



# BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Provisional Translations

3 IZZAT 178 B.E

ERIC MICHOT

Personal Selection Volume III

# VOLUME III

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# **Lawh-i Ittihád**

## **The Tablet of Unity**

### **Bahá'u'lláh**

--- provisional translation by Moojan Momen

He is God! Exalted be He in Wisdom and Exposition!

A letter has been received by this Wronged One from one of the Sayyids [1] who have turned towards God, have listened and responded to their Lord, the Compassionate, the All-Bountiful. All [of them] have been remembered in the presence of this Resplendent Beauty and I ask God (Haqq) to confirm[them] all in that which will cause them to be remembered forever.

Thou hast asked about unity (ittihád). The first kind of unity is unity in religion. This unity has always been the cause of the victory of the Faith of God in every age and century. Togetherness is the mystic sword of God.

For example, should a government see that most of the people of the country have rent asunder the veils and are turning towards the horizon of Divine revelation, it should remain silent and should listen to what is said. Each person who is attentive attains to the knowledge of God, except those who are utterly

distant from the Mercy of God. They indeed are fully deserving of anger and vehement opposition. Such persons are, in any case, forbidden and barred.

And another kind of unity is unity in speech. And this is very necessary. For example, consider that if two of the chosen ones of God should come to a town and should speak about the same matter and disagree, this would be the cause of disunity. It would cause them and those around them to be deprived and debarred from the bounties of unity which have been revealed by the Pen of the Lord of Being. That which aids the One True God has always been and is words (*bayán*), but in this most mighty dispensation, deeds and a goodly character are the hosts of the one True God and are responsible for the triumph of the Cause. If words are used to a due extent, they can be Divine mercy, but if they exceed that, they become the cause of devastation. In our tablets, we have exhorted all with words within which is concealed the effect of milk, such that it may educate the children of the world and cause them to reach maturity. Words, in every station, have an evident state and a clear effect, and there emanates from them the fragrance of either good or evil.

And in another respect unity in [ritual] acts is intended. For any difference in these is the cause of disunity. When this wronged one was being exiled from Zawrá (Baghdad) to Edirne, we entered a mosque, on the way, where we saw different forms of the obligatory prayer being performed. Although all agreed on the words of the prayer, yet each was different from the other for some reason. If the people of the Qur'án had truly acted in accordance with what was revealed in the Qur'án, then everyone on earth would have attained the honour of becoming a believer. But differences in [ritual] acts resulted in differences in the cause, and this weakened the Cause. One group prays with hands closed and another with hands open; one

group gives greetings while saying the shahádah, while another says "as-salám". And besides this, one group dances and says this is remembrance of God. We take refuge in God! God is sanctified and detached from any such remembrance.

The Holy Law (Sharí`ah) of the Messenger of God may be likened to an ocean from which innumerable gulfs branch out. And this is the cause of the weakness of the Sharí`ah of God among the peoples. Until now no-one, not kings nor subjects nor the indigent have understood the reason for this, nor have they appreciated how to regain that power that has vanished and the learning that has fallen away. Thus one gulf is Shí`a, one gulf is Sunni, one Shaykhi, another Shah Ni`matulláhi, one Naqshbandi, another Malámatí, one Jaláli, another Rifá`í, and yet another Khárábátí. Thus are multiplied the innumerable pathways to hell. Thus do the stones weep and the Pen of the All-High laments. Seest thou what has befallen a Sharí`ah whose light illumined the world and whose fire, that is to say the fire of its love, was the guide of its peoples. Well is it with those who ponder upon these matters and investigate them and are fair in their judgement. Thus did this difference in rituals become the cause of the shaking of the foundations of the Cause of God.

O people of the Bayán! Listen to the call of this Wronged One. Do not afflict yourselves with the like of what has happened to previous religions. Verily doth He reveal the evidence and make clear the straight path. Beware of disputing about what has been revealed from the heaven of the Will of Thy Lord, the All-Powerful, the Almighty.

By the Eternal God! If a single person could be seen who spoke the truth or an upright person could be found, this servant would not have spoken a word - in

other words the One True God would not have delivered him over to these people, that is to say the people of the Bayán. Let those possessed of insight take warning!

Purify and sanctify your hearts and your inner beings with the living waters that flow forth from the pen of the All-Merciful. And busy yourselves with assisting the Cause with the hosts of good deeds, a pleasing character, and holy words. Such is the advice of the One True God, exalted be His Majesty, which hath flowed forth from Pen of the All-High and been revealed in tablets.

Another type is the unity of rank or station. This results in the rising up of the Cause and its elevation among the peoples. But if ranking and preference of one over another comes into its midst, the world falls into ruin and desolation may be witnessed. Those souls who have drunk from the sea of the utterance of the All-Merciful and are turning towards the All-High Horizon should see themselves as being of one rank and one station. Should this injunction be firmly established and be realized through the power and might of God, the world would be seen as the Abhá paradise. Verily human beings are exalted, as can be found in every Divine scripture; but to consider oneself as more learned, more favoured, more accomplished, more righteous or more exalted is a mighty error and sin. Well is it with those souls who are adorned with the ornament of this unity and are accepted before God. Look at the `ulamá of Iran. If they had not considered themselves the most exalted and most accomplished of all beings, they would not have caused those wretched followers of theirs to curse and blaspheme against the Desire of the Worlds. All humanity is dismayed, nay the entire world is bewildered, at these false and neglectful souls. The fire of pride and vainglory has burnt them all, but they are not aware of it and do not understand. They have not drunk a drop of the ocean of knowledge and understanding. Woe unto them and unto what their tongues have



uttered and unto what their hands have wrought on the day of retribution and on this day when the people have arisen for the Lord of the Worlds.

If the Pen of the All-High were to wish to describe the types of unity in every way and in every affair completely, it would be occupied for years. Another example is the unity of souls and of wealth and with this example we will end our discourse on unity as a command from us, and We are the All-Powerful, the Unconstrained. This unity is a unity which is the source of joy, happiness and delight, where they know and understand. Let the neglectful clerics not ask: "To whom does this apply?" It applies to all.

From this unity beneficence arises. And this beneficence has been and is beloved in all of the holy books of the past and future. This beneficence is in terms of wealth, not anything either more or less than this. "And they prefer [others] over themselves, even though poverty becomes their lot. And they who are saved from the avarice of their own souls, verily, those are the ones who have attained [unto Thee]. (cf Qur'án 59:9)" [2]

This station goes beyond just equality. Equality is where a human being does not debar his fellow creatures from that which the One True God, exalted be His Glory, hast graciously given him. He himself doth live at ease and he doth cause those like himself to live at ease. Such a station is indeed well loved since all will thus partake of ease and receive their share of the ocean of grace. But those that prefer others over themselves have a station that, in truth, is above this station, as has already been mentioned and what the All-Merciful has revealed in the Qur'án is proof and evidence of this.

O people of God! The most exalted Pen doth weep unto itself over what hath occurred in this contingent world. Matters have reached such a pass that a stagnant pool claims to be the ocean and a lizard doth claim to be an eagle. [3] What hath occurred? What smoke hath encompassed the world? Hath not the fragrance of this revelation been diffused and distinguished itself from aught else? Can not the straight path be discerned from the pathways of evil? No! By my life! The truth with all of its attributes and actions is and always has been distinguishable from aught else and those who are possessed of insight have not and will not be mistaken over this.

The meaning of the unity of souls is that all should gather around and cling to the Love of God and the Word of God. Anyone possessed of wisdom and insight will affirm the truth of that which hath flowed forth from the most exalted Pen.

These unities that We have mentioned are each an army among the hosts of God, a part of the party of God, and a command that is part of the Decree of God. The unity of souls, from the beginning of creation until now, hath been and shall be that which doth assist and bring victory to the Truth – that is to say that unity that is established according to the Decree of God and His Law. In this station, unity does not exceed this degree.

Therefore, take heed, O people of insight! The most exalted Pen, at this moment, doth exhort Its chosen ones, one and all, to unity and harmony that, through this, may be manifested the Decree of God, the Help-in-Peril, the Self-Subsisting. Similarly with wisdom; some of the friends of God have not observed wisdom and have neglected its importance. In some lands they have become the cause of upheaval. Listen to the call of this Wronged One and act according to what has

been revealed in the tablets. For as long as thou hast not found a listener, do not open thy mouth. And if thou dost not see a good and blessed soil, do not deposited the seed of wisdom. The word of God should only be cast when the ear and the insight is ready to receive it and similarly the soil [of the heart]. Some have, at times, spoken words that damage the root of the tree.

Say: O people! Follow God and do not be of those who do evil. Fear God and do not be of those who are ignorant! Barren ground is not suitable for growing vegetation and the ear of infidelity is not worthy of hearing word of the Unity of God.

O People of God! From the most exalted Pen hath flowed forth that which is the cause of the life of the world. Everyone must meditate upon God and in particular upon the Unity of God. Let it not be that, like unto the peoples before you who spoke the words but remained bereft of their meaning, being worshippers of names and devotees of idols. Despite this, they accounted themselves as being among the upholders of the Unity of God and among the people of certitude. The One True God hath decreed that what was hidden of the actions and rewards of these people on the day of return should be revealed; that their elevation, their rank, their station and the extent of their belief in the Oneness of God should all become clear and manifest to the people of the world.

O my name! Convey to the friends of God the greetings of this Wronged One and counsel them according to what God hath exhorted in scriptures and tablets. Well is it with those who have emigrated in the path of God until they entered this most mighty Prison. They have accepted all for the sake of God and have turned themselves toward God. Their reward is with Him who hath formed them and

created them, hath provided for them, assisted them, taught them and hath caused them to speak forth in mention and praise of Him. Verily, He hath power over all things. May the glory shining forth from the Horizon of the heaven of My Mercy be upon them whom God hath enabled to act in accordance with that which hath been revealed in His firm and unshakable Book.

Praise be to God, the Lord of the Worlds! We ask Him, exalted be He, at the end of this tablet, to confirm them, assist them and reinforce them with the hosts of the Unseen and of the seen and to give them victory in His Cause. Verily, He is Powerful to do what He willeth and in His grasp are the reins of all things. There is none other God but He, the One, the Mighty, the All-Informed.

#### Notes

1. This tablet was addressed to Sayyid Asadu'lláh of Rasht, the fourth of five brothers known as Sádát-iKhams.
2. Qur'án 59:9 is identical except the last word is *muflihún* (successful) in the Qur'án and *fá'izún* (those who have attained) in this text.
3. It is possible that the text here is corrupt since the usual expression is a gnat (*dhabb*) rather than a lizard (*dabb*) in comparison to an eagle.

#### Background

The Tablet of Unity is a tablet of Bahá'u'lláh dealing with the subject of unity and describing various types of unity that may be attained.

It is usually considered that this tablet belongs to the Akka period. The tablet is stated to have been addressed to Sayyid Asadu'lláh of Rasht, the fourth of five brothers known as Sádát-i Khams. If this attribution is correct, and it seems to be well supported in that it is given in several sources, this would place the tablet firmly in the Akka period since the five brothers were only converted by `Alí Ashraf Láhijání, known as `Andalíb, in Rasht in about 1296 (c. 1879).

At first, it may appear confusing that there are several addresses to the "people of the Bayán" where one would expect, in a tablet of the Akka period, the "people of Bahá" to be addressed. It must be remembered, however, that Sayyid Asadu'lláh of Rasht was particularly affected by Azali activities in Qazvin. Samandar has described in his narrative how, shortly after his conversion, Sayyid Asadu'lláh moved to Qazvin. Here, the Azalís discovered that he was a Bahá'í and attempted to shake his faith. One of them sent his son to be a servant in Sayyid Asadu'lláh's house and thus obtained an entrance to the house. They then began to speak to Sayyid Asadu'lláh until they had caused severe doubts to arise in his mind. Samandar became aware of the situation and asked to be present on an occasion when the Azalís were at Sayyid Asadu'lláh's house. Samandar then proceeded to answer them point by point from the text of the Bayán. As a consequence, Sayyid Asadu'lláh's faith was restored.

The five brothers were merchants and had obtained Russian protection. When Sayyid Asadu'lláh returned to Rasht, he was able, together with one of his brothers, to negotiate a contract with the holder of the Imperial concession for the surfaced road between Anzali and Tehran for the provision of traveller's services along the route - rest-houses, food, accommodation, etc. As a result of this he became very rich.

## **Alvah-i-Laylatu'l-Quds**

### **Bahá'u'lláh**

The Most Great Name beareth Me witness! How sad if any man were, on this Day, to rest his heart on the transitory things of this world! Arise, and cling firmly to the Cause of God. Be most loving to one another. Burn away, wholly for the sake of the Well-Beloved, the veil of self with the flame of the undying Fire, and with faces joyous and beaming with light, associate with your neighbor. Ye have well observed, in all its aspects, the behavior of Him Who is the Word of Truth amidst you. Ye know full well how hard it is for this Youth to allow, though it be for one night, the heart of any one of the beloved of God to be saddened by Him.

The Word of God hath set the heart of the world afire; how regrettable if ye fail to be enkindled with its flame! Please God, ye will regard this blessed night as the night of unity, will knit your souls together, and resolve to adorn yourselves with the ornament of a goodly and praiseworthy character. Let your principal concern be to rescue the fallen from the slough of impending extinction, and to help him embrace the ancient Faith of God. Your behavior towards your neighbor should be such as to manifest clearly the signs of the one true God, for ye are the first among men to be re-created by His Spirit, the first to adore and bow the knee before Him, the first to circle round His throne of glory. I swear by Him Who hath caused Me to reveal whatever hath pleased Him! Ye are better known to the inmates of the Kingdom on high than ye are known to your own selves. Think ye these words are vain and empty? Would ye have the power to perceive the things your Lord, the

All-Merciful, doth see - things that attest the excellence of your rank, that bear witness to the greatness of your worth, that proclaim the sublimity of your station! God grant that your desires and unmortified passions may not hinder you from that which hath been ordained for you.

# **Lawh-i-Hawdaj/Samsun**

## **Tablet of the Howdah**

### **Bahá'u'lláh**

--provisional translation by Stephen N. Lambden

[Sighting from His howdah the Black Sea, as He approached the port of Samsun, Bahá'u'lláh, at the request of Mirza Aqa Jan, revealed a Tablet, designated Lawh-i-Hawdaj (Tablet of the Howdah), which by such allusions as the "Divine Touchstone," "the grievous and tormenting Mischief," reaffirmed and supplemented the dire predictions recorded in the recently revealed Tablet of the Holy Mariner. (Shoghi Effendi, 'God Passes By')]

[Additional information is also provided by Adib Taherzadeh]

These are verses which were disclosed in the Pavilion of Eternity and the Howdah of Holiness at the moment when the Greatest Name arrived at the precinct of majesty in the land of Sāmsūn, at the shore of a mighty ocean. Then did the hosts of the inspiration of God descend, so splendidly ornamented, that all who are in the heavens and on earth were thunderstruck thereat. Before them did the Sun of the Divine Beauty radiate forth in an holy, ethereal Temple and addressed the Ark with the like of that which had streamed forth from the Pen of God aforetime, in a Tablet in which We addressed the Holy Mariner with a secret, sorrowful Call. And



this in accordance with what hath this moment been sent down in this Tablet from an holy, luminous Pen. And whoever desires to comprehend the mysteries of the Command on the part of One, Wise, All-Knowing, let such an one consider these two Tablets and thus become cognizant of the mysteries of God; eyes solaced thereby and one numbered among such as are possessed of certainty.

The times of reclining in the Howdah of Holiness hath been completed and the Beauty of the Divine Essence hath emerged unto a mighty, noble panorama. Say: 'The terrestrial journey hath found completion at the shore of a mighty ocean.' At this did the Howdah of Immortality weep and a luminous Ship of Holiness rejoice.

O Holy Mariner! (ya mallāḥ al-quds) The promise hath come to pass just as We promised thee through a sure and knowing Tongue. So be of good cheer within thyself that the Logos-Self of God, which is naught save Him, might embark upon the Ark through this novel yet ancient Command. Before thee shall be made manifest all that We, in very truth, promised thee, if thou art truly patient. We announced unto thee aforetime all that hath come to pass and none in all the worlds hath been privy thereto. We made them to be heedless thereof on account of that which their hands hath wrought. And this, assuredly, is but manifest justice.

By God! Such as enter beneath thy shade shall be seized by a grievous and tormenting mischief. By God! This is the Touchstone of God. He hath risen up with justice and shall distinguish between truth and falsehood, doubt and certitude.

But thou, Purify! thy vision from the limitations of mortal men and suffer not thy sight to be distracted from this luminous Panorama. Waft then upon them [a

portion] of the breezes of the Divine Bounty perchance they might be purified of their idle fancies and be oriented towards God, the Mighty, the Wise; their hearts cleansed of their vain imagining and they be enabled to attain unto the sacred, wondrous Homeland. And perchance thereby the veils of imitation be burned up and the Beauty of the Divine Oneness radiate forth in the ethereal lamp[s] of the hearts. It is not fitting that the servants [of God] weigh the Balance of God for they shall at every moment be weighed and so be counted among such as are weighed. So turn aside from them! And disregard their outrages, for Thou, verily, art One Generous, Possessed of Grace, All-Knowing. Then, when Thou hast shut Thine eyes to the rebellion and opened them to that which is most-excellent, waft upon the denizens of existence fragrances holy and beneficent. This perchance they might become cognizant within themselves that God hath preferred them above all creatures, made them to be the associates of His Own Logos-Self, ennobled them through the Meeting with Him, caused to descend upon them the fruits of Union from an Holy, Manifest Tree. [He furthermore] made them to be robed in the garment of distinction, preferred them above such creatures as have been and now exist, and made their names to be inscribed upon mighty, preserved Tablets. All this shall assuredly be conferred upon them; as long, that is, as they alter not the bounty of God unto themselves, comprehend that which God hath graciously bestowed upon them, and at every moment render thanks unto Him.

And Thou, O Ark of the Cause! Transport them! Embark across the Ocean with the permission of God, the Mighty, the Powerful.

O Ship of Holiness! Rejoice within thyself for a Beauty, mighty, and transcendent hath come upon thee.

O Sea of Immortality! Delight thine eyes for there hath come upon thee a Sea spiritual and ethereal. Wherefore wert thou created before other seas if thou be of those that are truly aware. Then honor the guests of God, servants who ride upon thee, and who have arrived before thee, and be not such as to create confusion. Preserve the trustees of God! Act not treacherously within thyself and be not of those that are perfidious.

O fishes of the Sea! Be joyous within thyself, then be mindful of thy Creator, in that thou hast attained to the Meeting with God in the days in which the Sun of the Divine Beauty hath radiated forth from the Dawning Place of an Ancient Name.

O Atmosphere of the Sea! Waft thou upon the luminous, well-fashioned bodies which God created from the Light of His Essence before He created the heavens and the earth! Exalt within thyself them rejoice in thy spirit for God hath provided for thee an atmosphere, spiritual and ethereal.

By God! While the inmates of the inhabitants of the sea hath rejoiced, those that dwell on the land hath raised tumult for the Beauty of the Divine Essence hath emerged from the Howdah of Eternity and came to dwell within an Ark proximate and elevated.

Say: 'O People of Secret and the Disclosed, the Hidden and the Manifest! Let nothing sadden thee. Rejoice at the rejoicing of God, the Sanctified, the Most-Elevated, the All Knowing.'

Say: 'This is assuredly the Jubilation which hath captivated the totality of things existent and hath encompassed all that inhabit all the worlds.' Yet hath none been enraptured save such as hath turned towards the Panorama of God, the Sanctified, the Mighty, the Luminous.

Say: 'This is assuredly the Divine Bounty which hath inclined all the atoms towards the Beauty of the Divine Essence with a nearness comparable to the Beloved One's being mindful of the name of the Loved One.' Thus do We set forth the verses of the Spirit and widen the expanse of the Divine Bounty for all who are gathered in the earthly dominion.

And Thou, O Depth of Holiness! Raise thou a Call at the conclusion of this discourse in that the Depth of God, the Help in Peril, the Victorious, the Steadfast, hath arrived before thee.

O Billowing Ocean of the Divine Oneness! Be joyous in thine essence in that the Billowing Ocean of Joy hath risen up over thee. This, verily, is a mighty bounty.

O Fathomless Deep of the Divine Might! Be exhilarated within thy spirit for the Fathomless Deep of God, the Most-Elevated, the Mighty, the Powerful, hath compassed thee about. So be thou gladdened in that about thee are transported those that are nigh unto God. And at this moment hath all atoms reoriented [their gaze], risen up in thine atmosphere, and are of such as look on, for the Breezes of Holiness passeth over them from the Shore of the Divine Oneness, from this Enshrouded, Veiled, Concealed, Manifest, Apparent and Hidden Ridvān. So blessed be they and such as hath entered beneath His shadow, been ennobled with

the Meeting with Him, drunk deep of His Cup, and took hold on His strong and Firm Cord.

In such manner have We graciously conferred Divine Favor upon those of former and of latter times and sent down from the Clouds of Holiness that which serves to purify the hearts of such as are possessed of divine knowledge. And We have decreed the Robe of Guidance for all things should they give assent to Him and be of the truly pious. Thus hath been decreed in the Heaven of the Divine Command that which is the cause of the enrichment of all the worlds.

[From the Right-hand side of the Command / Cause there hath issued forth (the statement)] There hath indeed been manifest [herein] a tribulation [test] (fitnah) which We sent down [revealed] in this scriptural Tablet (al-lawh). We thus spoke forth and such is indeed the certain Truth-Reality (huwa al-haqq). By God! Such as have entered into Thy shadow, shall indeed be seized by the torment of a mighty tribulation [test] ('adhāb fitnat in `azimin)!

# **A Tablet by Baha'u'llah to the Persian Zoroastrian**

**Baha'is**

**Bahá'u'lláh**

Revealed in the purest Persian language, without any Arabic words

-- provisional translation by Ahmad Sohrab

In the Name of God the Peerless!

Glory is due unto God, the Discoverer, who, through one shower of the ocean of His Generosity, expanded the firmament of existence, begemmed it with the stars of knowledge and summoned the people to the most high court of perception and understanding!

This shower, which is the Primal Word of the Almighty, is sometimes called the Water of Life, for it quickens the dead souls in the desert of ignorance with the spring of intelligence. Sometimes it is called the First Emanation which appears from the Sun of Wisdom, and when it began to shine the first movement became manifest and known; then phenomena stepped into the arena of existence and these appearances were through the generosity of the Incomparable, the Wise One. He is the Knower, the Giver! He is sanctified and holy above every statement and

attribute! The seen and the unseen fail to attain the measure of His understanding. The world of being and whatever has been issued from it bears witness to this utterance.

Therefore, it has become known that the First Bestowal of the Almighty is the Word. The receiver and acceptor of it is the understanding. It is the First Instructor in the University of Existence and it is the Primal Emanation of God. Whatever has appeared is through the reflection of Its Light and whatever is manifested is the appearance of Its Wisdom. All the names originate in His Name and the beginnings and endings of all affairs are in His Hand.

Your letter came to this Captive of the world in this prison. It brought happiness and increased friendship; it renewed the remembrance of the former times. Thanks belong to the Possessor of the universe, who permitted us to meet in the land of Persia. We met, we conversed and we listened. It is hoped that no forgetfulness shall follow that meeting, that the revolving of the wheel of time shall not take away its remembrance from the heart and that the plants of love shall grow out of that which is sown and become green, verdant and imperishable.

You have asked regarding the heavenly Books: The pulse of the universe is in the hand of the skillful Physician. He diagnoses the illness and wisely prescribes the remedy. Every day has its own secret and every tongue a melody. The illness of today has one cure and that of tomorrow another. Look ye upon this day; consider and discuss its needs. One sees that existence is afflicted with innumerable diseases compelling it to lie upon the bed of suffering. Men who are intoxicated with the wine of self-contemplation prevent the wise Physician from reaching it. Thus have they made themselves and the world to suffer. They know not the ailment nor

recognize the cure. They take the wrong for the right, the crooked for the straight, the enemy for the friend.

Hearken ye to the melody of this Prisoner! Stand up and proclaim! Perchance those who are asleep may awaken! Say, O ye dead ones! The generous Hand of the Almighty is passing around the Water of Eternal Life. Hasten ye and drink! Whosoever becomes alive in this day shall never die, and whosoever dies in this day can never find Life.

Ye have written regarding the language: Both Persian and Arabic are good, for that which one desires to gain from language is to attain to the meanings of the speaker and this can be accomplished in both. As in this day the Sun of Wisdom has appeared and shone forth from the horizon of Persia, the more you respect this language the better it is.

O Friend! When the Primal Word appeared in these latter days, a number of the heavenly souls heard the Melody of the Beloved and hastened toward it, while others, finding that the deeds of some did not correspond with their words, were prevented from the Splendors of the Sun of Knowledge.

Say, O ye sons of earth! The Pure God proclaims that which in this glorious day shall purify you from the stains of desire and enable you to attain tranquility in My straight path and My manifest road. To be severed from attachment means to be separated from those things which occasion loss and lessen the grandeur of man. If the people of the world should attain the Heavenly Utterances they would never be prevented from the Ocean of Divine Generosity.



The heaven of righteousness has no Star, and never shall have one, brighter than this. The first Utterance of the Wise One is this: O ye Sons of Earth! Turn from the night of foreignness to the shining of the Sun of Unity. This is that which shall benefit the people of the world more than aught else.

O Friend! The Tree of the Word has no better Blossom and the Ocean of Wisdom shall never have a brighter Pearl than this: O ye Sons of Intelligence! The thin eyelid prevents the eye from seeing the world and what is contained therein. Then think of the result when the curtain of greed covers the sight of the heart.

Say, O People! The darkness of greed and envy obscures the light of the soul as the cloud prevents the penetration of the sun's rays. Should one listen with the ear of intelligence to this Utterance, he shall spread the wings of freedom and soar with great joy toward the heaven of understanding.

When the world was enveloped with darkness, the Sea of Generosity was set in motion and Divine Illumination appeared so that the deeds were disclosed. This is the same illumination which is promised in the heavenly books. Should the Almighty desire the hearts of the people of the world, He will purify and sanctify them with the power of the Word, and will pour forth the Light of the Sun of Unity upon the souls to regenerate the world.

O People! The word must be demonstrated by the deed, for the righteous witness of the Word is action. The former without the latter shall not allay the thirst of the needy nor open the doors of sight to the blind.

The Heavenly Wise One proclaimeth: A harsh word is like a sword, but gentle speech is like unto milk. The children of the world attain knowledge and better themselves through this.

The Tongue of Wisdom says: Whosoever possesses Me not, has nothing. Pass by whatever exists in this world and find Me. I am the Sun of Perception and the Ocean of Science. I revive the withered ones and quicken the dead. I am that Light which illumines the path of Insight. I am the Falcon on the arm of the Almighty; I bear healing in MY wings and teach the knowledge of soaring to the Heaven of Truth.

The Peerless Beloved says: The way of freedom is opened! Hasten ye! The Fountain of Knowledge is gushing! Drink ye! Say, O Friends! The Tabernacle of Oneness is raised; look not upon each other with the eye of strangeness. Ye are all the fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch. Truly, I say, whatever lessens ignorance and increases knowledge, that has been, is and shall be accepted by the Creator.

Say, O People! Walk ye under the shade of the Tree of Righteousness; enter ye under the protection of the Tent of Unity. Say, O thou Possessor of Sight! The past is the mirror of the future; look and perceive. Perchance, after the acquisition of knowledge, ye may know the Friend and attain to His good pleasure. Today the best fruit of the Tree of Science and Knowledge is that which benefits mankind and improves his condition.

Say! The tongue is the witness of My Truth; do not pollute it with untruthfulness. The spirit is the treasury of My Mystery; do not deliver it into the hand of greed. It

is hoped that in this Dawn the universe shall become illumined with the rays of the sun of understanding and knowledge, so that we may attain to the good pleasure of the Beloved and drink from the Ocean of Divine Recognition.

O Friend! As there were few ears to hear, so for some time the Pen has been silent in its own chamber and to such a degree that silence has preceded utterance. Say, O People! Words are revealed according to capacity, so that the beginners may make progress. The milk must be given according to the measure, so that the babe of the world may enter into the realm of grandeur and be established in the Court of Unity.

O Friend! We have seen the pure ground and cast the seed of knowledge. Now it depends upon the rays of the sun whether it burns up or is caused to grow. Say, today through the greatness of the Peerless, Wise One, the Sun of Knowledge has appeared from behind the covering of the Spirit and all the birds of the meadow of oneness are intoxicated with the wine of Understanding and are commemorating the Name of the Beloved. Happy is the one who finds this and becomes immortal.

- Baha'u'llah (Star of the West, vol. 1, no. 1, March 21, 1910)

# **Lawh-i Haqqu'n-Nas**

## **Tablet of the Right of the People**

**Bahá'u'lláh**

-- provisional translation by Mehran Ghasempour

In the Name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful

Praise be to God Who fulfilled what He revealed to all His Prophets and Messengers and gave to all the tidings of His days. And of them is the Day which He promised us in His Mighty Book through His saying, exalted be His dominion: on that day "God will enrich everyone out of His abundance." [Qur'an 4:130] And this, truly, is our Day, when I behold Him enriching all who enter in His shadow from the abundance of His knowledge and command, inasmuch as on this Day He hath placed the reins of knowledge in the grasp of His lowliest servant and in the possession of His most insignificant subject who hath held fast to the cord of His Love in the days of His manifestation.

And praise be to God who inspireth whom He wisheth with the hosts of His revelation and "casteth the light of His knowledge into the heart of whom He willeth." [Islamic Hadíth] There is no God but Him Who is manifest through the manifestation of His own Self, inasmuch as there remains no veil for Him but the light of His Beauty, and no cloud but the abundance of His manifestation.

Blessing and peace be upon the noblest of His Chosen Ones, and the most distinguished of His creation, and upon His kindred, and upon His family, and upon His saints who stood firm in His Cause and continued steadfast in His love.

And then We convey that the letter of that loved one was perused and was the source of joy and cheer. God willing this divine confirmation may always be Our friend and this divine assistance continue, such that from time to time thou shouldst seek to become informed of, and have sympathy for the wanderers of the wilderness of disappointment and obscurity. Thus may God reward thee with the best of rewards and graciously aid thee as He wisheth and pleaseth.

Thou hadst inquired as to how the settlement of one's rights in the world after death and paying the rights of people due to them can be conceived and be made possible in the great Resurrection, which hath been referred to as the Day of Judgement? Since these vanities, possessions, and rights that are desired and witnessed in this vain life have no existence in the worlds after death, and assuming their existence, they will be of no profit or benefit to those to whom those rights are due; how then, will the settlement of one's rights be accomplished in those worlds? Inasmuch as it is current amongst people that God, the All-Merciful, at times forgoeth His own right and forgiveth, but He forgoeth not the rights of the people until their rights are settled.

O beloved of my heart, thou hast inquired of a subject which is extremely perplexing and abstruse. For understanding this subject is dependent upon understanding and comprehension of the days after death and the knowledge of the Day of Resurrection. And the comprehension of these two subjects requireth a detached heart and necessitates a pure ear. Every ear is not worthy to hearken unto

this call. The ear which doeth not hearken unto the roar of the trumpet and the bugle from the heaven of the Manifestation, how can it hear the whisperings of the birds?

But since I cannot but reply to the bidding of that honored friend, therefore, I will briefly state a compendium and express a few comparisons and examples that they may suffice. And there is no power or strength save in God, the One, the Subduer.

Thus I express to thee that what thou hast seen and heard in this mortal world of limitations, by any name and character and by any form or descriptive attribute, in every one of divine worlds is manifested and witnessed in a manner suitable and proper to each world, which shineth forth and revealeth itself by another name, character, form and descriptive attribute.

This death that thou hast heard of in the world, referreth to the outward appearance and the garment, and not to the truth and the inner essence. Certainly the realities of things, through different appearances and various manifestations, truth after truth, shine forth and reveal themselves in every world. The sages of mature wisdom who have drunk from the mystic choice wine - God requite them - have believed in the embodiment of deeds.

The All-Glorious saith: "God will reward them for their attributions!" [Qur'an 6: 139] The Dawning-Place of revelation, the All-Merciful, hath said that people are recompensed according to their deeds; reward for good and punishment for evil.

Thus it becometh evident that a deed will remain and every attribute will exist until recompense is given according to the deed and attribute itself. Therefore, any

deed and any attribute that appeareth from any person hath a form in every world and unveileth itself "that God may reward every soul what he hath earned; verily, God is swift in reckoning." [Qur'an 14:51]

And every time We wish, in making this subject understandable, to explain the nature of the manifestations of things in the innumerable worlds by mentioning and setting forth an example which is nearer to understanding and comprehension, I consider none better to mention than the world of sleep. It is said that sleep is the brother of death, that thou may know the brother by the likeness of the brother. Thus observe that in the world of dreams thou dost witness some things, and after awaking thou dost interpret and explain them in this world by another name, form and description. And then as days go by they are witnessed in a like manner as they were interpreted and explained.

Thus O brother, every moment hath itself been from the dream, and in the world of dreams thou hast seen such a thing which, had another name and descriptive attribute in the dream, and hath another name and descriptive attribute in this world. Therefore, acknowledge thou likewise, the different forms in the world after death and know thou of a certainty that the truth, essence, oneness, form, and descriptive attributes are different. And in the event that thou hast not seen this same station with thine own eyes, thou shouldst refer to the interpretation of dream interpreters who possess knowledge and have interpreted every action and word, and have explained everything.

The Most Truthful of Speakers hath given utterance in mentioning Joseph's dream (peace be upon the Lord of our age and upon Him) and hath mentioned

Joseph's explanations and interpretations of the two persons mentioned in the Book.

Ponder now, what a world is this wherein father and mother are seen as the sun and the moon, and brother viewed as a star? And what a world is this which is seen conversely, in as much as the sun and the moon are witnessed as the father and mother, and the star is observed as the brother?

He saith, glorified be His dominion: "Lo! I saw eleven stars and the sun and the moon - I saw them prostrating themselves unto me." [Qur'an 12:4] And the interpretation of this dream became evident when Joseph sat upon the throne and Jacob, peace be upon Him, with the eleven brothers fell at Joseph's feet.

Thus, after this question is definitely proven, the settlement of every right in every world is in a manner that accords with that world. And, of course, if it were otherwise then the right is not settled.

I give thee another example that perchance through manifold examples that which hath been expressed should be closer to understanding and the subject be acknowledged.

Consider thou that should a person usurp a grain or a seed from another person and he should plant it in his own garden in the spring season, till it becometh green and flourishing until it finally bears fruit and becomes a tree in the summer season. Then, in this summer season, a just king desireth to restore the rights of the one who was wronged. How would the king accomplish this? Would he, in exchange, seize a grain or seed? Or would he seize the tree itself with all its fruit, to surrender



it to the one who was wronged? Surely thou wilt say the tree. However, the tree in this form is different from the previous form, and its name and description is different from the name and description in the spring season, because that grain or seed, as thou wouldst claim, doth not exist. And assuming that it doth exist and the same kind be given back, it would give no fruit and be of no consequence to the owner inasmuch as the spring season, which was the season of planting, hath ended and the grain or the seed will be an idle object. To the outward view it is possible to say that the grain or the seed doth not exist and giveth no fruit. Nevertheless, in truth and reality this grain and seed doth exist and is witnessed as a tree and fruit, which is better and more valuable.

Many a time the settlement of rights hath taken place in this same world, without thy being aware of it. Even as it doth happen at times that the riches and possessions are the garment of fate and afflictions, and affliction and fate are revealed as riches. Thus at times it doth occur that the loss of possessions redounds to the removal of affliction, and in this instance it maketh no difference whether this loss of possessions be due to heavenly means or to the tyranny committed by the person who stealeth thy possessions. In this case, whoever usurps and takes such possessions, that person hath removed the affliction and fate from thee and hath taken them unto himself. Could a better settlement of rights than this one be conceived? Nay, by the Lord of the worlds!

