

the outcome of whose activity the whole world will follow the true religion, namely Islam, Sunnī Islam.

The Shíʿites are more specific as far as the identity of the mahdí is concerned. Unlike the Sunna, the Shíʿite mahdí is still alive, he is the twelfth imám, who until his reappearance to fulfill his major function, is hidden in the mystery of his “greater occultation.” But when he appears he also will fill the world with justice and bring it under God’s true religion, presumably Islam in its Shíʿite version.

Jesus also plays a role in the drama of the end of days according to Islam, mainly in its Sunnī version. He also appears at the end of days next to, or with, the mahdí, mainly to clear the world of the major opponent of the mahdí, the Dajjál, the false messiah, the Anti-Christ. In all three or four versions of the apocalypse of the End of Days, the appearance of the ultimate redeemer is connected with the final battle between the forces of evil and those of righteousness. This battle, which assumes different names and takes place at various sites in the Holy Land, ending with the victory of the good side over the evil one, must precede messianic times. [See in Detail N. Cohn, *The pursuit of the Millennium*, London [1962], pp. 1-21 and throughout the book.]

Observing that the world is full of evil, and yearning for its redemption, religious thinkers were induced to look for clues in the scriptures, and transmitted tradition in order to calculate the exact era of messianic times. Each one of the religions mentioned above, Jewish, Christian and Islamic, tried to calculate the time of the arrival of as-sáʿah — the “Hour” if we use the Arabic-Islamic term; aʿarithayamím — the “End of Days,” or yemothamashiyaʿ — “The Days of the messiah” or just haketz — “The End,” in Hebrew, if we use the Jewish term. Similarly “the Millennium,” and the “Second advent” used in the Christian eschatology [ibid, pp. 13f.]. The search was for two different signs foretelling the approach of the final redemption. One related to its circumstances — unusual occurrences
End of Days

315

or major events of colossal magnitude including moral corruption; the second was the actual mathematical calculation of the exact date in which the messianic age should be expected.

It is interesting that these calculations, somehow, led those who were engaged in them to reach the conclusion that their calculations pointed to their own time as the time of redemption, the messianic era and the time of the appearance of God’s revealed, guided, inspired and even manifested, promised one. William Miller, for instance, fixed the end of 1843 and the beginning of 1844 as the date of Jesus’ second coming. In Judaism there were such calculations, mostly in times of great stress and persecution. Each such calculation ended with disappointment. Some Talmudic scholars tried to stop the

repeated exercise of the “calculation of the End” and the activities of “calculators of the End” (mehashevekitzin) by bringing proofs that “the Holy One blessed be He will not renew his world before 5000 or 7000 years (have passed since creation)” [BT, Sanhedrin 97b]. However, some scholars want to be more specific. An old document in Hebrew, they said, was found in the Roman archives, in which it was stated that “the world will come to an end 4291 years after the creation” [ibid.]. In Sunni Islam, the calculation of the End is described in great detail in the hadith, and is based on the division of Islamic history into two cycles (dawlah): a short one of one hundred years and a long one of an unspecified period. The short one is based on a ḥadīth that states that God sends a “renewer” at the beginning of every century to revive the collapsing Islam.” At the beginning of each century, Allah will send to this nation someone to renew its religion: inna allah sayab athiláhdhihi al-umma, ‘ala ra’s kull qarn man yujaddidlahá dínaha. The second indication of the end of days, or the “Hour” in Sunni Islam is not connected with a date but with some major event, which will initiate the period of wars preceding the final redemption.

In Judaism, “the calculators of the end” based their calculations on the Book of Daniel, chapters 7, 9 and 12, where the cryptic language, and the no less cryptic numbers, have excited and challenged these calculators. They have been attracting them to the present day. Already in the early third century, Talmudic scholars attempted to stop the practice of apocalyptic calculations because they felt that they involved disappointment on the one hand, and hasty activity such as attempting revolt, which ended usually with

316 Lights of Irfán vol. 19

national disaster. The irresponsibility of such calculations could also lead to blasphemy. For if according to the calculators the Messiah was to come at a certain date, and he did not come then some people could conclude that he would never come, which would be a denial of one of the articles of faith — the belief in the coming of the Messiah. In the language of the Talmud: “Accursed are the calculators of the End for they used to say: since the End has come (according to the calculations) and he (the Messiah) has not come, it follows that he will not come.” This negates the obligation to say, “even if he tarries, I shall wait for him” [ibid.].

