⁷

"The first *tajallī* (theophanic radiance) which hath dawned from the Day-Star of Truth is the knowledge of God ... And the knowledge of the King of everlasting days can in no wise be attained save by recognizing Him Who is the Bearer of the Most Great Name [Bahā'u'llāh]. He is, in truth, the Speaker on Sinai (mukallim-i ṭūr) Who is now seated upon the throne of Revelation (ʿarsh-i zuhūr). He is the Hidden Mystery (ghayb-i maknūn) and the Treasured Symbol (sirr-i makhzūn). ²⁰⁸

At one point in his "Medium [Daily] Obligatory Prayer," Bahā'u'llāh bids his devotees bear witness to the fact that God has "manifested Him [Bahā'u'llāh] Who is the Day Spring of Revelation, Who conversed on Sinai (mukallim al-ṭūr), through whom the Supreme Horizon hath been made to [140] shine, and

²⁰⁶ From Bahā'u'llāh's *Ṭarazāt* (II); text in TB, p. 18, trans. TB [Eng.], pp. 35-6.

²⁰⁷ From Bahā'u'llāh's *Lawḥ-i tajalliyāt*; text in TB, p. 27, trans., TB [Eng.], p. 50. See further MA, Vol. 7, p. 139 (Epistle of Bahā'u'llāh to Mullā `Alī Bajistānī).

²⁰⁸ Text in *Ishrāq Khāvarā*, *Abwāb al-Malakūt*, p. 2f; trans., Bahā'u'llāh, *Prayers and Meditations of Bahā'u'llāh*, p. 241.

the Lote-Tree beyond which there is no passing (sidrat al-qayyūm) [lit., Lote Tree of the Self-Subsisting] hath spoken". ²⁰⁹

In another prayer, in which details are given of the travels of Mīrzā Yaḥyā Ṣarrāf, Bahā'u'llāh refers to this pilgrim's arrival at Acre -`Akkā when he was present before his "Face" (al-wajh) and heard from the "Person of the Manifestation (nafs al-ẓuhūr) and He Who Conversed on the Mount (mukallim al-ṭūr)" that which the Son of `Imrān [Moses] heard on the "Mount" (al-ṭūr) of God's "mystic knowledge" (`irfān). ²¹⁰ Attainment to the presence of Bahā'u'llāh is identified as attainment to the presence of the Divine Being who spoke with Moses. Bahā'u'llāh divulged that which Moses heard from the "Mount." He disclosed his divinity to all peoples:

Every discerning eye can, in this Day, perceive the dawning light of God's Revelation, and every attentive ear can recognize the Voice that was heard from the Burning Bush (nidā-yi mukallim-i ṭūr). ²¹¹

This is the Day whereon human ears have been privileged to hear what He Who conversed with God [Moses] heard upon Sinai . ²¹²

²⁰⁹ From an epistle of Bahā'u'llāh written in honor of Mīrzā Yaḥyā Ṣarrāf, son of Karbalā'ī Muhammad asan Qazvīnī; text in Samandar, Tārīkh-i Samandar (pp. 297-314), p. 298 (MA, Vol. 4, p.371).

²¹⁰ Bahā'u'llāh, untitled epistle cited in Muntakhabātī az āthār-i Ḥaḍrat-i Bahā'u'llāh (henceforth Muntakhabātī.), p. 174; trans., Shoghi Effendi, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahā'u'llāh, p. 270 (CXXVI).

²¹¹ Idem., cited in Shoghi Effendi, The Advent of Divine Justice, p. 66.

Call thou [Muhammad Jawād Qazvānī] to mind when thou were in My [Bahā'u'llāh's] company, within the Tabernacle of Glory, and didst hear from Me that which He Who conversed with God [Moses] heard upon the Sinai of divine knowledge (ṭūr al-`irfān).. ²¹³

The people of the world are now hearing that which Moses did hear, but they understand not. ²¹⁴

It was through his claim to be the "Speaker on the Mount" (mukallim al-ṭūr) that Bahā'u'llāh--like the Bāb--taught that Sinaitic events had been repeated through his manifestation:

Say: Through this theophany (al-ḡuhār) the episode of the Mount (ḥadīth al-ṭūr) hath again come to pass. The Trumpet (al-ṣūr) hath

²¹² Idem., from an epistle to Muhammad Jawād Qazvānā (Ism-i Jād); text in TB, p. 149; trans. TB [Eng.], p. 242.

²¹³ Idem., text in TB, p. 172, trans. TB [Eng.], p. 265. Cf. also, among many other similar passages in epistles of Bahā'u'llāh, Lawḥ-i burhān (text in TB. pp. 125-133): "Present thyself before Me [Bahā'u'llāh] that thou mayest hear the mysteries which were heard by the Son of `Imrān [Moses] upon the Sinai of Wisdom (ṭūr al-`irfān)" (text in TB, p. 129, trans., Taherzadeh, TB [Eng.], p. 210). Note that here, as elsewhere, Bahā'u'llāh uses the genitive expression ṭūr al-`irfān (Sinai / Mount of Wisdom [Gnosis]) since `irfān (wisdom/gnosis) rhymes with the name of Moses' father `Imrān (Amram) -- the term `irfān also indicating the mystical significance of Sinai / the Mount. See further, for example, Bahā'u'llāh Tablet of Visitation for Imām Ḥusayn (in Ishraq-Khāvarī, ed., Risāla Ayyām-i Tis`a, pp. 235-244).

²¹⁴ From an epistle of Bahā'u'llāh to `Andaḡīb (and other Bahā'īs), text in AQA 2:23.

[141] been sounded and the servants have risen up before God, the Mighty, the Loving. ²¹⁵

The episode of Sinai (ḥadīth al-ṭūr) hath been reenacted in this Revelation (al-ḡuhūr) and He Who conversed [on the Mount] (al-mukallim) is calling aloud: "Verily, the Desired One is come, seated upon the throne of certitude, could ye but perceive it." He hath admonished all men to observe that which is conducive to the exaltation of the Cause of God and will guide mankind unto His Straight Path. ²¹⁶

Mystically speaking, Moses has again attained the presence of the Lord through the manifestation of Bahā'u'llāh:

Today the Voice of the All-Merciful hath been raised up from the Kingdom of Utterance (bayān). He who conversed with God (kalām) [Moses] hath attained unto the Lord [Bahā'u'llāh]. ²¹⁷

This is the Day in which He Who held converse with God [Moses] hath attained the [Sinaitic] light of the Ancient of Days [Bahā'u'llāh] ... ²¹⁸

²¹⁵ From an untitled epistle of Bahā'u'llāh, text in TB. p. 154, trans. TB [Eng.], p. 248 (adapted).

