

# *The Seven Valleys*

Notes from deepening classes by Hand of the Cause, A. Q. Faizi<sup>1</sup>  
(August 1, 1966—Haifa, Israel)

[transcribed by Thomas Wilson and Barbara Clements from  
bahai-library.com/pdf/f/faizi\_seven\_valleys\_deepening\_scan.pdf;  
proofread, formatted, and refined by Mike Thomas (2021)]

## Introduction

*The Seven Valleys* is not one of the major, basic texts of Bahá'u'lláh, such as *The Hidden Words*, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, etc. In beginning a study of *The Seven Valleys*, the reader should know that this particular “tablet” revealed by Bahá'u'lláh is a letter to an individual who was familiar with the terms of the reference in which the letter was written. For our understanding, it will be necessary to learn something of the references appearing in the text that are not familiar to the western reader.

For example, if you say to a westerner, “It was a herculean task”, the hearer will recognize the name “Hercules”; know something of his reputation; and will immediately visualize extraordinary, towering strength. The statement will therefore have a special meaning to the western hearer. If this same statement is made to an oriental, it would have no meaning whatever! Most likely, he has never heard of Hercules.

*The Seven Valleys* contains many references that have a special meaning to the oriental reader, but mean no more to the western reader at first glance than a reference to Hercules might convey to the oriental who knows nothing of this hero.

There is mysticism throughout all the Holy Books. This Book, too, is mystically inclined and makes us think in mystical terms. The history of religion shows us that stories and statements in the Holy Books become cut and dried by the people. Mysticism releases man from these rigid fetters and boundaries.

For example, in the Qur'án it is said that nothing can come to you except that which is written for you. From this text has sprung the cut and dried philosophy of “Why try?” This school of philosophy fails to note that the Qur'án also states that man is born to try and to strive.



## Lesson 1

All oriental books begin with a sermon or with praise of God. So Bahá'u'lláh opens *The Seven Valleys* with a sermon beginning with “Praise be to God Who ...” and ending at the end of the fourth paragraph, “... ‘Then feed on every kind of fruit’”.

We are being prepared in this short sermon to know the Manifestation of God. He says that God taught man from the Bayán that which he knew not; made him a Luminous Book *unto those who believed and surrendered themselves*.

Regarding the Luminous Book, man (one individual) may be likened to a single letter of the alphabet. (Example: Letters of the Living). A letter standing alone has no meaning. By combining many letters we gain a word. The Manifestation is referred to as “The Word”, thus establishing the Station of the Manifestation—and preparing us for the acceptance of the Luminous Book.

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<sup>1</sup> Abu'l-Qásim Faydí (Faizi) (1906–19 November 1980) was a Hand of the Cause of God and a Persian Bahá'í. The original rough notes have been reformatted, corrected, revised and more explanations have been added. *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys* was retranslated and published in *Call of the Divine Beloved*, 2019. Hence, references are given to both publications. The translations of the Qur'án by Dawood have been replaced with those by Rodwell, the translator chosen by Shoghi Effendi.—M.W.T. 2021

Bahá'u'lláh speaks further in the first paragraph about the dark (“*black and ruinous*”) age in which we live and tells us WHY He has caused the Manifestation to speak forth: “... *that every man may testify, in himself, by himself ...*”

Faith is to accept. Certitude involves some suffering.

Imagine that a room filled with people is closed from any outside view. All of the people are suffering from thirst. There is no water inside the room. Someone pushes back a drape at the window and says that there is a garden outside with a fountain filled with pure, crystal-clear, cold water. You can drink all you wish. Everyone in the room looks. They all know that it is there, so they have faith. Faith is accepting.

Suppose there is a hindrance between you and the fountain—some obstacle such as a wall or a locked door. If you break through the obstacle and drink, that is certitude. Faith knows the water is there. Certitude quenches the thirst.

The first paragraph concludes with the statement “... *none shall contemplate anything whatsoever but that he shall see God therein.*”

If you recall, poor Majnún could see nothing since everything was obscured by the vision of his love, Laylí. On one occasion, the story is told, a man came to Majnún and spoke for two hours relating the details of a business problem. When the man had finished his very lengthy explanation he asked Majnún, “Was I right or was he?”. Majnún said, “Laylí was right.” We should be as Majnún. Whatever we do, whatever we undertake, we should see God therein.

### **Second paragraph**

Bahá'u'lláh continues describing the Manifestation: “... *the first sea ... the first morn ... the first sun ... the first fire ...*”

He continues, “*He who was Ahmad ... and Muhammad ... and Mahmud ...*” These are all names of the Prophet Muhammad.

The paragraph ends “*And upon His household and companions be abundant and abiding and eternal peace!*” In other words, Greetings to the family!

### **Third paragraph**

Here we read, “*Methinks I verily inhaled the pure fragrances of the garment of thy love ...*”

This is a reference to the story of Joseph. If you recall, Jacob, Joseph’s father, was blind, but when Joseph’s cloak was brought to him he knew it belonged to Joseph although he could not see. The fragrance of love emanating from the garment told him that his beloved son had been found.

#### Fourth paragraph

He (Bahá'u'lláh) quotes, "*Fear God and God will give you knowledge*".<sup>1</sup> The word "fear" as it is used here is a translation of the Arabic *ittaqa*,<sup>2</sup> which means to protect one's self against his own ego. So He tells the reader to protect himself against his own ego and God will teach him everything.

If you DO THIS, He tells us, and then the bird of your soul will soar.

This ends the brief sermon.

#### Assignment

A further study of *The Seven Valleys* begins with our re-reading the book with this in mind: There are two categories:

1. The valleys of limitations, i.e., valleys in which growth or distance of spiritual travel can be measured (or limited).
2. The valleys that have neither measurements nor limitations.

To begin the search there must be discomfort. If a man is not thirsty he will not seek water. The pain that precedes a search is a praiseworthy thing. First we must feel pain, and then we go to the physician. First we feel the inward longing, and then we search for God.

The story is told of a man who wishes to sell a servant. To make the servant more attractive to prospective bidders he said something to attract by pretending to detract. He said, "He is a good servant, but he has a tendency to prophecy."

The servant was purchased and his new master told the servant to bring him water. "You are not thirsty yet", was the prophecy. Finally, after repeating this performance, the master arose to advance towards the servant in anger. "Now!" exclaimed the prophet, "you are thirsty".

We all begin our trip through the valleys, and after man traverses the first valley he will fall in love, then he will KNOW. Demanding, knowledge—all with limitations—before man begins to traverse the unlimited worlds of God.

**Remember:** Read with the eye to discern which are the valleys of "limitations" and which are valleys without limitations.



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<sup>1</sup> Qur'an 2:282

<sup>2</sup> Ittaqú'lláh, to fear God, is the command or imperative form of taqwá and Alláh. It is found in several Qur'anic verses. Various translations as "fear God", "keep your duty to God and fear Him", "guard your duty to God", "be careful of (your duty to) God", "be pious to God", "be aware of God", and to "love and be faithful to God".

## Lesson 2

It will be recalled that some time has elapsed between Lesson 1 and Lesson 2, hence much of Lesson 2 is a review of Lesson 1.

**Note:** Before beginning, assign someone the task of searching for the story of Joseph's coat in the Bible and have them bring the reference with them to class so that memories may be refreshed.

The Title Page reads, "Seven Valleys", then beneath that title is "*In the Name of God, the Clement, the Merciful*". The word "clement" should be changed to read "compassionate".<sup>1</sup> Mr Faizi indicates that this translation was checked with the Guardian, otherwise he would not presume to change the word.

### Paragraph 1

Then we begin: "*Praise be to God Who hath made being to come forth from nothingness ...*"

This nothingness refers to the mind of man. In other words, God told man of that which he did not know. Revelation was not known—then the Manifestation spoke, and it was known. It had "*come forth from nothingness*".

Continuing the first sentence: "... *graven upon the tablet of man ...*"

The Tablet of man refers to the mind of man again.

Then, the first sentence continues: "*caused him to witness the creation ...*"

This is a paraphrase of a quotation from the Qur'án. In the Qur'án it says "*God created Adam, called all angels to prostrate themselves.*"<sup>2</sup> It then says that all did except the highest one (Iblís, a reference to Covenant-breakers).

These partial quotes or references to familiar verses in the Qur'án are similar to our references in every-day usage to Biblical verses that are familiar to us. For example: I may say to you that he has had an extremely difficult time. He has been going "through the valley of the shadow". This reference to the valley of the shadow brings to mind the entire passage and contains a background of reference to which we are all familiar. The sentence would have special meaning to the Biblical scholar—just as these have special meaning to those familiar with the Qur'án.

Then the end of the first sentence: "... *to the end that every man may testify, in himself, by himself, in the station of the Manifestation of his Lord ....*"

This refers to the station of understanding the Manifestation.

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<sup>1</sup> The new translation of the Seven Valleys in *Call of the Divine Beloved* has the words: "*In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate!*"

<sup>2</sup> Loosely based on Qur'án 15:28–31. Adam represents man and Iblís Satan.

## Paragraph 2

Here are the references, which we mentioned in Lesson 1, to Muḥammad (Aḥmad, Muḥammad and Maḥmúd).

The root word in Arabic here is Ḥamd meaning “praise”.

Aḥmad means “more praised” (in Kingdom)

Muḥammad, “The praised One” (in this world)

Maḥmúd, “The most praised” (among the near ones)

## Paragraph 3

Note that paragraph 3 begins with the word, “Further”.

As was pointed out in Lesson 1, all literature begins with the praise of God. At some point the praise must end and the message begin. Therefore, we find sentences beginning with “Further”, “And further”, etc. This indicates that the preliminary praise of God is to be understood. Sometimes books or tablets will begin with these words or with the words “And after ...”, also leaving the pause of God up to the reader to take for granted—or to understand that it is not to be omitted.