However, in institutionalized Judaism, Christianity and Islam, it is generally believed that since the true redeemer has not yet come; there is no need, therefore, to prove the authenticity of anyone who claims to be the promised one. Yet, in more than one case in modern times, there appeared claimants to messianic status who created a need for such proofs, namely objective sources proving such claims beyond doubt. The proofs are needed mainly to ward off the attacks of opponents, but they also help to strengthen the faith of believers.

One of such cases is that of the Mormon religion in which the claim of Joseph Smith was supported by the mysterious gold plates that only he could read and translate. It was the testimony of eleven people who vowed that they had seen the tablets with their own eyes that established their existence, and therefore firmly supported the claim of Joseph Smith's prophecy, which led to the foundation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints [see "Testimony of three and eight witnesses," Book of Mormon].

The case of the Bábí-Bahá'í faiths is particularly significant in this regard. A few proofs were needed to confirm the claims of the Báb and then Bahá'u'lláh. Both claimed to have been prophets and the manifestations of God. During their lifetime, their claims were based on, and reinforced by, their personalities, writings and sayings. In the case of the Báb, at least, there were also the circumstances of his appearance. The Báb put his claim forward on a very significant date for the Shí'ah, in the year of 1260 of the Hijrah, a thousand years after the disappearance of the 12th imám, the hidden mahdí. Towards the year 1260 AH, and particularly during this exact year, the Messianic expectations in the Shí'ah soared high, and the Báb could well present himself as a Sá'ibaz-Zamán, the master of time. The

End of Days

317

proof that he was indeed divinely inspired was put forward when he wrote in Arabic a mystical interpretation of the Súrat Yúsuf, the 12th Súrah of the Qur'án, right in front of the amazed eyes of Óusayn Bushrú'í, who became his first disciple.

The short ministry of the Báb needed no external, independent proofs. His writings were the best proof, particularly the Bayán, his major opus. His recognition as a Sayyid, namely the acceptance of his genealogy as the descendent of the Prophet, and particularly his imprisonment far away from his disciples which conferred on him the aura of mystical occultation (ghaybah) reserved until then only for the Hidden Mahdí, added to the establishment of his claim to mahdíhood, and to even more.

Bahá'u'lláh openly claimed to be the manifestation of God, and the promised one of all ages and all creeds. During his lifetime he had no need for external proofs, his charismatic personality, his prophetic writings, and his firm claim for divine station were sufficient to secure this status. After he passed away, however, Abdu'l-Bahá', his son and heir, felt that in spite of the fact that a growing Bahá'í community worshiped his father, it was still necessary to delve into the former scriptures, and look for the proofs for his claim. Like calculators of the End before him (including William Miller) he concluded that the best proof could be the one that would show the correlation between the dates of the revelations of the Báb and of Bahá'u'lláh, and the dates found in the cryptic prophecy of Daniel.

he wrote his “Five Statements of Daniel on the Redemption” (???????)

?)????? ?????? ?? ???????. He regarded the year 1917, or 5677 of the

Jewish calendar, as the year of global redemption, but particularly the long awaited redemption of Israel. According to his calculation, all the numbers in Daniel’s prophecies lead to the same conclusion –that the Hebrew year 5677 definitely signifies Messianic times. He goes so far as to suggest that the number 1335 in Daniel 12:12, “Blessed be he that waiteth and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days,” refers to the Hijrah year equivalent to 1917 CE. “It is possible that this number hints to the date counted by the Mohammedans, the rulers of the Holy Land, from then until now, which comes to one thousand three hundred and thirty five.”

320

Lights of Irfán vol. 19

Abdu’l-Bahá by the way does not refer to this number. [For an interesting Christian interpretation of the same date see The New Scofield Reference Bible, Daniel 12:12, note 3.] Ben ‘Uliel, however, does refer to 1290 which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’ calculates as the time from the proclamation of Mohammad’s mission until the proclamation of Bahá’u’lláh in 1280 AH (1863). ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’ does not refer to the whole verse in Daniel 12:11, which speaks about 1290 (days/years) which will elapse from “the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away and the abomination that maketh desolate set up.” For Ben ‘Uliel this entire verse is important for establishing his calculation based on the general, not the Muslim calendar. This verse mentions two events — the taking away of the daily sacrifice (in the Temple) and the setting up of the destructive “abomination.” In between the two, he adds the destruction of the Temple, about ten years after the abolition of the sacrifice. The “abomination that maketh desolate” according to his understanding, is the mosque built by caliph ‘Umar on the Temple Mount (meaning the Dome of the rock which was built over the site, that is generally regarded as the location of the Holy of Holies in the Temple.). This took place, he says, in 637 when ‘Umar conquered Jerusalem. Now the calculation up to 1290 adds up as follows:

From the abolition of the daily sacrifice to the destruction of the Temple: 10 years

From the conquest of Jerusalem by ‘Umar until Ben ‘Uliel’s present: 1280 years

In this way, says Ben ‘Uliel, Daniel’s verse points directly to 1917 (1280 + 637), his own time, interpreting the whole verse rather than only using the number 1290. I quoted Ben ‘Uliel to show that the Book of Daniel can be easily manipulated to serve the needs of the user. It is, however, interesting that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’ turns to the Bible

when searching for proofs from a sacred text. For the Western faithful, this has been surely convincing.

Until now I have not dealt with the involvement of the Bahá'í Jews in supplying proofs for the validation of the manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh. A very interesting manuscript, which came to my attention some time ago, triggered the present discussion.

End of Days

321

The manuscript is a one page document in Hebrew, Judeo Arabic and Aramaic. It surfaced in the antiquities market in Jerusalem. Its owner, an antique dealer, demanded for it an exorbitant price. Since the document is still in his possession, I cannot publish it. I was able to make, however, a copy of it. The writer of this document is a Jewish convert to the Bahá'í faith who brings proofs that the actual name Bahá'u'lláh is no less than the representation of the most secret, the most holy name of the Lord in Hebrew consisting of the four letters, the tetragrammaton, which no Jew is allowed to pronounce. The true vowels of this sacred name has been intentionally obscured to prevent its exact pronunciation. Instead the vowels of the word Adonai ("my Lord") was attached to the four consonants of the Lord's name creating a bizarre meaningless combination. The usage in western languages of the pronunciation "Jehovah" or "Yahweh" is based on these purposefully confusing vowels. Even the writing of the four consonants outside the realm of sacred writing is not allowed. In post-Biblical literature we are told that only the high priest could pronounce the name of the Lord in its correct form, and only on the Day of Atonement and only next to the holiest place in the Temple.

In this document, the Jewish writer has no such restrictions.

Bahá'u'lláh is the Lord in his most majestic, secret and mystical name Y-H-W-H. The document begins with the four letters, the tetragrammaton, and under these letters we read "YHWH" which is

the exact transliteration of the Arabic "YHWH". The article al in

Hebrew is written in small letters above the text; the real name should accordingly be read without the article, Bahá Abhá in Arabic "YHWH". The numerical value of these letters

(2+5+1+1+2+5+10)

is 26, which is the exact numerical value of the tetragrammaton (10+5+6+5=26). In other words "YHWH" (note that "YHWH")

"YHWH" is the exact

transliteration of the Arabic "YHWH". For a Jew this is no less than

pure impudent blasphemy. Following this we read:

"YHWH" "YHWH" "YHWH" "YHWH" Welcome Adonai (the Lord)

Y-H-W-H.”

The four letters beginning the four Hebrew words create the acronym Y-H-W-H — YHVH Bahai. The same is repeated at the end of the document where this acronym is specified.

322

Lights of Irfán vol. 19

The text then continues in Judeo-Arabic and Aramaic written in Hebrew letters: ha bisharat hadrati rabbina wa moshí’ ana bahá elohayah. This is the good tidings of our Lord and Saviour Bahá (splendor) of God. The word Saviour is in Hebrew with the Arabic possessive ending in the plural. Instead of al-Abhá which in the Arabic means the “most glorious”, “most splendid” referring to God and to Bahá’u’lláh in the designation “Bahá’ al-Abhá” — the glorious of the most glorious, the Hebrew/Aramaic text has the word elohayah — God, and the combination for Bahá’u’lláh — The splendor of God (bahá elohayah). This one sentence is a statement repeating the idea which defines Bahá’u’lláh as both the Lord and the Saviour.

The usage of the Hebrew moshíya? to denote “saviour” is important, for it comes from the list of the adjectival appellations of the God of Israel, defined in the first Benediction of the daily “Eighteen Benedictions Prayer” as ????? ?????