²¹⁶ From an epistle of Bahā'u'llāh cited in MA, Vol. 8, p. 63. Cf., also *ibid.*, pp. 73, 75.

²¹⁷ From an epistle of Bahā'u'llāh cited in MA, Vol. 8, p. 63. Cf., also *ibid.*, pp. 73, 75.

²¹⁸ From an untitled epistle of Bahā'u'llāh, text in TB, p. 147; trans. TB [Eng.], p. 239. See also, Bahā'u'llāh's Persian Tablet of Aḥmad (MAM, p. 317 and p. 330), Lawḥ-i Sarrāj (MA, Vol. 8, p. 25), and Sūrat al-asmā' (Iqtidārāt, p. 90).

While, according to Qur'ān 7:143, Moses was informed by his Lord of the impossibility of direct vision of him -- "Said He, `Thou shalt not see Me (lan taranī)" -- in such epistles as the following Bahā'u'llāh affirms, in the light of his advent, the possibility of visioning the "Speaker on the Mount":

In this Day ... the faculty of sight calleth aloud, "Verily this is my Day, for I behold the Dayspring of glory shining resplendent at the bidding of Him Who is the Ordainer, the All-Powerful." Blessed the ear that hath heard the call, "Behold, and thou shalt see Me (inḡar taranī) and happy the eye that hath gazed upon the most wondrous Sign dawning from this luminous horizon. ²¹⁹

Certain of Bahā'u'llāh's Tablets to the Kings, written shortly after the exile to the Holy Land (1868), contain paragraphs of considerable interest in terms of the Sinaitic claims ^[142] of the Bahā'ī Prophet. In, for example, the Tablet to Napoleon III (c. 1869) we read:

Give ear, O King [Napoleon], unto the Voice that calleth from the [Sinaitic] Fire (al-nār) which burneth in this verdant Tree (al-shajarat al-khudrā'), on this Sinai (al-buq`at al-muqaddasa al-bayḡā'), beyond the Everlasting City (qulzum al-baqā): "Verily there is none other God but Me, the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Merciful!" ... Set your faces towards Him [Bahā'u'llāh] on this Day which God hath exalted above all other days, and whereon the All-Merciful hath shed the splendor of His effulgent glory (tajallī) upon all who are in

²¹⁹ Text in Bahā'u'llāh, *Alwāḡ-i nāzilah khitāb bih mulūk wa ru'asā-yi arḡ* (see fn. 200 above; henceforth, *Alwaḡ nāzilih*) pp. 97-8; trans., Shoghi Effendi, cited in *The Proclamation of Bahā'u'llāh*, pp. 18-19.

heaven and all who are on earth . . . The voice of the Burning Bush (shajarat al-ṭūr) is raised in the midmost heart of the world, and the Holy Spirit calleth aloud among the nations: "Lo, the Desired One is come with manifest dominion!" ²²⁰

As the Divine Being who uttered the declaration of divinity from the "Tree" on the "Mount," Bahā'u'llāh communicates his message from a "new Sinai" located above "the hallowed and snow-white [Sinaitic] Spot" beyond the "Everlasting City," or (literally) the "Abyss of Eternity" (qulzum al-baqā'). Through him God has disclosed his glory (tajallī) as he did before the "mountain" in the presence of Moses. (See Qur'ān 7:143.)

With Bahā'u'llāh's arrival in the Holy Land, the Acre-`Akkā-Haifa-Mt. Carmel region where he resided came to be pictured in his writings in terms of the mystic geography of the Sinaitic sphere. References to this region as the "snow-white Spot" or the "Crimson Spot" appear to express the idea that it was irradiated with that brilliant whiteness which shone from Moses' hand (mystically the Divine light) and by the crimson light of the Sinaitic "Fire." This, in view of Bahā'u'llāh being the locus of Sinaitic realities and the "Speaker on the Mount.". In several of his writings, Bahā'u'llāh clearly associates the Holy

²²⁰ From an epistle of Bahā'u'llāh, text in Muntakhabātī, p. 221; trans. Gleanings, p. 343 (CLXIII).

Land or the Acre-/Akka-Haifa-Mt. Carmel area with the Sinaitic Vale (wādī) or

"Snow-white Spot": [143]

This Holy Land (arāḍī-yi muqaddasa) hath been mentioned and extolled in all the sacred Scriptures (kutub-i ilāhī) ...This is the promised Land in which He Who is the Revelation of God was destined to be made manifest. This is the [Sinaitic] Vale of God's unsearchable decree (wādī-yi qaḍā), the snow-white Spot (arḍ-i baqā'), the Land of unfading splendor (buq`a-yi nūrā'; lit. luminous Spot).²²¹

... "Holy Vale" (al-wād al-muqaddas), "the Land of the Assembling" [for judgement] (arḍ al-maḥshar), "Snow-White Spot" (buq`at al-bayḍā'): these three terms refer to the `Akkā region (arḍ-i `Akkā').²²²

In an epistle to Hājji Mīrzā Ḥaydar-`Alī (d. 1920), Bahā'u'llāh expressed the nature and scene of his Sinaitic claims as follows:

... from the right bank of the Holy Vale (min shāṭī al-wād al-ayman) [Qur`ān 28:30] in the Luminous Spot (al-buq`a al-nūrā') beyond the Ocean of Grandeur (qulzum al-kubriyā) from the Lote-Tree beyond

²²¹ From Bahā'u'llāh's Tablet of the Interrogation (Lawḥ-i istintāq), text in MA, Vol. 4., pp. 220-60), p. 259. Cf., the epistle of Bahā'u'llāh printed in MA, Vol. 7 (pp. 174-255; dated 1293 A.H./ 1876-7), p. 190, where the cryptic reference in the Lawḥ-i sayyāh (an epistle of Bahā'u'llāh of the late Adrianople period) to the "Vale of Nabīl" (wād al-nabīl) is interpreted in terms of the region around `Akkā (N.B. in abjad, Nabīl = 92, as does `Akkā and the name Muhammad; cf., also Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 184).

²²² Text in TB, p. 153; cf. trans. TB [Eng.], p. 246.

which there is no passing, We call aloud unto thee saying: In truth there is no God but Me, the All-Knowing, the All-wise. ²²³

The epistle (c.1869) to the Czar of Russia, Alexander II, contains a passage in which Jesus is pictured as acknowledging Bahā'u'llāh's advent as the Father in the Holy Vale (the `Akkā-Haifa area?). Personified Sinai, it is stated, circumambulates his residence while the Burning Bush asserts the parousia of divinity:

He Who is the Father (al-ab) is come, and the Son [Jesus] in the holy vale (al-wād al-muqaddas) crieth out: "Here am I, here am I, O Lord, my God," whilst Sinai (al-ṭūr) circleth round the House (al-bayt), and the Burning Bush (al-shajarat) calleth aloud: "The All-Bounteous (al-wahhāb) is come mounted upon the clouds!" ²²⁴

[144]

At the very beginning of his epistle to Queen Victoria (c. 1869), Bahā'u'llāh boldly invites the queen to hearken unto his declaration of divinity from the Sinaitic Lote-Tree:

O Queen in London! Incline thine ear unto the voice of thy Lord, the Lord of all mankind, calling from the Divine Lote-Tree (al-sidrat): "Verily, no God is there but Me, the Almighty, the All-Wise!" ²²⁵

²²³ Text in *Alwāḥ nāzilih*, p. 122; trans., Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day is Come*, p. 33.

