

Twin Shining Lights Pt. 2: Sayyid Kazim al-Husayni al-Rashti (d. Karbala, 1259/1843).

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Like the Bab, Sayyid Kazim al-Husayni al-Rashti was a descendent of the third, martyred Imam Husayn (d. 60/680). Little is known about his early life save that he was born in Rasht, a city in northern Persia. His precise year of birth remains unknown. Estimates for his birthday vary by as much as fifteen years, from between 1198/1784 and 1214/1799-1800. It might thus be said that he was born around the mid. 1780s (c. 1199/1784 or 5) or some time in the early 1200s AH / 1790s CE. The date of his death which was in Karbala (Iraq) is firmly established as having happening in 1259 [60] /1843 [4], a little more than five and a half months (CE) before the Bab declared his mission in his Shiraz house to Mulla Husayn Bushru'i (May 22, 1844). Authorities thus differ only a little regarding the exact day of Sayyid Kazim's death, though it can confidently asserted that he died in very late 1259 or very early 1260, perhaps on the last day of 1843 or on the first day of 1844.

It was while he was a young teenager visiting Yazd, between c.1810-1815 (?), that Sayyid Kazim became a staunch disciple and champion of the elevated status and inspired doctrinal viewpoints of Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsa'i. These Shaykh-centered perspectives he championed and defended throughout his life in Iran and Iraq. He consolidated and established the Shaykhi phenomenon.

Like his master teacher, Sayyid Kazim wrote a great deal in Arabic and Persian. The number of works has been conservatively catalogued by one of the twentieth century

Shaykhi leaders, the sixth Kirmani Shaykhi leader, as amounting to 172 items. Very few of these works have been studied by western academics or by Baha'is. Until recent times very few of al-Rashti's works had been printed; apart, that is, from a few 19th century lithograph editions and compilations of great importance.

Among his most important works is his Dalil al-mutahayyirin (Evidence for the Perplexed), which was written in 1258/1842 in defense of the purpose and position of Shaykh Ahmad. The polymathic knowledge of al-Ahsa'i is asserted as is his fundamental orthodoxy within the realms of a twelver Shi'i universe of discourse.

His Sharh Du'a al-simat (Commentary on the Prayer of the Signs) of Sayyid Kazim is a lengthy phrase by phrase or word by word exegesis of an Arabic supplication transmitted by the fifth and sixth Imams, Muhammad al-Baqir (d. c.126/743) and Ja'far al-Sadiq (d. c 48/765). Among the beautiful passages within this prayer is the following text which at times reflects or is modelled upon the Biblical verse Deut. 33:2 :

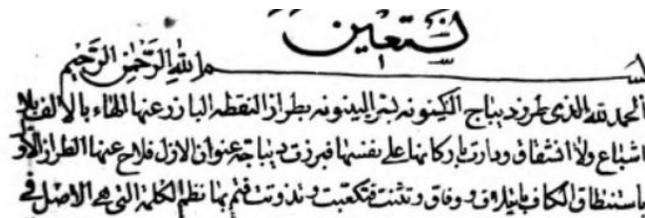
اللهم بمجدك الذي كلمت به عبدك ورسولك موسى بن عمران في المقدسين فوق إحساس الكرويين،
فوق عمائم النور فوق تابوت الشهادة في عمود النور وفي طور سيناء وفي جبل حوريث في الواد
المقدس في البقعة المباركة من جانب الطور الأيمن من الشجرةك وفي أرض مصر بتسع آيات
بينات،

I beseech Thee, O my God! by Thy Glory (majd) through which Thou did converse with Thy servant and Thy messenger Moses son of `Imran in the sanctified [Sinaitic] regions (al-muqaddasin) beyond the ken of the cherubim (al-karubiyyin), above the clouds of Light beyond the Ark of the Testament (al-tabut al-shahada) within the Pillars of Light. And in Mount Sinai (tur sina') and Mount Horeb (jabal al-hurib) in the sanctified Vale (al-wad al-muqaddas), in the Blessed Spot (al-buq'at al-mubarak) in the direction of the Mount [Sinai] (al-tur) situated at the right-hand side of the Bush [Tree]. And likewise [he conversed] in the land of Egypt through nine Luminous Verses (ayat bayyinat)...

Certain of Sayyid Kazim's comments upon this passage will be surveyed in this presentation, as will aspects of his explanations of the al-ism al-a`zam (the Greatest Name) reference towards the beginning of this important prayer. This will be

supplemented with a presentation of select statements made by Sayyid Kazim upon the graphic Shi'i form of the Greatest Name so often cited by the Bab in his numerous writings.

It is believed by Baha'is that Sayyid Kazim intimated the importance of the word baha' (viewed by Baha'is as the Greatest Name of God), at the very beginning of his Sharh al-Qasida al-Lamiyya (Commentary on the Ode Rhyming in the Letter "L") a poetical writing by a certain 'Abd al-Baqi Mawsili (of Mosul). The text of this commentary opens as follows:



In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

Praise be to God who ornamented the brocade of existence with the mystery of differentiation (sirr al-baynunat) by virtue of the ornament (tiraz) of the emergent Point (al-nuqtat al-bariz, at the base of the letter "B" = ب) from which comes the letter "H" (al-ha' = ه) through the letter "A" | (bi'l-alif) without filling up (ishba') or segregation [splitting] (inshiqaq)....

Above is a translation of the scan from the opening page of the 1270/1853 lithograph edition of this Sharh al-qasida. Its opening lines following the basmala have been interpreted within Babi-Baha'i literatures. Baha'u'llah has interpreted them in a scriptural Tablet to Mulla `Ali Bajistani (cited Ishraq Khavari, Ma'ida 7:139) as does his son and successor `Abbas Effendi, `Abd al-Baha' in his Tafsir on the basmala. It is viewed as a cryptic, acrostic spelling out the Arabic word baha' (= B ب + H ه + A | [+ ء = hamza], conjoined spelling = بهاء baha') which they viewed as the quintessence of the al-ism al-a`zam, the Mightiest or Greatest Name of God.

In this presentation a few aspects of the life and writings of Sayyid Kazim will be presented along with some aspects of his importance within the Shi`i-Shaykhi, Babi and Baha'i religions.