??????????. The word

moshiya? (Gr. ?????) indicates the exalted divine station of Bahá’u’lláh in his capacity as the ultimate Savior. He is described in terms saved for God Himself: “A Helper King, Saviour and Protector.” The text moves to Aramaic quoting the qaddish prayer: yehesh mehrabbahmeborakhle’alam we-’alme’almayah.” May His Great Name (in the original the Lord’s, but here could well mean Bahá’u’lláh) be blessed forever and ever.” The text continues in Hebrew: bishnat shalosh’esrim malkhut Nábir-al Dín Sháh Melekh Paras ...etc.

“In the year twenty three of the rule of Nasir ad Din Shah, the King of Persia, concerning the vision of Daniel, fulfilling his prophecy” (12:11]. “And from the time that the daily sacrifices shall be taken away and the abomination that maketh desolate set up one thousand two hundred and ninety days; every day is a year from the Caliphate of ‘Umar until now and this is in the year 5633 (=1873) of the creation)”. The year 1290 AH is 1873 corresponding to 5633 of the Creation, which the writer identifies as “now”. However, 23 years of the rule of Nábir ad-Dín Sháh is not 1873 but 1871. This date cannot be explained, but could well be a mistake. This date 1873 however is very important for the writer, as we shall soon see.

Here, just as in the calculations of Ben ‘Uliel, we read the name of ‘Umar. Ben Uliel identified “the abomination that maketh desolate” in Daniel’s prophecy, as the mosque of ‘Umar, and it seems that here

also ‘Umar’s Caliphate in general could well be the “abomination.” If one takes into consideration that for the Shí‘ah ‘Umar is probably the most hated figure in the entire Islamic history, this hatred filtered through into the Bábí and Bahá’í thought, and found its way to occupy the place of the “abomination” in Daniel’s vision. One thing seems sure, the 1290 date in this document is not the period of time that elapsed from the time of ‘Umar’s Caliphate but of the time from the Hijrah. It is only thus that we arrive at 5633 corresponding to 1873 the accepted date of the writing of al-Kitáb al-Aqdas. Unless there is a mistake in the dating. The text that follows says:

The majesty of the Divine presence (or the Being) shone and blazed; the light of ‘I am that I am’ glittered, rising, when the mighty and awful God became jealous for the shrine of Zion in the tower of Akko. ‘Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities etc. [Thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of its stakes shall ever be removed neither shall any of its cords be broken. [Isaiah 33:20].’]

In the document, “etc.” is written after ‘solemnities’ leaving the continuation of the very well-known verse (continued here in square brackets) to the reader. In this part the writer describes the appearance of Bahá’u’lláh as ‘rising light’ and his imprisonment in the fortress (“tower”) of ‘Akko as the time when he had the vision of the revival of Jerusalem and the “shrine of Zion” ()????

??????. The language is basically Hebrew to with the Arabic article (“al”) added. For the glitter of light of the new manifestation, the writer uses the Hebrew words???? ?? ?????the light of God Ehyeh, the word by which God defined himself to Moses: “I AM” [Exodus 3:14]. The manifestation is defined by the Hebrew ? ???? ??????the Majesty of Being ()?????.

In the fortress of Akko the angry God is jealous for the temple of Zion. This is an interesting interpretation of the redemptive station of Bahá’u’lláh as an angry god for Zion, and its saviour. In this way, he fulfills the role of the Jewish Messiah who redeems Zion, and heals its wounds. The following paragraph in the text moves again to deal with yet another date connected with the time of redemption:

324 Lights of Irfán vol. 19

Blessed is he who waits and reaches the days of one thousand, three hundred and thirty five days — each day means a year ()????? ??????. Until now (Aramaic: ?) ? ???he

revealed the year
5675 as the [time of] redemption according to the full
calendar.

(In the text —
????? acronym: “according to the lesser calendar
system” namely without the figure of thousands, but it should be
?????, acronym: “according to the full calendar” system including
the
reckoning of the thousands as we have it in the text. Without the
thousands, the date is 675, but the text explicitly gives the full date
with the thousands that is to say 5675.

This is a difficult part. 5675 corresponds to 1915, the middle of
the First World War. The writer uses the Aramaic ? ???? meaning “now,
at this time,” to denote the time of redemption. However it is
possible that he means that the year 1335 of the Hijrah which
corresponds to 1917 is the awaited date of the redemption which is
expected already in 1915 (5675). This brings us back to the
calculations of Ben ‘Uliel from Lisbon who in his own way calculated
that the redemption would occur in 1280 after ‘Umar’s conquest of
Jerusalem (1280 + 637 = 1917). The combination of General Allenby’s
conquest of Jerusalem in 1917, and the Balfour Declaration in the
same year obviously had the qualities of redemption for the Jewish
rabbi, professor and a consul at Lisbon, as well as for our obscure
writer, who at this point breaks into exaltation with the verse of
Isaiah 52:7: “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him
that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good
tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that sayeth unto Zion: Thy
God reigneth!” This verse is used by Christians to mean Jesus and by
Bahá’ís to mean Bahá’u’lláh.