And were I to unveil and elaborate upon the manifestation of deeds, actions, and words, as they reveal themselves in various unlimited forms in the worlds of God, it is feared that on the one hand the sanctified souls would abandon their bodies and ascend toward the seats of grandeur of the All-Merciful, and the ungodly and tyrannical souls would die for fear of what they have done in this vain life.

O what longing for the spiritual characteristics, goodly deeds, truthful and beneficial words and what manifests from them from the lofty heavens, to the vast earth: shining suns, resplendent moons, radiant stars, clear springs, flowing streams, pure air, sublime palaces, lofty trees, wondrous fruits, clusters of fruit that are near, [Quran 69:23] warbling birds, reddened leaves, fragrant roses!

Whereas I say, “Shelter! Shelter! O my Lord, the All-Merciful, from sinful characteristics, ungodly actions, unseemly deeds, lying and harmful words and that which appears from them, which manifests on earth as hellish fire, hell, [cf. Quran, 56:42, 52:27, 15:27] the tree of Zaqqu’m, [Qur’an 37:62, etc.] the bitter thorn fruit [Qur’an 88:6] and in the form of all the wickedness, deceptions, sicknesses, sorrows, Simúm, [hot wind, hot sandstorm, or poisons, cf. Qur’an 56:42, 52:27, 15:27], swords, arrows, spears.

Great God! revealing of the mysteries, any further, is not permitted! And I say: greatness, and again greatness and grandeur belongeth to God, the One, the Subduer.

I give thee another example from the world of divine law, which corresponds to the world of being, and I will conclude the examples with the divine laws, that perchance thou mayest, to the extent that thou art familiar with the worlds of God, know and comprehend the similitude of the world, and extrapolate it, as much as thou art able, to the endless worlds. I give thee an example of the divine law of Islam and the divine law before it which thou art familiar with and cannot but accept:

If a jug of wine or a measure of swine meat was lawfully owed to a Christian by another Christian, should both of them accept Islam, and the magistrates of the

religious court were to rule on the payment of this debt to the creditor, how would the magistrates accomplish this and take give is due to the creditor? Notwithstanding that in Islamic law wine and swine meat are useless, have no value, and are of no benefit to the claimant, thou hast no recourse except to say either that the debtor must give restitution from whatever is lawful in Islam, or say that the defendant must pay its price according to what is fixed and specified among those to whom it is lawful.

Similar cases are mentioned and written in the books of the doctors of religion. And if I wish to give thee one hundred thousand examples, mystical or vernacular, by God's power and strength I am not unable to do so. However, I fear that this might become lengthy and tedious for thee, and thou mayest become perplexed by what was said.

Thus We end Our argument and say: Praise be to God Who guided us unto the knowledge of His Most Great Name and made Us know what the whole world hath not known.

**“The religion of God... was revealed for the uniting of  
the whole world.”**

**An excerpt from Star of the West**

**Bahá'u'lláh**

-- provisional translation

O friends! In this day the door of heaven is opened by the key of the godly Name, the ocean of generosity is manifested and is rolling, before your faces, and the Sun of Providence is shining, and gleaming. Do not be exclusive nor destroy your most precious time through the speech of this or that person. Gird up the loins of endeavor and do your best in training, the people of the world. Do not imagine that the Cause of God is a cause of opposition, hatred or wrath. The Sun of Greatness hath said, that which is revealed from the heaven of will in this Supreme Manifestation, is to unite the people with love and friendship toward all. The people of Baha, who have drunk of the pure wine of reality, must associate with all the world with a perfect spirit of joy and fragrance, and remind them of that which is for the benefit of all. This is the Commandment of the Wronged One to his saints and sincere ones.

O people the earth! Make not the religion of God a cause of variance among you. Verily of a truth, it was revealed for the uniting of the whole world. Blessed is he who loves the world simply for the sake of the Face of his Generous Lord. With perfect compassion and mercy have we aided and directed the people of the world to that whereby their souls shall be profited. I declare by the Sun of Truth and which hath shown forth from the highest Horizon of the world, that the people of Baha had not and have not any aim save the prosperity and reformation of the world and the purifying of the nations.

- Baha'u'llah (Star of the West, vol. 6, no. 1, March 21, 1915)

# **Lawh-i-Maryam**

## **Tablet to Maryam**

### **Bahá'u'lláh**

-- provisional translation by Julio Savi and Faezeh Mardani Mazzoli

He is sorrowful in My sorrow.

O Maryam! The wrongs which I suffer have blotted out the wrongs suffered by My First Name (the Báb) from the Tablet of creation [2] and the showers of affliction rained at all times upon this veiless Beauty from the clouds of God's decree.

My expulsion from My country was for no other reason except My love for the Beloved, and my removal from My land was for no other motive but My willing submission to the Goal of all desire (ridáy-i-maqsúd).

In the summons of God's decree I was even as a kindled and shining lamp and in the time of heavenly trials I was as steadfast (thábit) [3] as a mountain.

In the revelations of grace I was even as a raining cloud and in restraining the enemies of the King of Oneness like a blazing fire.

The tokens of My might have become a cause of the envy of My enemies and the effulgences of My wisdom have turned into instruments of the perfidy of the malicious.

There was not a night during which I rested in a safe place, not a morning in which I lifted My head from My couch with ease.

I swear by the Beauty of God! Husayn wept for the wrongs I have suffered and the Friend (Abraham) cast himself into the fire for My grief.

Were thou to examine carefully the matter, the eyes of might are weeping behind the Tabernacle of sinlessness and the people of glory are moaning in the precincts of loftiness. Unto this beareth witness the Tongue of truth and glory.

O Maryam! From the land of Tá (Tehran), after countless afflictions, We reached 'Iráq at the bidding of the Tyrant of Persia, where, after the fetters of Our foes, We were afflicted with the perfidy of Our friends. God knoweth what befell Me thereafter! [4]

At length I gave up My home and all therein, and renounced life and all that appertaineth unto it, and alone and friendless, chose to go into retirement. [5]

I roamed the wilderness of resignation, travelling in such wise that in My exile every eye wept sore over Me, and all created things shed tears of blood because of My anguish. The birds of the air were My companions and the beasts of the field My associates. [6]

I passed beyond this fleeting world even as the flash of the spirit, and for two years or rather less I shunned all beside God, and closed Mine eyes to all except Him, that haply the fire of hatred may die down and the heat of jealousy abate. [7]

O Maryam! The celestial mysteries should not be unraveled and it is not pleasing that the heavenly secrets be divulged, that is the mysteries of the inner treasures of My Soul, this I mean, and nothing else.

By the righteousness of God! I have borne what neither the oceans, nor the waves, nor the fruits, nor any created thing whether of the past, or of the future, hath borne or will be capable of bearing. [8]

In that period of My exile none of My brothers or any other inquired about this Cause, or sought to understand it, although this Cause is greater than the creation of the earth and of the heavens.

I swear by God! One moment of My journey excelleth a service in both worlds (*'ibádati'l-thaqalayn*, cf. "Tablet of Ahmad," in Bahá'í Prayers), because that retirement was the mightiest testimony and the most perfect and conclusive evidence. [9]

Yea, a man of insight (*Sáhib-i-basar*) is needed to behold the Most Great Beauty (*manzar-i-akbar*, cf. "Tablet of Ahmad") and whosoever has no inner eye (*basar*) is deprived of perceiving the grace of his own beauty, how much more of the Sacred and Divine Beauty.



What does the shadow understand of the One Who casteth it? And what a handful of clay comprehends a subtle heart?

At length God's decree (qadáy-i-iláhí) reminded some of His spiritual servants of this Canaanite Youth, and with a handful of writings they began to make enquiry in all places and with all persons until they discovered a trace of that Traceless One in a mountain cave. Verily He guideth all things into a straight path (cf. Qur'án 2:142, 213). [10]

I swear by the Sun of Eternal Truth! This poor and forsaken One was so astonished and amazed by the presence of the newcomers, that this Pen is powerless to describe it, unless another sharp Pen (qalam-i-hadíd) steps forth from behind the Immortal Realm, and rends asunder the veils, and expounds its secrets with absolute sincerity and with the truth of certitude, and with a suitable language sets to explaining, and takes the celestial pearls out of the shell of silence. Nor is that for God any great matter (cf. Qur'án 14:20).

In brief, the seal of mystery was broken by the hand of the Unconstrained. Otherwise, none could understand but the men of understanding and the detached.

Then, the Day-Star of the World returned to 'Iráq. We found no more than a handful of souls, faint and dispirited, nay utterly lost and dead. The Cause of God had ceased to be on any one's lips, nor was any heart receptive to its message. [11]

Therefore this evanescent Servant arose for the protection and the exaltation of the Cause of God, in such wise that one would say that a new Resurrection (qiyámat mujaddad) had come to pass, and the greatness of the Cause was

manifested in every city, and witnessed in every land, so that all the authorities showed courtesy and good manners.

O Maryam! That this Servant has arisen to face enemies of all sects and tribes kindled the envy of the foes, in a manner which no one can describe or imagine. Thus hath it been decreed by One Who is the Glorious, the Almighty.

O Maryam! The Pen of the Ancient of Days says that purifying the heart from everything but God is among the most important matters. Therefore, sanctify thy heart from all but the Friend, so that thou mayest be worthy of the Realm of eternal reunion (bisát-i-uns, cf. Kitáb-i-Mustatáb 197, Kitáb-i-Iqán 255).

O Maryam! Move from the constraints of imitation towards the immensity of the heavens (fadáy-i-khush, cf. GWB 327, CLII, 6) of detachment. Cleanse thine heart from the world and all that is therein, so that thou mayest attain unto the King of faith and mayest not be debarred from the Sanctuary of the Merciful. Tear asunder the veil of fancy through the power of sublime renunciation (inqitá,' cf. KI 77) and enter into the holy seat of certitude.

O Maryam! A tree has a hundred thousand leaves and fruits, but they are all destroyed and wiped out by a breath of the autumnal and winter winds. Therefore do not distract thy gaze from the Root of the Divine Tree and from the Branch of the Tree of divine glory.

Look how the sea is calm and peaceful in its bed in majestic dignity and composure. But by reason of the gales of the Will of the Eternal Beloved, unnumbered forms and shapes become visible on its surface and all these billows

seem contrary and adverse. And thus all people busy themselves with the waves and are shut out as by a veil from the might of the Sea of Seas, from whose movement the signs of the Unconstrained become manifest.

O Maryam! Be a companion of the Self of the Merciful (nafs-i-rahmán) and from the association with and resemblance to Satan enter beneath the shelter of the sanctity of the Bountiful, that perchance the hand of Divine grace may draw thee away from the paths of passion unto the heavens of everlasting might and glory.

O Maryam! Return from the fleeting shadows unto the Day Star of unfading glory. The existence of all shadows endures or moves away by reason of the existence of the sun. Should the sun withhold its grace for but a moment, everything would end in the pavilion of nothingness. O the pity and the regret that people should busy themselves with perishing appearances and be deprived of the Dayspring of eternal holiness.

O Maryam! Appreciate the value of these days, for soon thou wilt not see the celestial Youth in the pavilion of the created world and thou wilt behold the signs of despondency in every thing. Soon ye will bite your fingers' ends (cf. Qur'án 3:115; KI 77) in your regret and will not find the Youth, were ye to search the uttermost corners of the heaven and the earth. This is what hath descended from the Kingdom of supernal glory. Yea, soon thou wilt see the people biting their fingers' ends in their longing for this Youth, and wilt witness how all of them will search after Him throughout the heavens and the earth and will not attain unto His presence.

Thus, the matter came to such a pass that this Servant decided to come forth among the people of sedition (bayn-i-yá'júj, literally among the people of Gog), separated from all else except a few women that had to stay with Him. And I brought none along with Me, not even the maids of My Consort, dependent on what God may desire.

This Youth departed in such a state that My succor were the drops of My tears, My confidants the sighs of My heart, and My friend My pen, and My companion My Beauty, and my army My reliance, and my people (hizb) My trust.

This is what I set forth unto you of the secrets of the Cause, so that thou mayest be of them who understand.

O Maryam! All the seas of the world and the rivers gushing therefrom flow forth from the eyes of this Youth, which have taken the semblance of a cloud and weep for their oppression.

In short, We offered this head and this soul in the path of the Friend for all eternity and whatever may happen We are pleased and thankful.

This head at one time was raised on a spear-point, at another was delivered into the hands of Shimr, again I was cast into fire, and again I was suspended. And this is what the infidels have wrought against Us.

And thus, O Maryam, We have marked this Tablet with a wondrous lamentation and a vernal weeping, and have dispatched it to thee, so that thou mayest moan with ease and share the grief of the Ancient Beauty.

Besides, inasmuch as his eminence Jináb-i-Bábá was present in the first year and is acquainted with certain facts, may God grant that the Holy Spirit bestow sincerity and certitude to his tongue and thou mayest be informed of a drop of the story of this Youth. We remember HusnÍ Khánum and Sughrá Khánum.

(Lights of Irfán Book 8, 2007)

#### NOTES

1. Ishráq-Khávarí, Risáliy-i-Ayyám-i-Tis'ih 366-71; cf. Rahíq-i Makhtúm 2: 430-435
2. From "O Maryam..." to "...Tablet of creation," GPB 118, VII, 31.
3. Ishráq-Khávarí, Risáliy-i-Ayyám-i-Tis 'ih, 367 gives nábit literally "growing, germinating" (Steingass 1366). It should be a typo for thábit. Cf. Ishráq-Khávarí (ed.), Má'idíy-i-Ásmání 4:330.
4. From "O Maryam..." to "...befell Me thereafter," GPB 118, VII, 31.
5. From "At length..." to "...into retirement," translated by Balyuzi, cf. King of Glory 117.
6. From "I roamed..." to "...My associates," GPB 120, VII, 35.
7. From "I passed beyond..." to "...flash of the spirit," cf. Browne's translation in Materials 5; from "for two years ..." to "...of jealousy abate," translated by Shoghi Effendi, cf. God Passes By 119, VII, 31.
8. Translated by Balyuzi, cf. King of Glory 117, cf. GPB 118, VII, 31.
9. "the mightiest testimony and the most perfect and conclusive evidence," translated by Shoghi Effendi, cf. God Passes By 124, VII, 42.
10. From "At length..." to "...straight path," cf. Browne's translation in Materials 5.
11. From "We found no more than..." to "...receptive to its message," GPB 125, VII, 44; Kitáb-i-Qarn-i-Badí' (God Passes By) 262.

# **Law-i-Liqá'**

## **Tablet of the Divine Presence**

### **Bahá'u'lláh**

He is the Eternal! Lo, We made this epistle to be the attainment of Our presence for such as have turned unto God in these days, wherein the nations have been made to tremble. Whosoever gazeth upon that which hath been sent down from the Throne of glory in this Tablet and findeth himself in doubt as to whether he hath attained the presence of his Lord, he is of them who have turned away from God, the One Who causeth the dawn to break.

O ye birds of the most exalted paradise! Give ear unto the call of the Beloved in these days wherein the feet of men have slipped. The Concourse on high have rejoiced by reason of your acceptance of this Cause, and the voice of the denizens of the cities of eternity hath been raised aloud in grief and lamentation by virtue of your remoteness from Him and your burning thirst, notwithstanding your nearness to the Ocean of His presence!

O how glorious is this blissful joy, this bitter anguish! Methinks both have embraced the Day of God, the Powerful, the Almighty, and the Omnipotent!

The hearts of the infidels have been set ablaze by that which We have revealed aforetime, and still they plot against Me day and night! Blessed are ye for having entered the city and attained unto that which hath been ordained by your Lord, the Mighty, and the Bestower. It behooveth you to show forth from your countenances utmost joy and bliss that all may discern in you the tokens of resignation and submission. Thus hath it been decreed by the pen of Glory; verily, your Lord is the Most Merciful, the Knower of the unseen and the seen.

O men of insight! Ye are beneath the shadow of My loving kindness and the canopy of My mercy, thus is the gaze of God fixed upon you. Blessed are ye and whosoever loveth you and turneth unto you wholly for the sake of God, the Almighty, the All-Compelling. God and such as have circled round the Throne bear witness that ye have attained unto His presence, circumambulated the Kaaba of His command, and beheld His countenance. Potent is He over whatsoever He willeth. No God is there but Him, the Mighty, the Munificent!  
By My life! We have granted that which ye have desired, and We are with you at all times. The glory of Him Who is the Almighty and the Helper rests upon you!

# **Panj Kanz**

## **The Five Treasures**

### **Bahá'u'lláh**

An oral discourse given by Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdád to a group of expatriate Persian princes, transcribed by Nabil-i-Zarandí, who was present.

-- provisional translation by Adib Masumian

[An authorized version of Nabil-i-Zarandí's transcription of the Panj Kanz, prepared by the Research Department at the Bahá'í World Centre]

[More contextual information on the Panj Kanz, is also provided by Adib Taherzadeh in 'The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh', vol. 2, pp. 140–143]

[Please note: Baha'u'llah's utterances are in quotes.]

#### The First Treasure

One day, the Beauty of the All-Knowing [Baha'u'llah] was walking in the bírúní [1] of the Most Great House in Baghdád when some of the princes of Persia, who were residing in that land, entered His presence. With the utmost solicitude, the Ancient Beauty [Baha'u'llah] inquired after them and asked about the current affairs of that land. One of them made this remark, "How is it that You discuss



spiritual matters with Your friends when they attain Your presence, but with us You ask only of the town and the market? It seems You do not consider us worthy,” by which he intended to ask, “Why should these people—bereft of exquisite clothing, wealth, knowledge, and insight—take precedence over us, with our riches and sagacity?”

The Blessed Beauty responded:

“Dost thou know what sort of person is worthy of hearing My words and is fit to enter My presence? I will say it that thou shalt know. Suppose one should find himself in a limitless space, unbounded in every direction. To the right, there existeth every pomp and glory, pleasure and comfort, and sovereignty eternal and stainless; and to the left is prepared every calamity and hardship, vengeance and poverty, and vicissitude unyielding and perpetual. Suppose then that the Faithful Spirit should call out, from the precincts of the Lord of the Worlds, to that one, saying, ‘Shouldst thou choose the right—with its eternal pleasures and all that is therein—over the left, thou wouldst not, in the estimation of God, be abased in the least; and shouldst thou choose the left—with its perpetual hardships and all that is therein—over the right, it would not add an ounce to thy worth in the sight of the Almighty, the Unconstrained.’ Should that one choose, at that moment, the left over the right—afire with ardor and zeal, and filled with rapture and ecstasy—then would he be fit to enter My presence and worthy of hearing My magnificent words.”

In this connection, the Tongue of Grandeur [Baha’u’llah] revealed the following poem addressed to His followers:

“If thine aim be to cherish thy life, approach not our court;  
But if sacrifice be thy heart’s desire, come and let others come with thee.  
For such is the way of faith, if in thy heart thou seekest reunion with Bahá;  
Shouldst thou refuse to tread this path, why trouble us? Begone!” [2]

In the same vein, the Dove of Eternity [Baha’u’llah] has warbled thus in the gardens of the Qasídiy-i-Varqá’íyyih [3]:

“Thou didst desire a hopeless union, the  
condition for which Thou must satisfy:

Thou must drain every cup of fate’s ordeals;  
thy heart must spew the blood of tyranny.

Thou must cut off all hope of comfort’s touch;  
Thou must renounce every necessity.

Thy duty is to shed blood in love’s faith;  
a love-scorched soul is fealty to Me.

Nights spent awake at slanderer’s attacks,  
a constant stream of insults all the days;

In My faith poison’s as a healing drink;  
in My Path, fate’s wrath is a tender grace.

Cease claiming to love, or accept all this,  
For thus was it ordained in My Law’s scroll.” [4]

And in the same connection, He has said:

“Should a person not see himself swimming in a sea of blood, and yet claim to love Me, he would be utterly bereft of sincerity.”

The Second Treasure

When the Lord of Men, [Baha’u’llah] the Causer of Causes, [Baha’u’llah] had concluded His first utterance, He addressed that same questioner, saying:

“Dost thou know what My purpose is in coming to this world and in proclaiming My Cause amongst the peoples? I will say it that thou shalt know. I have come to establish openly—through the strength and power of God—justice, protection, trustworthiness, and piety in every corner of this world, which is so replete with defilement, and in which the oppression of the oppressors and the treachery of the treacherous have sealed shut the door of tranquility to all creation. These I shall establish in such wise that a woman secluded behind the veil—to a ray of whose beauty even the sun itself would fail to compare, and whose virtue and beauty are without like or peer; a woman adorned with every precious gem, and bedecked with ornaments incalculable even to them that are endued with understanding—can step out from behind that veil with manifest splendor and travel, alone and without guardian or escort, from the uttermost corners of the East to the uttermost ends of the West. She would, indeed, be a wayfarer in every land and a traveler in every region. The state of trustworthiness, piety, equity, and justice—free of any treachery, baseness, injustice, and oppression—will be such that not a single rapacious hand would stretch out to encroach upon her riches, nor would one look of perfidy, perversity, or passion fall upon the beauty of her purity. Indeed, with a heart unsullied and countenance filled with joy, she would conclude her journey through every land and return to her native home.”

He then said:

“I will, through the power of God, fashion the world in this very way, and this greatest portal will be opened before the faces of all men. It is in this connection

that the Supreme Pen hath revealed, ‘Erelong wilt thou behold the earth as the Most Glorious Paradise.’”

### The Third Treasure

Concerning the subjects of pure motives, deeds sanctified in every way, living only for the sake of God, and having one’s gaze ever fixed upon God—Who is rich in Himself and independent of all that is not of Him—the Tongue of Grandeur [Baha’u’llah] gave an allegory, which was even as a limpid wine sealed in the vessel of purity, majesty, and glory. With it, He addressed the entire creation, quenching the thirst of them who wander in a desert devoid of truthfulness and sincerity:

“Suppose there is a rich man, who possesseth a wealth so incalculable that it exceedeth even the number of people on this earth, and a poor man, whose indigence is as extreme as the affluence of the rich man. Suppose then that, with generosity and beneficence, the rich man gradually giveth so much of his wealth to the poor man that it doth revert that rich one to his own initial state of poverty. Consequently, as fate would have it, the formerly rich man now oweth a meager sum to another, yet this is a debt he is unable to pay. In the markets and in the streets, people arise to punish and torment him, and his deliverance from this state remaineth unimaginable until his debt is paid. It is under these circumstances that the formerly poor man cometh upon the formerly rich man, to whom he oweth his superior wealth. As the gaze of the formerly rich man falleth upon his friend, he thinketh to himself, ‘Would that this friend of mine remember my charity unto him, that he might rescue me from this plight!’ Yet, the very moment the thought ‘I rendered charity unto him’ entered the mind of the formerly rich man, all his good

works sank into nothingness. He was, moreover, held back from obtaining the good-pleasure of God, and shut out as by a veil from the true meaning of humanity. In like manner, suppose the formerly poor man—indebted to the formerly rich man for the degree of affluence he now enjoyeth—should think to himself, ‘How excellent! Because of the infinite kindnesses this man rendered unto me, I am able to rescue him from his hardship and secure his comfort for the remainder of his life.’ In thinking that he saved his friend through his kindness or his generosity, and not through humanity alone, this man depriveth himself of the chalice of pure intentions, and—despite the immensity of his wealth—departeth to the valley of eternal baseness and perpetual poverty, unless the beneficence of the formerly rich man be rendered purely out of humanity and strictly for the sake of God, and the act of the formerly poor man be carried out for God alone without consideration of previous or subsequent circumstances. ‘We nourish your souls for the sake of God; we seek from you neither recompense nor thanks.’” [5]

Gracious God! Behold the realm wherein the immortal Bird of Eternity [Baha’u’llah] wings His flight, and observe the passion and desire of this mortal lot! Gone are the days when a man would, by simply reciting the declaration of faith, be numbered with the true believers. The time has come when the Ancient Beauty,\* seated upon His mighty throne, proclaims unto all that dwell upon the earth:

O wayfarer, O mystic, O lover, O you who have attained unto reunion with the Beloved!

Until His attributes appear in thee,  
Know thyself as lost, in separation [6]

Out of Thy benevolence, O God, and by the legitimacy of the Mystery of God, make me a striver in Thy path, purely for Thy sake, who makes mention of Thee and arises only in Thy love. Enable me to reflect all Thine attributes, to be a mirror of Thine essence, to manifest naught but utter servitude, and to be a star of salvation unto others. Make me, moreover, a discerning friend, a dayspring of life, and a servant unto all Thy creatures.

#### The Fourth Treasure

The Tongue of Glory [Baha'u'llah] then delivered these blessed and consummate words:

“Had the community of Islam acted upon two commands from among the utterances of God, all mankind would have been guided aright, reached the realm of His acceptance, and attained unto the pavilion of reunion with Him. That community would not be afflicted with all these spiritual maladies and selfish motives, which prompted them to put to death Him Who is the solace of the eyes of the Prophets, and the apple of the eyes of the Messenger of Bathá [Mecca] and Yathrib [Medina]. [7] They regarded themselves as His followers, who arose in the Name of the Promised Qá'im, [8] yet they made His pure and radiant body the target of their darts. ‘O Thou Who art our Lord! Judge between us and our people in truth, for Thou art the best of those who give judgment.’ [9] The aforementioned two commands are these: ‘O ye who believe! Fear God, and be with the sincere ones,’ [10] not with them whose hearts are hardened and incapable of the remembrance of God.” [11]

In this connection, the Tongue of Grandeur also said:

“Suppose that thou shouldst associate with another over the course of three meetings. If thine influence had no discernible effect on him, thou shouldst undoubtedly avoid his company, for his influence upon thee will, in time, be made manifest.”

The Lord of All Creation [Baha'u'llah] continued in this connection:

“Suppose there is a man with a keen sense of smell, and a sound and discerning sense of taste. As soon as another man, vigilant and ever mindful of God, entereth the home of the first man, he findeth the air to be fragrant, the food delicious, and the drink delectable and delightful. Conversely, should a heedless person enter that home, he would find the air unpleasant, and the flavor of the food and drink unpalatable. We seek refuge with God from the wickedness of the heedless! He saith, glorified be His mention: ‘Treasure the companionship of the righteous and eschew all fellowship with the ungodly.’ [12]

### The Fifth Treasure

Since the Ancient Beauty has flung open the doors of joy and glad-tidings before the faces of the people of the world, He has delivered this mighty utterance:

“I have come to this world to mine gems. If the tiniest gem be latent within a stone, and if that stone be hidden beneath the seven seas, I shall not cease My work until I have extracted the gem from that stone. He saith, exalted be He: ‘God,

exalted be His glory, hath sent a Trusted One in every age to bring forth Mystic Gems from the mine of man.” [13]

O God! In this state of poverty and degradation, I make mention of Thy hidden treasures; deprive me not thereof. Aid me, then, to perform such acts as beseem Thee. Thou, verily, art the All-Hearing, the Answerer of Prayers.

#### Notes

[1] From the Encyclopedia Iranica: “The public or male quarters of wealthy households, used for the conduct of business, male religious ceremonies, and parties for men.”

[2] An excerpt from the Persian poem *Sáqí az Ghayb-i-Baqá*, revealed by Bahá'u'lláh in Kurdistán. Translated by Shoghi Effendi in *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 96 (Brit.), pp. 137–8 (U.S.).

[3] “The Ode of the Dove,” an Arabic poem revealed by Bahá'u'lláh in Kurdistán.

[4] *Qasídiy-i-Varqá'íyyih*, verses 55–61. Translation by Juan Cole; available online.

[5] Qur'án 76:9.

[6] From Bahá'u'lláh's *Mathnaví-yi-Ma'naví*, verse 288. Translation by Franklin Lewis; available online here. For consistency's sake, the present translator has altered Lewis's translation of this couplet to use archaic forms of pronouns.

[7] This is a reference to the Prophet Muḥammad.

[8] This is a reference to the Báb.



[9] Qur'án 7:89.

[10] Qur'án 9:119.

[11] This appears to be a paraphrase of Qur'án 39:22.

[12] Bahá'u'lláh, Persian Hidden Words, #3.

[13] From a tablet by Bahá'u'lláh. English translation published in 'Abdu'l-Bahá, A Traveller's Narrative, p. 42. The present translator has altered E.G. Browne's rendering of this excerpt so that it more closely follows the style used by Shoghi Effendi. Bahá'u'lláh makes a very similar declaration in Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 10: "The purpose of the one true God, exalted be His glory, hath been to bring forth the Mystic Gems out of the mine of man..."

## Revealed by Bahá'u'lláh for 'Abdu'l-Bahá

### Bahá'u'lláh

O Thou Greatest Branch!

Thy letter was surely presented before this Oppressed One, and I heard that which Thou hast communed with God, the Lord of the world.

Verily, We have ordained Thee the Guardian of all the creatures, and a Protection to all those in the heavens and earth, and a Fortress to those who believe in God, the One, the Omniscient!

I beg of God to protect them by Thee; to enrich them by Thee; to nourish them by Thee; and to reveal to Thee that which is the Dawning point of riches to the people of Creation, and the Ocean of Generosity to those in the world, and the Rising point of Favor to all nations. Verily, He is the Powerful, the All-Knowing and the Wise!

I beg of Him to water the earth and all that is in it by Thee, that there may spring up from it the Flowers of Wisdom and Revelation and the Hyacinths of science and knowledge.

Verily, He is the Friend to those who love Him, and an Assistant to those who commune with Him! There is no God but He, the Mighty and the Magnified!

# **Súrat al-A'ráb**

## **The Súrah of the Arabs**

### **Bahá'u'lláh**

-- provisional translation by Joshua Hall

This is the Súrah of the Arabs which has been revealed by One Who is the Revealer, the Ancient of Days

He is the Sanctified, the Transcendent, the Exalted, the Most Effulgent

These are the verses of God which have been sent down from the heaven of wondrous glory, and which God has made to be a proof and testament from Him unto the worlds. Within it are mentioned the servants of God who recognized God in His own Self, who were not shut out as by a veil on account of the outcry of the idolators, who entered the shelter of His loving providence and reposed in the precincts of His mercy which surpasses all contingent things – this, indeed, is a great bounty.

These are they upon whom the heavenly concourse pronounce their blessings, as well as the angels that have drawn nigh. These are they who fell on their faces in

prostration before God, the Exalted, the Sublime, when the Everlasting Sun once again shed Its effulgence upon them from the Most High Horizon.

O Beloved of God from amongst the Arabs! Give ear unto the call of God proceeding from this Tree upraised in truth, all of Whose leaves speak forth in all things: “I am God; none other god is there beside Him, the Sanctified, the Almighty, the Munificent”.

O people, hasten unto the Sidrah [1] of God and take shelter beneath Its shade. By the One True God! Were you to search all the climes of the earth and the expanse of the heavens, never would you find an abode of safety save beneath the shade of this Tree which overshadows the worlds. From amidst Its leaves the sweet-scented breeze of the Lord is wafted, giving life to every moldering bone. Turn unto It and partake of Its fruits, that your hearts may be purified thereby of the suggestions of every wretched deceiver.

Render praise, then, unto God for having preserved you from the wastes of self and passion, for having delivered you from the depths of prejudiced delusion and blindness on a Day when God came with the kingdom of His Cause and made His sovereignty manifest before all in heaven and on earth. Thank Him for having enabled you to recognize Him Who is His Self, for having revealed His beauty to you, for having spoken with you openly, and for His having numbered you among His servants who are endowed with understanding.

Stand firm in the Cause, insofar as Satan has come forth with his armies, and bids you at every moment to deny God, Who created you by a word from Him and Who made you among them who have attained. Praise God for having chosen you for

His own Self, such that after the Sun of Eternity had set in Its own country, It dawned forth from the horizon of 'Iráq, your land. This is of His grace unto you, which nothing, whether in the heavens or on earth, can surpass. The Face of God was amongst you with refulgent radiance, unconcealed and divested of every veil. He recited to you the verses of your Lord for months and years. The Ancient Beauty used to walk amidst you with God's majesty and presence, and revealed to you at each moment a fresh effulgence. Thus was the favor of God and His mercy complete unto you, that you might be among those in gratitude.

It is befitting that you pride yourselves over all the peoples of the earth, for none have been graced with such as you have attained, if you be among them possessed of understanding. You are thus to characterize yourselves with the attributes of God, that the perfumes of holiness may be diffused over all creation from your hearts, and that the signs of your Lord, the All-Merciful, the Compassionate, may be revealed from you. Insofar as He has chosen you from amongst His creatures, strive that there be manifest from you such as has not been evinced by those beside you, that your eminence may be apparent in itself amongst the worlds. Be as the stars amidst the concourse of the earth, that you may guide those servants who have veiled themselves from recognizing God and Him Who is the Revealer of His Cause, and who are among the heedless.

Be marked by trustworthiness toward yourselves and all people, then with regard to their wealth and possessions, for such a virtue was beloved of God before the creation of Adam from water and clay. Were you not to be trustworthy and faithful on earth, neither could you be at peace with yourselves nor the people with you. Thus does God counsel you with the tongue of the Revealer of His Cause; indeed, a reminder is this to you and all creation.

Purify your hearts of envy and hatred, and your souls from lusts and corrupt inclinations. Observe, then, such as you are bidden by God. Indeed, that which God commands His servants is better for them than the treasures of the heavens and earth. Beware lest you dispute with anyone regarding such as is created in this world; leave it unto the people thereof, that your souls may be at rest and you be wholly devoted to your Lord, the Exalted, the Sublime. The kingdom of wealth is in the hand of your Lord, the All-Merciful; He enriches whom He wills at His own behest, and He is, in truth, the Omnipotent, the Almighty, the Munificent.

Know, then, that God has entrusted the earth unto the kings, and has made them the manifestations of His might amidst all creation, if they enter under the shadow of the Sidrah of the Cause. Beyond this, authority is in His grasp; He does as He wills and decrees as He pleases. Nothing has He desired for Himself. He has left the world and its vanities to the people thereof, and has sanctified His loved ones from turning unto it; for He desires naught for them save such as shall endure so long as He Himself, the Exalted, the Sublime, shall endure. All that He has desired of the world are the hearts of His beloved ones, to sanctify them from all else beside Him and uplift them to the abode of safety, wherein nothing is beheld save the splendors of His countenance, wherein only praise of Me, the Almighty, the Wondrous, is heard.

Open, O people, the cities of men's hearts with the sword of the tongue in the name of your Lord, the All-Powerful, the Almighty, the Beneficent. Thus has the tongue of the All-Merciful commanded you formerly and presently; observe, then, such as you have been bidden, and do not transgress the precepts of God, your Lord and the Lord of the worlds. Beware lest you dispute regarding the Cause of

God with anyone, for We have abrogated the law of the sword and have ordained that service be rendered by wisdom and exposition, as a token of Our grace to all creation.

Be kindled, O people, in the heat of God's love, that the souls of mankind may be set aflame! This is true service to the Cause, if you be among them possessed of understanding. From everlasting has He been sanctified of the world and all that is created within and upon it. If He were to so desire, He could conquer the earth and all who dwell upon it, by virtue of His name, the Omnipotent, the Almighty, the Powerful.

Adorn yourselves, O people, with the color of God; forsake, then, the hue of those who join partners with Him. God directs you unto righteousness and virtue. Be mindful in the religion of God, and do not commit iniquity and acts of profligacy. Be among those from whose faces the light of your Lord, the Unconstrained, is beheld, and from whom the sign of God and His bearing are manifest. Thus has it been ordained for you, the people of Bahá, in these days of travail.

O My Arabs, give ear unto My call and walk in My path. Remember, then, the days of My presence and then My exile, My solitude, and My imprisonment, that you may be remembered by God in His kingdom of sublime glory. Cast aside the cup of annihilation proffered by those who follow self and desire, then take up the chalice that is life everlasting proffered by the fingers of Bahá, in the name of your Lord, the Exalted, the Most High, in this latter day. By this are souls so enriched as to be independent of the worlds.

