





when the Prophets said this, they meant for people to know that, by the Command of God, six Prophets would come to this world to command people to work. When the seventh came, he would not command in this manner. Rather, he would reward them for their labours. They called it the Sabbath and declared it sacred.⁴

Thus, according to the *ta'wil*, these days do not concern the creation of the physical universe. They refer to the creation of a spiritual cosmos, a creation that commenced with Adam, who represented the first day of the week, Sunday, and continued with Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus, who represented Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday respectively. Muhammad, who is represented by Friday, brought this creation to its completion.⁵ Yet, to come was the last and final day, which would consummate the entire spiritual creation; a day not meant for the commandment of work, but rather for the allocation of reward and retribution. This was the Sabbath, or Lord of the Resurrection (*Qa'im-i qiyamat*).⁶

People await the advent of the Sabbath, for there will he repose on that day for those who have recognised the reality of these days and who laboured in fulfilment of (the Prophets') command and with knowledge. Those who toil physically in this physical world and know the esoteric meaning of this with their souls today, will be rewarded for it tomorrow in the spiritual world.⁷

The days of creation, in Ismaili thought, were considered the great cycles of prophecy. God's meaning in these verses concerned not the dense world of earthly phenomena, but a world of far greater import, that of religion. In the former, the movement of the celestial spheres marks time, while in the latter, it is marked by the coming of God's messengers, the lords of the



days, the minor cycles, which are the cycles of the Imams.¹⁰ The periods are sometimes differentiated by referring to the major cycle of the Natiq as *dawr*, while referring to the minor cycle of the Imam as *ruzgar* or *zamana*.¹¹ Nasir Khusraw's predecessor, Abu Ya'qub Sijistani, traces six Imams between every two Natiqs, but states that in the period of the sixth Natiq, there will be numerous imams until the coming of the lord of the Sabbath, the Qa'im.¹² In this regard, he must have had in mind the well-known prophetic tradition, equally cited by Nasir, 'If there were to remain of time but a single day, God would prolong that day until there would come a man from among my descendants who would fill the earth with equity and justice even as it has been filled with oppression and injustice.'¹³ That final day, which is prolonged until the coming of the Qa'im, is the day of Muhammad.

Each of the seven lords of the major cycles is an interface between the spiritual world and the physical world. Their bodies are earthly, but their subtle spirits belong to the celestial realm. It is through their subtle spirits that they accept the bounties of that realm, and through their physical bodies that they convey these bounties to the physical world. However, Nasir reminds us, human speech can never capture the reality of the spiritual world, but can only hint at it.¹⁴

In the minor cycle, the Imam and his hujjat, or proof, are the parallels of the Natiq and the Asas in the major cycle. Hence, in *ta'wil*, the symbols associated with the Natiq and the Asas in the major cycle are often related equally to the Imam and the hujjat in the minor cycle. Nasir Khusraw's *ta'wil* of the *adhan*, or call to prayer, may be taken as an example. When proclaiming the



air, fire and water, the human soul is nourished by the four *hadds*, or spiritual dignitaries, the Universal Intellect, the Universal Soul, the Natiq and the Asas. Two of the four elements, air and fire, are subtle, while two, earth and water, are dense. Similarly, two of these *hadds*, the Intellect and the Soul, are spiritual, while two, the Natiq and the Asas, are physical. With respect to the body these latter two are human beings, but with respect to intellect and soul, they are archangels.¹⁶ As in a day the brightness of the moon succeeds that of the sun, in the major cycle, the Natiq is represented by the sun and the Asas by the moon, while in the minor cycle, the Imam is represented by the sun and the hujjat by the moon.¹⁷

The Universal Intellect, the Universal Soul, *jadd*, *fath* and *khayal*, also known as the Pen, the Tablet, Seraphiel, Michael and Gabriel,¹⁸ are the five spiritual *hadds* who are eternal and unchanging. They are ontologically beyond the world of cycles. Paralleling these five spiritual beings in the physical world are the Natiq, the Asas, the Imam, the Bab (gate)¹⁹ and the hujjat. These are the five physical *hadds*, whose status continues in every cycle, or day.²⁰ It was in reference to these five spiritual and physical entities that the Prophet said, 'I received it [i.e., the divine message] from the five and conveyed it to the five.'²¹ The five earthly *hadds* are the recipients of *ta'yid*, or spiritual inspiration, from the celestial *hadds*





of *ta'wil*, the Natiqs were like the Fridays that occur in the cycle of seven days.³⁰ In Arabic, Friday is known as *yawm al-jumu'a*, the day of assembly or gathering, because on that day all the people of the community assemble in one place. Similarly, the Friday prayer signifies the Natiq, because the Natiq is the seventh imam, who gathers within himself the ranks of his six predecessors.³¹ Before reaching his position, the Natiq first passes through the ranks of *mustajib*, *ma'dhun*, *da'i*, *hujjat*, etc., finally attaining the station of a *nabi*, or prophet.³²