This paragraph also refers to the “*frangrances of the garment*”. Here it would be wise to review the story of Joseph.

## Paragraph 4

“... *fear God and God will give you knowledge*”

As mentioned in Lesson 1, the Arabic word used here, reference to protection of one’s self against one’s own ego. There evidently are many Arabic words with subtle shades of meaning that are sometimes translated as “fear” in the English language.

In this same paragraph: “... *the bird of thy soul shall recall the holy sanctuaries ...*”

The Arabic word that appears in this sentence (in lieu of holy sanctuaries) is *ḥazírah*.

Ḥazírah means “enclosure”, places where sheep and cattle are protected—in other words, a “fold”.

Quds means “Paradise”.

Ḥazíratu’l-Quds then means “the Sacred Fold”, or “the Fold of Paradise”.

This word, Ḥazíratu’l-Quds, was first applied to the Shrine of the Báb by the Master (‘Abdu’l-Bahá). That is why the Guardian (Shoghi Effendi) evidently endowed Bahá’í Centers everywhere with that same glorious title.

The last paragraph preceding the *Valley of Search*:

The stages that mark the wayfarer’s journey—some have called these the seven valleys. Where “valley” appears, the Arabic word is *wádí*. From personal observation, I have noted that wádí has very steep sides!



### Lesson 3

Return to the final paragraph preceding the *Valley of Search*.

Here it says we have seven valleys or *awdiya*<sup>1</sup> to traverse—or even cities. This terminology is according to the expression of those times.

Note that He says that “... *until the wayfarer taketh leave of self* ...”

The first requirement mentioned here is to cleanse one’s self—the first great hurdle before we begin to traverse the valleys.

There is a “self” that is the lowest stage of mankind. This is the self that commands man to commit evil.

There is another self that springs from the existence of our inner being, which begins to scold when the lower self begins suggesting. This “scolding” self-starts to work only after we listen to the promptings of the first self. Otherwise, the “scolding” self remains dormant. This is the test for mankind—which self do we obey?

When the second self operates we become pleased with ourselves; God is pleased with us; then we can enter the Kingdom.

If we repeatedly obey the lower self, the “scolding” self becomes dulled and repetition of unworthy action becomes habitual.

The second self or “scolding” self must be taught by the Words of God. Neither self will tell us the right thing to do automatically. If the “scolding” self is not educated, it will go hand in hand with the lower self. If children are educated in such a way that they are led only to their first selves, they become the victims of nature, and nature is merciless. Millions might die of malaria, but nature has no mercy. Children must be educated so that they are aware of the second self, and adults must learn this lesson if they have not done so.

Repetition forms habit. That is why we are told to read the Holy Word. That is why we must have obligatory prayers, so that the words become imprinted on our minds and implanted in the second self (whether or not we are aware of the fact that they are being implanted at the time).

No matter how strong the “scolding” self may become, no matter how good our deeds, we must always strive. Always we may meet a greater test and we must be prepared to meet the tests and grow.

This so-called evil self is created by God. It is a good thing if we use it properly as a means to growth. Remember, God also created opium, which may be used for either good or evil. We all know that to grow strong physically, we need exercise. This same principle applies to spiritual growth.

We then enter the *Valley of Search* and the steed of this valley is *patience*.

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<sup>1</sup> Wádí, pl. awdiya(h or t)

## Paragraph 1

“... *For those who seek the Ka’bah* ...”

Ka’bah (Ar.) or Ka’bih (Pers.) means cube or square and refers to the house built by Abraham in Mecca.

From the Qur’án: “*O ye who have believed, seek assistance through patience and prayer. Surely God is with the patient ones.*”<sup>1</sup>

Note that God mentions patience first, then prayer. In *The Seven Valleys* it is noted that “... *without patience the traveler will reach nowhere* ...”

Our relationship with God is child-like. A father assists a child to plant a seed. The child is impatient. The father knows that if a seed is planted and tended, a tree will grow, but the child is continually impatient to see the results.

So, the first requirement is *faith*. Patience and other qualities will be the fruit of our faith.

The story of the patience of the Central Figures of the Faith regarding teaching the Faith in India is a good example:

The first teacher (Jamal Effendi) was sent into India in 1872 by Bahá’u’lláh. He was told to go to all the provinces and speak to the people there. He spent some years, spoke to many people, spoke to all of the Maharajas of the Provinces and returned. Bahá’u’lláh asked him who had told him to come back! He went again. The second time he travelled to India, Burma, the Philippines and many islands (including Java). When he died, there was not one Bahá’í in all of India.

Later, fifty people from Persia emigrated from Yazd in Persia to India. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá told them that mass conversion would definitely occur there. He told them that the Indians will rise to serve in such a way that they will become examples to neighboring countries.

Years passed with no apparent results, but these people did their best. They traveled and announced the message with great personal sacrifice.

The Master sent Hands of the Cause, he sent many Americans, including Lua Getsinger, and Mr Faizi was there many times. He says that there were great conferences with large audiences. After he had finished telling them of the Bahá’í Faith, the multitude applauded, saluted him, hung flowers on him, and went home without a single pamphlet!

In 1953 the Guardian established a Conference there. He said that this was the time for the natives of India to come into the Bahá’í Faith. (Shoghi Effendi did not live to see the fruit of the great victories in India).

In 1962, one village accepted the Bahá’í Faith, now there are more than 200,000 Bahá’ís there—the result of more than 80 YEARS of CONSTANTLY TEACHING THE FAITH.

In the end, for those who are patient, there must be results.

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<sup>1</sup> Qur’án 2:153.

So we are back to the beginning statement; “... *taketh leave of self ...*”, which brings to mind the first of the Hidden Words, “... *possess a pure ... heart ...*”

In the *Star of the West*, the story is told of Corinne True who once visited Haifa during the life of the Master. She looked at the dirty people there and asked herself how in the world we could ever love these people.

‘Abdu’l-Baha told her when she went away she should look at every individual she came across as a letter from the Beloved, no matter how crooked the paper, no matter how crumpled the paper, imagine that the paper bears a letter from the Beloved. How happy we would then be to have such a dirty, crumpled scrap of paper!<sup>1</sup>

## Paragraph 2

Paragraph 2 in the *Valley of Search* begins, “*It is incumbent on these servants that they cleanse the heart ...*” a reiteration of this theme.

## Paragraph 4

Paragraph 4 of *The of Valley of search*: Regarding the search for Layli.

The story is told of the ruler who pretended to search for God. A dervish<sup>2</sup> approached this ruler one day and began searching beneath the throne, behind draperies, under carpets, etc.

When asked what he was searching for, the dervish replied that he was searching for his camel. Well, naturally, the ruler indicated that this was no place to search for a camel. “Nor,” replied the dervish, “is the throne the place to search for God.” The ruler later became steadfast.

**Next lesson:** We begin with paragraph 4 of the *Valley of Search*: “*One must judge of search by the standard of the Majnún of love ....*”



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<sup>1</sup> *Star of the West* XIII:10, January 1923, p. 284.

<sup>2</sup> Arabic darwīsh, pl. darāwīsh.



## Lesson 4

The stages of man's journey towards God are mentioned in many of the Writings of the Bahá'í Faith. References to these stages is not limited to *The Seven Valleys*. For example:

*He is the King, the All-Knowing, the Wise! Lo, the Nightingale of Paradise singeth upon the twigs of the Tree of Eternity, with holy and sweet melodies, proclaiming to the sincere ones the glad tidings of the nearness of God, calling the believers in the Divine Unity to the court of the Presence of the Generous One, informing the severed ones of the message which hath been revealed by God, the King, the Glorious, the Peerless, guiding the lovers to the seat of sanctity and to this resplendent Beauty.”<sup>1</sup>*

Note the four categories of people, or the people who have reached these various stages on the journey. Another example:

*When Quddús arrived in Shíráz and embraced the Faith declared by the Báb, he was only twenty-two years of age. Though young in years, he showed that indomitable courage and faith which none among the disciples of his master could exceed. He exemplified by his life and glorious martyrdom the truth of this tradition: “Whoso seeketh Me, shall find Me. Whoso findeth Me, shall be drawn towards Me. Whoso draweth nigh unto Me, shall love Me. Whoso loveth Me, him shall I also love. He who is beloved of Me, him shall I slay. He who is slain by Me, I Myself shall be his ransom.”<sup>2</sup>*

Again, we have the seeker, the Believer (*Whoso findeth me*), the near ones (the loved) and the beloved.

Before we continue with the study of *The Seven Valleys* it is necessary that we pause a moment and reflect carefully on the requirements that we are told is necessary before beginning the journey—to be rid of SELF! It is very important that we understand this basic requirement.

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<sup>1</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, Tablet of Aḥmad, in *Bahá'í Prayers*, pp. 208–9.

<sup>2</sup> Shoghi Effendi, *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 72.

Read merely to familiarize yourself with the language known to Bahá'u'lláh's first followers:

Sura 89 "The Daybreak"

*In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful*

1	BY the DAYBREAK and ten nights.	16	But when he proveth him and limiteth his gifts to him,
2	By that which is double and that which is single,	17	He saith, "My Lord despiseth me."
3	By the night when it pursues its course!	18	Aye. But ye honour not the orphan,
4	Is there not in this an oath becoming a man of sense?	19	Nor urge ye one another to feed the poor,
5	Hast thou not seen how thy Lord dealt with Ad* <sup>r</sup>	20	And ye devour heritages, devouring greedily,
6	At Irem* adorned with pillars,	21	And ye love riches with exceeding love.
7	Whose like have not been reared in these lands!	22	Aye. But when the earth shall be crushed with crushing, crushing,
8	And with Themoud* who hewed out the rocks in the valley;	23	And thy Lord shall come and the angels rank on rank,
9	And with Pharaoh the impaler;	24	And Hell on that day shall be moved up,—Man shall on that day remember himself. But how shall remembrance help him?
10	Who all committed excesses in the lands,	25	He shall say, Oh! would that I had prepared for this my life! On that day none shall punish as God punisheth,
11	And multiplied wickedness therein.	26	And none shall bind with such bonds as He.
12	Wherefore thy Lord let loose on them the scourge of chastisement,	27	Oh, thou soul which art at rest,
13	For thy Lord standeth on a watch tower.	28	<u>Return to thy Lord, pleased, and pleasing him:</u>
14	As to man, when his Lord trieth him and honoureth him and is bounteous to him,	29	Enter thou among my servants,
15	Then saith he, "My Lord honoureth me:"	30	And enter thou my Paradise. <sup>1</sup>

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\* Ad = 'Ád; Irem = Iram; Themoud = Thamúd.