O Pen of the Ancient of Days! Call to remembrance the Arabs whom God has chosen for His own Self, and whom He has enabled to gaze toward the direction of His mercy, whom He has severed from the idolaters, that they may rejoice within themselves and be steadfast in the Cause, whereby the heaven of opposition has been cleft and every lofty summit scattered to dust.

Say: O people! We warned you upon Our departing 'Iráq that Sámirí [2] would appear, the Calf cry aloud, and the birds of the night take flight after the setting of the Sun. Beware lest you forget the words of God; abide in peerless sanctity.

By God, My Arabs! If you were to look upon Me, you would not recognize Me, for My hair has whitened by reason of successive tribulations, and the Alif of the Cause has appeared in the form of Dál [3] by virtue of unrelenting trials; moreover, this rosy-red and luminous visage has grown wan and pale.

My Arabs! Be not forgetful of My mention, nor of My hardships, My sorrows, and My suffering. By My life! Mine eye weeps and My heart laments over Myself amongst these idolaters. By God! The Beauty of the divine will has suffered alteration by reason of the oppression of foes, the Temple of the divine behest lies prostrate on the ashes, Destiny has torn asunder the robe of forbearance, and Decree is bereft of realization for such as the armies of the wicked-doers have committed against God, the Exalted, the Most High, in His latter dispensation. Thus has the matter come to pass, if you are among those with a hearing ear.

Is there any soul who shall arise to assist the Beauty of God by the tongue, who shall guard the Temple of His Cause from the swords of the People of the Bayán, and be among them whom the veils of names have not shut out from attaining unto



Him Who is the Supreme Emanation, the Remembrance of God and the Wellspring of wisdom? Is there any who might have compassion on this Wronged One, who shall arise to render Him victorious, and be severed from all the worlds?

My Arabs! He who is unable to speak in My presence has endeavored to slay Me, [4] after We had created him, reared him, instructed him, and protected him for months and years. By God! If one of the tales of the Everlasting Joseph were to be related unto you, and such as had befallen Him from the wolves of hatred, you would be severed from your own souls, look out unto the wilderness and lament until the spirit left your bodies. Yet the Pen for bears to speak, so as to guard your souls, O concourse of the faithful.

O My Arabs! Weep over My loneliness, My solitude, My imprisonment, and the hardship I have sustained; be not among the heedless. Those whom God has made to be a manifest warning on the earth have arisen in opposition, such that the Pen of the worlds cannot describe.

O My Arabs! Listen to My counsel, and do not draw near to those from whom the odors of hypocrisy defuse. Shun their ilk and abide in stainless purity.

Thus has the Beauty of the All-Merciful commanded you at this moment while He is hemmed in with sorrows by reason of the legions of Satan, if you be among them possessed of understanding.

The radiance which has dawned from the everlasting realm rests upon you, O People of Bahá, so long as the Lord, the Omnipotent, the Exalted, the Sublime, shall endure.

## Notes

1 Lote-Tree. Among the connotations of this word are the Burning Bush and the Lote-Tree of the seventh heaven beyond which lies God's throne. In the Bahá'í writings, it is a symbol for the Manifestation of God.

2 He who, according to the Qur'anic story of Moses, induced the Israelites into the worship of the Golden Calf.

3 The letter Alif is an erect line, while the letter Dál appears to a bent over Alif.

4 Baha'u'llah's brother Mírzá Yahyá. Alluded references are common in Arabic style.

# **Tablet of Visitation for the Mother of Bahá'u'lláh**

## **Bahá'u'lláh**

--provisional translation by Baharieh Rouhani-Ma'ani

The most honoured, esteemed and respected mother.

He is God!

Praised be Thou O Lord, My God! This is My mother who hath acknowledged Thy oneness, confessed Thy unity, attained the honour of meeting Thy Manifestations in Thy days, reached the station of recognition and entered the tabernacle of Heaven, for she loved Thyself and Thy Servant and held fast to the cord of Thy love through the sanctified Temples of Thy Sovereignty.

I beseech Thee, therefore, O My God, to grant her the honour of beholding Thy Beauty, and vouchsafe unto her the gift of Thy Presence. Give her to drink then from the ocean of Thy mercy and the chalice of Thy forgiveness. Make her to dwell, O My God, in the precincts of Thy mercy in the Heaven of eternity. Grant her to hear Thy holy melodies that she may cast the veil from her head in her eagerness to meet Thee and speed through the domains of Thy nearness and union.

Thou art verily powerful over all that Thou desirest, and Thou art verily the Mighty, the Most Luminous.

# **Tablet of visitation in honor of Khadíjih Bagum, the wife of the Báb**

**Bahá'u'lláh**

-- provisional translation approved by the Universal House of Justice for inclusion in the book: 'Leaves of the Twin Divine Trees' (by Baharieh Rouhani Ma'ani)

He is the comforter of the sorrowful!

O Pen! Verily Thou hast been visited by a great calamity, an immense affliction, which hath caused the inhabitants of the highest Heaven and most lofty Paradise to lament. Through this affliction sorrow hath ascended until it seized the hem of the robe of the Merciful. Blessed be the man who arose to render her service in her lifetime and visited her grave after she winged her flight and ascended to the world beyond. Blessed likewise be the handmaiden who betook herself to her shrine and through her drew nigh unto God.

The glory shining from the horizon of My luminous Brow, and the splendour of the light manifested from the heaven of My Name, the Most Glorious, be upon thee, O thou the fruit of the divine Lote-Tree, the blessed and luminous leaf, the consort of the One through Whose revelation the kingdom of immortality and the realm of creation were wreathed in smiles! I testify that thou art in truth the first

leaf who attained the cup of a sure union and the last fruit who offered up her soul because of her separation from Him. Thou art the one whose inner being was consumed, whose heart melted, and whose limbs were set aflame by reason of thy remoteness from the presence of the One Whom God hath made to be the Dawning-place of His Signs, the Dayspring of His Proofs, the Manifestation of His Names, the Source of His laws, and the Seat of His Throne.

O My leaf and the fragrance of the paradise of My good pleasure! Thou art with the Supreme Companion, and this Wronged One maketh mention of thee in the prison of 'Akká. Thou art she who, before the creation of the world of being, discovered the fragrance of the garment of the All-Merciful. Thou wert honoured with meeting Him, attained union with Him, and drank the wine of nearness from the hand of His bestowal. I testify that in thee two signs have been conjoined: The sign of union revived thee in the beginning and the sign of separation encompassed thy death in the end. How many a night did thy sighs ascend because of thy love for God and thy tears flow at the mention of His Name, the Most Glorious! He hath verily been with thee, witnessing thy burning, thy fervour, thine eagerness, thy yearning, and hearing the lamentation of thy heart and the wailing of thine inner being.

O thou who art the fruit of My tree! Through thine affliction the ocean of sorrows hath surged and the breezes of forgiveness have wafted. I bear witness that on the night thou didst ascend to the Abhá Horizon and to the throne of the Most High, and on the following day, in honour of thee and as a bounty unto thee, God verily forgave the trespasses of every servant and handmaiden who ascended, save those who openly denied God's truth and that which He hath revealed. Thus hath God singled thee out, O My leaf, for this most great bounty and this everlasting and

preeminent station. Well is it with thee, with those who visit thee, with those who dwell in thy vicinity, with those who circle round thee, and with those who have besought and will continue to beseech God through thee.

Thou art she through whose afflictions the Maid of Heaven lamented and the leaves of the Tree of Revelation grieved. Thou art she who upon hearing the call from the tongue of the Possessor of the kingdom of names turned thy face unto Him and wert so attracted that the reins of composure were well-nigh seized from thy hand. O My leaf! O thou who art soaring in the atmosphere of My love, hast turned thy face unto Mine, and art occupied with my praise! Verily, We have revealed for thee a remembrance which neither the affairs of the centuries nor the passing of the ages can obliterate. We have through My Supreme Pen immortalized thy mention in the Crimson Book, which is known to none except God, the Source of all created things, and We have made mention of thee in this Tablet in such wise that those who enjoy near access to God will remember thee and the believers in the divine unity will direct their steps towards thine earthly remains. Blessed art thou, and well is it with thee and with whosoever standeth before thy resting-place reciting that which the Lord of Bounty hath now revealed.

## Two Excerpts from Star of the West

### Bahá'u'lláh

O friends! in this day the door of heaven is opened by the key of the godly Name, the ocean of generosity is manifested and is rolling, before your faces, and the Sun of Providence is shining, and gleaming. Do not be exclusive nor destroy your most precious time through the speech of this or that person. Gird up the loins of endeavor and do your best in training, the people of the world. Do not imagine that the Cause of God is a cause of opposition, hatred or wrath. The Sun of Greatness hath said, that which is revealed from the Heaven of Will in this Supreme Manifestation is to unite the people with love and friendship towards all. The people of Baha, who have drunk of the pure wine of reality, must associate with all the world with a perfect spirit of joy and fragrance, and remind them of that which is for the benefit of all. This is the Commandment of the Wronged One to his saints and sincere ones.

- Baha'u'llah ('Star of the West, vol. 6, no. 1, March 21, 1915)

O people the earth! Make not the religion of God a cause of variance among you. Verily of a truth, it was revealed for the uniting of the whole world. Blessed is he who loves the world simply for the sake of the Face of his Generous Lord. With perfect compassion and mercy have we aided and directed the people of the world to that whereby their souls shall be profited. I declare by the Sun of Truth and which hath shown forth from the highest Horizon of the world, that the people of Baha had not and have not any aim save the prosperity and reformation of the world and the purifying, of the nations.

- Baha'u'llah ('Star of the West, vol. 6, no. 1, March 21, 1915)

## Tablet of Shikkar Shikan Shavand

### Bahá'u'lláh

Translated by Shahrokh Monjazeb.

originally revealed as "*Lawh-i-Shikkar Shikan*" in Arabic and Persian.

He is the Supreme, the Most Exalted.

Warblers, mellifluous-toned, all the  
parrots of Ind shall be, Because of this  
Pársí sugar-cone which to Bengal goes.<sup>1</sup>

Your letter having reached this mortal spot of isolation was brought forth and stored in Our treasury of submission and acquiescence. What thou had written was noted and everything expressed therein was found to be true and correct. However, *they that yearn for the abode of the Beloved<sup>2</sup>, they that circle round the sanctuary of the Desired One, are not apprehensive of trials and adversities, nor do they flee from that which is ordained by God. They receive their portion from the ocean of resignation and drink their fill from the soft-flowing stream of His mercy. They would not surrender the good-pleasure of the Friend in exchange for the kingdom of both worlds, nor would they barter that which the Well-Beloved hath decreed in return for dominion over the realms of the infinite. They would eagerly drink the venom of woe as if it were the water of life and would drain deadly poison to its bitter dregs just as a sweet and life-giving draught. In the arid wastes of desolation they are stirred with enthusiasm through the remembrance of the Friend, and in the*



*dreary wilds of adversity they are eager and impatient to offer themselves as a sacrifice. Unhesitatingly have they renounced their lives and directed their steps towards the abode of the Best Beloved. They have closed their eyes to the world and fixed their gaze upon the beautiful countenance of the Friend, cherishing no desire but the presence of the loved One and seeking no attainment save reunion with Him. They fly with the feathers of trust in God, and soar with the wings of adherence unto His Will. In their estimation a blood-shedding blade is more desirable than finest silk and a piercing dart more acceptable than mother's milk. 'High-spirited souls by the myriad are deemed necessary in this path, To lay down a hundred lives with every fleeting breath.'*<sup>3</sup>

*It behoveth us to kiss the hand of the would-be assassin and to set out, dancing, on our way to the habitation of the Friend. How indescribably pleasant is that hour, how immeasurably sweet that moment when the inmost spirit is intent upon sacrificing itself, when the tabernacle of fidelity is hastening to attain the heights of self-surrender! With necks laid bare, we yearn for the stroke of the ruthless sword wielded by the hand of the Beloved. With breasts aglow with light, we eagerly await the dart of His decree.*

*Contemtuously of name, we have detached ourselves from all else but Him, we shall not run away, we pray for calamity, that thereby we may soar unto the sublime heights of the spirit, seek shelter beneath the shade of the tree of reunion, attain the highest station of love, and drink our fill from the wondrous wine of everlasting communion with Him. Surely we will not forfeit this imperishable dominion, nor will we forgo this incomparable blessing. If hidden beneath the dust, we shall rear our heads from the bosom of the tender mercy of the Lord of mankind. No trial can suppress these companions, no mortal feet can traverse this journey, nor can any*

*veil obscure this countenance.*

*Yea, it is clear and evident that in view of the multitudes of internal and external opponents who have raised the standards of opposition, who have girded the loins of endeavour to eliminate these poor creatures, it standeth to reason that one should turn away from them and flee from this land, nay, from the face of the earth. However, through the loving-kindness of God and by the aid of His invisible confirmations, we are as radiant as the sun and as shining as the moon. We are established upon the throne of tranquillity and seated upon the couch of fortitude. Of what importance is the shipwreck to the fish of the spirit? What doth a soul celestial care if the physical frame is destroyed? Indeed this body is for it a prison; and the ship but a place of confinement to the fish. What else but a nightingale can understand a Nightingale's melody and who else but the intimate friend can recognize the familiar voice of the Friend?*

Consider what was revealed in the bygone days unto Him Who is the Seal of the Prophets and the Beginning of His chosen Ones that thou may become weightless as a spirit, and like unto a breath, emerge from the cage of the body. While encompassed with sever tests and surrounded from all sides by enemies the most holy Bird descended down and brought forth this verse: “But if their opposition be grievous to Thee—if Thou canst, seek out an opening into the earth or a ladder into heaven.”<sup>4</sup> Oh, that a thousand eyes would shed tears of blood and a hundred thousand lives would groan from the heart. On another occasion He saith: “And when the unbelievers were devising against thee, to confine thee, or slay thee, or to expel thee, and were devising, and God was devising; and God is the best of devisers.”<sup>5</sup> Reflect well on these two blessed and holy verses, which have descended from the Source of Revelation, so that thou may become apprised of the

unseen mysteries.

If the discerning eye of the people was open this outward establishment of this Servant upon His seat would have been sufficient enough for them all, that, despite being surrounded by enemies and having been plagued by numerous calamities, We are incandescent as a candle and radiant as the Beloved of Love in the assemblage of lovers. We have burnt all the veils and have become ablazed like the fire of love. But, alas, to what use? For all the people's eyes are shut and all their ears are closed. They traverse the valley of heedlessness and roam the wilderness of error. "Ye are quit of what I do, and I am quit of what you do."<sup>6</sup>

Thou should be apprised to the fact that one of the divines<sup>7</sup> in this land, who is preoccupied with amassing worldly treasures and who truly has not tasted from the cup of justice and equity, having neither seen this Servant nor met Him at any gathering—to befriend Him as much as even an hour, has now lifted his pen of tyranny and has passed judgment on shedding the blood of these wronged ones. *'Willingly will I obey the judge who hath so strangely decreed that my blood be spilt at Hill and at Haram!'*<sup>8</sup>

He, moreover, has spread some baseless rumors among a certain group of people and in the course of these days has imparted to the noted individual<sup>9</sup> some expressions of his idle fancies. That individual, in turn, has taken these tales of fiction back to Tihrán. 'Whatever malice and intrigue he has in his heart; It is manifest as the day before the one true God.'<sup>10</sup>

All these propositions are clear and evident, and the motive behind them has also been exposed and confirmed. Should he succeed to conceal his evil

intentions from this Servant, how could he conceal it before the presence of the one true God, ‘the One Whom nothing is concealed from His Knowledge’? I know not at the end to what faith he will prescribe or with what proof he will choose to argue his case? After all it has been some time since this Servant hath secluded Himself from the world, closing His door to friend and stranger alike, and choosing the way of solitude. I know not from where this jealousy hath sprung or from which direction did this antagonism appear? And it is not known whether in the end this would bring him blessing and confirmation and cause his heart to be cheered!

Although, he treads the path of a corrupt inclination and this lowly One hath clung to the cord of the fear of God, and God willing will be led to the light of salvation—I have no ill-feeling towards him and have kept no resentment in My heart. I have left it to God and clung to the sure handle of justice. After achieving his intentions perhaps he may be led to drink from the boiling waters of Hell and be fed from the fire of the Wrath of God. For a powerful Ruler is presiding and He, indeed, doth not forgive oppression.

. . . . Until the ordained time cometh no one hath power over Us, and when the ordained time hath arrived it will find Our whole being longing for it. It would not be any sooner or later. ‘Surely we belong to God, and to Him we return.’<sup>11</sup> ‘If God helps you, none can overcome you; but if He forsakes you, who then can help you after Him?’<sup>12</sup> ‘Peace be upon him who follows the guidance!’<sup>13</sup>

## Notes:

<sup>1</sup> These two verses are from a lyric poem by the great Persian poet Khájih Shamsu'd-Dín Muhammad-i-Shírází better known as Háfíz of Shíráz (1320-91 C.E.).

<sup>2</sup> The italicized passages are the authorized translation excerpts of this Tablet published by the Universal House of Justice in *The Bahá'í World Volume XVIII (1979-83)* [Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1986], p. 11. All other non-italicized text, except the opening verse of the Háfíz, are translated by Shahrokh Monjazebe and must be regarded as a provisional translation pending the publication of an authorized version by the Bahá'í World Centre.

<sup>2</sup> This poetic verse is from the *Mathnavi* of Jalálu'd-Dín Rúmi (1207-73 C.E.).

<sup>3</sup> Qur'án 6:35. In the *Kitáb-i-Íqán* Bahá'u'lláh, expounding on the meaning of this verse, writes: "The implication of this utterance is that His case had no remedy, that they would not withhold their hands from Him unless He should hide Himself beneath the depths of the earth, or take His flight unto heaven." (*Kitáb-i-Íqán* [U.S. edition], p.110)

<sup>4</sup> Qur'án 8:30.

<sup>5</sup> Qur'án 10:41.

<sup>6</sup> This is a reference to Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Husayn-i-Tihrání who was the arch-nemesis of Bahá'u'lláh, outside of the faith, during the years of Bahá'u'lláh's banishment to Baghdad. He was also known as Shaykhu'l-'Iráqayn. See *God Passes By*, p. 141.

<sup>7</sup> This verse is an Arabic poetic verse by Ibn al-Fárid (1182-1235 C.E.) the famous Arab Sufi teacher and poet who lived in Egypt.

<sup>8</sup> This is a reference to Mírzá Búzúrg Khán-i-Qazvíní the notorious accomplice of Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Husayn-i-Tihrání mentioned above.

# **Súriy-i-Haykal**

## **Tablet of the Temple**

### **Two translations collated**

#### **Bahá'u'lláh**

translated by Anton F. Haddad and Shoghi Effendi.

Chicago: Behais Supply and Publishing Board, 1900

originally revealed as "Súratu'l-Haykal".

The Surat 'ul Hykl is from the Pen of Beha 'Ullah, and is literally translated from the original Arabic by Anton F. Haddad. It is published for the enlightenment of those who seek for knowledge from the fountain head of truth.

We desire to announce that this publication will be followed by other works from the same source, and it is hoped no one will attempt an interpretation of the Surat 'ul Hykl until he has had access to them, as therein light will be thrown on many passages the meaning of which may herein seem veiled or hidden.

This is the Sura of the Temple which God has made the Mirror of His Names between the earth and heaven and the sign of His remembrances among the people of the world.

He is the Wonderful, The Most Glorious!

Glory be to Him who hath caused the signs to descend to those who perceive!

Glory be to Him who hath caused the signs (verses) to descend to those who understand!

Glory be to Him who guideth whomsoever He wisheth to His Path! Say, verily, it is the path of God to those who are in heaven and on earth: Blessed are they who hasten toward it.

Glory be to Him who hath caused the signs to descend to those who know!

Glory be to Him who speaketh from the Might of command, and who is not known to any save his noble servants.

Glory be to Him who quickeneth whom He wisheth, by merely saying "Be" and it is.

Glory be to Him who elevateth whom He willeth to the heaven of bounty, and bringeth down that which He pleaseth to a predetermined measure.

Blessed is He who doeth what He pleaseth by a command on His part; verily He is the True One, the Knower of secrets and unseen things.

Blessed is He who giveth by inspiration to whom He willeth that which He wisheth through His hidden and irresistible command.

Blessed is He who assisteth whom He pleaseth by the hosts of the unseen; verily He is the Doer [doer] of that which He willeth, and He is the Mighty, the Self-existing!

Blessed is He who stengtheneth whom He pleaseth by the dominion of His Power, and confirmeth whom He wisheth to accomplish what He willeth: Blessed are they who know!

Blessed is He who hath ordained to everything a measure decreed in a hidden tablet [Tablet]!

Blessed is He who hath caused to descend upon His servant, that, by reason of which all the hearts and minds will be enlightened!

Blessed is He who hath caused to descend upon His servant, that kind of calamity, whereby the hearts of those who rested inside the awnings of eternity, were burned [(with anguish)]; then also the hearts of those who are near!

Blessed is He who hath caused to descend upon His servant, from the cloud of Fate [fate], the arrows of disaster — and still He findeth Me in Supreme Patience [supreme patience].



Blessed is He who hath ordained to His servant that which was not ordained to any other one of His servants: Verily He is the One, the Mighty, the Self-subsistent.

Blessed is He who hath caused to descend upon His servant, from the clouds of the detestation of those who closed their eyes and feigned to take no notice, the spears of the irreversible decree — and still He sees Him offering great thanks.

Blessed is He who hath caused to descend upon His [his] servant that which equals the weight of the earth and the heaven, for which We indeed praise Him; and of this no one is cognizant save those who understand.

Glory be to Him who hath placed His Beauty under the claws of the rancour of the immoral; verily We are contented with that, and no one can comprehend this save the discerning.

Glory be to him who hath entrusted el-Huseyn [\*]amongst the factions of the enemies, while at all times, the spears of hatred and ill treatment were brought upon His body; verily We thank Him for all that He hath decreed upon His servant, the sad, the distressed.

[\* Bahá'u'lláh]

[394] • But when I saw myself at the culmination of calamity, I heard, from above my head, the Most Wonderful [wonderful] and Melodious Voice [melodious voice], and when I turned I witnessed an Hourí [a Maiden] (Nymph of Paradise) of the celebration of the Name of my Lord, suspended in the air on a level with my head; [...] I saw her, that she was indeed rejoicing within herself as though the embroidered Garment [garment] of pleasure was manifesting itself upon her face,

and the brightness of the Merciful was apparent upon her cheeks; and between the earth and heaven, she was uttering a call, by which all the hearts and minds will be drawn, and at the same time, gladdening all the limbs of my internal and external being, with glad-tidings that made my soul rejoice, and those of the noble servants. Then with her finger, she pointed to my head, and addressed all those in heaven and earth saying: "By God, This is indeed the Beloved of the universe, but ye do not understand! This is the Beauty of God among you, and His Dominion within you, if ye are those who know! This is the Mystery of God, His Treasure, the Command of God, and His Glory, to those who are in the Kingdom of power and creation — were ye of those who reason! • 1 This is the One whose meeting will be longed for by all those who dwell in the everlasting spiritual world, and who have taken a station for themselves in the tents of El-ABHA [El-Abha]— while ye yourselves are turned away from His Beauty!

["]O People of el-Beyan [El-Beyan]! Should ye not assist Him, God will assist Him by the hosts of earth and heaven and those of the Unseen, through His Command which is "Be" and it is! And He will send forth by His Will certain people who are unknown to anyone but Himself, the Protector, the Self-existent, and purify them from the strain of surmise and passion, and elevate them to the rank of sanctity, and by them He will cause to appear the traces of the Glory of His Kingdom on earth: thus was it decreed on the part of God, the Mighty, the Beloved."

[395] O People of el-Beyan [El-Beyan]; do ye deny the One for whose meeting ye were created, and still ye are of those who sit in your place and rejoice? Do ye object to Him, the one hair of whose head is, before God, better than all there is in heaven and earth — and still do ye scoff at Him?

[396] O People of el-Beyan [El-Beyan]! Show forth that which ye have, that I may know by what proof ye have believed in the manifestation of the Command of God in the past, and to-day by what evidence do ye magnify yourselves?

[397] By the One who hath created Me from the Light of His Beauty, I have never found among the neglectful, one of such negligence, or among the ignorant, one of such ignorance, as ye are. (O People.)

[398] Ye take as an evidence for your belief in God, the Tablets which ye have in your possession, but when the Signs came down and the Lamp gave Light, ye denied the One through whose Pen all matters were decreed in a Preserved Tablet. Do ye read the signs and deny their Originator [originator] and Revealer [revealer]? Thus hath God seized (deprived) your sight as a punishment for your actions — were ye of those who perceive: Do ye write the verses at even-tide and dawn, and from the One who caused them to descend ye conceal yourselves? And to-day the Supreme Assembly will see you in the mischief of your deeds and disavow you whilst ye are of those who do not hear — and the one will ask, and then another: "What do these ignorant people say, and in what vale do they rest? Do they close their eyes, while yet they see?" By God, O people, the inhabitants of the Cities of Names, became perplexed by your actions, and still in the barren valley ye are bewildered, and do not conceive [perceive].

[399] O Thou Supreme Pen! Hear the voice of Thy Lord from the Divine [divine] Lote-tree [Lote-Tree] in the brilliant Spot of Unity [spot of unity], that thou mayst find thyself in exhilaration and cheerfulness by the melodious Voice [voice] of Thy Lord, the Merciful, and be sanctified from all sorrows through the strong fragrance which was diffused from the region of My Name, the Pardoner; then, from this Temple, send the Temples of Unity to speak in the Kingdom of Creation, of their

Lord, the Supreme, the Most Glorious, and be of those who obtain light by the Lights [lights] of their Lord. Verily We have ordained this Temple the beginning of the existence of the new creation, that each one may become convinced that I am indeed able to do what I wish, by merely saying, "Be," and it is. By the shadow of each letter of the letters of this Temple, We will send forth people whose number is not known to any save God, the Protector, the Self-existent; and from it [(the Temple)] God shall create certain people who will not be veiled by the illusions of those who acted wrongfully against God, and they will drink, at all times, the pure water of life: Verily are not they of those who are successful?

[400] They are those servants who have stationed themselves in the shadow of the Mercy [mercy] of their Lord, and were not prevented by the preventors; and in their faces the brightness of the Merciful is manifested, and from their hearts the mention of My Hidden [hidden] and Mighty [mighty] Name is heard: they are those, whose lips when opened in praising their Lord, all, whosoever is in earth and heaven, will praise with them — though there are but few people who do hear — and when they mention their Creator, all things will mention with them the same: Thus God hath preferred them to all creation, but indeed the people do not know. They move around the Command of God just as the shadow moveth around the sun.

[401] Open your eyes, O People of Beyan, that ye may witness! — and by the movement of these people all things will move, and by their quiescence all things will rest — were ye of those who believe: By them the Unitarians [people of unity] have come to the Koblat of the Horizons [(The Manifestations)] and calmness and forbearance became manifest amongst the good, and through them the earth was stationed, and the clouds gave out rain, and the table of Knowledge was descended

from the Heaven of Bounty [heaven of bounty] — were ye of those who understand: These people are the keepers of the Command [command] of God on earth, protecting its beauty against the dust of surmise and suspicion; they do not fear for themselves, but will sacrifice themselves in the Cause of God, for the hope of meeting the Beloved who hath appeared by this Name, the Mighty, Able, the Precious, the Holy.

[402] O Thou this Temple, arise by Thyself with an affair, whereby the contingent beings will arise; then assist Thy God with that which we have given Thee of power and might! Beware not to fear in a day whereon all things do fear. Be the Manifestation of My Name, the Protector, the Self-existent.

[403] Render Thy Lord victorious by that which is within Thy Power, and do not look to the creatures and that which comes from their mouths, save as to the voice of an insect in an endless and boundless valley. Drink the pure water of life in My Name, the Merciful, then give to drink to those who are near [(to God)] of the people of this rank, that which will make them cut themselves from the Names, and cause them to enter into this blessed and extended shadow.

[404] O this Temple, We have assembled by Thee all the things, and that which was created in the earth and heaven, and asked them of that by reason of which We administered the oath upon them in the beginning of eternity: Lo! We found the majority of them possessed of dull tongues and glazed eyes, and the minority of bright faces and voluble tongues — and out of these, We have sent forth a creation of what was and is: thus hath God kept their faces aloof from turning to the polytheists, and made them dwell in the shadow (protection) of the Lote-tree [Lote

Tree] of Himself; and thus He hath brought down upon them a calmness and strengthened them with the hosts of the Seen and the Unseen [seen and the unseen].

[405] O Thou, the Eye of this Temple! Look not to the heaven and what is therein, nor to the earth and whatsoever is thereupon; verily We created Thee for My Beauty — Lo, this is it [It]! Look as it pleaseth Thee and prevent not Thine eye from the Beauty of Thy Lord, the Precious, the Beloved. Through Thee We shall send forth Iron eyes [Eyes] and everseeing sight whereby they shall see the signs of their Creator, and turn away their eyes from that which the worldly wise have comprehended. Through Thee We give the power of sight to whomsoever We please, and seize those who were prevented from this bounty. Verily are they not drinking from the cups of imagination and they know not?

[406] O Thou, that Faculty of Hearing! Purify Thyself from the cry of every forsaken crier; then hear the voice of Thy Lord. Verily He revealeth unto Thee from the direction of the Throne, that indeed there is no God but ME [Me], the Precious, the Powerful, the Protector, the Self-existent. Through Thee We shall send forth purified ears that will listen to the Word of God and to that which became manifest from the dawning place of the Revelation, Thy Lord, the Merciful; verily do they find them melodious, the songstresses from this blessed and laudable place?

[407] O Thou, the Tongue of this Temple! Verily We have created Thee in My Name, the Merciful, and taught Thee that which was stored in el- Beyan [El-Beyan] (the revelation), and made Thee to speak for the sake of My great commemoration in the contingent world: Therefore do Thou utter this commemoration [(precious and wonderful)], and fear thou not from the manifestation of the Satan. Verily for this Thou wast created by My Command, the

Protector, the Self-existent. By Thee We made the tongue utter the revelation of that which was, and by My Dominion We utter of that which is. By Thee We send forth speaking tongues that move with praise in the Supreme Assembly, and amongst the people of creation.

[408] Thus have the signs descended, and the matter been decreed on the part of the King of Names and Attributes. Verily thy Lord is the True One and the Knower [knower] of all the Unseen [unseen]. Verily nothing can prevent [(tongues)] from praising their Creator; and by them all things will rise for the commemoration of the King of Names — verily there is no God but Me, the Able, the Mighty, the Beloved.

[409] The tongues of the Commemorators never speak unless reinforced by this Tongue, from this Station [station] — but there are few of the people who know. Everyone is able to praise his Lord and utter His remembrance, but some of the people understand and remember and some remember but do not understand.

O Hourī of Knowledge! Come forth from the chamber of words by the permission of God, the King of heaven and earth; then appear with the Divine embroidered Garment and give to drink the wine of Jabarout (spiritual world) with the fingers of ruby; then it may be that the people of mankind will look upon that which shone from the horizon of the Kingdom through the appearance of the Sun of Eternity from the dawn of Splendor (Beha), and arise in praising between the earth and heaven at the commemoration of this Page, Who is established upon the Throne of His Name, the Helper, in the midst of Paradise: Upon His face the brightness of the Merciful (God) became manifest, and from His eyes appeared the eyes of God, and from His affairs the affairs of God, the Protector, the Precious, the Beloved.

If thou (Houri) dost not find anyone to receive from thy white hand the red wine in the Name of thy Lord, the High, the Supreme, who appeared once more after His first appearance,\* in His Name, El Abha (the Most Glorious), do not grieve, leave these people to themselves; then go back to the pavilion of Greatness and Might where thou wilt find people whose faces shine as the sun at mid-day, singing and praising their Lord in this Name which arose on the abode of sovereignty with the dominion of glory and power — verily though dost not hear from them aught save mention and praise — verily thy Lord is a witness to all that which I say. No one of those who were created from the Word of God in the eternity of eternities has come to know these people. Thus have we narrated in all particulars this matter and thus analyzed the signs — perhaps the people will ponder over the traces of their Lord.

Verily they (these people) were neither commanded to prostrate before Adam, nor did they turn their faces from the Face of thy Lord, and with the grace of sanctity they, at all times, are delighted.

Thus the Pen of the Merciful hath recorded the secrets of what was and what will be, and of it the people may become cognizant. God will make these people appear on the earth and by them He elevateth His mention, spreadeth His traces, confirmeth His Word and promulgateth \* This refers to the Bab and Baha 'Ullah.

His Signs in spite of those who denied and contradicted, and were of those who Abjured His Words.

O thou Countenance of Unity! Shouldst thou find them and be able to meet them, relate thou to them that which this Page is relating to thee from the stories of Himself and what has befallen Him that they may peruse that which was written in a preserved tablet. Tell them the news of this Page and how He was smitten with



misfortune and injuries in order that they may remember My calamities and be of those who comprehend. Then mention to them that, verily We have chosen one of our brothers and showed to him a small drop of the high sea of science, and clothed him with the garment of one Name of the Names, and elevated him to a rank whereby every one rose to praise him, and protected him from the injury of the owner of injuries in such a manner that the powerful failed to affect him. Verily We were before the faces of whomsoever is in the heaven and earth in the days when all the servants arose to kill Me, and verily We were among them uttering the mention of God and His praise and sustaining His matter until the Word of God became ascertained amongst His creatures, His Traces famous, His Power High, and His Dominion Spread, and to this the noble servants will bear witness.

Verily when my brother saw that the matter became notorious he found in himself pride and delusion, and accordingly went forth from behind the veils and fought with Myself, disputed My signs, falsified My proof, and denied My traces; but the belly of the greedy was not satisfied until he desired to eat My flesh and drink My blood. To this the servants will bear witness who fled into exile with God, also the servants who are near (to God). In this he consulted one of My servants and instigated him to acquiescence (to that deed). But lo! God assisted Me with the hosts of the Seen and the Unseen and preserved Me with the truth and caused to descend upon Me that which prevented him from accomplishing that which he desired, and stopped the craftiness of those who denied the signs of the Merciful — were they not indeed people of cunning and deceit?

When that which his mind had enticed him to do became divulged and the exiles were cognizant of his wile, the noise of tumult was raised by these people, who attained to such a degree as to become known almost throughout the city — then

We prevented them and bestowed upon them the word of patience that they should indeed be of those who forbear.

By God who is the only God and there is no God but He! Verily We were patient and truly We commanded the servants to practice endurance and forbearance. We went out from amongst those people and settled in another house in order that the fire of violent hatred might be quenched in his breast and he be of those who are guided. We did not object to him, neither did We see him after that; We sat in the house waiting for the bounty of God, the Protector, the Self-existent. Verily when he knew that the matter had become notorious, he took the pen of lies and wrote to the servants attributing all that which he committed, to My Beauty, the Oppressed, the One, for the purpose of creating discord among the servants, and sowing hatred in the breasts of those who believed in God, the Precious, the beloved.

By the life of Him in whose hand My soul is, We were astonished at his deceit and all the creation of both the Seen and Unseen were astonished by him. Notwithstanding that which was in his heart abated not until he committed that which the pen dare not write, and by which he destroyed My reverence — the reverence of God, the Mighty, the Precious, the Praiseworthy. Were I to mention that which he did, such deeds could not be fulfilled and classified even were all the seas of the earth reduced to ink and all the things of the earth transformed into pens. Thus do We dictate that which has befallen Myself — were ye of those who know.