²²⁴ Text in *ibid.*, p. 131; trans., Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day is Come*, p. 34.

²²⁵ See Bahā'u'llāh, *al-Kitāb al-aqdas*, text in *al-Ḥsanī Al-Bābiyyū* p. 118; trans., Shoghi Effendi in *Synopsis and Codification*, p. 18.

Though essentially a volume of laws and ordinances, Bahā'u'llāh's Most Holy Book (*al-Kitāb al-aqdas*, c. 1873) contains several passages in which its author expresses his claims in Sinaitic terms. Within it Moses is, mystically speaking, said to have attained his presence. Mount Sinai is pictured as "circling round the Dayspring of [Bahā'u'llāh's] Revelation." ²²⁶ At one point, humankind is exhorted to advance "... with snow-white faces (*wujūh bayḍā'*) and radiant hearts (*qulūb nūrā'*) unto the blessed and crimson Spot (*al-buq`a al-mubārraka al-ḥamrā'* = Acre/ `Akkā' region) wherein the Lote-Tree beyond which there is no passing (*sidrat al-muntahā*, Bahā'u'llāh) is calling, `Verily, there is none other God beside Me, the Omnipotent Protector, the Self-Subsisting!'" ²²⁷ Bahā'u'llāh, furthermore, refers to himself as the one who caused the Sinaitic Lote-Tree to "lift up its voice upon the Mount (*al-ṭūr*) rising above the Holy Land (*al-arḍ al-mubārraka*) and proclaim- `The Kingdom is God's, the sovereign Lord of all, the All-Powerful, the Loving." ²²⁸

It has been noted above in connection with Sinaitic terminology occurring in the *Surat al-Qamīṣ* (*Surah of the Robe*) that the expression "Land of Saffron"

²²⁶ Bahā'u'llāh, *al-Kitāb al-aqdas*, text in *ibid.*, p. 121; trans., Shoghi Effendi in *Synopsis and Codification*, pp. 22-3.

²²⁷ *Idem.*, *al-Kitāb al-aqdas*, text in *ibid.*, p. 121; trans., Shoghi Effendi in *Synopsis and Codification*, p. 23

²²⁸ Text in TB, p. 80 (cf. "Errata" issued by the Bahā'ī World Centre, Haifa [n.d.]); trans., TB [Eng.], p. 137.

might (in certain contexts) be indicative of the saffron-colored Sinaitic light or the town of Adrianople (see above). As this phrase occurs in epistles of Bahā'u'llāh of the West Galilean (ʿAkkā) period, it doubtless also has more mystical import. In Bahā'u'llāh's Tablet of Wisdom (Lawḥ-i ḥikmat, c. 1876?), Aqā Muhammad Qā'inī (Nabil-i Akbar) is addressed as follows: [145]

O Muhammad! Hearken unto the Voice proceeding out of the Realm of Glory (shaṭr al-kubriyā), calling aloud from the celestial Tree (al-sidra) which hath risen up above the Land of Za`farān (land of saffron; arḍ al-za`rfarān): "Verily, no God is there but Me, the Omniscient, the Wise. ²²⁹

Doubtless responding to an enquiry about the significance of the "Lote Tree" (sidrat) and "Land of Saffron" mentioned in this or another of his epistles, Bahā'u'llāh has explained that: "The Holy Tree (sidrat) is, in a sense, the Manifestation of the One True God, exalted be He. The Blessed Tree in the land of za`farān referreth to the land which is flourishing, blessed, holy and all-perfumed, where that Tree hath been planted." ²³⁰ The quranic term "Lote-Tree" is, then, symbolic of the great Prophets or Manifestations of God, including Bahā'u'llāh. The place of their residence or where the "Lote-Tree" is

²²⁹ From an epistle of Bahā'u'llāh cited in "Errata" to TB [Eng.], p. 137.

²³⁰ Cf. fn. 00

planted is the sacred "Land of Saffron."²³¹ As already indicated, both the "Lote-Tree" and "Land of Saffron" are often used in Sinaitic contexts. Throughout his ministry Bahā'u'llāh, in one way or another, referred to himself as the "Lote-Tree" which is equated with the Sinaitic "Tree" (al-shajarat) or "Burning Bush." While for example, Bahā'u'llāh refers to himself as the "Lote-Tree of God" (sidrat Allāh) in his Sura of the Arabs (Sūrat al-A`rab, early Acre-`Akkā' period?), God addresses him in the following terms in his Sura of the Temple (Sūrat al-haykal, c. 1873-4?):

"O Thou Temple! ... We have made Thee [Bahā'u'llāh] the Lote-Tree of Munificence to whomsoever is in the heavens and on the earth."²³²

Hundreds of such passages occur in writings of the West Galilean (`Akkā) period.

In a number of his epistles of the West Galilean (`Akkā) period Bahā'u'llāh refers to and comments upon a line from one of the poems of the poet and philosopher Ḥājī Mullā Hādī, Ḥakīm Sabziwārī (d. 1873). As quoted in the Bahā'ī Prophet's Words of Paradise (Kalimāt-i firdawsiyya, late `Akkā period) it reads as follows:

²³¹ Refer, Bahā'u'llāh, Sūrat al-a`rāb, text in AQA, Vol. 4, p. 215 (cf., also pp. 217, 219); idem., Sūrat al-haykal, text in ibid., p. 290.

²³² Text in TB. p. 33, trans., TB [Eng.], p. 61.