<sup>1</sup> Sura 39, *The Koran*, tr. J. M. Rodwell, 1978. This was the translator preferred by Shoghi Effendi.

Verses 89:27–30 are addressed to the soul of man. “*Return to thy Lord, pleased*” refers to the time when the higher self has gained victory over the lower self.

Regarding these verses, read the following comment:

The concluding verses of this chapter [89] refer to the highest stage of the spiritual development of man, the stage in which he *rests contented* with his Lord, and finds his quietude, his happiness, and his delight in Him. This is the heavenly life. It has already been noted ... that the Holy Qur’án recognizes three stages in spiritual development, the *ammárah* or the animal stage ..., the *lawwámah* or the human stage ..., and the *muṭma’innah* or the heavenly or spiritual stage, mentioned here. At this last stage, the pure and perfect sincerity, truth and righteousness of a person are rewarded by Almighty God by granting him a heaven on this earth. All others look to a prospective paradise, but he enters paradise in this very life. It is at this stage, too, that a person realizes that the prayers and worship which at first appeared to him as a burden are really a nourishment on which the growth of his soul depends, and that this is the basis of his spiritual development. The spirit—which is in the second stage, although blaming a man for the impurities of life, is yet powerless to resist the evil tendencies, or to blot them out wholly, and too infirm to establish a man upon the principle of virtue with firmness—now reaches a stage of development in which its efforts are crowned with success. The state of struggle with sinful propensities passes away, an entire change comes over the nature of man, and the former habits undergo a complete transformation.<sup>1</sup>

The theme of Majnún and Laylí has often been repeated in poetry and prose. The literal translations of these names: Majnún is “insane”, and Laylí is “nocturnal” or “one whose hair or eyes are very black”.

Another version of the story of Majnún and Laylí, with essentially the same meaning as the one told by Bahá’u’lláh, is as follows.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Qur’án: Arabic Text, English Translation and Commentary*, tr. Maulana Muhammad Ali. Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Islam, Lahore. 1973, fn. 2732, pp. 1174–5.

## Laili and Mejnun

A certain King of the Arabs was told the story of Laili and Mejnun, and of the latter's madness; how that, notwithstanding his learning and eloquence, he had turned to a life in the desert and let slip the reins of self-control. The king commanded that they should bring him into his presence, and when this was done, he began to rebuke him, asking him what flaw he had seen in the nobility of human nature that he should take upon him the manners of beasts and forsake the society of his fellows?

Mejnun answered:

The many friends that oft my passion banned,  
Could they behold her face, might understand.

Couplets

Would that they that do reprove me  
Saw the beauty that doth move me!  
O ravisher of hearts! The knives that strip  
The lemon-peel would on their fingers slip.<sup>1</sup>

Then indeed the truth might bear witness to the saying: "*This is the he for whose sake you blamed me.*"<sup>2</sup> The King desired to see for himself the beauty of Laili, the cause of so much misery, and ordered search to be made for her. Having sought through many Arab tribes, they found her and brought her to the King, into the courtyard of the Palace. For a time he looked upon her form, and she appeared contemptible in his eyes, since the meanest of the slaves in his Harem surpassed her in beauty and charm. Mejnun, who in his wisdom understood (the King's mind), said: 'It would behove thee to look from the window of Mejnun's eye on the beauty of Laili, that the miracle of her appearance might be made known to thee.'<sup>3</sup>

Recall from these verses that there were many persons who saw the Manifestation of God; they spent much time in the company of Bahá'u'lláh but did not respond, even when they met him personally, because their eyes were closed to His beauty.

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<sup>1</sup> Meaning that they would cut their fingers, neglecting the banquet to gaze upon her beauty. Cf. the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife in Qur'án 12:31.

<sup>2</sup> Qur'án 12:32.

<sup>3</sup> *The Rose-Garden of Sa'di*, John Murray, London, 1905, pp. 50–1. <https://archive.org/details/rosegardensadis00sagoog/page/n10/mode/2up>

When we speak of the lower self and the necessity for the victory over that self we are speaking of something which occurs in our every-day dealings with others.

An example of this conversation between the higher and lower self is found in much of our literature. Perhaps the best example of this sort of thing is found in Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*.<sup>1</sup>

Read from paragraph 5 on page 134, "I am telling it. If I tell the whole truth just as it happened I shan't spare myself." Continue reading part way through the fourth paragraph on page 135: "I went to the window, put my forehead against the frozen pane, and I remember the ice burnt my forehead like fire. ... I only kissed my sword and put it back in the scabbard—which there was no need to have told you, by the way."

Here is a passage about a young man who would never dare approach the lady about whom he speaks, much less tell her that he loves her. Now, she is in circumstances that make it necessary for her to ask him for help—and the various stages of his thinking are exemplary of man's behavior. Note he considers what others will think of him, that they might think him a fool, and of course, his first inclination is to "get even".

To introduce this passage is not to stray from the Sacred Writings, but rather to give an excellent example of the argument between higher and lower self about which we have been reading.

**Next:** Read the story of Adam and Eve from *Some Answered Questions*.<sup>2</sup> Read it through in order to put the final statements into context, and note that the serpent means attachment to this world.

Laura Clifford Barney<sup>3</sup> said that the most tired moments of the Master's life went into *Some Answered Questions*. The book was written at a time when the Master's days were all very full, and at the end of a very long, tiring day, a paragraph or two more would be done until the book was finally completed.

Once when He was asked what the "near ones" means, the Master did not answer. Later, when walking, he said "*If a gale or tempest should occur, all of the herbs on the ground will be safe and sound.*" He struck a huge tree. "*But this,*" he is reported to have said, "*will be shaken!*"

We all saw that after the passing of the beloved Guardian, there was a violent storm and Mason Remey was shaken.

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<sup>1</sup> Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*. tr. Constance Garnett. The Modern Library, New York. 1880. Book III—The Sensualists, Chapter 3, "The Confession of a Passionate Heart—in anecdote", pp. 134–5. See the Appendix for the full text.

<sup>2</sup> *Some Answered Questions*, chapter 30, pp. 137–142, 2nd edn.

<sup>3</sup> Laura Clifford Barney collected and translated the stories from 'Abdu'l-Bahá in *Some Answered Questions*.

Read the *Valley of Love* section of *The Seven Valleys*.

**Suggestion:** Have a good reader read aloud this section before returning to consultation on the chapter.

*He fleeth both from unbelief and faith, and deadly poison is a balm to him. Wherefore 'Aṭṭār saith:*

*For the infidel, error—for the faithful, faith;  
For 'Aṭṭār's heart, an atom of Thy pain.<sup>1</sup>*

The name 'Aṭṭār generally refers to one who sells perfume or medicine. The 'Aṭṭārī is often a little shop that sells herbs and perfumes.

The 'Aṭṭār mentioned here is a specific person.<sup>2</sup> It is said that he was very successful and used to receive at least 200 patients each day. One day, a dervish passed by, and examining the 'Aṭṭār's mode of luxurious living with all of his material comforts said, "It is very hard for you to die with all of these things."

"How would you die?" 'Aṭṭār asked the dervish.

"In this way!" the dervish answered. He then put his sack over his head and promptly died.

Since that time, 'Aṭṭār became a Ṣūfī and a composer of poems.

Before proceeding through the *Valley of Love* you might wish to know that the Arabic word for "love" is *'ishq*. A literal translation of this word was originally a parasitic wild plant<sup>3</sup> that grows around trees and feeds on them until the tree becomes absolutely dry and has no existence whatever.

Love is sometimes described in this way. True love must be like this. You cannot have your own will and the will of your beloved.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Seven Valleys and The Four Valleys*, p. 8; *Call of the Divine Beloved*, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Abū Ḥamid bin Abū Bakr Ibrāhīm (c. 1145–c. 1221), better known by his pen-names Farīd ud-Dīn and 'Aṭṭār (apothecary), was a 12th-century Persian poet, theoretician of Sufism, and hagiographer from Nīshāpur who had an immense and lasting influence on Persian poetry and Sufism.

<sup>3</sup> Mistletoe.

*The steed of this Valley is pain; and if there be no pain this journey will never end.*<sup>1</sup>

Recall that in earlier lessons where it was mentioned that the patient does not seek the remedy from the physician unless there be some pain or discomfort.

*... and seeketh no refuge save the Friend.*

Persian mystics use the term “Friend” synonymously with the word “God”.

*Until thou enter the Egypt of love ...*<sup>2</sup>

This is an allusion. In this instance Egypt refers to the place where Joseph may be found.

*Love seizeth not upon a living soul ...*<sup>3</sup>

In love, you have no existence for yourself so that the fire of love will consume everything.

### **Assignment for next week**

Find the passage in *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh* in which Bahá'u'lláh explains the influence upon the world brought about by the martyrdom of Christ. This passage will help to illumine further this chapter on the *Valley of Love*.

Then proceed with the *Valley of Knowledge*.



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<sup>1</sup> *The Seven Valleys and The Four Valleys*, p. 8.; *Call of the Divine Beloved*, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.* p. 9 and 7 respectively.