The Natiqs are the lords of the revelation (*tanzil*), who convey the light of the Universal Soul in a physical form, i.e., the parables and symbols of the holy books. But each of the Natiqs has a *wasi*, a legatee, who begets a line of imams. These imams are charged with the *ta'wil*, the spiritual interpretation of these parables and symbols back to their primordial form as pure light. Hence, Nasir Khusraw explains, when God speaks of the Prophets in Qur'an 35:25, he speaks in the plural. This is because the *tanzil*, the exoteric revelation, may take different forms. However, when he speaks in the same verse of the Imams, the lords of *ta'wil*, addressing them as the Luminous Book, he uses the singular. This is because the *meaning* of all the revelations is one, regardless of the variety in their modes of expression.³³ Adam's *wasi* was Seth, Noah's was Shem, Abraham's was Ishmael, Moses' was Aaron, Jesus' was Simon Peter and Muhammad's was Ali.³⁴

Every prophet, *wasi* and imam has twelve *hujjats*, who are what are sometimes called the



In his cycle, the Natiq appoints one *hadd*, the Asas, who is the foundation of the esoteric interpretation. The Asas



not explicitly mentioned.⁴⁸

The reference to the throne in the well-known Qur'anic verse, 'Lo! Your lord is God who created the heavens and the earth in six days; then he ascended the Throne...' (7:54) is interpreted by Nasir as symbolic of the *Qa'im*, who is God's throne. God's sitting upon the throne is the fulfilment of his command regarding the *Qa'im-i qiyamat*, who appears after the passing of the six days. It is in this context that God declares, 'Whose is the kingdom today? God's – the One, the Subduer!' (40:16).⁴⁹

According to Nasir Khusraw, the world was generated by the activity of the Universal Soul for the sole purpose of giving birth to a perfect child, the *Qa'im*.⁵⁰ The Qur'an describes six stages in the birthing process of human beings:

We created man of an extraction of clay
then we set him, a drop (of sperm), in a receptacle secure
then we created of the drop a clot
then we created of the clot a tissue
then we created of the tissue bones
then we clothed the bones in flesh

Then, we produced him as a new creation — blessed by God, the best of creators! (23:12-14).

These six stages are seen as parallel to the six *Natiqs* preceding the arrival of the *Qa'im*, who is 'a new creation', a *Natiq* following upon his predecessors, but one who differs from them in his ushering in of the Great Resurrection.⁵¹ When the muezzin faces the *qibla* to call the *adhan*, it is symbolic of the *Natiq* summoning humankind to the Lord of the Resurrection, who is represented by the *qibla*.⁵² The afternoon prayer represents the *Asas*. It commences



prophethood (*nubuwwat*), legateeship (*wasayat*) and resurrection (*qiyamat*). The fact that one of the *rak'ats* is recited separately from the other two indicates that the *Qa'im* holds a rank that neither the *Natiq* nor the *Asas* held.⁵⁶ Expounding on this difference in rank among the seven days, or lords of the cycles, Nasir Khusraw alludes to the Qur'anic notion of the seven heavens. He explains that the six planets⁵⁷ that are visible to the naked eye – Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, Mercury and the Moon - are similar in that they have light. However, it is only the seventh, the sun itself, which has both light and heat. Moreover, in the presence of the sun, the other six disappear from view. Such is the place of the *Qa'im* among the *Natiqs*.⁵⁸

The *Qa'im* is represented by the *'Id al-Adha*, the festival of sacrifice⁵⁹ as well as by the prayer recited on this occasion.⁶⁰ He is the lord of the two worlds, as the inner meaning of the divine scripture is revealed through him and he delivers the believers from the torment of ignorance, extracting symbols from concealment and explaining them. The fact that the expression 'God is Greater' (*Allahu akbar*) is recited five times before the festival prayer indicates that during the cycle of the *Qa'im*, the believers receive benefit directly from the five spiritual *hadds*, the Universal Intellect, the Universal Soul, *Jadd*, *Fath* and *Khayal*.⁶¹ The *ta'wil* of reciting *Allahu akbar* before the festival prayer is that the divine unity and grandeur of God will be revealed to the people through the *Qa'im*.⁶²

The *Qa'im* is from among the descendants of the *Asas*⁶³ and represents the pinnacle and purpose of creation. Because of him, the Universal Soul attains completion and reaches the rank of the Universal Intellect, leading to the annihilation of the physical world.⁶⁴ This is why, in the sitting prayer after the *witr*, two *rak'ats*, representing the two spiritual *hadds*, are recited as one. This indicates that the *Qa'im* has linked the two spiritual *hadds* such that there is no separation between them.

In Nasir Khusraw's view, God accomplished the creation of the world of religion in six days, the cycles of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad. However, the Sabbath, the seventh day, will be such that the wise will achieve felicity, truth will be eternally established, the darkness of ignorance shall be baat,91ati3(e)-5.3(c d)tsi16(shkno)1()-2.2(b5.9(a)dg6.3(s)-, '-5.5