O Thou Pen of Eternity! Do not grieve for that which has befallen Thee, for God shall send forth people who will see with their eyes and remember what did befall Thee. Withhold the pen from mentioning these people, then wield it in mentioning the King of the Ancient — set aside the contingent beings; then drink from the

sealed and pure wine of My remembrance. Beware not to occupy thyself in mentioning those from whom thou dost not find but the scents of violent hatred, who were overtaken by the love of authority (temporal) in such wise that they destroy themselves in order to elevate their mention and perpetuate their names. God hath recorded these to be worshipers of names, in a preserved tablet. Mention thou that which is desired by thee to this Temple that its traces may appear in the earth and the lights of this Effulgence may fill the horizons and purify the earth from the pollution of those who deny God. Thus have We caused the signs to descend and classified the matter to the people who know.

O Thou this Temple! Stretch thou Thine hand over whomsoever is in the earth and heaven and take the reins of the command within the grasp of Thy will. Verily We have put in Thy right hand the kingdom of everything; do whatsoever Thou pleaseth and fear not those who do not know.

Then lift up Thine hand to the tablet which shone from the horizon of the fingers of thy Lord and take it with strength, and by taking it, the hands of whomsoever is in existence will take it — this behooveth thee, wert thou of those who understand. By the elevation of thy hand to the heaven of My bounty the hands of everything will be elevated to God, the Mighty, the Precious, the Beloved. We shall send forth from Thy hand the hands of strength, power and might, and by them We show forth My power to whomsoever is in the Kingdom of command and creation, in order to assure the Servant that there is no God but Me, the Protector, the Self-existent. By them We give and take and no one knows this save those who see with the Spiritual Eye. Say, O people do ye flee from the Power of God?

[410] By God, there is no escape to-day [today] for you and no refuge for any one save from the Mercy of God on the part of His Bounty — verily He is the Forgiving, the Generous. Say, O people! Set aside that which ye have; then enter into the shadow of thy Lord the Merciful. This is better for you than that which ye have done or do — fear God and deprive not yourselves from the fragrances of the days of the King of the Names and Attributes and change not the word of God nor transpose its meaning — fear God and be of those who are devout. Say, O people! This is the Hand [hand] of God which has been above your hands — were ye of those who reason.

[411] Through It We have ordained the good for the heaven and earth in such a manner that no good becomes manifest unless it is produced from IT — thus have We made IT the source and the store of good to all that which has been and will be. Say, all that has flowed in the tablets of the river of demonstrations and explanation was connected with this Most Great Sea — were ye of those who perceive: And that which was detailed in the books was traced to this Supreme Word which shone from the mouth of the Will of EL-ABHA [El-Abha] (The Most Glorious)[(the Most Glorious)] in this manifestation whereby the mouths of the seen and the unseen were wreathed in smiles. • God shall send forth from the sleeves of Might the hands [Hands] of power and victory, and certain people to assist this Servant, and to cleanse the earth from the impurity of every abandoned polytheist, and they shall arise in favor of this matter, and open the countries in My Name, the Powerful, the Self- existent, and enter their boundaries, and their threats shall overtake all the servants; this is from the strength of God: Verily His Strength [strength] is great in favor of Justice [justice].

[412] Verily He is the Encompasser [encompasser] of whomsoever is in earth and heaven, and causeth to descend that which He pleaseth to a predetermined measure. Should anyone of those people rise up and confront whatsoever is created in the universe, he would certainly be the conqueror through the victory of Myself. This is from My power, but My people do not know; this is from My dominion but My creatures do not understand; this is from My command but My servants do not perceive; this is from My victory but mankind is not grateful, save those whose eyes God has illumined by the Light of the Knowledge [light of knowledge] of Himself, and whose hearts He hath made the stores of inspiration, and whose souls the carriers of His Command [commands]; these are the people who from the garment of His Name, will inhale the fragrance of the Merciful, and at the signs of God they are continually rejoicing, and those people who denied and associated others with God, will have the wrath of God upon them, and to the fire be dragged and in its strata they shall show forth their grief; thus do We classify the signs and explain the truth with evident proofs, hoping that the people will ponder over the traces of their Lord.

• O Thou, this Temple! We have made Thee the sign of My Might in all that was and will be; We have made Thee the sign of My Matter between the earth and heaven by My saying "Be" and it is. • 3

(Words to the four letters of HYKL spelling "Temple" or "Body.")

O thou "Ha" of He (Deity) of this Name, We have made Thee the store of My Will, and the lurking place of My Wish to whomsoever is in the Kingdom of Creation and Command as a favor on the part of the Protector, the Self-existent.

O thou "Ya" of My Mighty Name, We have made thee the manifestation of My dominion and the rising place of My Names; and I am the powerful over all that which I say.

O thou "Kaf" of My Noble Name, We have made Thee the dawning place of My generosity amidst My creatures and the spring (origin) of MY benevolence amongst My people; I am the Mighty in My Dominion; nothing is hidden from My Knowledge of that which was created between the earth and heaven, and I am the True One, the Knower, of all secrets and unseen things.

O thou Pen! Bring down from the clouds of Thy generosity that which will satisfy the contingent beings; do not withhold Thy benevolence from existence; verily Thou art the Generous in the everlasting spiritual world (Jabarout el-beka), and the possessor of the great Bounty to whomsoever is in the Kingdom of the Names. Look not to the people and what they have in their possession; look to the beauty of thy gifts and to thy incomparable grants; make the servants enter into thy extended shadow; stretch out the hand of munificence on the contingent beings and the fingers of generosity over the existing beings; this behooves Thee, but the people do not understand.

He who advanceth unto Thee, it is from Thy bounty, and he who turns away, — verily Thy Lord is sufficient for all that which was created in the contingent world; to this the sincere servants will bear witness. • God shall send forth by Thee victorious hands and constraining supports, which will come forth from behind the veils to assist the Soul of the Merciful in this world. They will send forth a cry whereby the breasts will be rent asunder with rage. Thus it was decreed in a written tablet, and they will appear with a might whereby fear overtakes the inhabitants of the earth in a manner which will make them all shake and tremble.

4 Beware that ye shed not blood; draw forth the sword of the tongue from the scabbard of utterance, for by it the cities of the heart will be subdued. WE have

taken away the law of capital punishment from among you, verily My mercy has preceded the contingent beings — if ye are those who know. Assist your Lord the Merciful, with the sword of evidence; verily it is sharper than that of utterance and of more value — were ye of those who reflect upon the words of thy Lord. Thus the hosts of inspiration were made to manifest from the dawning place of the command on the part of God, the Protector, the Beloved.

[413] Say, verily the fates of all things were ordained in this Temple, the Treasured [treasured], the Illustrious [illustrious], and in It [IT] was stored the science of earth and heaven, and the science of that which was and is, and by the fingers of the skill of thy Lord, was written in this book that which the learned were unable to comprehend. He hath created in It [IT] the temples which were not known to any save God — were ye of those who believe.

[414] Blessed is the one who reads it and ponders over it and is of those who understand• . Say, nothing is seen in My Temple [temple], but the Temple of God, and in My beauty but His beauty [Beauty], and in My being but His being [Being], and in Myself but Himself, and in My movement but His movement [Movement], and in My acquiescence but His acquiescence [Acquiescence], and in My pen but His pen [Pen], the Precious, the Praiseworthy.

[415] • Say, there hath not been in My soul but the Truth [truth] and in Myself nothing could be seen but God.

5 Beware that ye mention not the two signs — all the particles in Myself speak, "verily there is no God but Me, the One, the Single, the Precious, the Beloved" — everlastingly in the spiritual world I was uttering "Verily I am God and there is no God but Me, the Protector, the Self-existent," and in the Kingdom of Names I

everlastingly utter, "Verily I am God, there is no God but Me, the Precious, the Beloved."

[416] Say, Verily the Lordship is my Name and for it (the Lordship) I have created manifestations in the Kingdom; verily We have been free from them — were ye to bear witness: And the Divinity is My Name, and for it we have made places of rising to encompass all servants and make them worshippers of God — were ye to believe: And thus know all the Names (Prophets) — were ye to know.

(Note. "Lam" is the last letter in the word "hykl" also the last letter of El-Fadhl" which means "the Bounty" or its synonyms. "Hykl" means "Body" or "Temple.")

O thou letter "L" (Lam) of El-Fadhl (Bounty) in this Name! Verily we have made thee the manifestation of Bounty between earth and heaven; from thee we created, first, Generosity among the contingent beings and to thee we shall return it; and from thee we will manifest it another time as a command on the part of Our Presence, and I am the Doer of that which I desire by saying — "Be," and it is; and every manifestation of this Bounty which has appeared in the Kingdom, originated from thee and to thee it shall return — this is that which was ordained in a tablet which we preserved behind the Tents of Greatness and concealed it from being witnessed by the eyes. How good is he who does not deprive himself from the chained and celebrated Bounty.

[416] • Say, the fecundation of Bounty [bounty] has been wafted over all things in this day and everything has generated and brought forth its own kind, but verily the majority of the people have turned away from it — the trees bring forth the beautiful fruit, — the seas, the brilliant jewels, — man, knowledge and science, — the universe, the transfiguration of the Merciful — and the earth, that which no one comprehendeth, save the True One, the Knower [knower] of secrets and unseen things. • 6



[418] Everything shall bring forth its own species. Blessed is the God who is the sender of this Bounty [bounty](el-fadh1), which surrounds all things that have appeared and that which is still hidden; thus have we created the beings of this day unequaled, but the majority of mankind do not perceive. Say, if the Bounty [bounty] (fadh1) of God cannot be known as it is, how would it be possible then to know Himself, the Protector, the Self-existent?

O Temple of the Command: If Thou findest none advancing toward Thy gifts, grieve not, — Thou wast created for Myself, occupy Thyself in celebrating Me amongst My servants, this was that which was apportioned to Thee in a preserved tablet. Verily when We found the hands impure on earth, We made Thy life pure, and sanctified it from touching them, or touching those who are infidels.

Be patient at the command of thy Lord, for God shall raise up people of pure hearts and clear sights who will flee from all directions to the direction of thy Bounty, the surrounding, the expansive.

O Temple of God, when the Hosts of Revelation were caused to descend with the banners of the signs, from the King of the Names and Attributes, the people of imaginations and illusions were put to flight, and they denied the clear proofs of God, the Protector, the Self-existent, and stood up for deceit. Some of them said these signs are not evident signs from God and they were not made to descend upon the Fitrat.\* Thus do the infidels remedy the wounds of the breasts. By this they will be cursed by whomsoever is in the heaven and earth, and in themselves they do not perceive.

Say, verily, the Holy Spirit hath been created by a letter of what hath been caused to descend from this Spirit, the Most Great, if ye could understand. • 7

Verily the religion of this land in its being was created from the signs of God, the Protector, the Precious, the Beloved. Verily it boasts on account of being attributed to Ourselves the Truth, but We do not boast of it or of that which is beside it; for all things besides Me were created by My word, if ye be of those who understand!

[419] Say, Verily, We have caused the signs to descend after nine conditions, each of which is a proof of the Dominion of God, the Protector, the Self-existent, — any one of these conditions is sufficient to convince whomsoever is in heaven and earth, but the majority of the people are heedless. Had We willed We would have revealed the signs after other conditions whose number could not be reckoned. Say O people, fear God and do not move your false tongues about that which God doth not like, — be ashamed before the one who formed you through a drop of water as ye do know. Say, verily, We have created whomsoever is in the heaven and the earth, after the nature of God. And he who advanceth to this Face will appear in the condition wherein he was created, and he who secludeth himself, will be secluded from this surrounding and hidden Bounty. Verily We did not prevent anything from attaining this Bounty, but We created all things equal according to their kind, and propounded to them the fidelity of Our love by a word on Our part; and he who remembereth, will escape and believe and be of those who will be saved from the terror of the Day, and he who turneth away will deny God, the Protector, the Self-existent. By the Word, We separated servants and classified them, verily We are the Separators. Say, the Word of God is not likened unto the words of His Creatures; verily it is the Sultan [king] of words, as His Soul is the Sultan [king] of souls, and His Command is the Protector [protector] over that which was and is.

O people, enter the chief city of Assurance, the abode of the throne of thy Lord, the Merciful.

This is that which ye are commanded by the Pen of the Glorious, as a Bounty on His part upon you, — if from His command ye differ not. And amongst the infidels is he who disbelieved within his soul, and arose in war saying, "these signs are spurious;" — thus in bygone time said men who have passed away, and lo, in hellfire do they now cry for help! Say, woe unto you by reason of that which came out from your mouths; if these signs are spurious, then by what proof did ye believe in God? Produce it! — Whenever we revealed to them evident signs they have denied them, but when they found that all the people were unable to produce the like, they said "this is sorcery." What aileth these people? Why do they say that which they know not? Thus said the nation of the Koran (Mohammedans) when God brought forth His matter; verily are they not people of cunning? They prevented the people from coming before the Beauty of the Ancient, or from eating with His Beloved, and some of them have said "Come ye not near these people, verily they enchant the people and lead them astray from the path of God, the Protector, the Self-existent." By God the True One, the ones who could not speak in our presence have said that which was not uttered by the people of yore and committed that which was not committed by those who have denied the Merciful in all ages: To this will their sayings and actions bear witness, — were ye of those who judge aright. Whoso attributeth the signs of God to sorcery, verily he is the one who hath not believed in any one of the messengers of God; he hath lost the fruits of his toil in this futile life, and is of those who say that which they know not. Say, O servant, fear God who created and fashioned thee, and seek not to emulate God, — then be impartial in thyself and be of those who perform justice. Verily those who were given knowledge from God are those who will ascertain from these

very objections, sufficient and strong proofs wherewith to refute them and confirm this illustrious Light. Do ye say that which the infidels said when the Reminder (the Bab) came unto them from their Lord? Woe unto you O community of Ignorance, evil is that which ye acquire.

O Blessed Perfection, set aside the infidels and what they have in their possession, then perfume the contingent beings by the celebration of thy beloved, the Supreme, the Great.

By His celebration all things will be vivified, and the temples of the people will be renovated. Verily he hath settled upon the Throne of Greatness and Glory, and he who wisheth to see His Beauty, lo, it is This. Blessed is God who appeared in this bright and effulgent Beauty! And he who wisheth to hear His melodious voice, verily it is heard from this wonderful and shining Mouth; and he who wisheth to be illumined by His Lights, say unto him "Come now before the Throne, — this is that which God hath bestowed upon you as a Bounty on His part to all the world."

[420] Say, O people, we ask a word from you by the Most Great Truth, — and we will take God as a witness between us, verily He is the Beloved, the Beneficent; — present thyself before the Throne of God, then let thy speech be unprejudiced and be ye of those who are just. Was God the powerful over His matter, or were we of those who are powerful? Was He the unconstrained in Himself, as ye say, "verily He doeth that which He pleaseth, nor is asked concerning that which He wisheth," or, are ye yourselves the unconstrained, and say this word merely by tradition, in the same manner as was said by your fathers, in the times of the messengers? Although He was unconstrained in Himself, He hath shown the manifestation of his command by signs, which are unequaled by anything either in heaven or on earth, — and he hath appeared after a condition the like of which hath not appeared

in creation, — just as that of which ye hath seen and heard when the Light of the horizons shone forth from the regions of Irak (Baghdad) with evident dominion. All things return to the signs and these are the signs of God, the King, the Protector, the Precious, the Mighty! Beside these He hath appeared with a Command whereto all the contingent beings hath confessed its authority and no one denieth this save the iniquitous infidel.

Say, O people, do ye desire to conceal the Beauty of the Sun by the veils of your souls, or to prevent the Spirit from singing in this pure and illustrious Breast? Fear God and oppose not Himself and dispute not with the One by whose command the Kaf (letter K\*) was created and connected with its Great Support. Believe in the Ambassadors of God, in His Dominion, in Himself and in His Greatness, and come not near those who have denied after they have believed, and who have taken a station for themselves in their own lust; verily are they not infidels? Bear witness for that which God hath borne witness, that those who are near may be enlightened by that which proceedeth from your mouth. Say, verily we believe in that which descended to the messengers of God aforetime, and to Ali (The Bab) with the truth, and that which will descend from the direction of the Great Throne (Abbas). Thus doth God teach you from His part and as a Generosity from His Presence. Verily, His Grace hath encompassed the whole world.

\*The letter Kaf is the first letter of the word "Koun" in Arabic, which means "existence," and the "Great Support" means Abbas Effendi, the Greatest Branch. O, thou Foot of this Temple: We have created Thee from the iron — be straightforward in the way of thy Lord, that through Thee will be straightened the feet of the devotees on the Path of Thy Lord, the Precious, the Wise.

Beware that thou art not moved by storms of violent hatred, nor by the sweeping winds of the wretched. Be firm in the command, and be of those who are steadfast. In Our Name, — through which the people of uprightness became straightened, and in every name of our Comely Names — We have sent Thee to whomsoever is in the heaven and on the earth. We shall send forth from Thee people (possessors) of straight feet, who will walk forward in the path and not deviate from it, even if opposed by soldiers equal in number with the soldiers of the ancients and moderns. Verily the whole bounty is within Our grasp: We give to whomsoever We please of Our servants who are near (to God); thus we bestowed upon Thee time after time, so that Thou wilt praise Thy Lord with a praise whereby the tongues of all beings will praise Me, the Merciful, the Clement.

O Temple! Arise and assist this matter with Power and Dominion from Our Presence; then expound to the servants that which was expounded to thee by the Spirit of God, the Kind, the One, the Precious, the Wise. Say, O people, Do you cast the truth behind you and proclaim that which We have created from a handful of clay: This is self oppression, were ye of those who ponder upon the signs of your Lord.

O people! Purify your hearts, then your eyes, that ye may know your Creator in this holy and brilliant Garment (body)! Say, verily this is the Servant of my God who hath been established upon the Throne of Glory and who hath appeared with dominion of Power and Independence, exclaiming between the earth and heaven with His most wonderful and melodious proclamation — "O people of the universe, why have you denied your Lord, the Merciful, and turned away from the Beauty of the Praised? By God, this is the Secluded, and the unseen hath risen from the dawning place of the contingent world; this is the Beauty of the Beloved which

hath shone from the horizon of this station, with the dominion of God, the Protector, the Precious, the Victorious, the Mighty."

O thou Temple of Holiness! We have cleansed Thy Breast from the insinuations of contingent beings and sanctified it from their evidences, that the lights of My Beauty be printed in it, wherefrom they will reflect light to the mirrors of the world. Inasmuch as we have chosen Thee above all that was ordained in the Kingdom of Command and Creation, and appropriated Thee especially for Myself; this is from the Bounty of God upon Thee from this very day to a day that will never end in the Kingdom, but will rather continue by the continuance of God, the Protector, the Precious, the Omniscient.

[421] For the day [Day] of God is He Himself, who hath appeared with the truth and will never be followed by the night, or limited by the remembrance, were ye of those who know.

O thou Breast of this Temple! Verily we have made all things as mirrors to Thyself and made Thee the Mirror of Myself, therefore reflect Thou upon the breasts of the contingent beings that which was reflected upon Thee from the Lights of Thy Lord, to purify from interpretations and illusions; thus hath the Sun of Wisdom shone from the horizon of the Pen of the King of Pre-existence; Blessed are they who read in Him, — His goodness. Verily We have originated from Thee the pure breasts and to Thee We return them as a mercy on Our part upon Thee and upon those who are near to God. • We shall raise up through Thee, people (lit. owners) of clear breasts and radiant ribs who will not speak save of My Beauty, and will not point save to the transfiguration of My Face; verily they are the mirrors of My Names among the whole creation. • 8

[422] O Temple of Holiness! Verily we have made Thy heart the store of knowledge of that which was and is and the rising place of Our science which We have ordained to the people of the earth and heaven, that the beings will be filled abundantly through Thee, and, by the wonders of Thy sciences, will attain the knowledge of God, the Able, the Supreme, the Great. Verily the science which is attributed to Myself was not known to anyone, nor will it be known by any soul, neither could it be endured by anyone of the world. Should we produce but one word of it all the souls will be disturbed, the supports of all things be destroyed and the feet of the accomplished will deviate. • We have in Our possession a science of which, should We convey but one word to the beings, every one would be made to believe in the Manifestation of God and His Knowledge, and be acquainted with the secrets of all sciences, and attain a position whereby they would find themselves able to dispense with the sciences of both the ancients and moderns.

[423] We have also other sciences of which if We speak but a single letter the people will not be able to hear its mention. Thus have we informed you of the Science of God, the Knower, the Informed. Had We found vessels We would have laid in them the treasures of Knowledge and would have taught them that of which one letter will encompass the whole world. • 9

[424] O Heart of this Temple! Verily we have made Thee the rising place of My science and the manifestation of My wisdom to whomsoever is in heaven and on earth. We have made the sciences to appear from Thee and to Thee shall we return them; then they will be sent forth from thee for another occasion as a promise on Our part, — verily We have been the doers. We shall raise up from Thee people of wonderful sciences and powerful arts and will show forth from them that of which the heart of no servant could ever conceive: Thus we give to whomsoever We



please that which we please and take from the one whom we desire that which we have given him, and govern by Our command that which we will. Verily should We, by the Sun [sun] of Our Providence reveal Ourselves upon the mirror of the existing beings in one hour, and take away from them the lights of Our revelation in another hour, — we are indeed able, — and no one dare ask "Why?" or "How?" Verily We are the Doers of that which We please and will not be questioned as to that We have done, and no one doubts this save the doubting infidel.

[425] Say, Our power could not be hindered and Our authority will never be annulled; We elevate whom We please to the glory of might and power; then bring him back, should We will, to the lowest of the low. Do you think, O people of the earth, if We were to elevate anyone to the divine lote-tree [Lote Tree], could [that] My power and dominion be prevented from controlling him? No, by Myself, but rather should We please, will bring him again to the dust in an instant. Look at the tree — [.] We plant it in the garden and water it by the water of Our Providence; and when it becomes of great stature, puts forth green leaves and bears the best fruits, We then send upon it the sweeping wind of command, uproot it and leave it upon the surface of the earth; thus have We been doing and thus will We do with everything — this is from the wonders of Our laws before and after all things, were ye of those who see. No one can see the wisdom of this save God, the Powerful, the Precious, the Wise! Do ye deny, O people, that which ye see? Woe unto you, O assembly of Abnegation [abnegation]: And the One who doth not change is He Himself, the Merciful, the Clement, were ye of those who reflect. Beside Him everyone changeth by the will on His part and He is the Almighty, the Precious, the Wise.

O people, speak ye not of My affair; because ye do not comprehend the wisdom of your Lord, and cannot attain His powerful and surrounding Knowledge. He who claims the knowledge of himself, is the most ignorant of all people, and will be accused of lying by all the atoms, and to this My faithful and trustworthy tongue will bear witness. Remember My command; then speak of it and of that which ye were commanded by Our Presence; and to speak of aught beside it beseemeth you not, for unto it no one can find a way, were ye of those who hear.

O thou Temple! We have made Thee the rising place of every Name of Our Comely Names, and the Manifestation of every attribute of our Supreme Attributes, and the Source of mention of Our Remembrances, to whomsoever is in heaven and earth. Then We sent Thee, after My Form, between the earth and heaven and made Thee the Sign of My Glory, to whomsoever is in the power of command and creation, that My servants may be guided by Thee and be of those who are rightly directed. We have made Thee the Lote-tree of Munificence to whomsoever is in the earth and heaven. Blessed is he who sheltereth himself in Thy Shadow, and draweth near to Thy soul, the Protector of all the worlds. Verily We have made every Name a fountain from which rivers of wisdom and knowledge were made to flow in the verdant Gardens of Command, whose number could not be known by anyone save Thy Lord, the Almighty, the Knower and the Wise.

Say, We have originated all the letters from the Point (Nukta) and to it We returned them; then We sent them forth in the form of a Human Temple. May the Wonderful and Admirable Doer be exalted. We shall form (a temple) from it for another time in My Name — El-ABHA — as a Bounty on My part, and I am the most Generous and Ancient: We produced the Lights from the Sun of Our Name,

the Truth, and to it We returned them and made them appear after the form of the temple of man; may He be exalted, the Able, the Powerful, the Mighty. No one prevented Me from accomplishing My Command and no soul could ever intervene between Me and My Dominion and Power; I am He who sent forth the contingent beings by My Word and I am the Powerful over that which I will. Say, verily, should We wish to take the spirits out of all things at one time and send them forth another time, We were indeed able, and no one knows this save God the Knower, the Omniscient. [426] Should We desire to show forth from an atom, suns without beginning and without end, We are indeed able and We can make them all appear in a moment by My Command. Should We please to produce from a drop of water the seas of the heaven and earth and from a letter the science of what was and is, we are indeed able, — Verily [verily] it is an easy matter.

[427] Thus I have been able from the first which has no beginning to the last which has no end; but My creatures became heedless of My power and turned away from My dominion and disputed Me, the Knower and the Wise. Nothing can move between the heaven and earth without My permission and no soul can ascend to the Kingdom without My Command; but My creatures veiled themselves from My power and authority — and were of those who are negligent. Say, nothing can be seen in My Manifestation but the Manifestation of God — nor in My power but the power of God, were ye of those who know! Say, the maxim of My creatures is likened unto that of the leaves of a tree — they appear and feel themselves independent but of their root they are neglectful. Thus we propounded a proverb unto Our servants, the wise, perhaps they will elevate themselves from the vegetable degree and attain the station of accomplishment in this confirmed and valid matter. Say, they are likened unto a whale in the water; verily the water is its source of life but it indeed does not know that the source of life is from the

Presence of the Precious, the Wise; it is veiled from it to such an extent that if asked about the water and its qualities, it does not know.

Thus We propound proverbs; perhaps the people will advance to the Kobla (Manifested God) of whomsoever is in the heaven and earth.

O people! Hear God and deny not the One whose Mercy has encompassed the contingent beings, and His Bounty preceded the existing beings, and the dominion of His Command encircled your external and internal, your beginning and end; honor God and be of those who are Godly. Beware of being like those upon whom the signs of God passed and they failed to know them; verily are they not of those who are neglectful? Say, do ye worship him who doth not hear or see, but was, rather, the lowest and most despised of the servants? Why do ye not follow the One who came from the rising place of Command with the message of God, the Supreme, the Great.

O people, be not like those who came before the Throne and could not perceive; verily are they not of those to be ignored? Verily we read to them the signs to which the people of might and the inhabitants of the Kingdom will be drawn; but they went back and veiled themselves from them, waiting anxiously to hear the voice of one of the servants who calls the people to prayer by the will of God. Thus do we convey to you that which will guide you to the same path as that of those who are near (to God). How many a servant entered the spot of Paradise, the station of the Throne, and stood before their Lord, the Supreme, the Great, and asked concerning the "Four Doors" or regarding one of the Imams of the Furkan (Koran); — thus was the condition of these people, — were ye of those who know. [428] In like manner in these days do ye see those who deny and associate others with God and adhere to one Name of the Names, but turn away from the One who

created these Names; verily we testify that they are of the people of Fire. They ask the Sun of that which the shadow hath said, and the Truth of that which the preachers uttered; — were ye of those who bear witness. Say, O people! The sun hath nothing in itself but its effulgence and that which appears from it, and all things beside it are illuminated by its light. Fear God and be not of those who are ignorant. Some of them asked the darkness about the light. Say, open thine eyes that thou mayest see the effulgence surrounding the horizons; verily it could be seen by the naked eye — this is a Light [light] which hath shone and appeared from the horizon of the Dawn of Knowledge with evident brightness. Do ye ask the Jews whether the Spirit [(Christ)] was of a Truth from God? Or the Idols, whether Mohammed was a Prophet [(Messenger)]? Or the people of the Koran concerning the Reminder [(the Bab)] of God, the Supreme, the Great?

[429] Say, O people, set aside that which is in your possession [(religious doctrines)] at the appearance of this Manifestation and take what ye have been commanded. This is the command of God unto you, — verily He is the best of Commanders. By My Beauty, in saying these words it was My aim only to bring the servants nearer to God, the Precious, the Praise-worthy [Praiseworthy]. • Beware not to do with Me that which ye have done with My Precursor • 10 [(the Bab)], and when the signs of God are descended upon you from the region of My Munificence, do not say that they were not descended upon el-Fitrat [El-Fitrat], verily el-Fitrat [El-Fitrat] was created by My Words and revolves around Me, were ye of those who believe. Blessed is He who hath found the fragrances of the Garment of Knowledge [garment of knowledge] from the Revelation of His Lord the Merciful; verily they were spread over the universe and by them the contingent world was perfumed. Blessed is the one who scenteth its fragrance and advanceth to God with an enlightened heart.

O Thou Temple! We have made Thee a mirror for the Kingdom of the Names to speak of My Dominion among all the creatures and summon all the people to My meeting and Beauty and to be a Guide to My obvious and upright Path. We have elevated Thy Name among the servants as a Bounty, — and adorned Thee with the embroidered Garment of Myself and cast upon thee My Word to use the Authority in the Kingdom as it pleaseth Thee and to do what Thou willeth. We have ordained to Thee the good of the heaven and earth so that no good will be granted to anyone unless he enters Thy shadow, as a command on the part of Thy Lord, the Learned, the Informed. And We have given the rod of command and the divination of authority to enable Thee to distinguish the wisdom of every question. We have shown forth from Thy breast the seas of Knowledge and Revelation in the celebration of Thy Lord, the Merciful, in order that Thou shouldst praise and be of the thankful. We have chosen Thee from amongst My creatures and made Thee the Manifestation of My Soul to whomsoever is in the heaven and earth. Send Thou forth by a permission on Our part, speaking mirrors and high letters to tell of Thy dominion and power and to indicate Thy might and greatness and be the manifestations of Thy Names among all the creatures. We have made Thee the origin of the mirrors and their originator just as We have originated them from Thee the first time; and We will take back to Myself just as We have created them, — verily Thy Lord is the Victorious, the Mighty, the Able. Tell the mirrors on their appearance, not to feel great against their Creator and Originator at the event of His Appearance, and not let authority make them proud and prevent them from submissiveness before the Hands of God, the Precious, the Handsome.

Say, O ye Mirrors! Verily ye were created by My Command and sent forth by My Will: — beware not to deny the signs of My Lord and be not of those who oppress; verily they are the losers, and take not hold of that which ye have in your possession or boast of the elevation of your names. It behooveth you to cut

yourselves from that which is in the heaven and earth; thus hath it been ordained to you from the Presence of the Almighty, the Able.

O Temple of My Command! Say, if I wish to make all things as mirrors of My Names in less than a moment, I am indeed able, how much more then is My Lord, who hath created Me by His confirmed and valid command? And if I wish to invert the contingent beings within less than a twinkling of an eye, I am indeed able; how much then is that wish which was stored in the will of My God, My Lord, and the Lord of the worlds? Say, O ye Manifestations of My Names! Should ye fight in the way of God with your property and yourselves, and worship Him as the number of the sands of the earth, and as the drops of the rain, and as the waves of the seas, but at the event of the Appearance, ye object to the Manifestation of the Command, your actions and deeds will not be mentioned on the part of God: And if ye give up actions, and believe in Him in these days, it may be that God will forgive your past trespasses; verily He is the Precious, the Wise. Thus God teacheth you that which is intended, and perhaps ye will not make yourselves great against the One by whom is confirmed that which was descended in eternity of eternities.

Blessed is he who cometh near to the Most Great Outlook, and those who turn away, may they be far off; how many servants have expended their money in the cause of God, but at the time of the Manifestation we see them turning away, and how many servants fast in these days and still object to the One by whose command the law of fasting was confirmed; verily are they not of those who are ignorant? And how many servants eat the bread of barley, sit on that which grows from the earth and suffer hardships as a protection for their authority? Thus have We analyzed to thee their actions that they may be a warning to the others. Those people suffer hardships before others for the purpose of maintaining their names hereafter; but nothing will be kept for them save that whereby they will be cursed

by whomsoever is in the heaven and earth. And suppose your names will be kept as ye conjecture, would it be of any good to you? Not by the Lord of the Worlds. Doth My Power glory in keeping His Name continually among those who worship the Names? No, by the life of God, the Powerful, the Mighty. Should no one mention you on earth and at the same time God was pleased with you, then ye would be in the treasures of His Hidden Name. Thus have we caused to descend the signs in order to attract you unto the rising-place of the Lights and enable you to know that which thy Lord, the Learned, the Wise, hath willed. Hold yourselves from that which ye were forbidden in the Book, and eat of that which was lawfully given to you by God, and do not deprive yourselves of His gifts; verily He is the Generous, the Owner of the Great Bounty. Do not bring hardships upon yourselves, but do that which We have revealed to you through evident proofs and brilliant signs, and be not of those who are neglectful.

[430] O ye Assembly of Ulama! (Divines)[divines]. Should ye shun the wine and what resembles it of that which was forbidden you in the Book, it is not a thing to glory over at all, for in practising such habits you will lose your dignity before the people, your affairs will be changed and your shame become manifested; but the glory is in your submissiveness to the word of the Truth [truth], and in cutting yourselves secretly and openly from everything besides God, the Powerful, the Able. Blessed is the learned who doth not allow science to intervene as a veil between him and the Known, and when the Self-existent cometh, he advanceth unto Him with a bright face, — verily he is of the Ulama [divines], — by whose wit the people of paradise will be exalted, and by whose lamp whomsoever is in heaven and earth will be illumined. Verily he is one of the heirs of the Prophets and he who sees him hath seen the Truth, and he who advanceth towards him hath advanced to God, the Mighty, the Wise.



[431] O ye Dawning Places of Science, beware not to be changed in yourselves; because, by such a change, most of the servants change; verily this is an oppression on your part upon yourselves — to this will bear witness every informed Knower. Ye are likened unto a spring which when changed, all the rivers branching out from it will be changed; fear God and be of those who are pious.

[432] And thus is man, when his heart becomes corrupted all the other limbs will become corrupted; so also the tree, — if the roots are corrupted, all the branches, twigs, leaves and fruits will follow the same process: Thus We have propounded proverbs that ye may not veil yourselves by that which ye have, from what was ordained unto you on the part of the Precious, the Generous. Verily should we take a handful of dust and embroider it with the embroidered garment of the Names, — we are indeed able and this is a bounty on my part upon it and not according to its deserts. Thus hath it descended of a truth from the Presence of the abode of the Omniscient. Look to the Blackstone of Caaba, Mecca, which God hath made the object of pilgrimage to the people; is this bounty from the stone itself? No, by My Soul!

And is this glory from itself? No, by Myself, which the knowledge of every learned and wise man failed to comprehend. Again look to the Masjid el-Aksa (a mosque built upon the site of the Temple of Jerusalem) and others which we have made places of circuit to the people of all sides and regions; such honor is not to be attributed unto them, but unto Our Manifestations which we have made the rising places of Our Revelation among the servants, — were ye of those who know. Verily there is wisdom in all this which no one knoweth but God. Ask that God may point out unto you that which He willeth, — verily He is the Omniscient.

O people! Cut yourselves from the world and its gold, and do not look to those who denied God and associated other things with Him; but look to the horizon of the Revelation (Beyan) for the purpose of celebrating your Lord, the Merciful. This is what God hath willed, — blessed are those who know.

Say, O people! We have commanded you in the tablets to sanctify yourselves on that occasion of the Appearance, from all the names, and that which was created in earth and heaven, in order that the transfiguration of the Sun of Truth from the horizon of the will of your Lord the Powerful, the Great, be printed upon your souls. Also, we have commanded you to purify your hearts from the love and detestation of those who are upon the earth, lest anything will prevent you from one direction and enforce you to another, — and this is of my greatest advice unto you in a perspicuous Tablet. He who adhereth to either the one or the other verily he cannot know the Command as it is, — unto this will bear witness every just and informed one. Ye have forgotten the Promise of God, and violated His Covenant in such a manner that ye turned away from the One by whose Appearance the eyes of the Unitarians were consoled. Purify your sight from the hidden and the veiled, then look to the evidences of the Prophets and Messengers, that ye may know the Matter of God in these days wherein the Promised One hath come with great sovereignty.