<sup>3</sup> Qur'án 50:29. *The Seven Valleys*, p. 10; *Call of the Divine Beloved*, p. 7.

## Lesson 5

Before we leave the *Valley of Love* and enter the *Valley of Knowledge*, which are so closely related, we should pause a bit and become better acquainted with the language of these valleys.

Sa‘dí,<sup>1</sup> the poet whose works are often quoted in these tablets studied for the first 30 years of his life; for the next 30 years he traveled through all of the known parts of the world; and for the last 30 years of his life he wrote. He died at the age of 90.

The more we read of the mystic poets who were being read at the time of Bahá’u’lláh’s announcement, the better we understand the language of Bahá’u’lláh. Those people who came to the Bahá’í Faith spoke this language, and twenty thousand of them gave their lives for the Faith. For them a familiar voice was heard by each of them.

One of the voices with which these people were familiar was that of the Persian mystic, Jami:<sup>2</sup>

### Pride

Boast not of having no pride, because it is more invisible  
Than the mark of an ant’s foot on a black rock in a dark night;  
Think it not easy to extirpate it from thy heart,  
For it is more easy to root up a mountain from the earth with a needle.<sup>3</sup>

Pride and boasting is a manifestation of the lower self in man.

There is a story told of a shepherd who was faithful to the King. The shepherd loved the king very much and finally went to see the King and to serve him. The shepherd grew in power and in stature.

One day the king gave a melon to the shepherd. The shepherd ate the melon with great relish, praising its sweet quality. The king asked for a bit of the melon and found to his surprise that the melon was quite bitter and questioned the shepherd about his praising this bitter gift. The shepherd told the king that he remembered all of the sweet bounties given to him by the king and could not complain about one bitter melon.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Abú-Muḥammad Muşliḥ ad-Dín bin ‘Abdu’lláh Shírází, better known by his pen name Sa‘dí, also known as Sa‘dí Shírází (c. 1210–1291 or 1292), was a major Persian poet and prose writer of the medieval period. His penname was derived from that of his patrons Sa‘d bin Zangí and Abú Bakr bin Sa‘d.

<sup>2</sup> Núr ad-Dín ‘Abd ar-Raḥmán Jámí, or simply as Jámí (7 November 1414–9 November 1492), was a Persian Sunni poet who is known for his achievements as a prolific scholar and writer of mystical şúfí literature.

<sup>3</sup> *The Persian Mystics: Jámí*. ed. Frederick Hadland Davis. John Murray, London. 1908, p. 89.

<sup>4</sup> A variation on a story about Luqmán, a bitter melon and his master in *Mathnawí-i-Ma‘nawí* (“The Spiritual Couplets”) 2.4.7 by Rúmi. Jalálu’d-Dín-i-Rúmi (AD 1207–1273) is the greatest of all Persian Şúfí poets, and founder of the Mawlawí “whirling” dervish order.



Sa‘dí has said:

Yet apart from the mirror of mortal loveliness is that God in little, that wandering fragment of Divinity—the soul. As the wife is part of the husband, so is the soul a part of God. Sa‘dí, preaching to the people of Damascus, quotes from the Koran the following verse: “Verily we created man, and we know what his soul whispereth unto him, for we are nearer to him than the vein in his neck.”<sup>1</sup> And so at its appointed time complete unity with the Beloved is attained; the atom is restored to the world dust, the planet is withdrawn into the solar system, and the soul is merged in God.

The lovers by the Loved One all are slain;  
No voice can answer from the dead again.<sup>2</sup>

When we enter the *Valley of Knowledge* we find that “*Love is a veil betwixt lover and the loved one.*”<sup>3</sup> Sometimes love itself becomes a hindrance.

We read that:

*Veiled from this was Moses  
Through all strength and light;  
Then thou who has no wings at all,  
Attempt no flight.*<sup>4</sup>

In the Qur‘án it is recorded that Moses said, “*O Lord, shew thyself to me, that I may look upon thee.*” He said, “*Thou shalt not see Me; but look towards the mount, and if it abide firm in its place, then shalt thou see Me.*”<sup>5</sup> If God said this to Moses, then it follows that we certainly will never know Him. Only through His Manifestations can we know him.

Sa‘dí says:

Forebearance

A band of vagabonds meeting a dervish spoke evilly to him, beat him and ill-used him, whereupon he brought his complaint to his superior. The director<sup>6</sup> replied: “My son! the patched gown of the dervishes is the garb of resignation, and he who, wearing it, cannot bear with injury, is but a pretender to whom our garb is forbidden.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Qur‘án 50:16.

<sup>2</sup> *The Rose-Garden of Sa‘di*, John Murray, London, 1905, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> *The Seven Valleys and The Four Valleys*, p. 16; *Call of the Divine Beloved*, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Quote from Rúmi in *ibid.*, p. 17 and p. 9 respectively.

<sup>5</sup> Qur‘án 7: 143 (Rodwell 7:139)

<sup>6</sup> Pír (Persian), i.e. “he who points out the way”.

<sup>7</sup> *The Rose-Garden of Sa‘di*, John Murray, London, 1905, p. 16.

In South America monkeys are often caught for shipment to zoos and for pets. The way that these monkeys are trapped offer an excellent lesson for all of us. See what avarice can do:

Cut a gourd just large enough for the monkey's fist and after affixing the gourd to some solid object, fill it with nuts. The monkey will reach into the gourd, close his fist around the nuts and his hand will be stuck. The monkey could regain his freedom at any time by merely letting go and releasing the nuts. All he has to do is to open his hand.

The "hunters" depend on the greed of the monkey. These poor animals will not let go of the prize and hence are waiting there at the gourd when the trapper calls to collect this prey.

Before entering the *Valley of Unity*, read:

*Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, XXXII, pp. 75–6; and XXXVI, pp. 85–6.



## Lesson 6

Before we go into the *Valley of Unity*, we will return for a moment to the *Valley of Love*.

One of the goals of Shoghi Effendi's Ten Year Crusade (1953–63) was to transfer the body of the father of Bahá'u'lláh and the mother of the Báb to fitting resting places, because these two believed in their Sons.

On page 112 of *The Dawn-Breakers* you will see the photograph of an inscription placed by Bahá'u'lláh's father above the entrance of the door of his house in Tákur. This poem, which is inscribed above the door, says:

When thou reachest the threshold of the Beloved say "Aye",  
For there neither "salám" nor "alayka" can find a way.  
This is the vale of Love, hold thy steps;  
This is holy ground, shed thy foot-gear.<sup>1 2</sup>

Rawḥání, who is now buried near Shoghi Effendi, performed the dangerous task of transferring the remains of Bahá'u'lláh's father and the Bab's mother to the Bahá'í Cemetery in Baghdád. Any Moslem cemetery is considered holy ground, and to remove a body to a place that you might consider even more holy, calls for great courage.

Shoghi Effendi guided the believers, but was always concerned that they should be relieved of their burdens so that they were free to better serve the Bahá'í Faith.

This same Rawḥání, once went to Mecca as a pioneer. While there he went to the Ka'ba<sup>3</sup> and recited Muslim prayers. Some of the Baha'i pioneers criticized this action. He did this because they were in the holiest Muslim shrine. However, the issue was not really settled as to whether Rawḥání should have offered Muslim prayers in the Ka'ba.

Rawḥání once went on pilgrimage to Haifa. While there he went with Shoghi Effendi to the Shrine of the Báb, but he was troubled about the criticism of the pioneers to the use of Muslim prayers in Mecca. Shoghi Effendi said, "Your pilgrimage is accepted, as well as the prayers you offered in Mecca!"

There are beautiful Persian carpets in the Shrine of the Báb. Vaḥíd brought these carpets during the lifetime of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and offered them as a gift. Woven on the top of each carpet are the words "Offered by Vaḥíd". During the lifetime of the Shoghi Effendi, Vaḥíd came on pilgrimage and to his surprise saw each of these carpets in the Shrine of the Báb.

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<sup>1</sup> This last line is what Moses heard, as He approached the Burning Bush, on Mount Sinai.

<sup>2</sup> H. M. Balyuzi, *Bahá'u'lláh: The King of Glory*, p. 19. Salám means "peace"; alayka means "upon thee".

<sup>3</sup> The Ka'ba, the cubic structure within the Majíd al-Ḥaram (the "Noble Mosque") in Mecca, that is the Muslim Qibla—the "Point of Adoration".

Poor Vahíd was dejected and rebuked himself for having put his name on each carpet. Coming out of the Shrine, the Shoghi Effendi said, “Aren’t you happy that your name is here and everyone remembers you?”

This is an example for us—to be as loving and understanding as we can so that we can achieve the most loving actions we are capable of performing,

Bahá’u’lláh says “... *until thou burn with the fire of love, thou shalt never commune with the Lover of Longing.*”<sup>1</sup> So wherever love pitches his tent, there will be no praise, for the fire of love burns the harvest of reason.

It is said that three men reached a river that they were to cross. Two of the men were philosophers and one was a lover. The philosophers debated about how best to cross. They considered where the nearest bridge might be according to the map. They studied the river to determine where the shallow water might be. While they were discussing the matter they looked, and the lover was in the other side!

With all of the vast store of knowledge that Islám has given to the world, the knowledge did actually become a veil.

The scholars got the books of the Greek scholars from the Byzantine monasteries. However, the Islamic scholars ran into a stumbling block. “Why ask if there is a God,” they argued, “When Muḥammad said there is. There is no need for a discussion.”

They concentrated on the human mystery of life and considered how man could develop himself. They also concentrated on man’s external life.

Some of these scholars took the path of reason. Find something known. From the known facts, make a path to the unknown.

They then found that reason is an instrument incapable of solving the issue. This occurred to them at about the same time that Spinoza endeavored to prove the existence of God via geometry.

So the Moslem scholars’ contribution to the world of reason sits at one end of a balancing scale. There was no standard to determine whether the balance was right or wrong.