"Alas! Attentive ears are lacking, otherwise the [146] whisperings of the Sinaitic Bush (sidra-yi tūr) could be heard from every tree (shajarat)." ²³³

For Bahā'u'llāh, these words indicate the widespread incapacity of his contemporaries to acknowledge or mystically perceive his being the One Who spoke from Mount Sinai. In the Tablet of the Ground of Being (or Elemental Reality) (Lawḥ-i basīṭ al-ḥaqīqa, early or middle `Akkā period), it is stated that Sabziwārī's poem indicates the non-existence of a "Moses" capable of hearing the murmur of the Sinaitic declaration of divinity ("I, verily am God"), but implies that mystic knowers might attain a rank in which their "eye" is illumined by beholding the "lights of the effulgence of the Agent of the [Sinaitic] Theophany (anwār-i tajallī-yi mujallā)" and their "ears" made capable of hearing the Sinaitic Call. ²³⁴ Like other Shī'ī mystics, Sabziwārī did not become a Bahā'ī. Bahā'u'llāh considered that he had failed to "hearken unto the call which the Tree of Man (sidra-yi insān; Bahā'u'llāh) raised from the loftiest heights of the world" and that his words exceeded his deeds. ²³⁵

²³³ See Bahā'u'llāh, Lawḥ-i basīṭ al-ḥaqīqa, text in MA, Vol. 7, p. 145.

²³⁴ From Bahā'u'llāh's Kalimāt al-firdawsīyya citing (unique recension), Lawḥ-i basīṭ al-ḥaqīqa, text in TB, p. 33, trans., TB [Eng.], p. 61.

²³⁵ Refer, Bahā'u'llāh, From Bahā'u'llāh's Kalimāt al-firdawsīyya citing (unique recension), Lawḥ-i basīṭ al-ḥaqīqa, text in TB, p. 33, trans., TB [Eng.], p. 61., text in MA, Vol. 7, p. 146.

In the later Arabic section of the Tablet of the Ground of Being, Bahā'u'llāh exhorts a certain Ḥusayn to inform one who had posed a question that he is capable of enabling him to attain a station in which he would see naught in the world save "the theophany of the presence of the Ancient One" (tajallī ḥaḍrat al-qadīm, Bahā'u'llāh) and hear the declaration of divinity from the Lote-Tree. He also refers to himself as the One Who cried out from the Sinaitic "Fire" (al-nār). From the "luminous Lote-Tree raised up above the Crimson Spot (al-buq`at al-ḥamrā', `Akkā/Acre?)" he uttered the words,

"O People! Hasten in heartfelt manner unto the precinct of the Beloved One [Bahā'u'llāh]." ²³⁶

In certain epistles then, Bahā'u'llāh quotes, comments upon and expresses his claims in the light of a line from one of the poems of Ḥakīm Sabziwārī. Apart from the two Tablets (alwā) referred to above, there exists another in which Bahā'u'llāh equates the "Speaker" (al-kalīm, Moses) with such [147] souls as are given to celebrating his position as the "Remembrance" (al-dhikr) and claims that through his "Reality" (al-ḥaqīqa)-- which permeates all "realities" (al-ḥaqā'iq) -- all things assert his divinity by crying out, "No God is there except Him." Sabziwarī's poem and failure to come to faith are commented upon in the following terms:

²³⁶ From an Epistle of Bahā'u'llāh cited MA 4: 95.

And among them stands he who claimed that he had heard from every tree (shajara) that which was heard by the One Who conversed with God (al-kaīm; Moses). But when the times were fulfilled and the Lote-Tree [Bahā'u'llāh] cried aloud between earth and heaven, We found him [Sabziwār] thunderstruck upon the dust. ²³⁷

In order to highlight the greatness of his person and revelation, Bahā'u'llāh not infrequently personified Mt. Sinai and the Sinaitic Lote-Tree during the West Galilean (ʿAkkā) period of his ministry. He pictured them as, for example, circumambulating his residence and testifying to the sublimity of his Cause. In the Most Holy Tablet (Lawḥ-i aqdas), we read: "Sinai (al-ṭūr) circleth round the House (al-bayt) and the Burning Bush (al-shajarat) calleth aloud: `He Who is the Desired One is come in His transcendent majesty. [i.e., Christ has returned'" ²³⁸ These words are closely paralleled in the earlier and already quoted Tablet to the Czar of Russia (see above) and anticipate Bahā'u'llāh's exhortation:

... O peoples of the earth ... Purge ye your ears and set your hearts towards Him that ye may hearken to the most wondrous Call which hath been raised from Sinai (al-sīnā'), the habitation of your Lord, the Most Glorious (al-abhā') [Bahā'u'llāh]. It will, in truth, draw you nigh unto the [Sinaitic] Spot (maqām) wherein ye will perceive the splendor of the light of His Countenance (anwār al-wajh, lit., the

²³⁷ Text in TB, p. 5; trans. TB [Eng.], p. 11.

²³⁸ Text in TB, p. 6; trans. TB [Eng.], pp. 12-13.

lights of the Face [of Bahā'u'llāh] which shineth above this luminous Horizon." ²³⁹ [148]

While in an epistle to a certain Jawād, Bahā'u'llāh pictures personified Mount Sinai as exclaiming, "Verily, the Lord of Revelation is come," ²⁴⁰ he elsewhere represents this mountain as weeping over his plight. ²⁴¹ In his highly allegorical Tablet of the Vision (Lawḥ-i ru'yā, March 1, 1873), Mount Sinai personified is said to have cried out--in the light of Bahā'u'llāh's manifestation--"The Kingdom is God's ... the All-Wise." ²⁴² On similar lines is the following extract from an epistle of Bahā'u'llāh to the aforementioned Bahā'ī poet `Andalāb:

This is the Day in which all things have been ennobled through the lights of the Theophany (anwār al-ẓuhūr) [of Bahā'u'llāh]; though most of the people are to be numbered among the heedless. The [Sinaitic] Mount (al-ṭūr) crieth out before the Theophany (al-ẓuhūr) [Bahā'u'llāh] and summoneth all unto the One round whom the Messengers [of God] circumambulate (maṭāf al-mursalīn) [Bahā'u'llāh]." ²⁴³

²³⁹ Text in *ibid.*, p. 146; trans. TB [Eng.], p. 237

²⁴⁰ Text in *ibid.*, p. 157; trans. TB [Eng.], p. 251.

²⁴¹ Text in AQA, Vol. 2. p. 176.

²⁴² Text in *ibid.*, p. 2.

²⁴³ Text in TB, p. 129; trans. Shoghi Effendi in TB [Eng.], p. 210.