Fear God and deprive not yourselves from the Rising-Place of the signs; this is that whereby you will be profited; — verily your Lord is the Rich, and He is sufficient for all the world. Verily He everlastingly was, and there was nothing beside Him. The standard of Unitarianism was elevated by His Name on el Tor (Mt. Sinai) of existence of the seen and unseen, declaring, "There is no God but Me, the One, the Powerful, the Single." Verily those who were created by His Will

and were sent forth by His Command, have turned away from Him and chosen for themselves a lord other than God; — verily are they not of those who are far away? They used to mention the Merciful in all times, but when He truly appeared, they opposed Him, — shame upon them, because they have violated the Covenant at the Appearance of the Sun of the horizons from the region of the will of God, the Holy, the Omniscient, the Wise. They drew our swords of hatred against the face of God, perceiving not in themselves that they are as dead in the graves of their lusts, after the Garment hath diffused its perfume upon all provinces. Verily are they not enveloped in a thick veil? When the signs of God are read to them they continue their persistence in showing their greatness, as if they knew nothing or ever heard the voice of God, the Supreme, the Omniscient. Say, alas, what a pity on you! Do ye claim the faith in you while ye deny the signs of God, the Powerful, the Wise?

Say, O people, turn your faces to the region of your Lord, the Merciful, and beware not to let that which was revealed in el-Beyan prevent you from coming to God. Verily it was not revealed save only for the sake of my Celebration, the Mighty, the Impregnable. Nothing was intended by him (the Bab who wrote the Beyan) save My Beauty. I have filled all the countries with My proofs, were ye of those who are just! • Had the First Point (Bab) been someone else beside Me, as ye claim, and reached the event of My Appearance he would never have left Me, but rather we would have had mutual delights with each other in My days; • 11 verily he lamented over our separation, and came before Me to preach to the people of my Kingdom; thus hath it been revealed in the Tablets, — were ye of those who see. Would there were someone from those who are ignorant, who have ears to hear his clamor in the Beyan of that which came upon Myself; and to know his yearning at My separation and his passionate love to meet Me, the Precious, the Incomparable. And at this time he sees his Beloved amongst the servants who were

created for His days and for worshipping Him, in that state of submissiveness, and the Pen is ineffective to mention that which came upon Him from these oppressors. Say, O people; We have summoned you in the first Appearance to the Most Great Outlook, this Most Pure Station, and preached to you of the days of God, but when the most great Veil became rent and the Beauty of the Ancients hath come upon the clouds of Destiny, ye denied the One in whom ye believed: Woe unto you, O assembly of infidels. Fear God and do not refute the Truth by that which ye have. When the Sun of the Signs shines upon you from the horizon of the Finger of the King of the Names and Attributes, fall down upon your faces to worship God, the Lord of the Worlds. To worship in front of His Door is better unto you than being worshipped by mankind and genii; and to humble yourself upon the occasion of his Appearance is better for you than what is in the heaven and the earth.

Say, O people, I remind you and do not want you to reward Me; for My reward is the One who hath created Me and sent Me with the Truth and made Me a remembrance to all of the creatures. Hasten to the outlook of God and His station and follow not Satan and yourselves; verily he (Satan) commandeth you to commit iniquity and injustice and preventeth you from the path which was set up in the world by the Wise the Confirmed Command. Say, the Satan hath appeared in a condition the like of which was not existent in creation, and also the Beauty of the Merciful hath been manifested in the Embroidered Garment the like of which was not comprehended and attained by the eyes of the Ancients.

[433] The Voice of the Merciful was raised, and from behind it the voice of Satan also. Blessed is the one who heareth the voice of God and turneth to the direction of the Throne, the Noble [noble] and Holy Outlook [holy outlook]. He who hath turned his heart less than a mustard seed of love for anything beside Me, verily he

cannot enter My Kingdom, and My proof of this is that whereby the Face [face] of the Book of Existence is adorned — were ye of those who know.

[434] Say, this is the day whereon the Most Great Bounty has appeared, and nothing, either in the supremest heaven or in the lowest earth, but utters in My mention and sings in the praise of Myself — were ye of those who hear, O Temple of the Manifestation! Blow though the horn in My Name: Then O Temple of the Secrets! Breathe thou into the fife in commemoration of thy Lord, the Unconstrained: Then O Hourī [Maid] of Paradise! Come out of the chambers of the Garden and say to the inhabitants of the universe, "By God, He hath appeared, the Beloved of the world, the Intended of the Knowers [knowers], the Worshipped of whomsoever is in the heaven and the earth and the adored [Adored] of the Ancients and Moderns [ancients and moderns]. Beware of hesitating to accept this Beauty, after the Ruler of Might, Power and Glory hath appeared. Verily, He is the Truth and everything besides Him on the part of His servants is annihilated and lost at the appearance of His Lights [lights]. Hasten to the River of Bounty [river of bounty] (Cowther el-Fadhī) and be of the impatient, and he who hesitates for an instant, God will frustrate his plans and bring him back to the station of overwhelming grief and constraint. Thus how terrible is the residence of those who hesitate!"

Notes:

1Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, 1944, p. 101-102:

"In His *Suratu'l-Haykal* (the *Surih* of the Temple) He thus describes those breathless moments when the Maiden, symbolizing the "Most Great Spirit" proclaimed His mission to the entire creation:

"While engulfed in tribulations I heard a most wondrous, a most sweet voice, calling above My head. Turning My face, I beheld a Maiden — the embodiment of the remembrance of the name of My Lord — suspended in the air before Me. So rejoiced was she in her very soul that her countenance shone with the ornament of the good-pleasure of God, and her cheeks glowed with the brightness of the All-Merciful. Betwixt earth and heaven she was raising a call which captivated the hearts and minds of men. She was imparting to both My inward and outer being tidings which rejoiced My soul, and the souls of God's honored servants. Pointing with her finger unto My head, she addressed all who are in heaven and all who are on earth, saying: 'By God! This is the Best-Beloved of the Worlds, and yet ye comprehend not. This is the Beauty of God amongst you, and the power of His sovereignty within you, could ye but understand. This is the Mystery of God and His Treasure, the Cause of God and His glory unto all who are in the kingdoms of Revelation and of creation, if ye be of them that perceive.'"

2Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, 1938, p. 110:

"He will, ere long, out of the Bosom of Power draw forth the Hands of Ascendancy and Might — Hands who will arise to win victory for this Youth and who will purge mankind from the defilement of the outcast and the ungodly. These Hands will gird up their loins to champion the Faith of God, and will, in My name the

self- subsistent, the mighty, subdue the peoples and kindreds of the earth. They will enter the cities and will inspire with fear the hearts of all their inhabitants. Such are the evidences of the might of God; how fearful, how vehement is His might!"

3Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day is Come*, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, 1939, rev. edn. 1963, p. 47-48:

"The most important of His Tablets, addressed to individual sovereigns, Bahá'u'lláh ordered to be written in the form of a pentacle, symbolizing the temple of man, including therein, as a conclusion, the following words which reveal the importance He attached to those Messages, and indicate their direct association with the prophecy of the Old Testament:

"Thus have We built the Temple with the hands of power and might, could ye but know it. This is the Temple promised to you in the Book. Draw nigh unto it. This is that which profiteth you, could ye but comprehend it. Be fair, O peoples of the earth! Which is preferable, this, or a temple which is built of clay? Set your faces towards it. Thus have ye been commanded by God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. Follow ye His bidding, and praise ye your God, your Lord, for that which He hath bestowed upon you. He, verily, is the Truth. No God is there but He. He revealeth what He pleaseth, through His words 'Be and it is.'"

4see note 2

5Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, 1938, p. 109:

"In the *Suratu'l-Haykal*, one of the most challenging works of Bahá'u'lláh, the following verses, each of which testifies to the resistless power infused into the Revelation proclaimed by its Author, have been recorded:

"Naught is seen in My temple but the Temple of God, and in My Beauty is His Beauty, and in My being but His Being, and My self but His Self, and in My movement but His Movement, and in My acquiescence but His Acquiescence, and in My pen but His Pen, the Mighty, the All-Praised. There hath not been in My soul but the Truth, and in Myself naught could be seen but God."

6Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, 1938, p 169:

"The onrushing winds of the grace of God have passed over all things. Every creature hath been endowed with all the potentialities it can carry. And yet the peoples of the world have denied this grace! Every tree hath been endowed with the choicest fruits, every ocean enriched with the most luminous gems. Man, himself, hath been invested with the gifts of understanding and knowledge. The whole creation hath been made the recipient of the revelation of the All-Merciful, and the earth the repository of things inscrutable to all except God, the Truth, the Knower of things unseen. The time is approaching when every created thing will have cast its burden. Glorified be God Who hath vouchsafed this grace that encompasseth all things, whether seen or unseen!"

7Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, 1938, p. 109:

"The Holy Spirit Itself hath been generated through the agency of a single letter revealed by this Most Great Spirit, if ye be of them that comprehend."

8Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, 1938, p. 109-110:



"The day is approaching when God will have, by an act of His Will, raised up a race of men the nature of which is inscrutable to all save God, the All-Powerful, the Self- Subsisting."

9Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, 1938, p. 109:

"Within the treasury of Our Wisdom there lies unrevealed a knowledge, one word of which, if we chose to divulge it to mankind, would cause every human being to recognize the Manifestation of God and to acknowledge His omniscience, would enable everyone to discover the secrets of all the sciences, and to attain so high a station as to find himself wholly independent of all past and future learning. Other knowledges We do possess, not a single letter of which We can disclose, nor do We find humanity able to hear even the barest reference to their meaning. Thus have We informed you of the knowledge of God, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise."

10p. 50: Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, 1938, p 117:

"Deal not with Him as ye have dealt with Me."

11Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, 1938, p 138-139:

"Had the Primal Point (the Bab) been someone else beside Me as ye claim.. and had attained My presence, verily He would have never allowed Himself to be separated from Me, but rather We would have had mutual delights with each other in My Days."

## Introductory notes

Bahá'ís reading this translation should be aware of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's statement, published in Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas, Volume I, 1908, p. 1: "Ye have written concerning the printing and publication of the Tablets. The translation of the Surat-ul-Hykl is of the utmost difficulty. It must be translated by a committee who are exceedingly efficient both in Persian and English, exercising the closest and most minute attention. Otherwise the text would not become intelligible. The same rule applieth to other Writings and Tablets. For the present the organization of such a committee of translators is not possible and there is no other means than the translations made by individuals. In the future, God willing, means will be brought about. Translations will be made by a committee composed of two most erudite Persians and two learned Americans, all of them having the utmost proficiency in both languages and possessing a certain knowledge of sciences and arts. Then others from among the scholars and thinkers must assist. At that time Tablets will be translated correctly and published. What ye have in your hands and what is already printed will impart a certain degree of information. Whatever matter the spiritual Boards of Council in New York, Chicago, Washington and Kenosha unanimously deem advisable to print and publish, ye may print and publish; and have the utmost union and oneness with each other."

This translation was also published abridged with minor editing in Bahá'í Scriptures, Selections from the Utterances of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Ed. Horace Holley, New York, Brentano's, 1923 (Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1928), p. 209 P 222.

Spelling or punctuation variations of the Bahá'í Scriptures edition are added in brackets.

Bracketed numbers shown in this online edition indicate verse numbering used in the Bahá'í Scriptures editions.

Verses not in Bahá'í Scriptures edition, but found in the Haddad edition, are indented.

Words within parenthesis are only in the 1900 edition translated by Haddad. If also enclosed in brackets then such words in parenthesis also appear in Bahá'í Scriptures.

Page numbering in brackets is according to the Haddad translation and precede the page intended.

Words in this color font • and between bullets • are footnoted to the translations made by Shoghi Effendi of the same passage, which is presented in this color font and italicized. For best appearance of the text, the footnotes are contained in a different file. For comparison, the reader might wish to open these footnotes in a different browser window such that the two versions can be read side-by-side in different windows.

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Notes

Suratu'l-Haykal was first written in Edirne but revised in 'Akka, probably in 1869 (Lambden: 1873-4). [more bibliographic information needed]

Various spellings and names of this Tablet

Book of the Temple

Suratu'l-Haykal (the spelling used by Shoghi Effendi)

# Lawh-i-Ashraf

"Tablet to Ashraf"

**Bahá'u'lláh**

(Partial Translation by The Beloved Guardian)

**LII: Say: O people! Withhold not from yourselves ...**

1 Say: O people! Withhold not from yourselves the grace of God and His mercy. Whoso withholdeth himself therefrom is indeed in grievous loss. What, O people! Do ye worship the dust, and turn away from your Lord, the Gracious, the All-Bountiful? Fear ye God, and be not of those who perish. Say: The Book of God hath been sent down in the form of this Youth. Hallowed, therefore, be God, the most excellent of makers! Take ye good heed, O peoples of the world, lest ye flee from His face. Nay, make haste to attain His presence, and be of them that have returned unto Him. Pray to be forgiven, O people, for having failed in your duty towards God, and for having trespassed against His Cause, and be not of the foolish. He it is Who hath created you; He it is Who hath nourished your souls through His Cause, and enabled you to recognize Him Who is the Almighty, the Most Exalted, the All-Knowing. He it is Who hath unveiled to your eyes the treasures of His knowledge, and caused you to

ascend unto the heaven of certitude ñ the certitude of His resistless, His irrefutable, and most exalted Faith. Beware that ye do not deprive yourselves of the grace of God, that ye do not bring to naught your works, and do not repudiate the truth of this most manifest, this lofty, this shining, and glorious Revelation. Judge ye fairly the Cause of God, your Creator, and behold that which hath been sent down from the Throne on high, and meditate thereon with innocent and sanctified hearts.

Then will the truth of this Cause appear unto you as manifest as the sun in its noon-tide glory. Then will ye be of them that have believed in Him.

2 Say: The first and foremost testimony establishing His truth is His own Self. Next to this testimony is His Revelation. For whoso faileth to recognize either the one or the other He hath established the words He hath revealed as proof of His reality and truth. This is, verily, an evidence of His tender mercy unto men. He hath endowed every soul with the capacity to recognize the signs of God. How could He, otherwise, have fulfilled His testimony unto men, if ye be of them that ponder His Cause in their hearts. He will never deal unjustly with any one, neither will He task a soul beyond its power. He, verily, is the Compassionate, the All-Merciful.

3 Say: So great is the glory of the Cause of God that even the blind can perceive it, how much more they whose sight is sharp, whose vision is pure. The blind, though unable to perceive the light of the sun, are, nevertheless, capable of experiencing its continual heat. The blind in

heart, however, among the people of the Bayán and to this God is My witness are impotent, no matter how long the Sun may shine upon them, either to perceive the radiance of its glory, or to appreciate the warmth of its rays.

4 Say: O people of the Bayán! We have chosen you out of the world to know and recognize Our Self. We have caused you to draw nigh unto the right side of Paradise ñ the Spot out of which the undying Fire crieth in manifold accents: "There is none other God besides Me, the All-Powerful, the Most High!" Take heed lest ye allow yourselves to be shut out as by a veil from this Day Star that shineth above the dayspring of the Will of your Lord, the All-Merciful, and whose light hath encompassed both the small and the great. Purge your sight, that ye may perceive its glory with your own eyes, and depend not on the sight of any one except

yourself, for God hath never burdened any soul beyond its power. Thus hath it been sent down unto the Prophets and Messengers of old, and been recorded in all the Scriptures.

5 Strive, O people, to gain admittance into this vast Immensity for which God ordained neither beginning nor end, in which His voice hath been raised, and over which have been wafted the sweet savors of holiness and glory. Divest not yourselves of the Robe of grandeur, neither suffer your hearts to be deprived of remembering your Lord, nor your ears of hearkening unto the sweet melodies of His wondrous, His sublime, His all-compelling, His clear, and most eloquent voice.

# LAWH-I-ARD-I-BÁ

(Tablet of the Land of Bá)

**Bahá'u'lláh**

1

PRAISE be to Him Who hath honoured the Land of Bá [Beirut. This Tablet is `a letter dictated by Bahá'u'lláh and addressed by Mírzá Áqá Ján, His amanuensis, to `Abdu'l-Bahá while the latter was on a visit to Beirut.' (The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 136.)] through the presence of Him round Whom all names revolve. All the atoms of the earth have announced unto all created things that from behind the gate of the Prison-city there hath appeared and above its horizon there hath shone forth the Orb of the beauty of the great, the Most Mighty Branch of God--His ancient and immutable Mystery--proceeding on its way to another land. Sorrow, thereby, hath enveloped this Prison-city, whilst another land rejoiceth. Exalted, immeasurably exalted is our Lord, the Fashioner of the heavens and the Creator of all things, He through Whose sovereignty the doors of the prison were opened, thereby causing what was promised aforetime in the Tablets to be fulfilled. He is verily potent over what He willeth, and in His grasp is the dominion of the entire creation. He is the All-Powerful, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

2



Blessed, doubly blessed, is the ground which His footsteps have trodden, the eye that hath been cheered by the beauty of His countenance, the ear that hath been honoured by hearkening to His call, the heart that hath tasted the sweetness of His love, the breast that hath dilated through His remembrance, the pen that hath voiced His praise, the scroll that hath borne the testimony of His writings. We beseech God--blessed and exalted be He--that He may honour us with meeting Him soon. He is, in truth, the All-Hearing, the All-Powerful, He Who is ready to answer.

# Tablet of the Son (Jesus)

**Bahá'u'lláh**

Letter of the Middle Edirne Period circa 1866

*Translation and commentary*

Juan R. I. Cole

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In the name of the beloved, the one

The scent of sorrow has encompassed the beauty of the compassionate God, and the door of joy and gladness has been slammed shut by the acts of oppression committed by the wicked among the people of the Bayan. Shame on them! It is accepted, clear and established that every preceding Manifestation of God has prophesied the appearance of his successor to the people in accordance with their stations and capabilities. Some employed signs and concealed allusions. As for my predecessor, he strove to counsel and educate the people of the Bayan to an extent that can be neither conceived nor perceived. Nevertheless, there occurred what followed. One word shall be spoken, and we ask the people of the Bayan to be fair. Is there any passage of the scriptures that

instructs you to hesitate about his cause when the succeeding Manifestation appears? Say: Then produce it! No, by my lord, the all-knowing, the all-perceiving. Leaving this issue aside, is there any place in the Bayan that instructs you to reject someone who appears with revealed verses, or to arise to kill him?

If anyone casts doubt on these verses, it is precisely the same sort of doubt cast by the dwellers in hellfire during the ministries of past Manifestations. I swear by the sun of meaning that if wondrous revealed verses are rejected, then no one will be able to establish the truth of the previous scriptures. Since the Point (the Bab) of the Bayan gazed upon these days, and upon what the servants would perpetrate, virtually the only things his exalted pen wrote were firm counsels, perfect advice, and beautiful sermons in mention of this subsequent dispensation. The *Book of Names* was revealed. At long last, give some thought to what his purpose was in entitling this work the *Book of Names*, and in mentioning therein the divine names one after another, as well as interpreting each. Then he commended the manifestations of the names to their creator.

Heart of the world, do you have ears to hear what the dove of sorrow is cooing in this time, when the cry of Satan has been raised behind the call of the All-Merciful? For, we have found the followers of the Bayan negligent and in extreme loss. By his beloved soul, no one has yet realized why the holy books of all sorts, and especially the *Book of Names*, were revealed. Thus has the omniscient, the all-knowing informed you. Where are pure ears, to hear the summons issuing from the precincts of divine unity at every moment? Where are sharp eyes, to

perceive the divine rays of wisdom in radiant words? The subsisting one (*Qayyúm*) has appeared in the recognized beauty. He is the beauty of the year “nine,” who was promised to all. Even so, the foul odors of jealousy and hatred have permeated creation to the extent that it has altogether withdrawn from the breaths of the All-Merciful and the divine fragrance.

Say: People, do not follow those who deserve torment and on whose faces is imprinted the wrath of God, the king, the mighty, the knowing, the wise. It is hard to imagine what they would have done if the highest pen had not revealed these counsels and this advice! No, by the one who allowed me to dispense with all the worlds through his grace, more than what they have done or plotted would not have been possible. It is astonishing that they recite the divine verses. By God, the verses’ revealer curses them and they are oblivious. Despite his firm and perfect counsels, the beloved of all creation prophesied what they would do, just as it came to pass and will yet become obvious. They showed sincerity and even subservience to anyone who disregarded the dignity of the cause of God, causing it untold harm. Behind the scenes, they call the people to themselves. That action is in secret, and this one is open. A little fairness is necessary. In the end, this youth has no quarrel with anyone. If he shows regard to someone, it will be for the sake of the cause of God, to manifest its sovereignty and honor its word. They treat with subservience, however, anyone who goes to extremes, so that they harm the cause of God and rebel against it. No one among the divine friends has arisen, out of sincerity and for his sake, to forbid the idolaters from committing these perfidious deeds. Does not a trace remain of the divine fire in the hearts of his creation? Have rays of the lamp of divine oneness not illuminated

the hearts of creation? What has happened, such that the bodies of the people have not burst aflame at this fire, and have not been illumined by these rays of light?

Say, caravans that travel between the cities of mystical insight on their way to the beauty of the All-Merciful: Know that the true dawn has broken above the horizon of the heavens of the divine will. Hurry, so that you might be enlisted among the troops of the near ones. Naturally, the lighter you tread, the better. Throw off the dead hand of false allusions and turn toward the precincts of divine unity. The pen of pre-existence says: Do you not hear my wailing and lamentations, or do you hear them but not understand them? If you are unable to soar in the joyous heavens of meaning, at least take wing in the sky of words. If you do not comprehend the wondrous Arabic verses of this dispensation, then think upon the Persian utterances that I revealed earlier and upon the Persian verses of this revelation.

In this way might you find a path to the truth. I swear by the one, the fire of whose love ignited my heart so that even a downpour of opposition from all the worlds cannot extinguish it: The Point (the Bab) of the Bayan had no purpose other than this subsequent dispensation. May my spirit be a sacrifice to his soul. He did not fall short in communicating my Cause, but the people have fallen short and transgressed.

Anyone who for a single hour sanctifies himself from veils and allusions for the sake of God and contemplates what has been revealed from the kingdom of God in the Arabic and Persian languages will, by God, detach himself from the worlds and lament for this wrongly

imprisoned stranger. Impassive stones wail and weep at this divine word, but humankind is sunk in profound negligence. For this reason, the previous scriptures say that rivers will flow from rocks, but that from the hearts of the wicked nothing will appear. Truthfully has spoken God, the exalted, the mighty.

You should know, questioner, that the divine word encompasses all meanings. That is, all divine meanings and mysteries are concealed within it. Blessed are they who attain it and extract the pearls hidden within it. Consider the radiance of the divine word to be like the shining of the sun. In the same way that once the sun rises, it shines on all, so once the sun of the word dawns from the will of the lord, it sheds its illumination on all. Indeed, I take refuge in God even from this simile, since the outward sun itself owes its existence to the comprehensive word. Think, so that you might attain knowledge. Still, the outward sun can be perceived with physical eyes, whereas the rays of the sun of the word are seen with inner vision. By the one in whose hand is my soul! If the hidden aid and power of the divine word were withdrawn from the world and its people for a single instant, all would be lost and annihilated. If souls gaze with divine sight, they will see the radiance of its lights in everything. Likewise, if they listen with pure ears, they will hear the primal call of God at every moment. The divine call is still being raised but ears are blocked, and the lights of the luminary above the horizon are apparent, but eyes are covered.

Wise friend, a physician is required so that perhaps the ashes in their eyes can be removed by the elixir of the greatest name, and so that the

brass of existence can be transformed into gold. Would that the number of those who have gained insight into the beloved of the worlds, which some have achieved, could be increased. Thus might he make apparent in detail, from the manifest letters, the word underlying the infinite branches of knowledge. The people have been stricken with an illness, and curing it is extremely difficult, except for those who have been treated with the greatest antidote. This epidemic consists in people believing that they have attained mystical insight, and then supposing that God is like them. Today, most are afflicted with this disease, and for this reason they are deprived of the Eternal Truth and what is with it. Beseech God to render hearts pure and eyes sharp, so that they might perhaps recognize themselves, and distinguish between themselves and God. Thus might they discern God's purpose in the revealed verses. If the peoples had understood the divine purpose, they would not have remained veiled at the moment of revelation.

Even though they have for years recited the divine book, they never attained to a single letter of the meanings that lie within it, just as they remained altogether veiled from and oblivious of its purpose. Even though all these things are mentioned and delineated in the scriptures, all have remained deprived. It is to the extent that some of those who consider themselves the educated elite are ignorant of matters that even the common folk know. For instance, they assert that the Mahdi resides in a supernatural city, and insist vehemently on this statement. If anyone asserts that the promised one, on the contrary, will come into the world by being born, they sentence him to death. Note how distant and deprived the elite is. Then, in the year '60, the veil was lifted, and all that had been

concealed was made visible, as was the resurrection and everything connected with it. No one attained a droplet from the surging sea of these utterances that were recovered in the divine book. Everyone mistook the mirage for water, as was apparent. Beyond these problems, they also remained veiled from the principle of mystical insight into the beloved of the worlds. The dust of misconceptions and the clay of illusions prevented all humankind from attaining the panorama of divine unity, until the greatest purifier arrived and washed the people with the most cleansed of celestial rivers, calling them to the radiant countenance and informing them of the good news.

Note that what appeared was virtues, of which all remained ignorant. It would be the indisputable truth to say that all of these virtues were hidden and concealed in the scriptures and that in the dispensation of the Point (the Bab) of the Bayan, the veiled faces of meaning came out from behind the curtain in the chambers of the divine verses. And if it were said that what went before was a concise mention, whereas thereafter came one who clarified and spoke in detail, that would be the truth, in which there is not doubt. If it were said that what became manifest in the new revelation had not been apparent in previous dispensations--though all are wondrous and new--this saying is also correct and complete.

For if God speaks a word today that comes to be on the lips of all the people, before and after, that word will be new, if you only think about it. Consider the word, "monotheism," about which all the manifestations of the Eternal Truth have spoken in each dispensation, and which all the adherents of the various religions have asserted. Nevertheless, in each



dispensation it is an innovation, and its novel character can never be withdrawn from it. God breathes into each word he speaks a new spirit, and the breezes of life from that word waft upon all things outwardly and inwardly. Again, for how long and until what age and era can the traces remain visible, of the divine verses revealed by the Manifestations of both the inner soul and of the farthest horizons?

For this reason, some of the people speak of illusory matters and take pride and become haughty about them. All of these are rejected and unmentioned by God. For, glory lies in attaining mystical insight into the Eternal Truth and remaining firm, steadfast and unswerving in the Cause of God. It does not come from outward statements, as my predecessor explained these spiritual levels. Look, so that you might understand. For instance, the souls who have ascended to the peaks of mystical insight and those who remained at the lowest rank have precisely the same station in the eyes of God. For the nobility of knowledge and insight is not dependent on these attributes in themselves. If they lead to the Eternal Truth and acceptance of it, they are approved. Otherwise, they are rejected. On this plane, all words are mentioned on the same level.

For instance, what if God were to say, “I was born?” This assertion would recall his saying, “He was not born, nor gave birth.” (Q. 112). Although this latter verse on the surface asserts that God is beyond having any likeness, peer or rival, it in fact leads only to the station of insight into humanity. For among the people, as well, this station is the highest and most exalted. However, even this distinction is dependent on God’s acceptance and will. In the dispensations of the Qur’an and the Bayan,

the divine will preferred pure transcendence and absolute sanctification. For this reason, the brilliance of these utterances has established itself and become apparent in the hearts of the believers. Otherwise, that Sea of preexistence is sanctified above all these words created in time, and the most holy court is purified above all of these statements.

One must look at the basic principle of the cause of God, not at the high or low levels of verbal insight that have been achieved among the people.

I wish I were able to make manifest what is hidden. My inability to do so derives from the way souls are veiled. Otherwise, he is the self-sufficient, the all-praised. At one time, he says, “You shall never see me.” (Q. 7:139) At another he says, “Behold and you shall see me.” Yes, today every soul who affirms belief in what was revealed from the heaven of the divine will has ascended to and attained the summit of mystical insight. All others are deprived and non-existent. We ask God to aid us and you to be steadfast in the Cause, at which the realm of names was turned upside down and the inhabitants of the cities of creation were inebriated, save for those who were overtaken by guidance from God, the guardian, the eternal.

My supporter: Think aright upon what was revealed from the most high pen, so that the doors of infinite knowledge might be opened before your heart and so that you might witness yourself rendered independent of everything but God, the all-possessing, the self-subsisting. Likewise, do not think that the manifestation of the Eternal Truth is limited to causing outward knowledge to appear or altering some well-established laws

among the people. Rather, at the time of revelation all things become bearers of divine emanations and infinite capabilities, and in accordance with the exigencies of the time and earthly circumstances, these become manifest.

In this regard, a summary was revealed from the heaven of the divine will in answer to a Christian priest who lives in Istanbul. Here, a portion of it will be quoted, so that perhaps some of the servants might become aware of divine, profound maxims that had been concealed from the eyes of the people.

God said: Your letter arrived at the kingdom of your lord, the All-Merciful, and we have grasped it with spirituality and fragrance, and have answered you even before you posed your question. Think, that you might know, for this is a grace from your lord, the mighty, the help in peril. Blessed are you, insofar as you have attained to it, and though it is hidden, it shall be revealed to you should God will and desire. Then will you see what no eye has witnessed. You, who are immersed in the sea of mystical insight and are gazing toward the precincts of your lord, the All-Merciful—you must know that this cause is great, very great.

Consider, and make mention of the one who was named Peter in the kingdom of God. Despite the loftiness of his rank, the splendor of his destiny, and the greatness of his station, his feet nearly strayed from the straight path. The hand of grace, however, grasped him and safeguarded him from stumbling, and bestowed certainty upon him. If you were to recognize this bounty, of which the dove warbles on the twigs of the tree

beyond which there is no passing, then you would be certain that what was mentioned formerly has been fulfilled in truth. Behold, in the kingdom of God he partakes of the eternal, everlasting bounty, and drinks from the fountain of realities and the spring of meanings. But the people are behind a thick veil.

It would be better for those who heard this call and were heedless of it and hesitated in this cause if they had never been born. But what appeared has appeared, and the matter was decreed by God, the mighty, the glorious, the sovereign.

Say: People, the Spirit (Jesus) has come again, to fulfill for you what he said aforetime. Thus were you promised in the tablets, if you only knew. In truth, he says now that which he said formerly, and has given his life, just as he did the first time, out of love for all who are in the heavens and on earth. Know that when the Son surrendered the spirit, all things wept for him. But by giving his life he bestowed a new capacity upon all things, as you witness throughout the creation. Every sage from whom wisdom appeared, every scholar who showed forth knowledge and sciences, every craftsman who produced crafts and industries, every monarch who demonstrated his power—all these persons derived their gifts from the confirmation of his spirit, the exalted, the sovereign, the radiant.

We bear witness that when he came into the world he bestowed his radiance on contingent beings. By him the leper was cleansed from the diseases of ignorance and blindness and the afflicted was cured of the

maladies of negligence and passion. The eyes of the blind were opened, and all souls were purified by the Almighty, the All-Powerful. In one station, leprosy refers to whatever causes a servant to be veiled from mystical insight into his lord, such that whoever is thus veiled is termed a leper, nor is he worthy of mention in the kingdom of God, the glorious, the All-Praised. We testify that by the word of God lepers were cleansed, the infirm were cured, and the sick were healed. In truth, it is the purifier of the world. Blessed are those who advance toward it with illumined faces.

Then know that the one who ascended into heaven has now descended in truth. By him, the breezes of grace have wafted over the world, and your lord is a witness to what I say. The world has been perfumed by his return and manifestation. Those who busy themselves with this world and its vanities cannot perceive the fragrance of (Joseph's) coat. We have found them in the grip of a mighty delusion.

Say: The bell rings out his name, the trump declares his mention, and his soul bears witness to his soul. Blessed are they who know. But today, the leper has been cleansed even before the words, "Be cleansed!" are pronounced. For by virtue of his appearance the world and its people have been cured of every malady and illness. Exalted be this grace, which no other grace has surpassed, and this mercy, which has encompassed the world.

You, who are mentioned in the kingdom of God, seek empowerment from your lord. Arise, and say: People of the earth, the reviver of the world has come and has ignited a fire in the heart of the world. The caller

has cried out in the sacred wilderness with the name of `Ali Muhammad. He prophesied to the people that they would meet God in the most glorious garden, and opened its gate to them by virtue of his grace upon the faces of those who have come forward. What the most high pen wrote in the kingdom of God, the lord of this world and the next, has been completed. Whoever desires may eat of its fruits, for it is wondrous nutrition.

Say: The most great bell has appeared and is being rung by the force of God's will in the garden of divine oneness. Listen attentively, people, and do not be negligent. God willing, a people will appear, who shall grasp the intent of the Eternal Truth as expressed in his discourse; who shall strive with perfect submission and humility to protect and safeguard the cause of God from the rejected idolaters. He is able to accomplish what he wills. All souls who are nourished by a sprinkling from the heavenly stream of utterance will perceive that in the dispensation of the Point of the Bayan (the Bab), there appeared that which had remained concealed. This revelation and the revelation before it bear an exact resemblance to the dispensations of (John) the son of Zechariah and (Jesus) the Spirit. In some of the revealed tablets this has been mentioned. Note well: This was the revelation that appeared in order to prepare the people of the world. It arrived at a time when the world and its inhabitants had perished. That person came, who had remained alive, in order to bestow eternal life and to ensure that it persisted, and to favor others with the water of life.

What was revealed in the Bayan has been established. This is that prophesied beauty who, he said, “will come after me even though he is before me.” He is the call that was raised between the earth and heaven, so that you might make straight and build up the stations of God, that is, the hearts. That was the same call that the son of Zechariah [John] raised before the Spirit [Jesus] came. “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” [Mt 3:3]. If a woman gives birth to a viper, that is better than that a man should be born and become known in the kingdom of God as an enemy. Blessed be the barren in that day and woe unto mothers with babes at the breast.

Say, the highest pen writes: O you who are lost in the wilderness of carnal passion, you do not accept me. Yet you have accepted the call of the one who made mention of me. You lie, and are the people of darkness, avoiding the radiant morn. For if you sought to draw near, in the light your selfish and reprobate actions would, naturally, become visible. Woe be unto those souls who ignore these days and their fruits. Soon, they will lament for themselves and will find no one who will commiserate with them. Happy is the estate of the truthful, who attain the unadulterated truth. Happy is the estate of the mystics, who have recognized the straight path and turned toward his kingdom. Blessed is the estate of the joyous and sincere, the lamps of whose hearts have been lit and illumined by the oil of mystical insight into the very soul of God himself. By the glass of attachment they were protected from the gales of sorrow and temptation. Pure is the estate of the strong-hearted who did not grow faint before the oppression of tyrants. Pure is the estate of the clear-sighted who know both annihilation and immortality, and who turned toward eternal life so

that they are mentioned as deathless in the celestial realm. Naturally, their hearts will not fail because they are among the people of insight.

Say: My servants, you shall die and fall sacrifice, either by the sword of illness or by the saber of ill-wishers. Given that this is so, it is preferable and more right that you be killed by the blades of the idolaters in the path of the beloved of the worlds. For the indemnity [diyih] that is received from a murderer by the family of a victim is beloved. Do not forget or give up this desired fruit. Pure is the estate of the beneficent from whose good deeds wafts the fragrance of divine approval. Evil is the estate of detractors who wreak corruption and oppression. Even though they might attain honor and wealth among the servants, soon those souls shall be overtaken by sudden abasement and relentless wrath.

The former word is shining by virtue of a new spirit at all times in this era, from the horizon of the mouthpiece of the All-Merciful. That word is this: I said to the Son, that is, Jesus the Spirit, “Moses came for the sake of the law and religion. John the Baptist came for the sake of baptism. And I came so as to bestow everlasting life and to deliver souls into the realm of immortality.” [cf. Jn 1:17-18]. Say: Friends! Thieves and traitors wait in ambush. You, who bear the trust of the All-Merciful: Do not grow negligent. Safeguard the pearls of divine love from brigands.