Then they found the way of love. Fall in love with God. Know that each man is created separately with a destiny to reach God, and when love came, reason was forgotten.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys*, p. 9; *Call of the Divine Beloved*, p. 7.

These lovers of God were called “the knowers”. The mystics were the least accepted at that time. They were disliked because they wore the garments of mendicants and lived an isolated life. They did not agree with the lovers who said man was born to work, to love and to grow closer to God.

The most outstanding of these lovers or knowers are the ones who are quoted by Bahá’u’lláh. It is just a step from loving to knowing. When you love, you know.

This is the basis of success:

If you love something, you will do it.

If you love pioneering, nothing will stand in the way.

If you love Bahá’u’lláh, you will wish to tell everyone about him.

The first line in *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*:

*No man shall attain the shores of the ocean of true understanding except he be detached from all that is in heaven and on earth.*

By the force of love, man advances and he becomes a knower.

A group of dervishes in Turkey went to a certain “monastery” to worship. Their service consisted of music. They would hum songs, arise and dance for hours until they literally fell unconscious.

Bahá’u’lláh once went there. They were all dancing and whirling about the floor. Suddenly, they stopped and looked at Bahá’u’lláh who frowned and said, “Is this called worship of God?”

It was in Turkey that Bahá’u’lláh first said work is worship.<sup>1</sup>

*After passing through the Valley of Knowledge, which is the last plane of limitation, the wayfarer cometh to THE VALLEY OF UNITY ....*<sup>2</sup>

Having become knowers, we then enter the *Valley of Unity*.

*He stretcheth out the hand of truth from the sleeve of the Absolute.*<sup>3</sup>

This form of speech should not be too strange to either a Muslim or a Christian. Moses drew forth from the bosom of His clothing a shining hand! This became a well-known tradition in oriental languages.

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<sup>1</sup> *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 26; *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys*, p. 17; *Call of the Divine Beloved*, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

Note that in the *Valley of Unity* it is said that the color of the reflected sun varies according to the color (“nature”) of that glass (“globe”).<sup>1</sup> It is also said that the faithful ones should look through the eyes of God.<sup>2</sup>

The life of Shoghi Effendi clearly illustrates what it means to look through the eyes of God. Nothing ever stopped him. Walls did not stand when he wished to go forward. Time meant nothing to him.

On seven different occasions seven groups of pioneers from Persia were sent by Shoghi Effendi to Afghanistan. Each of these groups was forced to leave Afghanistan. Among the last group of pioneers who were expelled from that country, one went to Haifa on pilgrimage. He told Shoghi Effendi the sad story of how everything they owned was confiscated, how they were all thrown into trucks and sent back penniless to Persia.

Shoghi Effendi did respond to this sad story with what we might expect. Offering no condolences, he said, “Yes. The friends of Afghanistan will help the propagation of the Cause in China!” Shoghi Effendi was looking to the future, at the ultimate accomplishment of the goals, not at the story of this temporary set-back.

Remember also the story of India. Recall that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá sent out a little handful of weak pioneers to conquer that vast land. These pioneers were weak in body and weak spiritually, yet of their efforts ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said that the friends of India will arise in such a way that they will be an example to neighboring countries.

So man is told, “... see through the eyes of your Lord”.

There is some danger of misunderstanding what is written about the *Valley of Unity*. The reader must not believe that statements indicating we are all waves of one sea moving by the will of one God indicates that we are not responsible for what we do. In the Writings we learn that this may never be interpreted to mean that man is not responsible for his own deeds. It is true that the sun is shining through the many colored globes.

Whatever we do individually, we cannot stop the sun from shining. To make use of that sunshine in some way requires the application of man’s own will. Man is responsible.

*How can utter nothingness gallop its steed in the field of preexistence, or a fleeting shadow reach to the everlasting sun?*<sup>3</sup>

Here is a statement to shrink the ego. There is always more to learn, no matter how much we know and understand. To equate our learning with the station of the Manifestation, even in a comparative way by measuring our own learning next to that of a friend, is as foolish as relating our comparative positions here with relation to the physical position of the sun.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys*, p. 19; *Call of the Divine Beloved*, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 17 and 9 respectively.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 23 and 10 respectively.

A Shaykh in the court in Sulaymáníyyih once gave a book to Bahá'u'lláh for His blessing. It is reported that Bahá'u'lláh wrote in the book as follows:

*I hope that the fortune of your enemies will be utterly changed  
The sovereignty of the two worlds will be available for you.  
You are the shadow of the mercy of God,  
And how strange the world is illumined by a Shadow!*

From the Valley of Unity:

*Secrets are many but strangers are myriad.*<sup>1</sup>

Even if we find the meaning of one secret, then we may be sure there are thousands and thousands more.

*Knowledge is a single point, but the ignorant have multiplied it.*<sup>2</sup>

Here, jokingly, it is suggested that you might give a group of small children the problem of adding 1 + 3. You may very well get ten answers from ten children!

Mr Faizi tells us of stopping at an Arab Coffee House where the unlettered dock workers, all laborers, sit and wait for time to go to their ships to work. There was a “speaker” among them one day.

“Do you believe God is most powerful?” he asked his audience. All answered, “Of course”.

“Can He do anything?” was the next question.

“Yes,” was the rapid reply.

“There is one thing which he will never be able to do,” informed the speaker.

“What?”

“No matter how many sins we commit, He can never send us out of His own kingdom!”

There is great wisdom in this statement, even Covenant-breakers will not be sent out of His own kingdom.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys*, p. 24; *Call of the Divine Beloved*, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

*... so it is that all move through Him and arise by His Will.*<sup>1</sup>

Man must always strive to be sure that his will is the Will of God.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá once said that when he tells you something, whatever he FIRST said, do that.

A man once asked where to go to teach. The man was told to go to India.

If the man says that water in India is not good for him, the Master may then say to go to Australia. Thus the Bahá’í Faith will be served, but it is the first instruction that is the Will of God and a compromise is not to be confused with that first instruction.

Self and ego always are present and can often be considered the Will of God, when it is merely the lower self-asserting itself.

The greatest danger of this ego is this: Whatever the ego-infected individual wishes you to do, he must first convince you that this is the best thing to do, with absolute reason. He brings the verses of God to convince you. It is here that man must weigh his own wishes, and in this day we have the perfect standard by which to weigh them.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys*, p. 22; *Call of the Divine Beloved*, p. 10.



THE FOLLOWING STORIES WERE NOT PART OF THE LESSON, BUT ARE BEING  
PASSED ALONG BECAUSE THEY WERE ENJOYED BY EVERYONE IN THE CLASS

A pilgrim once indicated to Shoghi Effendi that he and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá were one and the same. The pilgrim went on to explain this. The expounder of the Text must comprehend the words, therefore with his understanding and interpretation, he would be the same as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

“Is that so?” Shoghi Effendi is reported to have said.

“Yes,” was the first response of the pilgrim.

“Well, I am the Expounder and I say I am not the same as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá!”

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A Persian poet is reported to have sent a poem to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. The poem indicated that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is the same as Bahá’u’lláh. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wrote the poet as follows:

“I received your poem. It is beautiful, like flowing water, but bitter to my taste. I adorn my head with the crown of servitude, but alas! Poets are pouring the waters of godlessness on my head.”

“Either compose an ode in praise of my servitude or I will have you here and will flog you!”

“One friend will hold your head, two will hold your feet, and I will flog you.”

The recipient was so happy that he wrote another poem along the same lines as the original and said “Now I am ready if the flogging takes place in Your presence.”

After two months, the Tīhrán Assembly asked this poet to go to the city of Qum to visit new contacts there. The first day the people knew he was a Bahá’í teacher, they attacked him. One held his head and two held his feet and another flogged him. The Governor was there and, pretending a rage he did not feel, demanded that the prisoner be given to him to deal with. The Governor sent the poet back to his home.

After many years, the poet came to Haifa. On the first night ‘Abdu’l-Bahá asked him, “How much were you beaten?”

“As much as you had promised when you wrote,” was the reply.

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Our beloved Hand of the Cause Dhikru’lláh Khádím once aspired to be a poet, and wrote requesting a pen from Shoghi Effendi. He sent him a purse!



## Lesson 7

[Class conducted by Hand of the Cause, Mr A. Q. Faizi, Haifa, Israel, November 1966]

*On this same basis, ponder likewise the differences among the worlds. Although the divine worlds be never-ending, yet some refer to them as four: The world of time [zamán], which is the one that hath a beginning and an end; the world of duration [dahr], which hath a beginning, but whose end is not revealed; the world of perpetuity [sarmad], whose beginning is not seen but which is known to have an end; and the world of eternity [azal], neither a beginning or an end which is visible.<sup>1</sup>*

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Before continuing to the next paragraph, consider what we have just read. Give examples of each of the four words.

- Zamán There are many examples of things that have a beginning and an end.
- Dahr Has a beginning, but its end is not revealed.
  - An individual soul
  - This earth
  - Creative energy
  - Numbers (they begin, but where do they end?)
- Sarmad Beginning is not seen, but known to have an end.
  - The sun
- Azal Only God can be described thus.

---

*The journeys in the pathway of love are reckoned as four: From the creatures to the True One; from the True One to the creatures; from the creatures to the creatures; from the True One to the True One.<sup>2</sup>*

Bahá'u'lláh journeyed and lived in many places during His lifetime, many of the moves were forced on Him by political and religious authorities. Many of the places had an inner spiritual significance in relation to the journey in the pathway of love. For example:

Recall the time Bahá'u'lláh was in Baghdád. Bahá'u'lláh was forced to leave Baghdád incognito because of the nefarious activities of Şubh-i-Azal, who brought many afflictions on Bahá'u'lláh. At that time 'Abdu'l-Bahá was between 12 and 15 years of age. The mother of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Ásíyih Khánum, was then responsible for the family, and for the pilgrims. This was the time when she had to sell all her remaining valuable items. Bahá'u'lláh went to Sulaymáníyyih for two years and then returned. This is the apparent or outward movement.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys*, p. 22; *Call of the Divine Beloved*, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 25 and 11 respectively.