Following this, the writer finishes the happy part of the text by
quoting a verse from a religious hymn sung by the Jews on the
conclusion of Sabbath (Saturday night). Only a Jew could have
thought of including this verse in a text dedicated to Bahá’u’lláh in
his capacity of the harbinger of the redemption of Zion and his
coronation, according to Isaiah, as her king. The harbinger could be
Bahá’u’lláh but it could also be the Báb proclaiming the ascension of
Bahá’u’lláh to the throne of Zion.

End of Days

325

In Jewish tradition, the herald of the Messiah is the zealot prophet
Elijah. He will precede the coming of the Messiah, preparing the way
for him. It is not surprising that the Báb is represented as Elijah. In
Jewish tradition Elijah, who destroyed the priests of the Phoenician
god Ba’al out of jealousy for the God of Israel is likened to the priest
Phineas who is described in the Bible as the ultimate zealot. In reward
for his jealousy, God says: “I give to him my covenant of peace”

[Numbers 25:12]. Of course, it is Moses who brought the divine promise to Phineas, who reappeared, many generations later, as Elijah. This idea is conveyed in the hymn sung at the end of the Sabbath the first verses of which run as follows:

Elijah the Prophet, Elijah the Tishbite, Elijah the Gileadean:
Let him come quickly to us with the messiah, the son of David.

He is a man who was jealous for the name of God; He is a man who received the good tidings of peace by Yekutiel.

Yekutiel is another name of Moses in Jewish tradition. Only a Jew who kept the Sabbath and was well acquainted with the ritual at its conclusion could quote the verses of this hymn, which refer to the Messianic ideas of this document. This in fact could be the end of the document but the writer finishes by emphasizing yet again the divine station of Bahá'u'lláh. For in this hymn the Báb who is Elijah, and beforehand Phineas, was chosen to receive the good tidings by no less than Moses himself. However the text continues with going back to the holy tetragrammaton. Y-H-W-H, he says, is Bahá'u'lláh in gematry, as we saw above. The acronym "Welcome the Lord Y-H-W-H" in Hebrew (???) which we met at the very

beginning of the document), gives us the word Bahá'í. The text

mentions the reference to Daniel 12:11-12, which we dealt with above, and is used here towards the end of the document as a reminder. It ends with a sentence in Aramaic: "It came from the Holy Torah to the people of the world, from the vision of the later prophets who brought the good tidings of Oneness." The meaning of this sentence is more or less clear. The message of Divine unity, brought to the world in general, is found in the Holy Torah and the prophecies of the later prophets meaning, most probably one prophet, Daniel, to whom the reference is supplied. Above of the

326 Lights of Irfán vol. 19

words "vision of the later prophets" the writer inserted two words "visions that bring good tidings" correcting the language of the text under them.

Summary

The Calculation of the End in the anonymous document presented here refers to the same dates used by Ben 'Uliel and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. All three documents refer to the date of a number of years in the esoteric prophecies in the Book of Daniel. The main number is 1290 which appears in the last chapter of the book, chapter 12 verses 11-12. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, regards it to refer to the time that elapsed from the public proclamation of Mo'ammad's mission, ten years before the

hijrah. If we detract 10 years from 1290, we are left with the 1280 years that have elapsed since the hijrah, which corresponds to 1863 CE, the year of Bahá'u'lláh's proclamation at Ri'wán.

Ben 'Uliel refers to the whole verse (12:11) and also detracts 10 years from 1290 — the time that elapsed from the abolishment of the daily sacrifice to the destruction of the Temple. According to him the “abomination” mentioned by Daniel refers to the mosque, which was built by Umar in 637.

The calculation in the anonymous document is similar to Ben Uliel's although the interpretation is none too clear. However, in this document the important parts are dedicated to proving the divinity of Bahá'u'lláh using combinations of letters which demonstrate that the name Bahá'u'lláh is no less than the revered, mystical and great name of the Lord.

— End of Days (Used by permission of the curator)