I swear by the luminary of the heaven of meaning that all who neglect to rend the veils of illusion today shall be unable to hear the divine call. Pure are they who shatter the idols wrought by false imaginings, who listen to the voice of the All-Merciful, and who rise up from among the



dead. Upon them may the breath of God waft, for he is the king of names and attributes.

People of the earth: The cry of the compassionate God has been raised between the earth and heaven, and upon hearing the divine word the heart of the world has been set aflame by the fire of love. The dispirited, however, have remained entombed in the graves of negligence and stupor. They could not feel its warmth, much less burst into flames. They lie eternally in their graves. People: Arise to aid God. The abiding one has come to you, who was prophesied to you by the one who arose. Because of him, there appeared the unprecedented earthquake and the most frightful terror. At his advent, the sincere rejoice and the idolaters burn in the fire of hatred.

Say: I adjure you by God, people of the Bayan, to be fair in coming to a consensus. And, it is this: That your lord, the All-Merciful, has not made this cause dependent on anything that he created in the worlds of being, as was revealed in the Bayan. You did with his beloved as you did. If this revelation had been made dependent on anything other than him, you would not have treated him as you did, you tyrants! Is there any hearing ear that can hear, or sharp eye that can discern? The eye of God has wept, and you are at play, you at whom the exalted assemblage is bewildered, and at whose deeds they are astonished.

My friends, you are the wellsprings of my own discourse. In every spring, a droplet from the heavenly stream of divine meaning wells up. With the hand of certainty, cleanse these springs of the pollution of

unfounded judgments and illusions. In this way might you yourselves give convincing and unassailable answers to the sorts of questions that have been posed. In this greatest of dispensations, all must appear with branches of knowledge and sayings of wisdom. For in these unparalleled days, celestial gales have rendered all human beings—indeed, all things—bearers of the divine emanations to the extent of their capacity. In the impenetrable depths of the revealed words have been disclosed the answers to the issues that were raised, as well as those that remain hidden and concealed. God willing, you will gaze with divine vision into his words, so that you will discover that which you seek.

They posed precisely the same question to Jesus, saying that John the son of Zechariah has come. He has called the people to the truth, and baptized them. What was the purpose of his appearance, and what did he say about this subsequent revelation? He came in order to bear witness to me, and was faithful to what he was commanded, and I have come to set ablaze the people of the world.

You, who are gazing toward the most great panorama: Sorrows have reached the point where the tongue of heavenly compassion has been forestalled from speaking. By God, my eye weeps, my lips move, and the one standing before my face records what issues from them. For, the people of the Bayan have been veiled to the extent that were they to witness today with their own eyes that someone had contravened the eternal command of God, they would accept it. For instance, the chief of liars wrote that the production of verses constituted a proof at the

beginning of this dispensation but now does not. Say, people of the Bayan: Be fair. By God, your lord, the All Merciful! Aside from this divine youth, and the immortal manifestations who appeared in this dispensation, consider the Bayan in its entirety, and make your own judgment. Even if you are not, in the end, satisfied with the decree of God and what he revealed, God will nevertheless be pleased with your judgment if it is fair, so that perhaps an eye might be opened by justice and gaze toward God.

It is perfectly clear that the Bayan in its entirety explicitly, and without any need for figurative interpretation, contradicts this saying of the opponent of God. Nevertheless, he has brazenly and openly contravened the whole of the Bayan, and continues to do so, and then considers himself the champion of the Bayan. By God, the Bayan laments them and curses them. Now, consider in sum and for the sake of God, what could be the reason for which they strive so impudently to violate the purity of the divine book? It is clear and obvious that the reason is the acquiescence therein of some of the people of the Bayan. Otherwise, by the one who caused me to speak forth with the truth and made me manifest in order to vindicate his cause, if they had not been assured of that support, they would never have dared be so bold. This is among the greatest commands of God, which was revealed in the Bayan, such that it is mentioned in every single line thereof, whether by allusion or explicitly. It says, “Do not hesitate concerning the advent of the next dispensation, and seek only revealed verses.”

Even so, they have turned away, and have committed these enormities, and not a soul has protested. Yet they attributed to this Center—by whose will all scriptures speak forth—the abrogation of the laws of the Bayan. Do not the imprecations of God fall upon the iniquitous?

All this, even though the text of the Bayan asserts that this dispensation was and is chosen, and the entire Bayan speaks forth in mention and praise of it, and prophecies its appearance! What has become manifest from it is what was apparent in the previous dispensation. Whoever makes a distinction between the two is a lying idolater and a mistrustful opponent. Quite apart from verses, most of the adherents of the various religions witnessed the miracle performed by this Seat of sanctity, such as words cannot describe. Ask the city [Baghdad], and those about it, to make the truth apparent to you. It is not known what that fierce adversary says within himself. No, by the soul of Baha! His falsehood is grave indeed. Ask God to confirm you with his grace, so that perhaps you might hew to the straight path of the cause. For this cause is great, great indeed. Soon will its greatness become clear and established. Only those shall remain, who are gazing toward the greatest panorama and who are detached from all who are in the heavens and on earth, out of love for God, the powerful, the mighty, the wise.

Today is a day for aiding the divine cause. It is incumbent upon every soul to call the people, with complete uprightness, to the precincts of the divine. God willing, they will mightily exert themselves so that perhaps those lost in the wilderness of passion and desire may turn their faces toward the most glorious horizon of sanctity. The influence of

individual souls is and always will be beloved. For the influence of each soul is its fruit, and a soul without influence is considered a tree without fruit in the most great realm. Speak forth for the sake of God, and spread the cause for his sake. Do not look at whether others accept or deny, but rather at the service you are commanded to perform by God. This is the highest grace, eternal beneficence, everlasting fruit, and the loving-kindness of the Eternal Truth at every moment. The succor of his overflowing grace has arrived and will arrive at all times. He is with all those who are for him, and supports them with the truth. He is, in truth, powerful over all things. Glory (Baha') be upon you, my friends, for as long as the kingdom of God and the realm of divine power endure.

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## Notes

\*Many thanks to the H-Bahai participants whose discussion improved my understanding of this Tablet, including Alison Marshall, Christopher Buck, Michael Sours, and especially Dr. Iskandar Hai for his searching philological interrogations of the translation and suggestions for improvement, many of which I have incorporated into this draft. I am, of course, responsible for all remaining errors.

+The following two paragraphs were translated in a different style by Shoghi Effendi, *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), XXXVI.

N.B. This translation is based on the text published in Baha'u'llah, *Iqtidarat va Chand Lawh-i Digar* (Cairo, c. 1924), pp. 78-104.

# Lawh-i-Times

## Tablet to The Times of London

### Bahá'u'lláh

edited by Mehdi Wolf.

published in *Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, by Adib Taherzadeh, Vol. 4, pages 348-50  
1987

first written or published 1891

#### **Adib Taherzadeh's Introduction** <sup>[1]</sup> <sup>[2]</sup>

The seven martyrs<sup>[3]</sup> were executed less than a month after the imprisonment of 'Mullá-'Alí-Akbar and Hájí Amín<sup>[4]</sup> ..... Bahá'u'lláh wrote a Tablet in which He (p349) describes the two events. Because He addresses *The Times* of London in this Tablet, it is referred to as the 'Tablet to The Times'. In the opening paragraph Bahá'u'lláh states that the martyrdom of the seven and the imprisonment of the two have created the most joyous jubilation among the Concourse on High. He describes in glowing terms the festive mood among the inmates of the highest paradise as they rejoice and celebrate with exceeding gladness the victory of the triumphant martyrs over their adversaries. Neither the onslaught of the bloodthirsty tyrant nor the fury of the beastly oppressor had succeeded in dampening their faith and enthusiasm or extinguishing the fire of the love of their Lord within their hearts. Their

steadfastness in the face of such brutal treatment had endowed the Faith with enormous potentialities.

In this Tablet, Bahá'u'lláh describes the circumstances of the martyrdom of the seven in detail, and recounts the story of each. Of Múllá 'Alí-i-Sabzavari, one of the seven, Bahá'u'lláh says that this great man of God proclaimed the Cause of God at the very moment of martyrdom, and testified to its truth with his own life-blood. Just before he was beheaded, he cried aloud to the teeming multitudes who had assembled around him, these soul-stirring words: 'At the time of his martyrdom on the plain of Karbilá, Imám Husayn, the Prince of Martyrs, called out to those around him: "Is there any one capable of helping, to help me." And I say to you: Is there any one capable of beholding, to behold me!'<sup>[5]</sup> Bahá'u'lláh showers His praise and blessings upon him for these words.

This Tablet is significant for its portrayal of the sufferings and persecutions which the people of Persia inflicted upon the believers.

### **Translation of the Tablet**

O 'Times', O thou endowed with the power of utterance! O dawning place of news! Spend an hour with the oppressed of Irán, and witness how the exemplars of justice and equity are sorely tried beneath the sword of tyrants. Infants have been deprived of milk, and women and children have fallen captive to the lawless. The blood of God's lovers hath dyed the earth red, and the sighs of His near ones have set the universe ablaze.

O assemblage of rulers, ye are the manifestations of power and might, and the fountainheads of the glory, greatness and authority of God Himself. Gaze upon the plight of the wronged ones. O daysprings of justice, the fierce gales of rancour and hatred have extinguished the lamps of virtue and piety. At dawn, the gentle breeze of divine compassion hath wafted over charred and cast-out bodies, whispering these exalted words: 'Woe, woe unto you, O people of Irán! Ye have spilled the blood of your own friends and yet remain in ignorance of what ye have done. Should ye become aware of the deeds ye have perpetrated, ye would flee to the desert and bewail your crimes and tyranny.'

O misguided ones, what sin have the little children committed? Hath anyone, in these days, had pity on the dependents of the oppressed? A report hath reached Us that the followers of the Spirit (Christ)--may the peace of God and His mercy be upon Him — secretly sent them provisions and befriended them out of utmost sympathy. We beseech God the Eternal Truth, to confirm all in accomplishing that which is pleasing to Him.

O newspapers published throughout the cities and countries of the world! Have ye heard the groan of the downtrodden, and have their cries of anguish reached your ears? Or have these remained concealed? It is hoped that ye will investigate the truth of what hath occurred and vindicate it . .



## Notes

[1] This introduction and the text translation of this section of the *Lawh-i-Times* (Tablet to the Times) is taken from Taherzadeh, Adib. *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*. Vol. IV. "Mazrih and Bahji, 1877-1892" (Oxford, George Ronald, 1987), pp. 348-350. It was later reprinted in *Bahá'í World* Vol. 18 976-7. Date in *A Basic Bahá'í Chronology* 121. Formatting and notes added by Mehdi Wolf.

[2] *Má'idíy-i-Ásamání*, vol. 4, pp. 129-30. The extract printed here has been authorized by the Universal House of Justice. [Taherzadeh's note]

[3] Refers to the martyrdom of seven believers in Yazd on May 19th, 1891. Shoghi Effendi's description of this incident is as follows:

In Yazd, at the instigation of the mujtahid of that city, and by order of the callous Mahmud Mirza, the Jalulu'l-Dawlih, the governor, a son of Zillu's-Sultán, seven were done to death in a single day in horrible circumstances. The first of these, a twenty-seven year old youth, 'Alí-Asghar, was strangled, his body delivered into the hands of some Jews who, forcing the dead man's six companions to come with them, dragged the corpse through the streets, surrounded by a mob of people and soldiers beating drums and blowing trumpets, after which, arriving near the Telegraph office, they beheaded the eighty-five year old Múllá Mihdí and dragged him in the same manner to another quarter of the city, where, in view of a great throng of onlookers, frenzied by the throbbing strains of the music, they executed Aqa 'Ali in like manner. Proceeding thence to the house of the local mujtahid, and carrying with them the four remaining companions, they cut the throat of Múllá 'Alíy-i-Sabzivarí, who had been addressing the crowd and glorying in his imminent martyrdom, hacked his body to pieces with a spade, while he was still alive, and pounded his skull to a pulp with stones. In another quarter, near the Mihriz gate, they slew Muhammad-Baqir, and afterwards, in the Maydan-i-Khán, as the music

grew wilder and drowned the yells of the people, they beheaded the survivors who remained, two brothers in their early twenties, 'Alí-Asg<sup>h</sup>ar and Muhammad-Hasan. The stomach of the latter was ripped open and his heart and liver plucked out, after which his head was impaled on a spear, carried aloft, to the accompaniment of music, through the streets of the city, and suspended on a mulberry tree, and stoned by a great concourse of people. His body was cast before the door of his mother's house, into which women deliberately entered to dance and make merry. Even pieces of their flesh were carried away to be used as a medicament. Finally, the head of Muhammad-Hasan was attached to the lower part of his body and, together with those of the other martyrs, was borne to the outskirts of the city and so viciously pelted with stones that the skulls were broken, whereupon they compelled the Jews to carry the remains and throw them into a pit in the plain of Salsabil. A holiday was declared by the governor for the people, all the shops were closed by his order, the city was illuminated at night, and festivities proclaimed the consummation of one of the most barbarous acts perpetrated in modern times.

(Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 201-2)

[4

# **Tablet of Pilgrimage to the House of Bahá'u'lláh:**

## **Baghdad**

### **Bahá'u'lláh**

Translated by Denis MacEoin.

Originally revealed as "Suriy-i-Hajj".

#### **HE IS THE EVERLASTING, THE MANIFEST!**

It is incumbent on whomsoever desireth to turn to the most holy direction, to come into the presence of God, the Mighty, the Knowing, to hearken unto the call of God, to behold His beauty, and to inhale the perfume of God, the Mighty, the Powerful, the Exalted, the Great, that he should go forth from his house, journeying unto God, until he entereth the city that hath been named "the Abode of Peace" [Dar al-Salam - Baghdád]. And when he arriveth there, let him magnify God (with the phrase *Allahu akbar*), his Lord, with the tongue of his heart and with his outward tongue until he cometh unto the river. And when he reacheth it, let him put on his best clothes and then perform ablutions as God hath commanded him. And when he washeth his hands, let him say: "O Lord, this is water that Thou hast caused to flow forth through Thy command in the neighbourhood of Thy sacred House (*baytika 'l-hardm*). As I have washed my hands with it, O my God, at Thy command, wash me, then, from every stain and sin and omission and from all that Thy good-pleasure abhorreth. Thou, verily, art the Mighty, the All-Powerful."

Then let wash his face, saying: "O Lord, this is my face that Thou hast purified through Thy will. I beseech Thee, then, by the power of the glory of Thy singleness and the wonders of the names of the manifestations of Thy cause, to]

Let him, then, walk with the utmost gravity and glorify God (with the phrase *Allahu abha*) until he reacheth the gate, then let him stand and say: "O my God, this is the spot wherein Thou didst lift up Thy voice and in which Thy proof was made manifest and Thy signs shone forth and Thy beauty rose above the horizon and Thy verses were sent down and Thy command was made visible and Thy name was raised up and Thy mention was spread abroad and Thy power was made perfect and Thy sovereignty was exalted above all that are in the heavens and the earth."

Let him, then, address the House and its land and its walls and all that is upon it, saying: "Blessed be thou, O House, inasmuch as God hath made Thee the Spot whereon His feet have trodden. Blessed be thou, O House, inasmuch as the glances of the glory of His greatness have fallen upon thee. Blessed be thou, O House, inasmuch as God hath singled Thee out and made Thee a dwelling-place for His own Self and a location wherein to establish His sovereignty. No earth hath surpassed thee, unless it be the earth that God hath chosen above all the shrines of the world, by that which hath been written down by His Pen, the Preserver. Blessed be thou, O House, inasmuch as through Thee God distinguish between the fortunate and the wretched from this day unto the day whereon the All-Merciful shall shine forth with the lights of a wondrous holiness. Blessed be thou, blessed be thou, inasmuch as God hath made Thee the balance for them that believe in His unity and the uttermost abode of them that know Him, and hath sanctified Thee from the knowledge of them that hate Him and them that disbelieve in Him, in

such wise that none may enter Thee save the believer whose heart God hath tried in its faith, nor may any be able to approach thee save him from whom there are wafted the breezes of the praise of God. Blessed be Thou, inasmuch as God hath singled Thee out for them among His servants that are nigh unto Him and them among His creatures that are devoted to Him. None may touch Thee save them that have utterly detached themselves from all that are in the heavens and the earth, in whose hearts there is naught but the radiance of the lights of the glory of His oneness and in whose inner beings there is naught but the manifestations of the effulgences of the holiness of His eternity. This is a station for which God hath chosen Thee, wherein Thou shouldst pride Thyself above all the worlds. Blessed be Thou and him that built Thee and raised Thee up and served Thee and carried water unto thy roses, and blessed be he that hath entered thee and he that hath gazed upon Thee and he that hath discovered from Thee a breath of the robe of the Joseph of God, the Mighty, the Powerful. I bear witness that he that hath entered within thee, God shall cause him to enter the holy sanctuary on the day whereon the Beauty of the Essence shall be established upon a mighty throne, and He shall forgive the sins of him that taketh refuge in Thee and entereth beneath Thy shadow, and shall fulfil his needs and shall raise him up on the Day of Resurrection with such beauty that his kindred of both past and future shall be illumined by it."

Let him, then, prostrate himself with his face upon the dust of the gate and call upon his Lord like one that is detached and repentant, relating himself to God and saying: "O Lord, I am he that hath acted wrongly towards Thee and rejected Thy beauty, for my self and my desires preoccupied me. Thou, verily, art the Knowing, the All Informed. O Lord, since I have recognized Thy Self, I seek pardon for my former state and for whatever appeared from my tongue and went forth from my mouth and entered into my thoughts. I have returned unto Thee with

all my being; Thou, verily, art the Forgiving, the Compassionate. O Lord, when Thou didst make known unto me the places of Thy command and didst awaken me from my sleep and my heedlessness, I set forth from my house in the direction of Thy House, turning my eyes towards Thy bounty and Thy forgiveness. Thou, verily, art the Most Merciful of the Merciful. O Lord, I have come unto Thee with that sin that was heavier than all that is in the heavens and the earth and greater than the creation of all existence, until I have stood before the gate of Thy House, from which no sinner hath been turned away disappointed; I have bowed myself down upon its dust, humbling myself before Thy beauty, abasing myself before Thy sovereignty, and making myself as nothing in Thy presence. O Lord, have mercy on me through Thy compassion and graciousness and ordain, then, for me a seat of truth by Thy side. Make me, then, one of Thy servants that have turned in repentance unto Thee. O Lord, forgive me my sins and my transgressions and all that my hands have committed. Thou, verily, art the Mighty, the Generous."

Then let him raise his head and seek forgiveness from God with this mighty, this great invocation: "O Lord, I seek forgiveness from Thee by my tongue and my heart and my soul and my mind and my spirit and my body and my corporeality and my bones and my blood and my skin. Thou, verily, art the Forgiving, the Merciful. And I seek forgiveness from Thee, O my God, by the invocation whereby the fragrances of mercy have blown upon the people of rebellion and through which the sinful have been clothed in the beautiful garment of Thy forgiveness. And I seek forgiveness from Thee, O my King, by the invocation whereby the power of Thy clemency and Thy grace is made manifest and whereby the sun of loving-kindness and bounty shineth forth above the forms of the sinful. And I seek forgiveness from Thee, O Forgiver of my sins and my Creator, by the invocation whereby the wrongdoers hasten in the direction of Thy pardon and

graciousness and through which the seekers stand at the gate of Thy mercy, O Thou the Merciful and Compassionate. And I seek forgiveness from Thee, O my Lord, by the invocation that Thou hast made a fire that burneth away all sins and rebelliousness from every one that hath repented and returned to Thee, regretting what he hath done, weeping over his actions, and secure in Thee, and through which the bodies of all created things are purified from the defilement of sins and wrongful actions and from all that Thy mighty and all-wise Self abhorreth.”

Then let him enter into the House with dignity and tranquillity, as if he beholds God in the realm of His command and the kingdom of His House, until he enters the courtyard (*al-sahn*) and comes before the *qibla* that was singled out for the raising up of the throne of might upon it. Then let him raise his hands and turn his gaze in the direction of His bounties and say: "I bear witness in this place where I stand that there is no god but Him alone; no companion is there for Him nor likeness nor peer nor rival nor deputy nor equal nor similitude; and that the Primal Point (*nuqta al-Cild [sic]*, the Báb) is His servant, His glory, His might, His greatness, His reality, His power, His sovereignty, His majesty, His kingship, His strength, His honour, His nobility, His benevolence, and that through Him, His beauty shone forth and His face was purified and His proof rose above the horizon and His evidence was perfected and His argument was completed and His signs were made luminous, and through Him all that are in the heavens and on the earth were raised to life and they that are in the kingdom of command and creation were resurrected, and through him the breezes of holiness were wafted upon all the worlds. And I bear witness that He Whom God shall make manifest [i.e. Bahá'u'lláh] is the truth, no doubt is there concerning Him; He is come with the lights of a wondrous holiness, and through Him are recreated the heavens and the earth and the people of the former and the latter generations. Blessed is he that hath attained

unto His days and that entereth His gate and is honoured with meeting Him and circleth around Him and prostrateth himself before Him and visiteth the dust of His feet and standeth in His presence and is of them that arise."

Then let him say: "O Lord, this is Thy House wherein the breezes of Thy bounty and generosity have wafted and wherein Thou hast shone forth in the innermost heart of mystery upon all the manifestations of Thy names and the dawning-places of Thine attributes. None is informed of this save Thee, the All-Knowing. O Lord, this is Thy House from which the signs of Thy grace have been made manifest unto all the worlds and wherein there befell Thee what befell Thee on the part of them that believed and them that disbelieved. Thou, verily, wast patient in all this, notwithstanding Thy power and Thy sovereignty. Thou, truly, art the Knowing, the Wise, the Mighty, the Powerful! O Lord, this is the Spot whereon Thou didst walk with Thine ancient feet and wherein Thou didst raise up Thy voice and Thy melodies and didst make heard Thy call and Thy singing, with wondrous and honeyed tones. O Lord, this is the Spot wherein Thou didst sit upon the Throne of all created things and didst exalt Thyself through the tongue of Thy power above all that are in the heavens and on earth. O Lord, this is the Spot wherein Thy gaze was turned in the direction of Thy bounty and wherein the oceans of power surged within Thy hidden and concealed and guarded Word. O Lord, this is the Spot wherein was Thy Cause within the mystery of mysteries, and wherein Thou didst not move Thy lips as Thou didst wish, and wherein Thou didst conceal Thy radiant face, and wherein Thou wast hidden in the most utter concealment and behind the densest of veils, in such wise that none among all creation recognized Thy Self. O Lord, this is Thy House that was shamed after Thee by Thy servants, who looted whatever was therein and plundered all that was within it; thus did they dishonour Thee and make war against Thee in their heart of hearts and break Thy covenant



and shatter Thy bond; yet didst Thou conceal all this and didst pass over them through Thy wondrous bounty. O Lord, divest me not of the bounty of Thy protection, nor take from me the garment of Thy favour and pardon, nor cause me to be far removed from the precincts of Thy mercy, nor deprive me of the fountain of Thy exalted grace. O Lord, sanctify me from all save Thee and bring me near unto Thy Self and honour me with meeting Thee. Thou, verily, art the Powerful, the Knowing, the Understanding, the Bringer to life, the Vivifier, the Slayer. O Lord, cause me to attain unto that which Thou hast willed for those of Thy servants that are nigh unto Thee. Ordain, then, for me the best of what Thou hast ordained for the sanctified among Thy chosen ones."

Let him then be silent within himself and be at rest in his innermost being. Then let him turn in his heart and with his hearing in the direction of the House. If he should discover the fragrance of God and hear His call, he may be assured within himself that God has forgiven him his sins and has passed over him and relented towards him and beholdeth him as on the day whereon he was born of his mother. But if he should not discover the fragrance of God, the Mighty, the Powerful, let him perform again the ritual on this day or one another day until he discovereth it and heareth [the call]. This is that which hath been decreed by the Pen of a glorious and wise One upon the Tablets of a hidden holiness. Thus doth God open the gates of grace and bounty unto the face of the heavens and the earth, that perchance men may not deprive themselves of the mercy of God and His bounteousness. This, verily, is true guidance and a remembrance from Us unto all the worlds.

# **Tablet of Pilgrimage to the House of the Báb:**

**Shiraz**

**Bahá'u'lláh**

translated by Denis MacEoin.

published in *Rituals in Babism and Bahá'ism*, Pembroke Persian Series Vol. 2, pages 154-62

London: British Academic Press, 1994

originally revealed as "Suriy-i-Hajj".

O Muhammad, when the fragrances of holiness have drawn thee unto them and turned thee unto the land of the All-Merciful that thou mayest discover the breezes of divine praise, go forth then by permission of Thy Lord, the Generous, unto the spot around which circle the angels that are nigh unto God, they that sing His praises about the Throne. At the moment when thou arisest from thy place, seeking to turn in the direction of God, thy Lord, take off from thy body the robe of self and desire and from thy feet the sandals of sin and wickedness, for thou art entering the spot that none may reach save he that casteth behind him all that are on earth and in the heavens, wherein naught but the greatest righteousness shall be accepted, if thou art of them that comprehend, and around which circle the Mount of Command and the Land of Holiness and the Sinai of Glory and the hearts of them that ascend at all times unto the heaven of nearness. None other shall ever

attain unto it nor be mentioned by God as having reached it, even should he dwell there for a thousand years as you number them.

And when thou hast journeyed from thy self and from the world and its people and hast travelled unto God, thy Lord, and hast reached the spot at which thou beholdest the outskirts of the city, dismount and stop where thou art and say: "Spirit and light and glory and praise be upon thee, O City of God, O dwelling-place of His names, O treasury of His attributes, O source of His bounties, O mine of His grace, O place of the manifestation of His effulgences that have encompassed all creation. I bear witness that from thy outskirts appeared the Primal Point [i.e. the Báb] and the ornament of pre-existence and the eternal mystery and the universal word and the fixed decrees and the hidden secrets. Thus hast thou surpassed all others in receiving grace from God, the Protector, the Self-Subsisting."

Lift up, then, your hands unto God, thy Lord, with humility and self-effacement, with submission and pleasing contentment, and say: "O Lord, praise be to Thee for the wonders of Thy gifts and the graces of Thy bestowals. How can I give thanks to Thee, O my God, for having provided me with the visitation of Thy House and having honoured me with it and having chosen me for this bounty in which none hath preceded me and having taught me what none hath known but Thee? Wherefore, O my God, I have fled from the house of my self and taken refuge in the place in which Thy most exalted Self hath been established; I have taken flight from whatever hath kept me back from drawing nigh unto Thee and gone for protection unto the precincts of Thy most great mercy. Deprive me not, then, O my God, of that which belongeth unto Thee and cause me not to be occupied with any but Thee. Thou, verily, art the Mighty, the Forgiving. O Lord,

make me steadfast in Thy love and in the love of Thy friends, and cause me not to be of them that have disbelieved in Thy verses after they were sent down, them that have mocked them after their perfumes had encompassed all created things and all that was brought into existence in the visible and the invisible worlds. O Lord, send unto me the rod of Thy grace and bounty that I may cleave therewith the sea of self and desire, pass over it, and reach the pavilion of the glory of Thine exaltation and the tabernacle of the holiness of Thy protection, lest there be made manifest from me that which Thy good-pleasure abhorreth. Thou, verily, art He that doeth as He willest, and Thou art, in truth, the Lord of this firmly builded House."

Ride on, then, until thou reachest a spot at which there shall be between thee and the city only a thousand steps, be it more or less. Whereupon, dismount and immerse thyself in water, as thou hast been commanded in the Book of God, the Protector, the Exalted, the Self-Subsisting. And when thou comest forth from the water, trim thy moustache, then clip thy nails, then shave thy head, then make use of the best of perfumes, then put on the best clothes you are able to afford. And if thou art not able to perform that which We have commanded thee, be thou not saddened, for God hath pardoned thee; He, verily, is the Powerful, the Forgiving, the Pardoner. Strive, then, within thyself that, at the moment thy eye falleth upon the city and thou comest close to it, thy heart may be purified from the mention of all things in such wise that thou mayest cast behind thee all that hath been created between the earth and the heavens, for thou art at that moment walking before the King of all creation, thy Sovereign of names and attributes. Thus instructeth thee the Pen of God, thy Lord and the Lord of all things, if thou art of them that know.

And when thou hast performed that which We have commanded thee, rise from that spot and turn your face towards the House. Then stop, then raise your hands in

humble devotion to God, the Powerful, the Protector, the Beloved, and say: "O my God, this is the spot through which the eyes of them that desire Thee have been solaced and the hearts of Thy lovers have been attracted; this is the utmost goal of them that seek Thee and the highest desire of them that yearn for Thee. This is the spot wherein the eyes of them that know Thee have rained tears in their separation from Thee and the faces of them that have attained unto Thee have turned yellow in their longing for Thy beauty. I beseech Thee, O my God, by it and by the effulgences of the lights of the glory of Thy oneness and the flashes of the manifestation of the holiness of Thy divinity, to release me from the fire of my self and to sanctify me from all that is unworthy of Thy sovereignty. Thou, verily, art the Protector, the Self-Subsisting."

Lower, then, thy hands until they reach the level of thy cheeks, then magnify God (with the phrase *Allahu akbar*) nine times, then raise thy hands yet again unto God, thy Lord and the Lord of all that hath been and all that is, and say: "O my God, this is the city wherein Thy sovereignty was made manifest and the signs of the glory of Thy grandeur appeared and Thy verses were sent down and Thy word was completed and Thy might was exalted and Thy proof shone forth and Thy mercy encompassed all things and all that is in the heavens and the earth. There beareth witness unto this my self and my heart and my tongue and beyond them blessed servants. Whereupon, I beseech Thee, O my God, by it [the city] and all that hath been manifested in it to remove that which hath kept me far from the shore of the holiness of Thy mercy and bounty and shut me out from the precincts of the outpouring of Thy grace and bestowal. Clothe me, then, O my God, in the robe of Thy graciousness and bounty. Thou wilt and Thou art, truly, the Mighty, the Exalted, the Beloved. Give me, then, to drink, O my God, from the fountain of the glory of Thy knowledge and the living waters of the holiness of meeting with

Thee, waters which, were but a drop from them to be sprinkled upon all created things, they would be raised to eternal, everlasting life, standing before Thy face and the manifestations of the flashes of the lights of Thy countenance. Thou, verily, art the Mighty, the Exalted, the Holy."

Lower, then, thy hands and walk upon the ground with the dignity of God and His tranquillity. And as thou walkest proclaim the singleness of thy Lord (with the phrase "there is no god but God") then proclaim His greatness (with the phrase *Allahu akbar*), then His holiness (with the phrase *Allahu aqdás*), then His majesty (with the phrase *Allahu amjad*). Follow, then, in the ways of the messengers and the manners of them that are near to God, saying: "Here am I, O my God, here am I; greetings unto Thee, and the light be before Thee." Repeat these words as much as will not cool down the fire of thy ardour and passion. Thus We have instructed thee in truth that thou mayest be of them that act in accordance with what they have been commanded. Know, then, that thou didst answer thy Lord with these words when He ascended the Throne and called upon all created things with His words "Am I not your Lord?" Those words are the secret of those others, if ye be of them that ponder upon the mysteries of their Lord. Indeed, shouldst thou behold with the eye of thine inner being, thou shalt at that moment behold Him raised upon the thrones of all created beings, crying: "No God is there but Me, the Protector, the Self-Subsisting." Know, then, O pilgrim, thy value and station at that moment. Give thanks, then, to God that this has been bestowed upon thee and that He hath aided thee therein. Verily, there is no God but Him; creation and command are His and all act according to His bidding. Blessed art thou, O servant, in that thou hast entered the land of holiness, the Paran of the Spirit, and the Sinai of Command. Yea, shouldst thou make sharp thy sight, thou wilt behold all about thee circumambulating. By God, O servant journeying from thy home, should God open

thy vision and shouldst thou turn thy gaze above the head unto the heavens, thou wilt behold the sanctuaries of holiness, the habitations of loving-fellowship, the people of the pavilion of the heavenly kingdom, the inhabitants of the thrones of the kingdom of might, the bodies of the holy ones among the manifestations of the realm below and the kingdom above all moving in the heaven of holiness above thy head, extolling with thee the unity, the greatness, the holiness, and the majesty of the Lord of the City and of him that appeared from it and arose therein. Thus shalt thou behold the matter, if thou art of them that see with the eyes of the spirit.

And when thou reachest the spot at which thou art come nigh unto the gate of the city at a distance of 20 paces, stop at the command of God, thy Lord, the Lord of all things, and the Lord of this praiseworthy scene. Extol, then, the greatness of God 19 times, then address the city on My behalf, saying: "May God curse a people that have interposed themselves between Us and the lights of thy holiness, O City of God, and who have kept us back from inhaling the fragrances of the holiness of Thy oneness and from dwelling within the precincts of the glory of Thy mercy and from standing in the courtyard of the gate of the outpouring of Thy compassion." Turn, then, thy gaze unto the most great spectacle, in the direction of the wall of the city and whatsoever hath been created therein and hath existed within it, for upon all of these hath fallen the eye of God, the Mighty, the Protector, the Self-Sufficient. Say: "O wall of the City! Blessed be thou, inasmuch as there shone forth above thee the lights of the sun of thy Lord, the Exalted, the Most High. O trees of the City! Blessed be ye, inasmuch as the breezes of holiness have been wafted upon you from the direction of eternity. O air of the City! Blessed be thou, inasmuch as the breath of God, the Mighty, the Powerful, the Beloved, was spread within thee. O earth of the City! Blessed be thou, inasmuch as the feet of thy Lord, the All-Merciful, have walked upon thee and the form of the Praised One

hath passed over thee in the days when all were wrapped in the veils of their own selves.”

Walk, then, until thou reachest the city; and when thou hast attained its presence and arrived at its gate, place thy face upon the dust of the gate, that thou mayest discover the fragrance of thy Lord, the Exalted, the Most High and may be of them that are nourished with the water of life. Know, then, that from its dust is manifested the decree of water, and from its water the decree of air, and from its air the effect of fire, and from a torch ignited from it hath appeared the decree of 'B' and 'E' [*@ukm al-kdf wa'l-nan* - i.e. *kun*, "be"]<sup>[1]</sup>, if thou art of them that know.

This is how We have described it unto thee in the land and among these people that are unconscious in the drunkenness of self. Otherwise, by Him in Whose hand is my soul, an atom of its dust is more glorious in the sight of God than all that hath been created in the meadows of eternity and all that hath been decreed in the tablets of destiny within the mystery of fate in the realm of the divine decree. Thus do We cast upon thee the secrets of the Cause, that thou mayest be of them that comprehend.

When thou hast kissed the dust and derived a blessing therefrom, raise up thy head, then stand and magnify God (with the phrase *Allahu akbar*) 19 times, then walk with the dignity and tranquillity of God and with His grandeur and majesty until you arrive before the House. Then stop and say: "I bear witness by my tongue and my soul and my spirit and my body that this is the spot whereon prostrate themselves the inhabitants of the empyrean realm and the denizens of the



kingdom of God's decree and they that inhabit the highest mansions of eternity behind the veils of grandeur. Through it all things have been made manifest and through it the breezes of bounty have blown upon the forms of all the worlds. And this is the spot whence the inhabitants of the Concourse of Eternity derive their blessings and the hearts of them that are established between earth and heaven obtain their illumination. Every day the dwellers of the crimson chambers sweep its courtyard and the angels that are nigh unto God brush it with the tresses of the spirit. And this is the spot wherein the Beauty of the All-Merciful appeared and in His own person ascended the Throne of Forgiveness and decreed that which He willed for all creation. He, verily, is the One that doeth as He willeth and decreeth as He desireth and performeth whatsoever He wisheth. I bear witness that, from a handful of this dust, the first Adam was created, wherefore was he named "the father of man" (Abu 'IBashar)[2]<sup>i</sup> in the kingdom of names, and God made him His remembrance amongst all created things."