At one point in his Tablet of the Proof (Lawḥ-i burhān, early 1880s), Bahā'u'llah exhorts the anti-Bahā'ī Shī'ī cleric Shaykh Muhammad Bāqir (d. 1883) to present himself before Him, that he might hear "the mysteries which were heard by the Son of `Imrān [Moses] upon the Sinai of Wisdom (ṭūr al-`irfān)." ²⁴⁴ After quoting these words in his epistle to Muhammad Bāqir's equally antagonistic son, Shaykh Muhammad Taqī Najafī (d. 1914), the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf (Lawḥ-i ibn-i dhi'b, c.1891), Bahā'u'llāh sets forth certain words of the "true Faith" in which both "Sinai" and "the Bush are personified and pictured as addressing words of considerable interest to the followers of the Bāb or the "people of the Bayān":

Thereupon hath the cry and the lamentation of the true Faith been raised once again, saying: "Verily Sinai (al-ṭūr) calleth aloud and saith: `O people of the Bayān! Fear ye the Merciful. Indeed [149] have I attained unto Him Who conversed upon me (mukallimī) [Bahā'u'llāh], and the ecstasies of my joy have seized the pebbles of the earth and the dust thereof.' And the Bush (al-sidra) exclaimeth: `O people of the Bayān! Judge ye fairly that which hath in truth been manifested. Verily the Fire (al-nār) which God revealed unto the One Who conversed with Him (al-kaīm) [Moses]

²⁴⁴ Text in Bahā'u'llāh, Lawḥ-i mubāraka khiṭāb bih Shaykh Muhammad Tāqī Isfahānī (henceforth Lawḥ-i Shaykh;), pp. 100, 101; trans., Shoghi Effendi in Bahā'u'llāh Epistle to the Son of the Wolf (henceforth ESW), p. 86.

is now manifested. Unto this beareth witness every man of insight and understanding.' ²⁴⁵

At another point in the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, the "voice and lamentation of the true Faith" is pictured as uttering the words: "This is the Day whereon Sinai (al-ṭūr) hath smiled at Him Who conversed upon it [Bahā'u'llāh], and [Mount] Carmel at its Revealer and the Sidrat [Lote-Tree] at Him Who taught it". ²⁴⁶ Bahā'u'llāh's theophany as the "Speaker on the Mount" had, figuratively speaking, caused the Mount to smile with joy. In the same work, personified Sinai is also said to have exclaimed: "He that discoursed upon Me (mukallāmī) is come with evident signs and resplendent tokens". ²⁴⁷

The Claim to Divinity.

During the latter years of the `Akkā period, Bahā'u'llāh dictated a number of sometimes lengthy epistles in which key aspects of his Sinaitic theology are discussed in the light of allegations that he had uttered blasphemy by claiming to be an incarnation of the Absolute Godhead. Anti-Bābā mullas, unaware of the subtleties of Bahā'ī theophanology, took Bahā'u'llāh's oft-voiced claim to represent the eschatological advent of

²⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 46; trans. ESW. p. 38.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 205; trans. ESW. p. 173.

²⁴⁷ Text in TB, p. 26; trans. TB [Eng.], p. 49.

Divinity, and to have uttered the words "I, verily am God..." or the like, as the "Speaker on the Mount," as sure signs of the perfidy of the Bahā'ī Prophet and of the heretical nature of the Bahā'ī religion. The uninitiated came to view and refer to Bahā'u'llāh as the "God of the Persians." They were unaware that he had explained in his "revelations" that one of the significances of the doctrine of the Divine Unity (at-tawhād) is that the great Manifestations [150] of God mirror forth the names and attributes of God such that all scriptural statements about God revolve around their transcendent Being. It was not commonly understood that Bahā'u'llāh's claim to "Divinity" and "Lordship" was not a claim to identity with the transcendent and unknowable Godhead as he himself made perfectly clear in innumerable Tablets.

The following notes on select writings of the late West Galilean ('Akkā') period must suffice to illustrate some of the detailed aspects of Bahā'u'llāh's own clarification of his Sinaitic theology and claim to divinity.

a) The Tablet of Effulgences (Tajalliyāt):

The important work which bears this title was written for a staunch Iranian Bahā'ī named Ustād `Alī Akbar Bannā (d. Yazd 1903). It consists of a prolegomenon and four sections on diverse themes, each of which constitutes an "Effulgence" or "Theophany" (tajallī) from the pen or person of Bahā'u'llāh. In the prolegomenon, Bahā'u'llāh refers to "that which the people of tyranny

ascribe unto Me in My days" and mentions that some among them say, "He hath laid claim to divinity (ar-rubūbiyya, lit., "Lordship")." ²⁴⁸ While the first tajallī includes reference to his claim to be the "Speaker on Sinai," the fourth tajallī takes up the issue of the claim to "Divinity" (ulūhiyya), "Lordship" (rubūbiyya), and the like. After alluding to the importance of his person and revelation as the "Lote-Tree and its fruits" and again referring to himself as the "Speaker on Sinai" (mukallim al-ṭūr) Bahā'u'llāh states:

Say O people, if ye judge fairly and equitably, ye will testify to the truth of whatsoever hath streamed forth from the Most Exalted Pen [i.e., Bahā'u'llāh's writings]. If ye be of the people of the Bayān [the Bābīs], the Persian Bayān will guide you aright and will prove a sufficient testimony unto you; and if ye be of the people of the Qur'ān [Muslims], ponder ye upon the Revelation on [151] Sinai (tajallī) and the Voice from the Bush (sidrat) which came unto the Son of `Imrān [Moses]. ²⁴⁹

It is indicated that the truth of the revelation and claims of Bahā'u'llāh would be clear to Bābīs who derive guidance from the Bāb's Persian Bayān and to Muslims who are mindful of the quranic accounts of the Sinai theophany (of Qur'ān 7:143) and of the call of Moses. God "revealed his glory" (tajallī) before the "Mount" and declared His divinity from the "Bush." As the

²⁴⁸ Text in *ibid.*, p. 28; trans. TB [Eng.], p. 52.

²⁴⁹ Text in *ibid.*, p. 29; trans., TB [Eng.], p. 53.

manifestation of God, Bahā'u'llāh has accomplished the same and should, it is implied, be accepted by Muslims who are aware of the quranic precedent.

God, Bahā'u'llāh continues to argue, intended that human beings be mature enough to accept and understand his elevated claims. Heedless souls, however, have failed to come to faith: "That which they accepted from the [Sinaitic] Bush (shajara) they now refuse to accept from Him who is the [Lote-] Tree of the world of existence (sidra-yi wujūd) [Bahā'u'llāh]." ²⁵⁰ People, in other words, can accept that God proclaimed His divinity through a "Bush," but cannot accept Bahā'u'llāh's "I, verily am God," or the like. Followers of the Bāb, furthermore, should bear in mind that: "Most of the peoples of the earth attest the truth of the blessed Word (kalimat-i mubāraka) that hath come forth from the Bush (shajara)." ²⁵¹ They acknowledge the truth of the scriptural accounts of the Sinaitic declaration of divinity. Unbelieving Bābās should thus feel humbled that they have failed to acknowledge Bahā'u'llāh's position as the "Speaker on Sinai." They should bear in mind that he would not have "breathed a word" of his claim to divinity had not the

²⁵⁰ Ibid

²⁵¹ Persian Bayān 8:1, cited TB, p. 29; trans., TB [Eng.], p. 53. Cf. H. Taherzadeh (trans.,) Selections from the Writings of the Bāb, pp. 97-98. Bahā'u'llāh quotes and comments upon Persian Bayān 8:1 in terms of his claim to divinity in a fairly large number of his epistles of the late Adrianople and `Akkā periods.