The spiritual journey in this instance was highly significant:

*From the creatures to the True One*<sup>1</sup>

Bahá'u'lláh left the people and went into the mountains to be alone with God.

*From the True One to the True One*<sup>2</sup>

There Bahá'u'lláh had nothing but God in Him and around Him. Only the Will of God remained.

*From the True One to the creatures*<sup>3</sup>

After being filled with inspiration, from God to Himself, Bahá'u'lláh then came back to the creatures.

With this thought in mind, meditate on the spiritual journey of Bahá'u'lláh throughout His lifetime.

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*If Khidr did wreck the vessel on the sea,  
Yet in this wrong there are a thousand rights.*<sup>4</sup>

Khidr is Arabic for “Elijah”. The above verse refers to this story:

Moses accompanied Khidr on a certain journey. Khidr told Moses, “You may be my companion on this journey on one condition. You must never ask me ‘why’. Just surrender your will to mine.” Moses agreed to do so and with this understanding, they set out on the journey.

As the two companions passed a certain portion of a sea, they saw a boat that appeared to be empty. Khidr immediately caused the boat to sink. Moses knew that the boat belonged to some orphans, and that the use of the boat made the orphans very happy. The act seemed ruthless to him. Finally he could contain the question no longer. “Why”, he asked Khidr, “did you do it?”

“I told you not to ask me why,” was Khidr’s response. “I will tell you this. The boat seemed to be empty. Inside the boat there was a cruel king who had hidden himself there. When the boat touches the shore, the children will go to the boat. He kills the little children. To save the lives of hundreds of children, we had to sink this boat.”

Man is governed by two forces: The force of love, and the force of reason.

In oriental mythology, Khidr is a symbol of love and the Will of God, and Moses is the symbol of reason.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys*, p. 25; *Call of the Divine Beloved*, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 26 and 11 respectively; quoting Rumi; with a reference to Qur’án 18:71.

He is the first and the last, the Seen and the Hidden ....”<sup>1</sup>

Consider the following examples given by Bahá’u’lláh.

You are the father to your own son.

That means in relation to your son, you are first and your son is last.

Your son is last in relation to you.

In relation to your own father, your father is first, and you are last.

One person may be, in relationship to others, either first or last, or both in relationship to many others.

Our spiritual relationship to others may also vary.

This brings us to the thought of the prophecy with which we are all familiar: “The first shall be last and the last shall be first.”<sup>2</sup>

Recall the situation concerning the family of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. They were first in physical relationship to the Center of the Covenant. They were last in relationship to the Covenant.

Bahá’u’lláh defines this relationship to the Covenant as the meaning of the term “last” in *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*.

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... the Persian bird keepeth in his soul many a sweet Arab melody; yet these are hidden ....<sup>3</sup>

The Persian bird and the Arab melody refers to the two Prophets who were expected at the time of the end.

It is said that there were four fore-runners of Muḥammad. Salmán, knew that it was time for a Prophet of God to manifest Himself even before Muḥammad went to Mecca. Salmán went to the fore-runners of Muḥammad. The last one of these fore-runners said to Salmán, “You will see the Manifestation of God”.

One day it is said that Muḥammad was with some of His followers. He suddenly started to cry. “Why?” they all asked Him, to which He replied. “I am weeping for my friends.”

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<sup>1</sup> *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys*, p. 27; *Call of the Divine Beloved*, p. 11; quoting Qur’án 57:3.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 19:30.

<sup>3</sup> *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys*, p. 29; *Call of the Divine Beloved*, p. 12.

“Aren’t we your friends?” they wanted to know.

“You are my companions,” was the reply of Muḥammad. “My friends are the followers of the Promised One who will come at the end of the days.”

“From which nation will He come?” Muhammad was asked.

Muḥammad patted Salmán on the hand, “From this nation.” He continued, “They are Persians, but they understand Arabic. Even if knowledge is placed in the heavens these Persians will have it because of that Manifestation.”

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*And the wayfarer, after traversing the high planes of this supernal journey, entereth THE VALLEY OF CONTENTMENT.*<sup>1</sup>

In the tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá it is said that the friends should try to give themselves spiritual practice and discipline until they reach the Valley of Contentment. It is also said that when they are truly in this Valley, then they will never feel the loss of anything.

We strive too much in the world of matter. People always want more. If we reach this state where we do not feel the loss of anything, we are happy and contented with whatever is available to us.

Both Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá gave us many statements that to outward appearances are contradictions. We must meditate on these. You all know the sort of thing being referred to: They seem to tell us “Go into the water, but don’t get wet!” (This is NOT an example from the Writings, it is just an example).

We have pointed out that man should be content with what is available to him. Also, we note that we are warned that the Šúfí practice of withdrawal from society is absolutely useless. Man must travel through life, strive, do his best, earn, spend, but at the same time, be above all of these things.

In the Kitáb-i-Aqdas it is said that any man who has adorned his heart with the love of God has the right to sit upon a chair made of gold. Now, in view of the statement that “... *to outward view the wayfarers in this Valley may dwell upon the dust ...*”,<sup>2</sup> we must see what this apparent contradiction means.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys*, p. 29; *Call of the Divine Beloved*, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 29 and 12 respectively.

In Islám it is forbidden for men to use plates made of gold and silver. Bahá'u'lláh is saying that in this Dispensation, that is no longer true. He tells us that now man must have the best life possible—may possess beautiful things—but in order to remain in the Valley of Contentment, he must never place his heart in these things.

To pay interest on a loan is forbidden in Islám.<sup>1</sup> Men have followed practices of trickery in order to avoid the “letter” of Muḥammad’s law, but they violate the spirit of the law. Assume you and I are Moslems and I wish to borrow money from you. We compute interest for the period of time I will need the money and I sign a note for the amount of the loan plus interest!

Bahá'u'lláh knew of these practices and said this is not pleasing to God. He further indicates that interest may be charged for lending money since this is the basis of business life today.

Mr Faizi tells us of his own uncle who was a supreme divine<sup>2</sup> in the Muslim religious order in Persia. This uncle would come to Mr Faizi’s home and drink tea from a silver cup. If anyone other than family members entered the room, the uncle would immediately push the cup away from him. This of course, raised many questions. If it is bad to drink from a silver cup, why do it at all? This example is, in essence, the same as “note signing”.<sup>3</sup>

How many a deed has never been accepted by  
God, and how many intentions are accepted  
by God as pure deeds.



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<sup>1</sup> Qur’án 3:130, 4:161, 30:39 and most importantly 2:275–2:280. Muslims generally interpret usury as including all interest. However, according to the Báb, the Qur’án does not forbid interest: “Most important, he [the Báb] denied the validity [of the generally accepted interpretation] of the Quranic law against usury, maintaining that interest on money may be taken.” *The development of Shaykhí thought in Shí‘í Islam*, p. 152 (referencing the *Persian Bayan*, p. 181).

<sup>2</sup> Áyatu’lláh al-‘Uzmá’.

<sup>3</sup> Making claims to a faith or a pretence of faith.

## Lesson 8

### THE VALLEY OF WONDERMENT

Religious leaders of the past have tried to describe this valley, but they have been in error since they have assumed the limited power of the mind of man can comprehend the endless mysteries of God.

Suppose there is a garden full of beautiful trees bearing various kinds of fruit. On each tree is a lamp. You enter the garden at night. The first light will ignite as you enter, and you will wonder at the beauty of this tree—its leaves, blossoms and fruits. If this is the end, then that is the end of this valley. However, there are millions of different trees in this garden. The moment you reach the end of your pleasure and say, “Now I know all about this garden”, another lamp will ignite and astonishment will be increased. There is no end to this valley.

Imam ‘Alí (the first Imám) said “O Lord, show me more of the secrets you have in this dark world.”

There is an oriental poem that indicates that all arguments end with this: “You will reach the end of the divine mysteries if a bush ever reaches the bottom of the ocean. (By nature, a bush floats and will not sink.)

‘Alí has further said: “I never worship God whom I cannot see.” By this was meant that he saw beauty in, before, and after objects in this world.

And so, because this is a never-ending valley, we cry out, “*O Lord, increase my astonishment at Thee!*”<sup>1</sup>

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Now there are many wisdoms to ponder in the dream, which none but the people of this Valley can comprehend in their true elements.<sup>2</sup>

Bahá’u’lláh tells us that the world of the dream was created by God. Man could go to sleep in the same manner that the trees sleep if God had not decreed otherwise. If you will check with one who knows, you will find that trees do, indeed, sleep [dormant], and it is dangerous to transplant trees when they are not “awake”.

Today, man places great trust in people who deal with psychology. The psychologist cannot deal with the human spirit, the soul and the heart unless and until he becomes well acquainted with the world of God, and what He has planned and destined for man.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys*, p. 33; *Call of the Divine Beloved*, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 32 and 13 respectively.

Think of what we know of the study of dreams today. Sigmund Freud's interpretations of dreams were based on his own life. He indicates that dreams have no spiritual value, but rather they expressed man's relationship to his own self, a lack of a fulfilled life, lack of gratification of all our unsatisfied desires and wishes.

'Abdu'l-Bahá has told us to think of the soul of man like a pond of crystal pure water. Look into the pond and see all of the reflected stars. All heaven is reflected in this pond. Now bring one piece of a feather, or straw, the lightest object in the world and place it on the surface of the pond. Very tiny ripples are created. You can still see the stars, but not so clearly as before. Your soul is like that pond. If it is in absolute comfort, you can be sure you will see everything very clearly in your dream. If you are confused, you will not see clearly.