Bow down, then, with thy face upon the dust, then place thy right cheek upon it and say with my tongue: "Praised be Thou, O God, my God. This is Thy servant that hath detached himself from all directions, turning in the direction of Thy oneness, and hath freed his soul from all apart from Thee, and hath clung to the cord of the bounty of Thy grace, and hath come in his completeness unto the meadows of the glory of Thy forgiveness. Cause to blow, then, O my God upon my heart the breezes of the glory of the holiness of Thy bounty and upon my inner being the fragrances of the majesty of the glory of Thy favours. Cast me not away disappointed, O my God, from Thy gate or despairing from the manifestations of the sun of Thy bounties. Thou, verily, art the Powerful over what Thou wiliest and Thou art the Protector, the Mighty, the Powerful."

Then stand and turn to the right of the House, in the direction of thy Lord, the Exalted, the Mighty, the Wise. Raise, then, thy hands unto God, the Exalted, the Most High and say: "Praised be Thou, O God, my God. I have raised the hands of my hope unto the heaven of Thy bounty and grace, and I have fastened the fingers of my reliance upon the cord of Thy grace and favours. I beseech Thee by him through whom Thou didst clothe all created things with the robe of Thy guidance and didst raise to life all existence from the power of Thy compassion and generosity, not to lock the door of Thy knowledge upon the face of my heart nor the door of Thy mercy upon my soul. Cause me, then, O my God, to be such as will be worthy of the power of the glory of Thy singleness and the majesty of the holiness of Thine eternity. Thou, verily, art the Gracious, the Bestowing, the Mighty, the Generous. And I, O my God, have become detached from mine own self, hastening unto Thy Most Exalted Self, and have fled from mine own abode and stood before Thy most pure and most glorious House. Wherefore, I beseech Thee not to leave me unto myself nor unto them that keep back mankind from the love of Thy beauty and debar Thy servants from Thy mighty and unbending path."

Circle, then, about the House on my behalf seven times. Thus commandeth thee the Ancient Beauty and teacheth thee what none in all the worlds doth know. And at the time when thou art circumambulating the House of the Lord, make mention of Him in thy heart and upon thy tongue and turn within thyself unto the direction of the mighty Throne. And when thou hast completed thy circum-ambulation, present thyself within the first portico, before the door of the sanctuary, then, stand, then raise thy hands unto the heaven of the outpouring of the grace of thy Lord, the Mighty, the Inaccessible. And I counsel thee that, at that time when thou dost raise up thy hands, raise them with such yearning that thereby the hands of all beings may be raised up towards the heaven of the grace of thy Lord.

And when thou desirest to call upon God, thy Lord, call upon Him with such devotion that thereby the tongues of all atoms may utter the praise of thy Creator and may make mention of Him that brought thee into existence, the Powerful, the Mighty, the Wondrous. And if thou be not thus, it is not fitting for thee to stand in the spot whereon have stood the bodies of the holy ones and them that are nigh unto God. Nor art thou worthy of thy relation unto my Self nor thy habitation beneath the shadow of my love, which God hath made a cutting sword whereby to separate the unbelievers from them that extol His oneness. And when thou hast raised thy hands unto the clouds of the mercy of thy Lord, the Mighty, the Knowing, the AllInformed, say: "I bear witness that no god is there but He; He is alone, no companion is there for Him nor likeness nor deputy nor comparison nor rival nor equal nor similitude for His sovereignty, the Exalted, the Inaccessible, the Most High. From all eternity He was one in His Essence and one in His attributes and one in His deeds and unto all eternity He shall be as He hath ever been in the glory of His majesty and the sovereignty of His sublimity, such that the mystic knowers have confessed their inability to attain unto the meadows of the holiness of His knowledge and the devoted ones have admitted their powerlessness to ascend unto the heaven of His mention and His praise. He, verily, is the Protector of all things and He, in truth, is the Mighty, the All-Generous. I bear witness that the Primal Point [the Báb] our Lord the Exalted, the Most High is, truly, His Manifestation in the realm of the empyrean and His Appearance in the kingdom of the decree and His Dawning-place in the domain of destiny. Through Him all created things are brought to life and all existence is renewed and the balance of justice hath been set up upon the station of praiseworthy glory. Through Him the Bird of the Throne hath crowed and the Dove of Glory hath warbled and the resurrection of the command hath come to pass and all that lay hidden in the treasuries of hidden glory hath been made manifest. Through Him the heavens of

pre-existence were raised up and the clouds of bounty were elevated unto this most holy and most notable sky and the sun of grace and beneficence shone forth from the horizon of resplendent holiness. Through Him the oceans of verses surged in the kingdom of names and attributes and the time set for the command arrived with that which was decreed in the tablets of inaccessible majesty. And I bear witness that, through Him, the veil of mystery was removed from the beauty of grandeur and the secrets of the unseen were revealed in the kingdom of the divine decree, and that through Him every poor and needy one ascended unto the heaven of riches and every transient one rose up unto the dwelling-places of eternal life and every sick one was raised to the abodes of healing within pavilions of shining light. And I bear witness that this is the Spot wherein Thou didst ascend the Throne of the glory of Thy unity and didst bring into being all creation, both former and latter, through the power of Thy will and Thy desire, and wherein the clouds of Thy grace rained down upon all created things.

"Wherefore, I beseech Thee, O my God, by Thy hidden and Most Great Name and Thy concealed and most perfect word whose manifestation Thou didst promise unto Thy servants at the time of *Mustaghath* [i.e. at the time of the appearance of Him Whom God shall make manifest], to bring me unto the shore of the ocean of Thy forgiveness and to erase all that I have enumerated of my most great sins and my most mighty transgressions; then forgive, O my God, my father and my mother and my family and those whom I have related unto myself, them that have believed in Thee and Thy signs. Make, then, for me, O my God, a seat of truth by Thy side and cause me to be united with those of Thy servants that are nigh unto Thee. I ask Thee, then, O my God and my Beloved, not to make me to be one of them that circle about Thy House in Thy land and deny Thy sacred House within the Manifestations of Thy Self and the Dawning-places of the glory of Thy

Self-Subsistence and the Locations of the glory of Thy Lordship. Thus, O my God, is my utmost wish and desire. Thou, verily, art the Sovereign, the Powerful, the Mighty, the Wise. I ask Thee, then, O my God, by Thy beauty whereby the suns of the glory of Thy bounty have been made luminous and the rays of the lights of the holiness of Thy generosity flashed forth, to cause me not to be distressed upon the day whereon every soul shall be distressed, on which the possessors of pomp and leadership shall be puffed up with pride, on which the feet of them that have attained shall slip, on which the lamentation of all things shall be raised, and on which every resplendent and shining light shall be darkened. Take hold, then, of my hand, O my God, with the hand of Thy grace and favours and deprive me not on that day of the fragrances of the glory of Thy holiness nor from hearkening unto the melodies of Thy new creation, and cause me not to follow upon that day behind every croaking, sinful one. Open my eyes through Thy grace that I may recognize Thee by Thine own Self, not by that which is other than Thee, and that I may behold the wonders of the lights of Thy Beauty by what Thou hast bestowed upon me through Thy bounty, not that which belongeth unto men. For Thou hast not created any proof for Thyself save Thine own Essence, nor any evidence save Thy signs. Thou, verily, are He that ariseth, the Ruler, the Knowing, the All-Informed. Praise be to God, Lord of all the worlds."

Whereupon, end thou thy pilgrimage, for We have not permitted anyone to approach closer than this unto the sanctuary, for before that spot shine the lights of the Essence from behind the names and the attributes. And, apart from that, courtesy must be observed, for that is one of the best of all attributes in the sight of God, King of the earth and the heavens. Thus have We sent down upon thee the command with a shining and manifest proof. It is our desire that, from every city, one should go forth on My behalf and for his own sake to visit the House of God

and that he may be a pilgrim. By God, at every step mercy and grace shall descend upon him from the heaven of resplendent holiness, and at the same time when he raises his foot for the first step and sets it down, God shall forgive his sins and the sins of his mother and his father and all that are related unto him. Thus hath the grace of thy Lord encompassed all created things, whether of the first or of the last. By God, whosoever visiteth the House, it is as if he hath visited God within the pavilion of the glory of meeting with Him and the tent of the majesty of His Beauty. Thus do We inform thee of the call that is mighty by the side of the Throne.

Whosoever visiteth the House as We have commanded him, God shall raise him up after his death within the paradise of majesty and grandeur in such a beauteous form that the dwellers of the Concourse on High shall be illumined by the lights of his face, and all that are in the exalted heavens shall be commanded to appear before him and to circle about him and to make their pilgrimage unto his beauty every morning and evening. O trustees of God upon the earth, strive unto the most great mention, and cast away all that is in your hands and turn your faces unto the Abode of God, the Mighty, the Powerful, the All-Knowing. Be ye steadfast, O people, in this station that, if all that are on earth should rise up against you, ye would not pay the least attention to them and would remain firm in the faith of God. The unbelievers shall prevent you performing what God has sent down upon you on account of the rancour that is in their breasts. But God shall do as He willeth through His word; He, verily, is the Powerful, the Mighty.

Know, then, that We have written concerning pilgrimage to the House in detailed and vast tablets, but We have not sent them until now, If God wills, We shall send them in truth. He, verily, is the Guardian of the Messengers. That which

We have sent is what was sent down from the kingdom of divine power in a brief form, for the angels that are nigh unto God and the inhabitants of the Exalted Concourse love to be brief in their outward acts. And inwardly, let there be at all times those that perform the pilgrimage. Thus have We taught thee and made known unto thee the paths of holiness and guided thee unto the shores of manifest grace.

*(Amr, IV, pp.120-33)*

# Baha'u'llah's Paradise of Justice

**Bahá'u'lláh**

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## **Abstract**

Baha'u'llah's Paradise of Justice (Riḍvānu'l-'Adl, or Riḍwān al-'Adl; also known as Lawḥ-i Riḍvānu'l-'Adl and Lawḥ-i 'Adl) may be regarded as Baha'u'llah's paradigm ('Paradise' or ideal) of 'justice'. Baha'u'llah's Paradise of Justice transforms received notions of 'justice'. Although typically considered a 'secular' concern within rather specific institutional confines, Baha'u'llah allegorizes, personifies, symbolizes and otherwise expatiates on 'Justice' in such a way as to vivify the concept. Justice is made sacred, deriving from the 'Name' of God as 'The Just' (*al-'ādil*). Justice – encompassing, as it does, both faith and action – is the essence of the Baha'i concept of salvation, both individual and societal. As a framework of analysis, this paper is organized as follows: Introduction; Historical Context; Structure (vis-à-vis



Apostrophes); Highlights of Baha'u'llah's Paradise of Justice; Theological Dimension of 'Justice'; Revelatory Dimension of 'Justice'; Authoritarian Dimension of 'Justice'; Contemporaneous Dimension of 'Justice'; Social Dimension of 'Justice'; Individual Dimension of 'Justice'; Conclusion; Appendix: Riḍwān al-'Adl: Paradise of Justice (translated by Adib Masumian). This study demonstrates how Baha'u'llah's Paradise of Justice presents a significantly expanded paradigm of justice, both in precept and practice.<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

One of the 'best-known works'<sup>1</sup> of Baha'u'llah (1817–1892), prophet-founder of the Baha'i Faith, is the Paradise of Justice (Riḍvānu'l-'Adl,<sup>2</sup> or Riḍwān al-'Adl<sup>3</sup>; also known as Lawḥ-i Riḍvānu'l-'Adl<sup>4</sup> and Lawḥ-i 'Adl<sup>5</sup>). This is a major Tablet of the late Edirne (in Ottoman Turkey, in 'European' Turkey) or early Akka (in Ottoman Syria or Palestine) period, revealed during Baha'u'llah's public proclamation to the world's political and religious leaders (1866–1873). No exact date has been assigned. The circumstances of revelation have yet to be definitely determined. This paper will attempt to contribute to a fuller understanding of the place of this work within Baha'i history. Although openly directed, in particular, to the world's political and religious leaders and, in general, to the peoples of the world, Baha'u'llah's discourse is immediately focused on winning over the allegiance of the Babi [p. 98]

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community. Three passages from the Paradise of Justice have been translated by Shoghi Effendi, whose selection and privileging of these texts provides a thematic context. The first passage is as follows:

In the *Riḍvānu'l-'Adl*, wherein the virtue of justice is exalted, He makes a parallel prediction: ‘Erelong will God make manifest on earth kings who will recline on the couches of justice, and will rule amongst men even as they rule their own selves. They, indeed, are among the choicest of My creatures in the entire creation’.<sup>6</sup>

This quotation is found in Paragraph 15 below. Significantly, Shoghi Effendi characterizes Baha’u’llah’s Paradise of Justice as a work ‘wherein the virtue of justice is exalted’. Taking the ‘virtue of justice’ as a cue for understanding Baha’u’llah’s intended meaning of ‘justice’, the Oxford English Dictionary’s pertinent definition of ‘justice’ may serve to further illuminate the range of meanings of ‘justice’ as set forth in the Paradise of Justice:

The quality of being just or right, as a human or divine attribute; moral uprightness; just behaviour or dealing as a concept or principle (one of the four cardinal virtues: cf. cardinal adj. 2a); the exhibition of this quality or principle in action; integrity, rectitude; commutative justice, distributive justice, social justice, etc.<sup>7</sup>

Shoghi Effendi’s cue that ‘virtue of justice’ constitutes the salient leitmotiv or epitome of Baha’u’llah’s Paradise of Justice is a natural point of departure for the present study. Indeed, the theme of ‘justice’ centres and unifies the entire Tablet. Since a wide range of topics (sometimes personified) and persons are referenced or addressed here, ‘justice’ thus serves as the principal theme underpinning and animating the entire text, as seen in this second passage of the Paradise of Justice translated by Shoghi Effendi:

Know verily that the essence of justice and the source thereof are both embodied in the ordinances prescribed by Him Who is the Manifestation of the Self of God amongst men, if ye be of them that recognize this truth. He doth verily incarnate the highest, the infallible standard of justice unto all creation. Were His law to be such

as to strike terror into the hearts of all that are in heaven and on earth, that law is naught but manifest justice. The fears and agitation which the revelation of this law provokes in men's hearts should indeed be likened to the cries of the suckling babe weaned from his mother's milk, if ye be of them that perceive. Were men to discover the motivating purpose of God's Revelation, they would assuredly cast away their fears, and, with hearts filled with gratitude, rejoice with exceeding gladness.<sup>8</sup>

This passage appears as Paragraph 46 below. It indicates that 'justice' – typically regarded as a secular concern – has a sacred origin and purpose. Although, at first blush, certain laws may appear harsh to some, those whose actions are in conformity with such laws have absolutely nothing to fear. Such fear, after all, is fear

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of punishment, not fear of abiding by the dictates of the law. The third passage of the Paradise of Justice translated by Shoghi Effendi is as follows: [p. 99]

Bestir yourselves, O people, in anticipation of the days of Divine justice, for the promised hour is now come. Beware lest ye fail to apprehend its import and be accounted among the erring.<sup>9</sup>

This excerpt is found in Paragraph 49 below. The audience here is the 'people of the earth' (par. 46). This is a clear warning of approaching judgement and chastisement to be visited on the peoples of the world if they fail to turn towards God. (Part and parcel of this turning to God is the recognition of Baha'u'llah who, from the Baha'i perspective, is the source of revelation (divine guidance) for this day and age, and of faithful adherence to Baha'u'llah's socio-moral principles and precepts.) Such an admonition is classically prophetic in nature, harking back to the dire warnings of the

‘Minor Prophets’ of the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible).

In his seminal essay on this Tablet, Muhammad Afnan has suggested that Baha’u’llah’s Paradise of Justice can be read as consisting of three distinct ‘parts’, each of which was addressed to a different audience.<sup>10</sup> In the first part (pars. 1–13), the concept of justice is apostrophized as one of God’s divine attributes; in the second part (pars. 14–52), the Tablet addresses ‘the manifestations of justice’, as well as the ‘people of the Bayān’, and generally the entire human race; and in the third part (pars. 53–69), the focus shifts to Āqā Siyyid Muḥammad-Riḍā Shahmīrzādī. The ‘people of the Bayān’ refers to the followers of Mīrzā Yaḥyā Nūrī

(d. 1912), a younger half-brother of Baha’u’llah. Mīrzā Yaḥyā was also known as Ṣubḥ-i Azal (‘Dawn of Eternity’, or ‘Azal’, for short). Therefore the ‘people of the Bayān’ were also known as ‘Azalīs’. As Shoghi Effendi explains: ‘It was in this period [the late Edirne period] that the phrase ‘the people of the Bayān’, now denoting the followers of Mīrzā Yaḥyā, was discarded, and was supplanted by the term ‘the people of Bahā’.<sup>11</sup>

Baha’u’llah’s decision to allegorically illustrate a ‘Paradise’ (Riḍvān) of justice through this Tablet is noteworthy. Muhammad Afnan notes<sup>12</sup> that the word ‘Riḍvān’ is only used in the title of one other Tablet by Baha’u’llah, the Riḍvān al-Iqrār, in which the word ‘Riḍvān’ conveys the idea that one’s acknowledgement of the Manifestation of God is an earthly demonstration of divine Paradise, and an act that elicits the good-pleasure of God.

Baha’u’llah’s Paradise of Justice may be regarded as Baha’u’llah’s paradigm (‘Paradise’ or ideal) of ‘justice’. As a framework of analysis, this paper is organized as follows: Introduction; Historical Context; Structure (vis-à-vis Apostrophes); Highlights of Baha’u’llah’s Paradise of Justice; Theological Dimension of ‘Justice’; Revelatory

Dimension of ‘Justice’; Authoritarian Dimension of ‘Justice’; Contemporaneous Dimension of ‘Justice’; Social Dimension of ‘Justice’; Individual Dimension of ‘Justice’; Conclusion; Appendix: Riḍwān al-‘Adl: Paradise of Justice (translated by Adib Masumian); and Acknowledgements.

The provisional translation used in this paper is by co-author, Adib Masumian, whose translation has been posted online, based on the latest and best edition of the Arabic text.<sup>13</sup> For the purposes of the present study, the translation has been logically broken down into numbered paragraphs, for ease of reference. Also consulted are the independent translations by [p. 100] Stephen Lambden<sup>14</sup> and Juan Cole.<sup>15</sup> With these preliminary considerations in mind, we turn our focus to the work itself.

## Historical Context

**‘Riḍā after Nabīl’ (Recipient):** Baha’u’llah revealed the Paradise of Justice in honour of Āqā Siyyid Muḥammad-Riḍā Shahrīrādī. Moojan Momen has greatly illumined the life and legacy of Muḥammad-Riḍā Shahrīrādī (1246/1830– 1317/1899), also known as Mīr Muḥammad-Riḍā, along with a photograph of this illustrious Baha’i as well.<sup>16</sup> As for the date of the Riḍwān al-‘Adl, Stephen Lambden offers this hypothesis:

It was addressed to a certain Āqā Siyyid Muḥammad-Riḍā Shahrīrādī (= ‘Riḍā after Nabīl’ (= Muḥammad Riḍā’)) (d. 1310/1892–3) one of the *Baqiyyat al-sayf* (‘Remnant of the Sword’), the survivors of the Shaykh Tabarsī upheaval of 1848–9 (Ishraq Khavari, *Ganj*, No. 54, p. 208). This key Tablet of Bahā’u’llāh most likely dates from the late Edirne (Adrianople) period, perhaps early 1867.<sup>17</sup>

As for the recipient himself, Muḥammad-Riḍā Shahrīrādī wrote a work that provides

an account of the 1848 siege of Fort Shaykh Tabarsi, and illustrates the spread of the Babi and Baha'i religions in Shahmirzad, entitled *Vaqāyi'-i-Qal'ih va Shahmīrzād* ('Events of the Fortress [of Shaykh Tabarsi] and Shahmirzad'), which spans 131 quarto pages in length. This memoir has been scanned in full and is available on H-Bahai.<sup>18</sup> The memoir is not dated,<sup>19</sup> but Shahmīrzādī must have written it after receiving Baha'u'llah's Paradise of Justice, since he refers to that Tablet by name ('Lawḥ-i 'Adl').<sup>20</sup> Momen notes that this local history is 'difficult to follow, with few dates or names but numerous dreams recorded'.<sup>21</sup>

According to the late Baha'i historian, Ahang Rabbani, Shahmīrzādī was just nineteen years old at the time of the Shaykh Tabarsī conflict, and did not personally witness the event he describes. Thus, his account must be based on eyewitness primary sources, and/or on personal knowledge gleaned from the reports of some of the survivors whom he may have met, including his elder brother. Muḥammad-Riḍā

Shahmīrzādī's account of the Shaykh Tabarsi upheaval was evidently written late in his life.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, the assertion that Muḥammad-Riḍā Shahmīrzādī was a veteran of that armed struggle may be called into question. However, this problem may be resolved based on the following explanation:

In *Maṣābīḥ-i Hidāyat*, 'Azīzu'llāh Sulaymānī notes that, although the young Muḥammad-Riḍā could not join his brothers at Shaykh Tabarsi – as his mother was

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old and infirm, and needed someone to take care of her – Quddus nonetheless considered him 'one who shared in the hardships endured by the people of the Fortress' (of Shaykh Tabarsi).<sup>23</sup> Sulaymānī goes on to say that, much later on, 'Abdu'l-Baha named Āqā Siyyid Muḥammad-Riḍā one of the *baqiyyat al-sayf* ('remnants of the sword', a title given to the survivors of the upheaval of Shaykh Tabarsi). When

‘Abdu’l-Baha was later asked by a certain Ghaḍanfar – a Baha’i living in Mazandaran – why this appellation had been given to Muḥammad-Riḍā, he replied with a Tablet that begins as follows: [p. 101]

O servant of the Holy Threshold! Thy letter hath been received. Although Āqā Sayyid Muḥammad-Riḍā, upon him be the Glory of the All-Glorious, was not physically present at the Fortress [of Shaykh Tabarsi], yet he was there in spirit.<sup>24</sup>

Muḥammad-‘Alī Malik-Khusravī, in the *Tārīkh-i Shuhadā-yi Amr*, introduces Āqā Sayyid Muḥammad-Riḍā as an ‘Honorary Remnant of the Sword of the Blessed Fortress’ (of Shaykh Tabarsi).<sup>25</sup> This is probably based on the foregoing information.

**‘People of the Bayān’ (Immediate Audience):** This Tablet, the Paradise of Justice, combines time-specific and timeless elements. The key to unlocking the historical context of this Tablet may be based on internal evidence. It is clear that Baha’u’llah was writing at a time when he was experiencing fierce opposition from the ‘People of the Bayān’ (par. 57). Here, a clear historical context would help decode the text. A definite marker that this Tablet was revealed in the late Edirne period (or later) is provided by Nader Saiedi, who notes that ‘Baha’u’llah uses the title of *ahl-i-Bayān* (people of the Bayān)’ as ‘a distinction that became the norm in the late Edirne period’,<sup>26</sup> referring, as previously mentioned, to the partisans of Azal. Here, Baha’u’llah represents the ‘People of the Bayān’ as his immediate opponents. This generally refers to those Babis who not only failed to recognize the advent of Baha’u’llah as the fulfilment of the Bab’s announcement that an even greater Messenger of God would appear soon, but who openly opposed Baha’u’llah as well.

**Mīrzā Yaḥyā (Antagonist):** As a further internal clue to the dating of the ‘Tablet of Paradise’, Baha’u’llah evidently refers to Mīrzā Yaḥyā in this passage:

The appointed Hour (*al-sā'a*) came upon you in your heedlessness, for when the Beauty of the Beloved shone forth above the horizon of the Will of your Lord – the Almighty, the All-Powerful – you turned away from Him, cavilled at Him, rejected His signs, and ascribed partners unto Him, and in this heedlessness you persisted until you resolved to shed His blood – the blood of the Most Holy, the Most Pure, the Most Powerful, the Most Luminous (par. 26).

Jealousy on the part of Azal, intensified by his lust for leadership, grew pejoratively deeper over the course of the Edirne period. As evidence of this, Baha'u'llah apostrophizes 'you' who 'resolved to shed His [Baha'u'llah's] blood' (par. 26). This clearly refers to Baha'u'llah's half-brother and arch-rival, Mīrzā Yaḥyā ('Azal'), who poisoned Baha'u'llah,<sup>27</sup> 'probably' with 'sublimate of mercury' (mercury chloride).<sup>28</sup>

Then, failing that, Azal tried to persuade Baha'u'llah's personal attendant and barber, Ustād Muḥammad-'Alī Salmānī, to slit Baha'u'llah's throat.<sup>29</sup> Shoghi Effendi tells of such attempts on the life of Baha'u'llah:

Desperate designs to poison Bahā'u'llāh and His companions, and thereby reanimate his own defunct leadership, began, approximately a year after their arrival in Adrianople [Edirne], to agitate his mind. Well aware of the erudition [p. 102] of his half-brother, Āqāy-i-Kalīm, in matters pertaining to medicine, he, under various pretexts, sought enlightenment from him regarding the effects of certain herbs and poisons, and then began, contrary to his wont, to invite Bahā'u'llāh to his home, where, one day, having smeared His tea-cup with a substance he had concocted, he succeeded in poisoning Him sufficiently to produce a serious illness which lasted no less than a month, and which was accompanied by severe pains and high fever, the aftermath of which left Bahā'u'llāh with a shaking hand till the end of His life. ...



On another occasion this same Mīrzā Yaḥyā had, according to the testimony of one of his wives, who had temporarily deserted him and revealed the details of the above-mentioned act, poisoned the well which provided water for the family and companions of Bahā'u'llāh, in consequence of which the exiles manifested strange symptoms of illness. He even had, gradually and with great circumspection, disclosed to one of the companions, Ustād Muḥammad-‘Alīy-i-Salmānī, the barber, on whom he had lavished great marks of favor, his wish that he, on some propitious occasion, when attending Bahā'u'llāh in His bath, should assassinate Him.<sup>30</sup>

Consistent with his otherwise reclusive and self-protective behaviour, Azal's rivalry reached its pejorative nadir in resorting to attempted murder and conspiracy to murder. These episodes added a sordid, criminal dimension to Azal's intrigues. Obviously these were acts of desperation of unmitigated audacity, motivated by an all-consuming lust for leadership. These acts, for the most part, formerly were covert, and largely concealed. Notwithstanding, Azal resolved to openly challenge Baha'u'llah for leadership of the fledgling Babi community.

**The ‘Days of Stress’ (Key Historical Context):** On Saturday, 10 March 1866, the ‘Most Great Separation’ (*faṣl-i akbar*)<sup>31</sup> occurred, in which Baha'u'llah moved to the house of Riḍā Big in another locale in Edirne, and, for around two months, remained in seclusion. According to Moojan Momen, this signal event ‘precipitated’ the ‘Days of Stress’.<sup>32</sup> The ‘Days of Stress’ (*ayyām-i shidād*) is the term by which Baha'u'llah characterizes a period of several years of intense, internecine strife, marked by the open hostility shown by Mīrzā Yaḥyā (or ‘Azal’) to Baha'u'llah, including Yaḥyā's efforts to wrest leadership of the Babi community by attempts to murder Baha'u'llah. The ‘Days of Stress’ are relevant to the historical contextualization of the Paradise of Justice because they arise in the context of opposition, by the Azalīs (followers of Azal), to

Baha'u'llah's claims and leadership, particularly in relation to Mīrzā Yaḥyā's attempts on Baha'u'llah's life, followed by the 'Most Great Separation', and thereafter a public challenge (that was supposed to be a showdown or contest between Baha'u'llah and Mīrzā Yaḥyā), and, finally, machinations on the part of Mīrzā Yaḥyā to persuade Ottoman officials to exile Baha'u'llah to a far-off place, by way of a harsh decree.

Baha'u'llah himself has made references to the 'Days of Stress' in some of his Tablets. In a Tablet to Javād-i Qazvīnī, for instance, Baha'u'llah writes:

In this year of stress, which hath been mentioned previously in the perspicuous Tablets, the great sedition and dire calamity shall come to pass with such severity as will remove the suckling babe from his mother's breast, and [p. 103] cast out the lovers from the land of their Beloved. Perchance, in these days and at those moments, that servant [Javād-i Qazvīnī?] will hold fast to the bounties of his Lord, cling to the hem of His mercy, and abide by His bidding with such firmness and steadfastness that if the people of enmity were to join forces with the hosts of obstruction, they would both be powerless to make him falter in his path.<sup>33</sup>

This is primarily an exhortation to steadfastness, as the Babi community was experiencing internal turmoil due to the challenge by Azal to Baha'u'llah's prophetic claims. In another Tablet, Baha'u'llah writes: 'O Javād! This year is the 'Year of Stress' (*sani-yi shidād*)'.<sup>34</sup> Baha'u'llah assures 'Javād' (perhaps also Javād-i Qazvīnī) that such times of tribulation will not deter Baha'u'llah from proclaiming his mission:

O Javād! This is the Year of Stress unto men, and it is the year of God's decree. Were calamity to befall Us, this would be a good thing, and We would be content therewith; and if God were to protect Us from calamity, this too would be good, and We would be grateful for it.<sup>35</sup>

Māzindarānī also mentions a third Tablet (recipient not specified), but provides a summary of its contents rather than reproducing the actual text. He writes:

In a Tablet [from Baha'u'llah] signed by Mīrzā Aqa Jan, dated 1283 AH, the 'Year of Stress' is mentioned, by which is meant the days of Mīrzā Yaḥyā's opposition, resistance, and adherence [to Siyyid Muḥammad Isfahani?].<sup>36</sup>

It would be reasonable to assume that the 'Year of Stress', as mentioned here, is basically synonymous with the 'Days of Stress'. Therefore, this Tablet is a contemporaneous writing that confirms that 1283 AH was one such 'Year of Stress'. (In the Gregorian calendar, 1283 AH converts to 16 May 1866 to 4 May 1867.) There were doubtless more years of prolonged 'stress'.

The timing of the 'Days of Stress', however, has never been definitely resolved in the published literature. Shoghi Effendi offers some definite statements that shed further light on the significance and duration of the 'Days of Stress'. Basically, this was an intense and protracted 'period of travail', in which the 'first major internal convulsion' within the fledgling Babi community precipitated 'the heaviest blow ever sustained by Him [Baha'u'llah] in His lifetime'.<sup>37</sup> This period of time began 'approximately a year after their arrival in Adrianople', when Azal's nefarious 'designs to poison Bahā'u'llāh' were conceived in the ferment and turpitude of Azal's fratricidal rivalry, as described above. So, the onset of the 'Days of Stress' would be around a year after 12 December 1863, which was the date of Baha'u'llah's arrival in Edirne. That is to say, the 'Days of Stress' must have begun around late 1864.<sup>38</sup> The end of the 'Days of Stress', however, apparently was not so clearly indicated by Shoghi Effendi.

Riaz Ghadimi actually gives two definitions for the terms 'Days of Stress' (*ayyām-i shidād*) and 'Years of Stress' (*sinīn-i shidād*), which he uses interchangeably.<sup>39</sup> One

refers to the years following the ascension of Baha'u'llah, when Mīrzā Muḥammad-‘Alī and his accomplices broke the Covenant by [p. 104] opposing ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s newly-assumed leadership of the Baha’i community. The other definition – and the one relevant to this discussion – refers to the years in Edirne when Mīrzā Yaḥyā rose against Baha’u’llah, pursuing machinations that ultimately culminated in Baha’u’llah’s excommunication of Mīrzā Yaḥyā and Siyyid Muḥammad Isfahani, which in turn resulted in the ‘Most Great Separation’. The ‘Most Great Separation’ (*faṣl-i akbar*), which occurred on Saturday, 10 March 1866, happened shortly before the beginning of 1283 AH.

Thereafter, in September 1867 (month of Jamādīyu’l-Avval 1284 A.H.),<sup>40</sup> a public confrontation (Persian: *mubāhalih*; Arabic: *mubāhala*)<sup>41</sup> between Baha’u’llah and Azal was arranged by mutual assent, to take place at the Sultan Selim mosque (Mosque of Selim in Edirne, Turkey) on a Friday. A twist in this tryst with fate took place when Azal failed to appear for this final and decisive showdown – despite the fact that Baha’u’llah waited until sundown. In the evening, later that same day, Baha’u’llah revealed the Tablet of Confrontation (*Lawḥ-i Mubāhala*), in which Baha’u’llah stated that he would be at Sultan Selim mosque for the next two days, waiting for Azal to appear. By failing to face Baha’u’llah, Azal lost face, whereupon many of Azal’s partisans, in Edirne and Iran, deserted him.

An end date to the ‘Days of Stress’ may be reasonably fixed by a process of deduction. This period has been characterized by Shoghi Effendi as the ‘rebellion’ of Azal, as well as his covert plots and overt acts against Baha’u’llah. The ‘Days of Stress’ are coterminous with the continued machinations of Mīrzā Yaḥyā, among the Babis in Edirne, against Baha’u’llah. Unless all such evils ceased after the *mubāhala*, then the problems, although less severe, presumably continued. Shoghi Effendi indicates the unrelenting plots and cabals by Azal in this telling statement: ‘The petitions of Mīrzā

Yahyā which reached them through Siyyid Muḥammad, his agent, had provoked them' (here, referring to 'Mīrzā Husayn-Khān, the Mushīru'd-Dawlih, and his associates' as the 'authorities in the capital').<sup>42</sup> So notorious was this entire ordeal that news of it reached the highest echelons of authority, culminating in a 'strongly worded Farmān, issued by Sultān Abdu'l-'Aziz', whose decree was 'to banish Bahā'u'llāh to the penal colony of 'Akkā, and Mīrzā Yahyā to Famagusta in Cyprus'. The original decree was 'to banish Bahā'u'llāh, Āqāy-i-Kalīm and Mīrzā Muḥammad-Qulī, with a servant to 'Akkā, while the rest were to proceed to Constantinople'.

This imperial decree, however, 'provoked scenes of indescribable distress' and was soon 'revoked', upon Baha'u'llah's insistence and on the subsequent order of Major Umar Effendi, commander of the armed escort, at Gallipoli, shortly after Baha'u'llah and family were taken from Adrianople on 12 August 1868. The revised order was to exile Baha'u'llah, and a retinue of seventy (along with several Azalīs), to Akka, while Azal and the bulk of his immediate followers (along with four Baha'is) were dispatched to the remote island of Cyprus.<sup>43</sup>

Clearly, Mīrzā Yahyā persisted in his machinations against Baha'u'llah, by dispatching various 'petitions' to 'Mīrzā Husayn-Khān, the Mushīru'd- Dawlih, and his associates' as the 'authorities in the capital', ultimately resulting, and culminating, in the 'strongly worded Farmān, issued by Sultān Abdu'l-'Aziz' which provoked 'scenes of indescribable distress'. This arguably is part and parcel of the 'Days of Stress'. Therefore, the 'Days of [p. 105] Stress' reasonably may be dated from around December 1864, to (on or shortly before) 21 August 1868, when Baha'u'llah embarked in an Austrian-Lloyd steamer for Alexandria, when Baha'u'llah was finally free of Azal.<sup>44</sup> The foregoing analysis is based largely on Shahrokh Monjazeb's well-grounded theory, to wit: 'We must also bear in mind that this special phrase (*Ayyām-i Shidād*), used by Bahā'u'llāh in His Tablets, was to underscore the psychological severity of that

very turbulent period of perfidy and dissension in Edirne which brought an extraordinary level of distress and pain to the person of Bahā'u'llāh'.<sup>45</sup>

These events likely provided the historical context (and possibly predated) the Paradise of Justice. The present writers find evidence that the Paradise of Justice definitely alludes to events within the 'Days of Stress'. Whether or not this important Tablet was revealed during the 'Days of Stress' or after is an open question for future researchers to resolve.