Bāb praised him so highly and, for example, written of him in his Persian Bayān (VIII:1): "He is the One Who shall proclaim under all conditions, `Verily, verily, I am God, no God is there but Me, the Lord of all created things..." ²⁵²

Such, in summary, if I understand it correctly, is the substance of Bahā'u'llāh's fourth tajallī. [152]

b) The Tablet of the Essence of Praise (Lawḥ-i jawhar-i ḥamd): ²⁵³

This unpublished Persian Epistle which is largely addressed to the people of the world collectively opens with a paragraph in which God's supreme transcendence and essential incomprehensibility are clearly and categorically set forth. The next few paragraphs contain many points of interest and serve to underline the elevated status of the Manifestations or Messengers of God. The "Blessed and Primordial Word (kalimat) which shone forth from the Dawning-Place of the Will (mashiyya) of the King of the Divine Oneness [God]" as the agent of creation is equated with the "Self" (nafs) of the

²⁵² I have and shall refer to this untitled epistle of Bahā'u'llāh after its opening words (jawhar-i ḥamd...). It has not been published, though reference has been made to two mss, one of them photostatically reproduced in INBA. Xerox coll., Vol. 35, pp. 161-8.

²⁵³ In addition to the passages from Bahā'u'llāh's Epistle to the Son of the Wolf which will be summed up or commented upon in the following paragraphs, see further, ESW, pp. 8, 18, 25, 40, 43, 65, 96, 114, 140, 141, 146, 147, 152, 156.

Manifestation of God. As the exclusive intermediaries between God and creation, the great Prophets represent the Godhead and express His divinity. Prophecies about the eschatological advent of God refer to them and to Bahā'u'llāh in particular for, as the "Most Great Theophany" (ḡuhūr i- a`ḡam), he has been manifested in every age and cycle with a particular Name, and appeared on the "Day of God." Despite the fact that "He Who Conversed with the Speaker (mukallim-i kalim) [Moses]" disclosed the "Greatest Name" (ism-i a`ḡam) or identity of Bahā'u'llāh, souls have remained veiled from him.

About half way through his Tablet of the Essence of Praise, Bahā'u'llāh mentions how different religious factions have been held back from faith on account of his various claims to "Prophethood" (nubuwwa), "Guardianship" (wilāya), and "Divinity" (ulūhiyya). He expresses astonishment that Jews, Christians, and other communities in possession of a Holy Book object to his claim to divinity and writes: "Say: O thou who art dumb! Hast thou not heard the Call of God from the [Sinaitic] Tree (al-shajara) raised up from the Luminous Spot (al-buq`a al-nūrā), "No God is there except Him." Then consider this and be not such as hearken but fail to comprehend ". It is implied that Bahā'u'llāh's claim to divinity was foreshadowed on Sinai. [153]

In defending the legitimacy of his claim to divinity, Bahā'u'llāh also quotes and comments on that line of the "blessed Sermon of the Gulf which shone

forth from the horizon of the heaven of guardianship [Imam `Alī]" in which the advent of "He Who conversed with Moses" (mukallim mūsā) on Sinai is mentioned. He stresses the importance of this prophecy and declares that through it "all the peoples of the world were given the glad-tidings of the [eschatological] manifestation of God (ḡuhūr Allāh)." Referring to himself, he explains: "Today He Who conversed with Moses (mukallim mūsā) hath appeared and hath cried out, `I, verily am God.'" That a Prophet of God would be made manifest and make such claims is, Bahā'u'llāh also argues, anticipated in various Islamic traditions (ḡadīth) and quranic texts. The "Day of Resurrection" is the time of the rising up of the "Manifestation of the Self of God" (mazḡhar-i nafs Allāh).

c) Epistle to the Son of the Wolf (Lawḡ-i ibn-i dhi'b):

This epistle to Shaykh Muhammad Taqī Najāfī has already been mentioned and quoted from. It is fairly rich in Sinaitic and related theological materials ²⁵⁴ and contains an important section on the question of

²⁵⁴ Text in Lawḡ-i Shaykh, p. 49; trans. ESW, p. 41 (cf. fn. 224 above). Worth noting at this point is the fact that in his Lawḡ-i milād-i ism-i a`ḡam (text cited in MA, Vol. 4, pp. 342-346), Bahā'u'llāh wrote, "...He [Bahā'u'llāh] hath been born Who neither begeteth nor is begotten." (See Qur`ān 112:3; originally designed to counter Christian incarnationalism [p. 344]). This claim of Bahā'u'llāh is a striking illustration of the Bahā'ī doctrine that whatsoever is said about God in the Holy Books revolves around the transcendent "Logos-Self" of the Manifestation or Messenger of God; God in his essence being unknowable and absolutely transcendent.

Bahā'u'llāh's claim to divinity. About a quarter of the way through his treatise, Bahā'u'llāh records that either Shaykh Muhammad or some other opponent of the Bahā'ī Cause had suggested that the quranic Sura of the Divine Unity (Sūrat at-tawhīd, Qur'ān 112) be translated [into Persian], to the end that it may be clear to all that "the one true God begetteth not, nor is He begotton." This was with a view to countering the assertions of such "Bābīs" (i.e., Bahā'īs) as "believe in his [Bahā'u'llāh's] Divinity (rubūbiyya, lit., Lordship) and Godhood (or Divinity, ulūhiyya)." ²⁵⁵

Immediately after recording such views, Bahā'u'llāh defends his claim to divinity in the following terms: "This station [Divinity] is the station in which one dieth to himself (fanā' az nafs) and liveth in God (baqā' bi-Allāh)." ²⁵⁶ His exalted [154] claims are indicative of his utter self-effacement before God and not of his own identity with the Absolute Godhead. Outside of an acceptance of the legitimacy of his claim to divinity, the prophetically and mystically understood accounts of the theophany (tajallī) before the Mount, and of the declaration of divinity from the "Bush," lose their meaning--given that the absolute Godhead was not personally involved: "O Shaykh," Bahā'u'llāh asks Shaykh Muhammad Taqī, "How do the [Muslim] divines of this age account

²⁵⁵ Lawḥ-i Shaykh, p. 49; trans. ESW, p. 41.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 50; trans. ESW, p. 41.