Another example. Take a pure white canvas. Color it blue, then add yellow. The paint will then appear to be green. You dream of green. The one who interprets the dream must separate the various factors, the things that make up the "green", otherwise the dream cannot be correctly interpreted.

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*Dost thou reckon thyself only a puny form  
When within thee the universe is folded?*<sup>1</sup>

In the Arabic text this appears, "*Do you think of yourself as only an atom? In thee is hidden the whole universe.*"

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*Then we must labor to destroy the animal condition till the meaning of humanity shall come to light.*<sup>2</sup>

The ailment comes from you and the remedy is also within you."

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*Thus, too, Luqmán,<sup>3</sup> who had drunk from the wellspring of wisdom and tasted of the waters of mercy, ... advanced the dream as an evidence and an example.*

The Western world knows Luqmán as Aesop. There is an entire chapter (31) in the Qur'án about this great African teacher and philosopher.

Note that Bahá'u'lláh states that (with regard to Aesop) "*We relate it here, that ... a memory may endure of that youth, of the school of Divine Unity, that elder of the art of instruction and the Absolute.*"<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys*, p. 34; *Call of the Divine Beloved*, p. 13. Quote ascribed to Imám 'Alí.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> A famous legendary figure noted for his wisdom. A Prophet of the Qur'án.

<sup>4</sup> *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys*, p. 34; *Call of the Divine Beloved*, p. 13.



The *Valley of Wonderment* is a Valley of apparent confusion and contradiction. It is for man to surrender his will and know that God's Will is most great.

In Oriental literature, Khidr is depicted as the old sage in many stories—similar to Hercules in Greek mythology.

According to the interpreters of the Qur'án, someone once asked Moses whether God had created anyone higher and more exalted than He (Moses), to which He replied, "No." Then God told him to accompany Khidr on his journey.

In the Qur'án is told the story that illustrates and gives examples of the wonder after wonder which man sees, things about which man always wants to ask "Why?"

Following is the story from Sura 18 The Cave:

*Remember when* Moses said to his servant, "I will not stop till I reach the confluence of the two seas, or for years will I journey on."

But when they reached their confluence, they forgot their fish, and it took its way in the sea at will.

And when they had passed on, said Moses to his servant, "Bring us our morning meal; for now have we incurred weariness from this journey."

He said, "What thinkest thou? When we repaired to the rock for rest I forgot the fish; and none but Satan made me forget it, so as not to mention it; and it hath taken its way in the sea in a wondrous sort."

He said, "It is this we were in quest of." And they both went back retracing their footsteps.

Then found they one of our servants to whom we had vouchsafed our mercy, and whom we had instructed with our knowledge.

And Moses said to him, "Shall I follow thee that thou teach me, for guidance, of that which thou too hast been taught?"

He said, "Verily, thou canst not have patience with me;

How canst thou be patient in matters whose meaning thou comprehendest not?"

He said, "Thou shalt find me patient if God please, nor will I disobey thy bidding."

He said, "Then, if thou follow me, ask me not of aught until I have given thee an account thereof."

So they both went on, till they embarked in a ship, and he—*the unknown*—staved it in. "What!" said *Moses*, "hast thou staved it in that thou mayest drown its crew? a strange thing now hast thou done!"

He said, "Did I not tell thee that thou couldst not have patience with me?"

He said, "Chide me not that I forgat, nor lay on me a hard command."

Then went they on till they met a youth, and he slew him. Said Moses, "Hast thou slain him who is free from guilt of blood? Now hast thou wrought a grievous thing!"

He said, "Did I not tell thee that thou couldst not have patience with me?"

Moses said, "If after this I ask thee aught, then let me be thy comrade no longer; but now hast thou my excuse."

They went on till they came to the people of a city. Of this people they asked food, but they refused them for guests. And they found in it a wall that was about to fall, and he set it upright. Said Moses, "If thou hadst wished, for this thou mightest have obtained pay."

He said, "This is the parting point between me and thee. But I will first tell thee the meaning of that which thou couldst not await with patience.

"As to the vessel, it belonged to poor men who toiled upon the sea, and I was minded to damage it, for in their rear was a king who seized every ship by force.

As to the youth his parents were believers, and we feared lest he should trouble them by error and infidelity.

And we desired that their Lord might give them in his place a child, better than he in virtue, and nearer to filial piety.

And as to the wall, it belonged to two orphan youths in the city, and beneath it was their treasure: and their father was a righteous man: and thy Lord desired that they should reach the age of strength, and take forth their treasure through the mercy of thy Lord. And not of mine own will have I done this. This is the interpretation of that which thou couldst not bear with patience."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Qur'án 31:60–82 (Rodwell 31:59–81)

Conversation following this class will undoubtedly turn to dreams we have had or dreams that others have related to us.

Shoghi Effendi once dreamed that all of the leaves on the trees surrounding the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh had turned yellow. He was disturbed, but fell asleep and dreamed the same dream. That morning they brought him the news of the passing of 'Abdu'l-Qásim, the beloved gardener. For three days Shoghi Effendi would not visit the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh. He could not bear to see the gardens without 'Abdu'l-Qásim. The epitaph that Shoghi Effendi wrote for this soul refer to 'Abdu'l-Qásim as the "Breeze which was wafted from the garden of detachment."

Be sure when thinking of the latent powers enfolded within man that these should be manifested in due time. They should not be manifested by force, but rather by spiritual discipline.



## Lesson 9

Class conducted by A. Q. Faizi—Haifa, Israel (15 December 1966)  
THE VALLEY OF TRUE POVERTY AND ABSOLUTE NOTHINGNESS

The following is a story, an African legend, which has been translated from the Persian language. This story shows the similarity of all religious stories. It is an expression of the longing of man to reach God.

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Kabzia, who was the wealthiest of all gods, created the heaven and earth and two human beings: one man, and the other, a woman. He conferred upon the two human beings wisdom, but none of them had a heart that could pulsate.

Kabzia had four children: Sun, Moon, Rain and Darkness. He summoned all of them and said, “Now I desire to abandon this place in such a way as they will never be able to see me. I shall return the heart to its own place, but before doing so, tell me, you Rain, what will you do?”

Rain: “I shall rain ceaselessly and cover all places with water.”

Kabzia: “Look at these two—man and woman. Do you think they will be able to live in water?” Don’t do as you planned. When you rain sufficiently, let the sun shine and dry the earth.”

Then Kabzia turned to the Sun, and asked him, “What will you do?”

His second child the Sun, replied and said:

Sun: “I shall shine on the earth with such hot and burning rays that nothing will survive. All will vanish.”

Kabzia: “No, you can’t do that. Then how can these two whom I have created be able to find their sustenance? When you warm the earth, let the rain shower upon it until the fruits will ripen.”

Then he faced the Darkness and said, “What will you do?”

Darkness: “I shall rule the earth forever.”

Kabzia's voice was then raised while uttering these words:

Kabzia: "Pity! Do you desire the lions, tigers and vipers to swallow all and everything created on the earth? Let the Moon shine on the earth. Towards the end of the moon, then you rule the world."

After a little silence, Kabzia said:

Kabzia: "It seems that I lingered here for a long time. Now is the time for me to leave this place for my own."

Saying this, Kabzia disappeared.

No sooner had Kabzia disappeared than a little box descended on the earth containing the heart. The heart said to the Sun, Moon, Darkness and the Rain:

Heart: "Where is our Father?"

They all answered:

All: "He turned his face away from here, but where no one knows."

Then the heart said:

Heart: "How I yearn to talk to our Father!"

He said this and afterwards uttered the following words:

Heart: "Therefore I go within man, reside there and shall search for our Father from one generation to the other."

This is what happened once and ever since then man's heart, longing to find God, is in a perpetual pulsation.

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As we begin reading from the *Valley of True Poverty and Absolute Nothingness* we find that the first paragraph ends with these words:

... so that nothing will remain save the Friend.<sup>1</sup>

In the Gospel of John, John describes the condition of the Disciples at the time of Christ. In the Arabic Bible a word is used to describe the Disciples that is not translated in the English, French or Persian versions of the Book. John says *hala*, which means something which "to untie or to dissolve". An example might be sugar—the way that it dissolves in water.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys*, p. 36; *Call of the Divine Beloved*, p. 14.

By that he means that the human temple had been filled with Christ. Christ replaced all. That is why ‘Abdu’l-Bahá praised the Disciples and told us to follow their example. The ego was gone. Nothing remained “save the Friend”.

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As we read on in the next paragraph, we find reference to these people:

*Wherefore, if those who have come to the sea of His presence are found to possess none of the limited things of this perishable world, whether it be outer wealth or personal opinions, it mattereth not.*<sup>1</sup>

Pilgrims are an excellent example of this. If they bring nothing except themselves to the Holy Land, they go away as more spiritual beings than ever before. This transformation begins from the first day.

The story is told of a great spiritual teacher in India, known as Ghuru. A university graduate wanted to know where to learn more about life. He was introduced to Ghuru. He kneeled and said, “I have studied philosophy and other subjects. I have a Master’s degree and I want to learn more.”

The Ghuru filled a glass of water in the presence of the graduate and then started to pour more into the glass. The boy did not understand, and asked for an explanation.

“As long as the glass is full, it will not hold any more,” was the reply. “Come without these things and we can pour more in.”

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*Verily the righteous shall drink of a winecup tempered at the camphor fountain.*<sup>2</sup>

In oriental medicines, things are divided into two categories: food or beverages, and drugs, all of which are either treated to heat or cool the human body.

In the Qur’án two things are mentioned: Ginger, which is the symbol for heat, and Camphor, which is a cooling agent.

There are people who have a fever of gathering things for themselves. Let them drink from the wellspring of camphor. This will bring down the great appetite of man.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys*, p. 36; *Call of the Divine Beloved*, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 37 and 14 respectively. Quote from Qur’án 76:5.