for the effulgent glory (tajalliyāt, lit., 'theophanic splendors') which the Sidrat [LoteTree] of Utterance hath shed upon the Son of `Imrān [Moses] on the Sinai of Divine knowledge (ṭūr-i `irfān)? He [Moses] hearkened unto the Word (kalimat) which the Burning Bush (sidrat, lit., Lote-Tree) had uttered, and accepted it; and yet most men are bereft of the power of comprehending this, inasmuch as they have busied themselves with their own concerns, and are unaware of the things which belong to God" ²⁵⁷ Moses, in other words, accepted the claim to divinity made from a "Bush," while souls find it difficult to accept the claim to divinity made by Bahā'u'llāh. This, despite that Islamic tradition which has it that in the latter days souls shall behold "their Lord" as clearly as they behold the "full moon on its fourteenth night" and the prophecy contained in the Sermon on the Gulf (which is again quoted by Bahā'u'llāh.²⁵⁸

Having made these points, and others besides, Bahā'u'llāh states that the people have failed to perceive his purpose in making reference to his "Divinity" (ulūhiyya) and "Godhood" (rubūbiyya). His having made such claims is perfectly legitimate in the light of claims to "Divinity" made by Muhammad and the Imams (recorded in Shī'ī literatures). Opponents have stirred up controversy, furthermore, by referring to his most elevated claims, without taking into account the fact that other less exalted claims had been disclosed

²⁵⁷ Refer, *ibid.*; pp. 50, 51; trans. ESW, pp. 41-42.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 53; trans. ESW, p. 44.

by the "Abhā Pen" (Bahā'u'llāh). In order to illustrate his lowliness before God, Bahā'u'llāh writes: "In truth I say, and for the sake of God I declare: This servant, this Wronged One, is abashed to [155] claim for Himself any existence whatever, how much more those exalted grades of being!" ²⁵⁹ His claims to "Servitude" (ʿubūdiyya) do not, however, overrule his claims to "Divinity" (ulūhiyya). Both sets of claims are made by the Manifestations of God who, though they may say, "I, verily, am God," as representatives of the unknowable Godhead, yet remain servants of that Absolute Being. In explaining such theological subtleties, Bahā'u'llāh quotes the sixth Imam, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, as having said: "Servitude (al-ʿubūdiyya) is a substance the essence of which is Divinity (al-rubūbiyya)." ²⁶⁰ It is in view of such arguments that Bahā'u'llāh can confidently declare in his Epistle to the Son of the Wolf: "The Sun of Utterance beameth forth in this day, above the horizon of bounty, and the radiance of the Revelation of Him Who spoke on Sinai

²⁵⁹ Cited in *ibid.*, p. 131; trans. ESW, p. 111. This tradition is frequently quoted in early Shaykhī literature; sometimes as a means of upholding a doctrine of the subordinationalist divinity of the Imams.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 76; trans. ESW, p. 65.

(nūr-i zuhūr-i mukallim-i tūr) [Bahā'u'llāh] flasheth and glisteneth before all religions." ²⁶¹

Bahā 'u 'llāh as YHWH "Jehovah " and Exodus 3:

The majority of the writings of Bahā'u'llāh discussed in the previous pages have contained Sinaitic materials closely related to Islamic and Bābī sources. Other epistles do, however, contain paragraphs in which Bahā'u'llāh interprets and expresses his claims in the light of the biblical account of the call of Moses and theophany of YHWH "Jehovah." With the conversion of a considerable body of Iranian Jewry to the Bahā'ī Faith from the early 1870s, and the publication of Cornelius Van Dyck and Eli Smith's Arabic translation of the Bible (Beirut, 1865) (later editions were available to Bahā'u'llāh), Bahā'u'llāh came to dictate Tablets for Jews directly informed by biblical materials.

A Tablet of Bahā'u'llāh written as if by his amanuensis Mīrzā Āqā Jān Khadīmu'llāh and addressed to a Bahā'ī referred to as Khalīl is of particular interest. Its opening Arabic section was revealed in honor of a certain Ḥakīm - -most probably a Jewish convert to the Bahā'ī Faith -- and may be

²⁶¹ For the text, full provisional translation, and some detailed notes on the Arabic section of this epistle of Bahā'u'llāh, see Lambden, "The Mysteries of the Call of Moses."

characterised as a mystical exegesis of Exodus 3 and 6:3 [156] (Arabic version).²⁶² Within it, key texts drawn from the biblical account of the call of Moses and relating to God's disclosure of his identity to the patriarchs and to Moses are associated with the disclosure of the Greatest Name (bahā') or identity of Bahā'u'llāh in primordial times (mystic pre-eternity). It opens with a paragraph in which mention is made of the archetypal beauty of the pre-Mosaic Prophets whose creation is linked with God's theophany as "Almighty God," the El Shaddai of Exodus 6:3.²⁶³ The scene is set for mention of God's appearance to Moses and His declaration, "Moses, Moses, I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Exodus 3:4b + 6a Arabic version). Bahā'u'llāh says that Moses was greatly moved by this declaration and "veiled his face, being unable to look at Him [God]." (See Exodus 3:6b + quranic parallels.) On account of it, he swooned away, thunderstruck for a period of 81,000 years (9 x 9 x 1,000; a symbolic figure) until "his Lord" revived him, and he glorified Him for 9,000,000 years (another symbolic figure; cf. Qur'ān 20:14, 7:143b).²⁶⁴

²⁶² See p. 72ff, and fn. 19 above.

²⁶³ Without going into details (see my article mentioned in fn. 261 above) the vast periods of time mentioned by Bahā'u'llāh refer to "mystic preeternity" and are symbolic.

²⁶⁴ For the text, see Lambden, "The Mysteries of the Call of Moses," pp. 42-3/47. Cf., p. 62ff.

Then, called again from the "Supreme Horizon," Moses was commissioned by God to make Him known to His "hidden people" in the celestial realms or "timeless" preeternal sphere. A difficult paragraph follows which forms a kind of counterpart to and transcendentalization of Moses' being called to liberate the Israelites in bondage in Egypt (cf. Exodus 3:7-11 Arabic text) and Exodus 3:13-15 is exegetically paraphrased:

Then the One Who conversed with God [Moses] presented His plight unto the Lord, the Ancient: "If I come unto them [the people] and say to them, "Your Beloved hath sent me unto you," and they ask me "What is His name?", what reply shall I give to them?"

Then did the mighty Divine Realm (lāhūt) quake, the Heavenly Dominion (jabarūt) of Power shake, and the kingdom (malakāt) of loftiness and exaltedness swoon away. The most exalted heaven [157] of heavens trembled by reason of the [divine] call which was raised from the hidden Retreat of [God's] Grandeur. The Voice of the Lord caused every ancient mountain to tremble. [Cf. Qur'ān 7:143]

Say [O Moses, to the people]: "I am He Who is I AM WHO I AM ('ehyeh 'asher 'ehyeh). I AM hath sent me [Moses] unto you." [See Exodus 3:14 Hebrew + Arabic.] O Moses! This Thou shalt say to the thirsty ones who desire the Kawthar (Fount) of union with Me: "YHWH (Jehovah), your Beloved, hath sent Me [Moses] unto you in order that I might give you the glad tidings of His [future] advent, His [spiritual] nearness, and of the [eschatological] attainment of His Presence." ²⁶⁵

²⁶⁵ Translated from an unpublished and uncatalogued manuscript of epistles of Bahā'u'llāh (photocopy in this author's possession).

It seems to be presupposed in this paragraph that God's making himself known to Moses as "I AM WHO I AM" and YHWH "Jehovah" was with a view to the Israelite Prophet making his presence and future advent as Bahā'u'llāh known to the denizens of the mystic realm. The Divine Being who appeared to Moses and made Himself known as the God of the Patriarchs and YHWH will, Bahā'u'llāh subsequently states, not be known by His name Bahā' (the Greatest Name) until "the end of all ages" (eschatological times). Exodus 3: 13-15 and 6:3 are paraphrased by Bahā'u'llāh so as to express a progressive disclosure of the names of the Divine Being Who spoke from the Burning Bush culminating in the announcement of the expected advent of El Shaddai/YHWH as one bearing the "Hidden Name," Bahā', namely, Bahā'u'llāh.

In a number of his epistles of the late West Galilean (ʿAkkā) period, Bahā'u'llāh clearly claimed to be YHWH, the Divinity Who conversed with Moses from the burning bush and whose eschatological advent as "YHWH of hosts" ("the Lord of hosts") was predicted by the Israelite prophets. In, for example, the following lines addressed to a Jewish convert to the Bahā'ī Faith named Āqā Jān, Bahā'u'llāh writes:

The Face of the Ancient One [Bahā'u'llāh] hath turned towards the sages (ḥukamā') in the Land of al-hā' and al-mīm [Hamādān, in ^[158] Iran] and announceth unto them the glad-tidings of the Riḍvān (Paradise) of God, the Lord of all the worlds: "By God! He Who hath been named YHWH "Jehovah" in the Torah hath come. ²⁶⁶

On similar lines is the following extract from an epistle of Bahā'u'llāh to the Bahā'ī poet `Andalīb (and others):

He [Bahā'u'llāh] it is Who, in the Old Testament (Torah) hath been named YHWH "Jehovah". ²⁶⁷

A good many passages are to be found in the Tablets of the late West Galilean (`Akkā) period in which Bahā'u'llāh refers to himself as "the Lord (YHWH) of hosts" (Arabic: rabb al-junūd). One such passage reads as follows:

This is the Day in which He Who cried out on the Mount (munādī al-ṭūr) hath held converse and the Lord of Hosts (rabb al-junūd) proclaimed before all the world: "No God is there except Me, the Mighty, the Knowing." ²⁶⁸

²⁶⁶ Text in AQA, Vol. 2, p. 28; trans. Shoghi Effendi, cited in *The Dispensation of Bahā'u'llāh*, p. 13 (adapted).

²⁶⁷ Text in *ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁶⁸ See `Abdu'l-Bahā, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, pp. 17-23 (Letter of `Abdu'l-Bahā, dated April 19, 20, and 22, 1916).

`Abdu'l-Bahā specifically identified the Biblical "Lord of Hosts" with his father and spoke of the "hosts" as the stalwart members of the Bahā'ī community.

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CONCLUDING NOTE

In the light of the foregoing it should be clear that Moses/Sinai motifs rooted in the Bible and the Qur'ān were given a wide range of interpretations by the Bāb and Bahā'u'llāh. They reinterpreted, in terms of their respective missions, those quranic texts that narrate the episode of the call of Moses, often presupposing that it has deep allegorical and mystical levels of meaning. While they underlined the incomprehensibility and transcendence of the Absolute Godhead they yet understood the theophany before the Mount recorded in Qur'ān 7:143, and rooted in Exodus 33:18-23, in the light [159] of their own manifestations in eschatological times. Each claimed divinity in the light of God's declaration from the "Tree" or "Burning Bush," and in this respect they made reference to the prophecy attributed to Imām `Alī about the theophany of "He Who Converses with Moses" on Sinai.

The Bāb's claim to be the "Gate" and Bahā'u'llāh's oft voiced claim to be the "Speaker on Sinai" were made in the light of the typological repetition of the call of Moses in the "Holy Vale." Such are but a few of the key points

²⁶⁹ `Abdu'l-Bahā', cited in Shoghi Effendi, *The Dispensation of Bahā'u'llāh*, p. 38.

which emerge from the study of the Sinaitic materials within the massive corpus of Bābā and Bahā'ī scripture. Of course, not all the points made in this paper can be discussed here.

Finally, it is important to note that, in addition to the many passages within the writings of the Bāb and Bahā'u'llāh that are expressive of a "Sinaitic theology," there exist certain writings of `Abdu'l-Bahā (d. 1921) and Shoghi Effendi (d. 1957) that contain important exegetical statements. The former, for example, showed himself fully aware of his father's claims when he wrote: "...the Blessed Beauty [Bahā'u'llāh] is the One promised by the sacred Books of the past, the revelation of the Source of light that shone upon Mount Sinai, Whose fire glowed in the midst of the Burning Bush." ²⁷⁰

Shoghi Effendi, to quote but one extract from a letter expressive of his interpretation of the Sinaitic dimensions of Bahā'u'llāh's claims, has stated:

Bahā'u'llāh is not the intermediary between the other Manifestations [of God] and God. Each has His own relation to the Primal Source [God]. But in the sense that Bahā'u'llāh is the greatest Manifestation to yet appear, the One who consummates the Revelation to Moses, He was the One Moses conversed with in the Burning Bush. In other words, Bahā'u'llāh identifies the glory of the God-Head on that occasion with Himself. No distinction can be

²⁷⁰ From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, dated October 19, 1947, cited in *The Unfolding Destiny of the British Bahā'ī Community*, p. 448.

made amongst the Prophets in the sense that They all proceed [160] from one Source [God], and are of one essence. But their stations and functions in this world are different.

It is clear from this letter that the present Bahā'ī viewpoint is that Bahā'u'llāh's claim to be "He Who conversed with Moses," with its implications of divinity, does not signify that the Founder of the Bahā'ī Faith acted as an intermediary between other great Messengers of God and the absolute Godhead; neither, as we have seen, does it assert his own identity with the unknowable God. Rather, as has also been pointed out, it implies that Bahā'u'llāh fulfills the Mosaic faith and appeared on the eschatological "Day of God" as the manifestation, but not incarnation, of divinity.

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The Bāb = Sayyid `Alī Muhammad Shīrāzī (1819-1850 CE).

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