Napoleon had the fever to conquer. The Russian general was advised to send an army against Napoleon, but he said: “No, let him come to us.”

There was no war. No force. Napoleon, by his own fever, was forced to go back.

From the last tablets mailed after the death of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, dictated prior to His ascension, we find that there were tablets to two individuals. To one of them He said, “I hope you will drink from the fountain the nature of which is ginger.”

To the other man, He said the opposite, and wished that this man might drink from the camphor fountain.

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*O My friend, listen with heart and soul .... For the heavenly wisdoms, like the clouds of spring, will not rain down on the hearts of men forever ....<sup>1</sup>*

Every era is divided into four seasons. It is only through the first 300 years (say) that the rain of confirmation comes for teaching the Cause. Remember, “*The clouds of spring will not rain down ... forever.*”

Since a portion of the time for teaching is given for this springtime of teaching, we can better understand why Shoghi Effendi said that a pioneer is worth many philosophers these days.

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*O Brother! Not every sea hath pearls ....<sup>2</sup>*

When Bahá’u’lláh ascended to the ‘Abhá Kingdom, the Covenant-breakers took possession of the mansion of Bahá’u’lláh at Bahjí. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá lived in the House of Abbúd for five years in constant pain and anguish. This was the worst period of His life. A Committee of Investigation came and took residence in the Bedouin mansion near the Bahjí Mansion and the Covenant-breakers at Bahjí helped them in their charges being investigated against ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. The committee came to the conclusion that either ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would be hanged at the gate of Jerusalem, exiled to the desert of Africa, or drowned in the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>3</sup>

At that time a cousin<sup>4</sup> of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá came to see Him. The cousin, who was a Covenant-breaker, had great rejoicing in his heart and a victorious attitude. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was found sitting on a bench in Abbúd’s House, very calm and quiet. The cousin started to talk in great agitation. “Everything is finished for you,” he told ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. “We told you, advised you to come

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<sup>1</sup> *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys*, p. 37; *Call of the Divine Beloved*, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 38 and 14 respectively.

<sup>3</sup> See Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 269. This occurred in 1901.

<sup>4</sup> The “cousin” is probably ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s half-brother, Mírzá Muḥammad ‘Alí (16-12-1853–20-12-1937).

and help us, but you would not listen!” Then the cousin told ‘Abdu’l-Bahá that He would either be hanged at the gate of Jerusalem, exiled to the desert of Africa, or drowned in the Mediterranean Sea. At that, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said, “What an immense shrine!” (the entire Mediterranean Sea).

‘Abdu’l-Bahá then asked the cousin if he had finished his talk. He then advised the cousin to recall that God would give the cousin a very long life so he could see all of his plans as paintings on the waters. He told the cousin he would demand death and it would not be given to him.

This was the man who lived in the house alongside Bahjí. He was paralyzed except for his head, and he lived to see Shoghi Effendi arranging all the gardens. Once he became very weak, and was taken to the hospital. Shoghi Effendi said he would not die because ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said he would have a long life.

When beloved Dorothy Beecher Baker<sup>1</sup> was drowned in the Mediterranean, the Guardian said, “Now that shrine is hers. Shoghi Effendi, referring to Loulie Albee Mathews’ book entitled *Not every Sea Hath Pearls*, said, “Now change the title of your book to ‘All Seas Have Pearls.’”

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*His face no covering save revelation.*<sup>2</sup>

The radiance of the Manifestation is a veil. Just as we cannot see the sun except for the rays of the sun, neither can we see the full splendour of the Manifestation save through Revelation. They, Themselves, cannot be properly seen.

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*Ecstasy alone can encompass this theme, not utterance nor argument ....*<sup>3</sup>

The following prayer explains and elaborates on the above statement.

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<sup>1</sup> Dorothy Beecher Baker (1 December 1898–10 January 1954), *Hand of the Cause of God*. She died when a de Havilland Comet passenger jet crashed into the sea.

<sup>2</sup> *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys*, p. 39; *Call of the Divine Beloved*, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*



*Make firm our steps, O Lord, in Thy path and strengthen Thou our hearts in Thine obedience. Turn our faces toward the beauty of Thy oneness, and gladden our bosoms with the signs of Thy divine unity. Adorn our bodies with the robe of Thy bounty, and remove from our eyes the veil of sinfulness, and give us the chalice of Thy grace; that the essence of all beings may sing Thy praise before the vision of Thy grandeur. Reveal then Thyself, O Lord, by Thy merciful utterance and the mystery of Thy divine being, that the holy ecstasy of prayer may fill our souls—a prayer that shall rise above words and letters and transcend the murmur of syllables and sounds—that all things may be merged into nothingness before the revelation of Thy splendor.*

*Lord! These are servants that have remained fast and firm in Thy Covenant and Thy Testament, that have held fast unto the cord of constancy in Thy Cause and clung unto the hem of the robe of Thy grandeur. Assist them, O Lord, with Thy grace, confirm with Thy power and strengthen their loins in obedience to Thee. 69–70*

*Thou art the Pardoner, the Gracious.<sup>1</sup>*

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*In all these journeys the travel must stray not the breadth of a hair from the “Law” ...<sup>2</sup>*

If you recall, we have noted that the mystics are divided into two groups. Some are mendicants and beggars. They say that when you know the truth you do not need prayer, fasting, etc. Bahá'u'lláh says that as long as you are journeying throughout these valleys you must always abide by the commandments of the Prophets. This obedience protects us and it protects the Faith of God.

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Note that Bahá'u'lláh states that those who believe they have reached the “*farthest homeland of the lovers*” have actually only reached the “*first gate of the heart’s citadel*.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in *Bahá’í Prayers*, pp. 69–70.

<sup>2</sup> *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys*, pp. 39–40; *Call of the Divine Beloved*, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 40 and p. 15 respectively.

*The thoughts thou hast expressed as to the interpretation of the common species of bird that is called in Persian Gunjishk (sparrow) ...*<sup>1</sup>

Here a number of quotations or “sayings” from the Qur’án or teachings of Islám were stated. The combined first letters from each of the sayings form the word for “sparrow”.

This practice in the western world is usually restricted to names of organizations such as:

Committee of Racial Equality (CORE), the World Health Organization (WHO), etc.

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To return for a moment to the fact that this is the season for teaching the Faith:

It is said that when ‘Abdu’l-Bahá knew that He was about to ascend, He asked someone in the Holy Land to send a cable to Shoghi Effendi. A letter was sent instead. Shoghi Effendi often mentioned this and wished ‘that he might have known in time to be here to speak to the Master ....’

There are many lessons for all of us in this story, if we are told that NOW is the time for a certain action, then we must not delay!

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<sup>1</sup> *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys*, p. 42; *Call of the Divine Beloved*, p. 17.

## Appendix

I am telling it. If I tell the whole truth just as it happened I shan't spare myself. My first idea was a—Karamazov one. Once I was bitten by a centipede, brother, and laid up a fortnight with fever from it. Well, I felt a centipede biting at my heart then—a noxious insect, you understand? I looked her up and down. You've seen her? She's a beauty. But she was beautiful in another way then. At that moment she was beautiful because she was noble, and I was a scoundrel; she in all the grandeur of her generosity and sacrifice for her father, and I—a bug! And, scoundrel as I was, she was altogether at my mercy, body and soul. She was hemmed in. I tell you frankly, that thought, that venomous thought, so possessed my heart that it almost swooned with suspense. It seemed as if there could be no resisting it; as though I should act like a bug, like a venomous spider, without a spark of pity. I could scarcely breathe. Understand, I should have gone next day to ask for her hand, so that it might end honourably, so to speak, and that nobody would or could know. For though I'm a man of base desires, I'm honest. And at that very second some voice seemed to whisper in my ear, "But when you come to-morrow to make your proposal, that girl won't even see you; she'll order her coachman to kick you out of the yard. 'Publish it through all the town,' she would say, 'I'm not afraid of you.'" I looked at the young lady, my voice had not deceived me. That is how it would be, not a doubt of it. I could see from her face now that I should be turned out of the house. My spite was roused. I longed to play her the nastiest swinish cad's trick: to look at her with a sneer, and on the spot where she stood before me to stun her with a tone of voice that only a shopman could use.

"Four thousand! What do you mean? I was joking. You've been counting your chickens too easily, madam. Two hundred, if you like, with all my heart. But four thousand is not a sum to throw away on such frivolity. You've put yourself out to no purpose."

"I should have lost the game, of course. She'd have run away. But it would have been an infernal revenge. It would have been worth it all. I'd have howled with regret all the rest of my life, only to have played that trick. Would you believe it, it has never happened to me with any other woman, not one, to look at her at such a moment with hatred. But, on my oath, I looked at her for three seconds, or five perhaps, with fearful hatred—that hate which is only a hair's-breadth from love, from the maddest love!

"I went to the window, put my forehead against the frozen pane, and I remember the ice burnt my forehead like fire. I did not keep her long, don't be afraid. I turned round, went up to the table, opened the drawer and took out a banknote for five thousand roubles (it was lying in a French dictionary). Then I showed it her in silence, folded it, handed it to her, opened the door into the passage, and, stepping back, made her a deep bow, a most respectful, a most impressive bow, believe me! She shuddered all over, gazed at me for a second, turned horribly pale—white as a sheet, in fact—and all at once, not impetuously but softly, gently, bowed down to my feet—not a boarding-school curtsey, but a Russian bow, with her forehead to the floor. She jumped up and ran away. I was wearing my sword. I drew it and nearly stabbed myself with it on the spat; why, I don't know. It would have been frightfully stupid, of course. I suppose it was from delight. Can you understand that one might kill oneself from delight? But I didn't stab myself. I only kissed my sword and put it back in the scabbard—which there was no need to have told you, by the way.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, pp. 134–5.