**Dating the Paradise of Justice: Late Edirne Hypothesis:** Similarly to Lambden, Cole proposes roughly the same date, based on this rationale:

This Tablet was probably written in winter-spring of 1867, at a time before Baha'u'llah decisively promulgated the ideal of constitutional monarchy and parliamentary governance, which he does only once he arrives in Akka. ... This Tablet toward the end refers to some Baha'is who were recently martyred. The first Baha'is to be martyred were Mīrzā Mustafa, Shaykh Ahmad, and Mīrzā 'Alī Naqī, all of Khurasan, at Tabriz on 8 January 1867. These three believers had been en route to Edirne to see Baha'u'llah, but were arrested by the Iranian authorities in Tabriz. I think it most likely that these are the martyrs referred to by Baha'u'llah in this Tablet, which would then date it to winter-spring, 1867.<sup>46</sup>

Baha'u'llah mentions those 'who suffer martyrdom in the path of God in these days' (par. 66), but the martyrs are not named. Balyuzi describes the events that culminated in the martyrdoms of Mīrzā Mustafa, Shaykh Ahmad and Mīrzā 'Alī Naqī. Balyuzi relates that these three, en route to Edirne to attain the presence of Baha'u'llah, arrived in Tabriz. There, they met a certain Siyyid 'Alī-yi 'Arab, who, in the course of their

conversation, deprecated Baha'u'llah in vile terms. Incensed and enraged, the three 'rushed him and tied around his neck the shawl he wore round his waist, which led to his death'. Shaykh Ahmad did not deny his role in the killing. The three were later beheaded, not because of the murder, 'but because they were Baha'is'.<sup>47</sup>

The acts of these three martyrs, in taking the life of their victim, was obviously contrary to Baha'u'llah's command in the preceding paragraph: 'Do thou forbid them to shed blood', and further: 'We, verily, have made this unlawful unto them in all the Tablets (*innā qad nahyināhum fī kullil alwāḥ*)' (par. 65). It may be that Baha'u'llah, if alluding to these three recent martyrs, takes this recent episode as an opportunity to emphasize that, while martyrdom is praiseworthy, violence is not.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to those martyrdoms, however, another Baha'i – this one completely innocent of any crime – was also martyred shortly thereafter.<sup>49</sup> Balyuzi notes that a petition – addressed to Baha'u'llah and written by Mīrzā Muḥammad-'Alī-yi Zanjānī, a physician – was found in the pockets of the Baha'i martyrs of Tabriz. This [p. 106] was apparently grounds enough for the execution of that physician, despite the fact that he not only had nothing to do with the aforementioned murder of Siyyid 'Alī-yi 'Arab, but was not even in Tabriz at the time of the incident. It is possible, therefore, that Baha'u'llah's reference to martyrs in the Paradise of Justice could have also included Mīrzā Muḥammad-'Alī-yi Zanjānī.

In addition to the foregoing evidence, others have pointed to the similarity between the language Baha'u'llah uses in this Tablet when mentioning John the Baptist (pars. 20–24) and his treatment of that figure in the Kitāb-i Badī',<sup>50</sup> revealed sometime between September 1867 and August 1868,<sup>51</sup> to draw the conclusion that this Tablet was probably revealed in the late Edirne period.

Cole's point that this Tablet was written prior to the Akka period is based on an

argument from silence – that is, it was revealed ‘at a time before Baha’u’llah decisively promulgated the ideal of constitutional monarchy and parliamentary governance’. Yet, Baha’u’llah does address the kings and rulers of the world so:

O concourse of rulers! Crown your heads with the diadems of justice (*akālīl al-‘adl*), that the regions of every land may be illumined with their light. Thus have We bidden ye in token of Our grace unto you.

O concourse of kings! Erelong will God make manifest on earth kings who will recline on the couches of justice (*namāriq al-‘adl*), and will rule amongst men even as they rule their own selves. They, indeed, are among the choicest of My creatures in the entire creation. (pars. 14–15)

Here, if not evidence of Baha’u’llah’s grander proclamation to the world’s most powerful individuals, there is a clear anticipation of Baha’u’llah’s increasing concern with good governance, for which ‘justice’ is a metonym and mandate. Thus, if anything, Baha’u’llah’s Paradise of Justice is transitional, from proclamation to the ‘people of the Bayan’ to the peoples of the world: ‘O people’ (par. 16). Both audiences – respectively immediate and virtual – are concurrently in view. The precise historical context of this Tablet, therefore, is a matter for further investigation.

### **Highlights of Baha’u’llah’s Paradise of Justice**

**Preamble (pars. 1–3):** Baha’u’llah describes this Tablet as the Paradise of Justice, laden with ‘wondrous fruits’ (par. 1). He singles out one of God’s names, ‘The Just’ (pars. 2–3), from which God inspires (‘breathes’) the ‘Spirit of Justice’ into ‘all that



dwell on earth'. This is stated as a potentiality, of course. The purpose is to empower people to 'arise to rule over themselves and over others with pure justice' (par. 3).

**'O this name!' (Spirit of Justice) (pars. 4–13):** Baha'u'llah addresses 'The Just' (or 'Justice') as though an intelligence. He does so by apostrophe (a figure of speech, in which some thing is addressed, as though to a person, pars. 4, 5, 6, 12, 13) and personification (another figure of speech). 'Justice' is a spiritual 'sun', the radiance of which can dispel the darkness of 'oppression' (par. 4). Divine 'Justice' is the 'very source' of justice on earth (par. 5). 'Justice' proceeds from Baha'u'llah, who 'ascended the throne of justice' (par. 6).

In this Tablet, Baha'u'llah singles out, or privileges, the quality or attribute of 'Justice' for special mention (par. 7). The various 'Names' of God, as manifested through Baha'u'llah, are 'raiments' (i.e. perfections or powers). 'Justice' may 'adorn' a person by God's will and power (par. 10). The spirit of 'Justice' is greatest when its quality of 'detachment' (or self-disinterest) is at its apex (par. 11). In due course, God will raise up the very embodiments of the spirit of 'Justice' (par. 12), 'through whom We shall roll up the standard of oppression and unfurl the banner of justice between the heavens and the earth' and through whom 'God shall blot out every trace of injustice from the earth' (par. 12).

Muhammad Afnan believes that, although this could be interpreted as a general allusion to sovereigns and others who hold the reins of secular power, it is probably a specific reference to the members of the Universal House of Justice.<sup>60</sup> Justice, moreover, is the great 'ornament of the sovereigns', who rule 'with equity and complete sincerity towards their subjects' (par. 13) The true 'crown' of rulers is 'diadems of justice' (par. 14). 'Erelong' such just kings will appear as 'the choicest of My creatures in the entire creation' (par. 15).

**‘O People’ (pars. 16–17):** Baha’u’llah enjoins ‘justice’, ‘courtesy and equity’ for the peoples of the world (par. 16). Baha’u’llah, moreover, has ‘planted trees of justice in this Paradise’ which ‘will, ere long, bear fruit’ (par. 17). [p. 109]

**‘O Embodiments of Justice’ (pars. 18–24):** Leaders should call upon the followers of the Bab to recognize Baha’u’llah (par. 18). The Babis’ belief in the Bab is questioned – i.e. compromised by their rejection of Baha’u’llah, foretold by the Bab (par. 19). Such people are ‘foolish’ and ‘heedless’ (par. 19) The Bab is compared to John the Baptist, and Baha’u’llah to Christ (par. 20). Like the followers of John the Baptist in rejecting Christ, the Babis have done the same with respect to Baha’u’llah (pars. 20–24).

**‘O people of the Bayān’ (pars. 25–26):** The Babis are then addressed directly, and castigated for their disbelief in Baha’u’llah, even though foretold by the Bab (pars. 25–26).

**‘O people!’ and their Leaders (pars. 27–44):** God speaks through Baha’u’llah, by revelation (par. 28). People should ‘judge fairly’ (par. 33) and recognize Baha’u’llah by virtue of his inherent qualities, independent of all bias, whether individually or by the influence of religious leaders (pars. 30–31).

Baha’u’llah is the metaphorical ‘Flute’ of God from which heavenly ‘melodies’ are played (par. 34). Switching metaphors, Baha’u’llah rhetorically asks: ‘Can the sun that riseth above the horizon of Revelation shine aught but light from itself?’ (par. 34). Baha’u’llah is now the ‘Supreme Pen’ set in motion by ‘the fingers of your Lord’ (par. 35). ‘The dwellers of the Realms above are astonished’ by the people’s rejection of Baha’u’llah, such that the ‘Eye of Justice’ and the ‘Reality of Justice’ are perturbed thereby (par. 36). ‘Say: O people! Ye have entered Paradise, and have attained unto a

Rose' (par. 38).

**'Explanation of Justice' (pars. 45–52):** Baha'u'llah explains that 'justice consisteth of innumerable degrees and incalculable meanings' (par. 46). The 'essence of justice and the source thereof' are embodied in Baha'u'llah's laws (par. 46). Baha'u'llah 'doth verily incarnate the highest, the infallible standard of justice unto all creation' (par. 46). 'It is through justice that every one is rendered his due' (par. 47). Recognition of Baha'u'llah itself is an act of justice. (par. 48.) '... whoso believeth not' in Baha'u'llah hath indeed abandoned the stronghold of justice' (par. 48).

**'O people!' (pars. 49–52):** The advent of 'Divine justice' is approaching, 'for the promised hour is now come' (par. 49). 'Say: O people! Adorn your bodies with the ornament of justice' (par. 50).

**'O servant!' (Āqā Siyyid Muḥammad-Riḍā Shahrīrādī, pars. 53–57):** Baha'u'llah calls upon the 'Supreme Pen!' to manifest 'Riḍā after Nabī' as 'one of the embodiments of justice' which is 'his faith in God', which 'is a justice unmatched by any other' (par. 53). The following historical account will give the reader a fair idea of the character of Āqā Siyyid Muḥammad-Riḍā Shahrīrādī in light of Baha'u'llah's commendation of him:

Of the two youngest sons of Āqā Mir Muḥammad 'Alī, Mir Abu Talib Shahrīrādī ... survived Shaykh Tabarsi, while Mir Muḥammad Riḍā Shahrīrādī ... had been left behind to look after their mother. After the end of the Shaykh Tabarsi episode, a severe persecution erupted in Shahrīrād [p. 110] and after a time the family were forced to move in with their sister Ma'sumih in Sangsar. Even here they were relentlessly persecuted, at one stage being reduced to eating grass. Although still in their teens and early twenties, the two brothers took on extensive responsibilities

looking after the dependents of those who had been killed at Shaykh Tabarsi. Their property had been looted and so they began as pedlars, eventually developing a pattern of travelling together through Mazandaran in the winter months, taking with them salt, fruit and dried foods from Shahmirzad, and returning to the Sangsar area in the summer with rice from Mazandaran. In all the years of their travelling, they faced many hardships and much persecution but they never hid their religion from anyone. Over the years, these two succeeded in converting many people in Mazandaran, in villages such as Ivil and Rawshankuh and towns such as ‘Alīyabad (Shahi). The two brothers married the two daughters of a Babi, Mulla Amina of ‘Arab-Khayl in Mazandaran, and also established a residence in that village.

In early 1861 the two brothers were arrested in Bihnamir and taken together with three of the Babis of that area to Tehran where they were imprisoned together with several other Babis for two and a half years. At the shah’s court there was a native of Sangsar called Āqā Muḥammad Sangsari of whom the shah was so fond that he called him ‘Dā’ī’ (uncle). This man had been a close friend of the brothers’ father, Mir Muḥammad ‘Alī, and now managed to obtain orders for their release. (He had also written to Mahdi-Quli Mīrzā during the Shaykh Tabarsi episode and asked him to ensure the safety of the sons of Mir Muḥammad ‘Alī – an action that enabled Mir Abu Talib to survive this episode.) The two brothers would not leave the prison however until their fellow prisoners were also released and Da’i arranged this as well. The latter took the two brothers to his home in Tehran as guests and they convinced him of the truth of the Baha’i Faith. After this they undertook a trip to Isfahan, Yazd and Khurasan in the company of Ibn Asdaq, visiting Baha’i communities. Several accounts comment on the joyful and radiant faces of these two brothers and mention that the Baha’is in each place looked forward to their visits.<sup>61</sup>

Baha’u’llah calls upon Muḥammad-Riḍā Shahrīrādī to dispel the ‘darts of doubt’

among the Babis and to ‘draw their attention to this Announcement’, i.e. Baha’u’llah (par. 55). Faithful to this charge, Muḥammad-Riḍā Shahmīrzādī fulfilled his mission. Here is one example:

A similarly important local cleric was Mulla Muḥammad Hasan (d. 1322/1902) who was converted in 1285/1868 after speaking with Mir Muḥammad Rida (Muḥammad-Riḍā Shahmīrzādī). He renounced his religious leadership and became a builder as well as a copier of the Baha’i scriptures. Nevertheless, his relatives tried to kill him. He was responsible for spreading the Baha’i Faith to the village of Aftar. His wife was also a distinguished Baha’i.<sup>62</sup>

Another example of his effectiveness as a Baha’i teacher is seen in the fact that ‘about half of the villagers (of Ivil) became Baha’is, a process that was assisted by the visits of such persons as Mulla ‘Alī Jan Mahfuruzaki ... and Mir Muḥammad Rida Shahmīrzādī’.<sup>63</sup> [p. 111]

Baha’u’llah further takes to task the Babis for their opposition (pars. 56–58) and for having ‘broken the Covenant of God’ (par. 59), such that Baha’u’llah is ‘left alone amidst the people of the Bayān’ (par. 60). The Babis are directly addressed (par. 61) and called upon to recognize Baha’u’llah as the one foretold by the Bab (par. 61). In rejecting Baha’u’llah, the wayward Babis are the oppressors, notwithstanding that Baha’u’llah has raised up the ‘embodiments of justice’, i.e. the Baha’is (par. 62). Such Babis are considered satanic (par. 63). Baha’u’llah asks Shahmīrzādī to ‘attract’ the Babis by ‘the wonders of My melodies and My words’ (par. 64) – in other words, to proclaim Baha’u’llah’s message among the remnant Babis. As an illustration of how this illustrious Baha’i was faithful to Baha’u’llah’s command, the following episode – which Momen relates – is of interest:

In 1276/1859, there was an episode of persecution in Sangsar when the mujtahid of the town wrote to the governor of Simnan complaining about the Babis in the village. (This mujtahid was related to Mir Muḥammad Rida and had been a Babi at first but had apostatized after the defeat of the Babis at Shaykh Tabarsi.) The governor sent some officials who ill-treated some of the Babis. They arrested Mir Muḥammad Rida and his nephew, bound them and took them off towards Sangsar. On the way, they came to a shrine called Imamzadih Qasim (1 kilometre north of Sangsar) of which Mir Muḥammad Rida had been custodian until he had been replaced (this was the original home village of the family). He spoke for over an hour to the people of the village that surrounds this shrine (population 500 in 1951) and several were converted. When they reached Sangsar, they arrested Ma‘sumih, the sister of Mir Muḥammad Rida, her son and their cousin as well as two other Babis and insulted and harassed them. They released Ma‘sumih and took the other six off to Simnan, where they were thrown into prison. After three months of imprisonment, they were fined and released.<sup>64</sup>

Baha’u’llah also calls upon Muḥammad-Riḍā Shahrīrādī: ‘Do thou forbid them to shed blood’ (par. 65), because those ‘who dispute with and wage war against men have indeed forsaken the Paradise of Justice’ (par. 64). As for those who ‘suffer martyrdom in the path of God’, they will be welcomed by ‘the entire company of the Concourse on High’, who ‘shall stand ready to receive them bearing the banners of this Cause’ (par. 66).

In upholding the ‘Covenant of God’ (par. 59), Muḥammad-Riḍā Shahrīrādī remained faithful to the end:

After the passing of Baha’u’llah, Jamal Burujirdi, who had travelled frequently to

Mazandaran and was highly regarded there, wrote letters to gather support for Mīrzā Muḥammad ‘Alī in Barfurush, Sari and Mahfuruzak but was unsuccessful owing to the efforts of Haji Mīrzā Haydar ‘Alī Isfahani and Mīr Muḥammad Rida Shahmīrzādī.<sup>65</sup>

And further:

In 1893, following the death of Baha’u’llah, Mir Muḥammad Rida visited ‘Abdu’l Baha in Akka. During this trip, he became aware of the schemings of Mīrzā Muḥammad ‘Alī (even though these had not yet become public) [p. 112] and upon his return, he warned the Baha’is of the area so effectively of the dangers of failing to follow ‘Abdu’l-Baha that no one from the area later followed Mīrzā Muḥammad ‘Alī, despite two visits to the area by Āqā Jamal Burujirdi, a Baha’i who sided with Mīrzā Muḥammad ‘Alī.<sup>66</sup>

Shahmīrzādī’s death is noteworthy as well:

When Mir Muḥammad Rida Shahmīrzādī ... died in Barfurush, the people of the town forbade his burial. It was the Luri Baha’is who enabled him to be buried in their quarter.<sup>67</sup>

There is also more extensive biographical information on Shahmīrzādī available in a variety of Persian sources.<sup>68</sup>

**‘Prayer’ and Benediction (pars. 68–69):** Baha’u’llah closes with a prayer, in which God is acknowledged as ‘the One Who hath planted the trees of justice in the Paradise of Thy Revelation and Thy Wisdom’, and prays that the faithful may ‘abide beneath the shadow of their leaves’ (par. 67). Baha’u’llah ends the Tablet by inviting the faithful to

partake of ‘the fruits of these trees’ and to ‘rest beneath the shadow of their leaves’ of the trees in the ‘Paradise of Justice’ (par. 68). Muḥammad-Riḍā Shahrīrādī is given this great ‘Bounty’ (par. 69).

### **Theological Dimension of ‘Justice’**

Does Baha’u’llah’s Paradise of Justice offer a new paradigm of justice? Certainly ‘justice’ is used in a number of ways, which can be appreciated within the following framework of analysis, encompassing six dimensions of justice: (1) theological, (2) revelatory, (3) authoritarian, (4) contemporaneous, (5) social, and (6) individual.

A place to begin might be termed ‘theological justice’. One can say that the universe itself, in a sense, is founded on ‘justice’ as it pertains to order. When God, Baha’u’llah writes, ascended the ‘throne of justice’, He ‘fashioned all created things through a single word from [His] side’ (par. 6). Indeed, the ‘Name’ or attribute of justice is characterized as ‘the very source of Our justice amidst such among Our servants as are near unto Us’. Through this justice, God has ‘manifested the justice of every just one, and has adorned the sincere ones among [His] servants’ with the ‘ornament’ of justice (par. 5). In other words, justice is a virtue, by virtue of the fact that it is an attribute of God.

Justice, therefore, is both divine and human, i.e. godly and goodly. Baha’u’llah opens this Tablet by invoking God’s attributes of justice and wisdom: ‘In the Name of the Just, the All-Wise’ (par. 2). This ‘Tablet’ is a discourse on God’s ‘Name’ (attribute, or power), ‘The Just’ (par. 3). From this ‘Name’, God has ‘breathed the Spirit of Justice into the mortal frames of all that dwell on earth’ so that, ideally, ‘they may arise to rule over themselves and over others with pure justice’ (par. 3). Thus justice, as manifested in this world, is anchored in divine justice. In this sense, Baha’u’llah makes justice sacred. In other words, justice is not simply ‘secular’. It is a sacred value and virtue.



However, there is a distinction between institutional and individual justice, as explained below.

In his essay on Baha'u'llah's Paradise of Justice, Muhammad Afnan makes the following observation:

... the establishment of justice on the Day of Recompense is the objective of the divine religions, and the promised 'Paradise' refers to a place where the effects of divine justice will encompass everyone. This Paradise will be realized when justice is established; thus, the Paradise of Justice is the very reality of that justice – promised and divine – which is mentioned in this Tablet.<sup>69</sup>

The preamble of the Tablet (par. 1) states that the 'Paradise of Justice ... hath appeared as a token of God's grace'. Muhammad Afnan notes that these two concepts – justice and grace – are often portrayed as irreconcilable, yet the two seem to be interconnected in this Tablet. He writes:

In the nomenclature of religious studies, 'justice' and 'grace' are concepts that are invariably invoked as two of God's attributes, and they are portrayed as opposites of one another. 'Justice' looks to the merit of a person or thing to ensure that they receive their due accordingly, whereas 'grace' is rooted in God's favour, his beneficence, and his disregard for an individual's capacity or talent. Could we not say, however, that at the very outset of this Tablet, the Manifestation of God looks upon all created things, in a general sense – and upon every person, more specifically – with the eye of grace and pardon?<sup>70</sup>

Afnan goes on to give another example<sup>71</sup> of how justice and grace are interconnected in his observation of par. 17, where Baha'u'llah states that God has planted 'trees of

justice' in the 'Paradise of Justice', and has watered those trees with 'the waters of [His] grace'.

### **Revelatory Dimension of 'Justice'**

Justice, as conceived in Baha'u'llah's Paradise of Justice, 'consisteth of innumerable degrees and incalculable meanings', a veritable 'Ocean' from which God has given mankind a mere 'sprinkling', an amount nonetheless sufficient to 'cleanse [mankind] from the defilement of oppression, and cause [them] to be numbered with the sincere ones' (par. 46). Through the figure of speech known as 'apostrophe', Baha'u'llah hypostasizes, personifies and calls upon 'Justice' to take pride in the fact that it has been made 'the dawning-place of [God's] justice amidst all people' (par. 12).

'Pure justice' is defined as a justice from which all that dwell on earth 'shall not deviate by one jot or one tittle' in the exercise thereof 'over themselves and over others' (par. 1). In a highly intriguing explication of justice, Baha'u'llah declares that: 'The essence of justice and the source thereof are both embodied in the ordinances prescribed by Him Who is the Manifestation of the Self of God amongst men'. This Manifestation of God (Baha'u'llah) incarnates 'the highest, the infallible standard of justice unto all creation'. Baha'u'llah remarks that: 'It is through justice that every one is rendered his due', and that – contrary to what 'most of the people imagine' – this is behaviour that can be discerned 'in the manifestations of the world of being' (par. 47). What is apparently the most potent form of justice – a justice that 'causeth the pillars of tyranny to quake and the foundations of misbelief to crumble' – is none other than 'the recognition of this [the Baha'i] Revelation' (par. 48).

Those who have failed to believe in Baha'u'llah are described as having 'abandoned the stronghold of justice', whose 'name is recorded among the [p. 114] oppressors in God's

mighty and guarded Tablets’ (par. 48). ‘Even if a man were to strive until the end that hath no end and bend every possible effort to deal equitably with others, if he should ever hesitate in the exercise of justice, he would verily have committed an injustice against his own self, and would be regarded as one of the oppressors’ (par. 48). Those who have ‘fail[ed] to apprehend [the] import’ of ‘the days of Divine justice’ will be ‘accounted among the erring’ (par. 49).

### **Authoritarian Dimension of ‘Justice’**

Justice, in essence, is defined by Baha’u’llah as follows: ‘It is through justice that every one is rendered his due’ (par. 47). As for historical context, the world in the nineteenth-century was dominated by monarchs, autocrats, dictators and the like. This being the case, when speaking of ‘kings’ and ‘rulers’ (pars. 14–15), they are metonyms for government institutions in general, endowed with plenary legislative, executive, judiciary and administrative powers. Baha’u’llah calls upon those in authority to carry out their duties with self-disinterest in favour of the best interests of the people, i.e. to do whatever is best for the commonweal.

Justice is considered ‘an ornament of the sovereigns’. A sovereign can best practise this ‘ornament’ by ‘act[ing] with equity and complete sincerity towards their subjects, and decree[ing] for them what God Himself hath decreed in His mighty and everlasting Book’ (par. 13). Should the rulers of the world choose to ‘crown [their] heads with the diadems of justice’, these diadems will have the potential to illuminate ‘the regions of every land with their light’ (par. 14). This mandate extends from the present to the future, with this vision or prophecy in view: God will soon ‘make manifest on earth kings who will recline on the couches of justice’. These kings ‘will rule amongst men even as they rule their own selves’, and they are considered to be ‘among the choicest of [God’s] creatures in the entire creation’ (par. 15).

## **Contemporaneous Dimension of ‘Justice’**

Baha’u’llah, addressing ‘the embodiment of justice’, takes to task those ‘who have disbelieved in [Him] and ascribed partners unto [Him], even after [His] advent’ notwithstanding the fact that Baha’u’llah’s advent was ‘promised in every Tablet’. This suggests that the failure of the Babis (whom Baha’u’llah thoroughly castigates soon before this point) to divorce themselves from literal or superficial understandings of their scripture, which ultimately resulted in their rejection of Baha’u’llah, constituted an act of great injustice (par. 37). The ‘Eye of Justice’ and the ‘Reality of Justice’ are both distressed at Baha’u’llah’s plight, suggesting that the suffering He underwent and the calamities imposed upon Him were demonstrations of extreme injustice (par. 36).

Forecasting the future consequences of contemporary tyranny, Baha’u’llah states that ‘the cruelty’ of those ‘oppressors’ (also referred to as ‘infidels’) who ‘ascribed oppression unto the One through Whom the embodiments of justice were raised up [Baha’u’llah]’ will, ere long, ‘change this earth and frustrate the affairs of men’ (par. 62). Baha’u’llah beseeches God, Who has ‘planted the trees of Justice in the Paradise of [His] Revelation and [His] Wisdom’, to ‘shelter’ those trees from ‘the raging storms of fate [p. 115] and the rolling thunder of calamity, that their boughs and their branches may grow and develop beneath the shade of [His] bounty and the canopy of [His] mercy’. He further entreats God to ‘cause them who are the chosen ones amongst [His] creatures and the truly devoted amidst [His] servants to abide beneath the shadow of [the] leaves’ of these trees – in other words, he beseeches God to help His servants to be just (par. 67).

## **Social Dimension of ‘Justice’**

The peoples of the world are instructed to ‘adorn themselves...with the raiment of

justice, inasmuch as the exercise thereof befitteth all mankind'. By contrast, those who have 'dispute[d] with and wage[d] war against men' are described as having 'forsaken the Paradise of Justice', and have been 'numbered with the oppressors in the sublime and preserved Tablets' (par. 65). Baha'u'llah goes on to say that He has 'enjoined courtesy and equity' upon people 'in most of His Tablets', as if to suggest that justice, equity and courtesy are all somehow related (par. 16). It is 'through this name' (justice) that 'God hath shed His splendour upon all things in this Tablet'.

They who have been illumined with the light of justice and have attained unto it are reckoned with 'the truly devoted among [Baha'u'llah's] servants' (par. 17). God has planted 'trees of justice' in this 'Paradise' (of justice – in other words, this Tablet), and He has 'watered them with the waters of [His] grace'. He assures, moreover, that 'every one of those trees will, ere long, bear fruit' (par. 17).

### **Individual Dimension of 'Justice'**

Justice is a virtue, as Shoghi Effendi explains: 'In the Riḍvānu'l-'Adl ... the virtue of justice is exalted'.<sup>72</sup> 'Justice', on an individual, interpersonal level, is defined primarily in terms of two corollary virtues, 'courtesy' and 'equity':

Adorn yourselves, O people, with the raiment of justice, inasmuch as the exercise thereof befitteth all mankind, did ye but know it. Thus have We enjoined courtesy and equity upon you in most of Our Tablets, that ye may be of them who comprehend (par. 16).

Another key concept of 'Justice' is adherence to laws, socio-moral principles and ethics that are conveyed through Baha'u'llah's 'revelation':

O people of the earth! Know ye that justice consisteth of innumerable degrees and incalculable meanings, yet We have given you only a sprinkling from this Ocean, that it may cleanse you from the defilement of oppression and cause you to be numbered with the sincere ones. Know verily that the essence of justice and the source thereof are both embodied in the ordinances prescribed by Him Who is the Manifestation of the Self of God amongst men, if ye be of them that recognize this truth. He doth verily incarnate the highest, the infallible standard of justice unto all creation. ... Were men to discover the motivating purpose of God's Revelation, they would assuredly cast away their fears, and, with hearts filled with gratitude, rejoice with exceeding gladness (par. 46)

That the 'essence of justice' inheres in 'God's Revelation' expands the notion of justice, making justice more broad-based, anchored as it is in [p. 116] the Baha'i sacred texts. Humanity, collectively and individually, is instructed to 'adorn [their] bodies with the ornament of justice'. In order to do this, one must 'enjoin ... that which God Himself hath enjoined, and be not of them that transgress their bounds' (par. 50). Addressing the recipient of this Tablet, Āqā Siyyid Muḥammad

Riḍā Shahrīrādī, Baha'u'llah describes Shahrīrādī's 'justice' as 'his faith in God', and He declares that this is 'a justice unmatched by any other' (par. 53). The Paradise of Justice was created 'through [God's] strength and power', and was sent to Shahrīrādī 'with a glorious and wondrous fruit'. In tasting 'the fruits of these trees' and 'rest[ing] beneath the shadow of their leaves', humanity can be 'protected from the fire of the infidels' (par. 68). In addition to this, Baha'u'llah also treats the teaching of Baha'i precepts and principles (along with recognition of the divine authority of Baha'u'llah) as yet another way of promoting justice.

## Conclusion

**Date of Revelation:** Historically, whether Baha'u'llah's Paradise of Justice belongs to the late Edirne period or to the early Akka period, in the final analysis, may be a distinction without a difference. The historical context is clear enough. This Tablet addresses both the 'people of the Bayan' and the peoples of the world – and their respective leaders. There is a consensus that Baha'u'llah's Paradise of Justice refers to the period of time that Baha'u'llah designated as the 'Days of Stress'. Whether or not this Tablet was revealed in the late Edirne or early Akka period is a separate, although related inquiry. The present writers, based on their independent investigation and careful review of the available evidence, are of the opinion that Baha'u'llah's Paradise of Justice was almost certainly revealed during the late Edirne period. That is to say, this Tablet was written during the latter part of the 'Days of Stress'. Exactly when, however, is not possible to determine with precision. That said, is it possible to fix an end-point to the 'Days of Stress'?

**Duration of the 'Days of Stress':** The 'Days of Stress' refers to the machinations of Azal against Baha'u'llah. Baha'u'llah's Paradise of Justice evidently alludes to Azal's attempts on Baha'u'llah's life, to wit: 'you [Azal] persisted until you resolved to Baha'u'llah's Paradise of Justice 118

shed His [Baha'u'llah's] blood' (par. 26). There is a consensus that the 'Days of Stress' belongs to the Edirne period, starting around December 1864 (approximately a year after arrival from Istanbul in December 1863). There is a further consensus that the 'Most Great Separation' (*faṣl-i akbar*) – on Saturday, 10 March 1866 – belongs to this same period. After the 'Most Great Separation', Azal resumed, renewed and redoubled his opposition – much 'to Bahā'u'llāh's profound distress'.<sup>73</sup>

This led to the episode known as the *Mubāhilih*, in September 1867. The question remains as to when the ‘Days of Stress’ ended.

The prevailing opinion appears to favour the view that the ‘Days of Stress’ ended right after the episode of the *Mubāhilih*. However, after the *Mubāhilih*, Shoghi Effendi speaks of ‘[o]ther developments and happenings of great, though lesser, significance’ that must be taken into account, if this ‘agitated and most momentous phase of Bahā’u’llāh’s ministry’ is to be fully appreciated.<sup>74</sup> Therefore, it is possible to read Shoghi Effendi’s [p. 117] narrative as a sustained history of Azal’s plots and cabals against Baha’u’llah, which ‘was engineered throughout by the tortuous intrigues and incessant machinations of that same diabolical Siyyid Muḥammad, that vile whisperer’ (Azal’s instigator and accomplice in all these nefarious intrigues).

In a book entitled *God Passes By* (1944), Shoghi Effendi wrote an interpretive history of the Baha’i Faith. He devoted an entire section – ‘Chapter X: The Rebellion of Mīrzā Yaḥyā and the Proclamation of Bahā’u’llāh’s Mission in Adrianople’ – to the Edirne period.<sup>75</sup> The Gallipoli episode is right afterward, and is discussed by Shoghi Effendi in Chapter Ten of *God Passes By* as well.

The present writers venture the theory that the ‘Days of Stress’ not only included: (1) the attempts on the life of Bahā’u’llāh, as well as (2) the ‘Most Great Separation’ and (3) the *Mubāhilih* episode, but also that (4) the ‘Days of Stress’ extended into the Gallipoli episode, at which time Bahā’u’llāh effectively had the Farman altered in its implementation – a major victory over the last remaining attempts to wrest leadership away from Bahā’u’llāh:

The fateful decision was eventually arrived at to banish Bahā’u’llāh to the penal colony of ‘Akká, and Mīrzā Yahyá to Famagusta in Cyprus. This decision was



embodied in a strongly worded Farmán, issued by Sultán Abdu'l-'Azíz. Even in Gallipoli, where three nights were spent, no one knew what Bahá'u'lláh's destination would be. Some believed that He and His brothers would be banished to one place, and the remainder dispersed, and sent into exile. Others thought that His companions would be sent back to Persia, while still others expected their immediate extermination. The government's original order was to banish Bahá'u'lláh, Áqáy-i-Kalím and Mírzá Muhammad-Qulí, with a servant to 'Akká, while the rest were to proceed to Constantinople. This order, which provoked scenes of indescribable distress, was, however, at the insistence of Bahá'u'lláh, and by the instrumentality of Umar Effendi, a major appointed to accompany the exiles, revoked. It was eventually decided that all the exiles, numbering about seventy, should be banished to 'Akká.<sup>76</sup>

Alternatively, it could be argued that the Farman itself – decreeing a separation between Baha'u'llah and Azal – marked the end of the 'Days of Stress'.

Either way, the 'Days of Stress' extended well beyond the 'Confrontation' (Arabic: *Mubāhala*) of September 1867. To the best of the present writers' knowledge, this particular point has not been hypothesized before; yet this view is based squarely on a close reading of Chapter Ten of *God Passes By*.

**Decree Against Bloodshed:** On 22 April 1863, Baha'u'llah abrogated holy war (jihād), as Baha'u'llah later recounts: 'On the first day of His arrival in the garden designated the Riḍvān, the Ancient Beauty established Himself upon the Most Great Throne. Thereupon, the Tongue of Glory uttered three blessed verses: First, that in this Revelation the use of the sword is prohibited'.<sup>77</sup> Saiedi points out that Baha'u'llah's principle of nonviolence was promulgated privately among the Babis in Baghdad, and thereafter publicly in Edirne.<sup>78</sup> But the question of when this same declaration, as a

matter of ‘public record’, as it were, first appeared in Baha’u’llah’s writings by way of an open epistle, is a distinct – albeit related – historical issue. The present [p. 118] writers submit that the Paradise of Justice may well be among Baha’u’llah’s first ‘public’ proclamations of the abrogation of jihad. Although this is not conclusive for dating purposes, this conclusion has independent value.

**Dimensions of ‘Justice’:** Thematically, this study demonstrates how Baha’u’llah’s Paradise of Justice presents a new, significantly expanded paradigm of justice, both in precept and practice. Certainly ‘justice’ is used in a number of ways, which can be appreciated within the foregoing framework of analysis, in six dimensions of justice: (1) theological, (2) revelatory, (3) authoritarian, (4) contemporaneous, (5) social, and (6) individual.

Justice is both individual and collective. This Tablet significantly broadens the horizons of ‘justice’ by expanding the purview of ‘justice’ to encompass equity, courtesy, sincerity, faith and righteousness. The term ‘justice’ occurs 38 times in the text, with ‘equity’ mentioned twice and ‘courtesy’ once. The emphasis placed on these two latter terms, however, deserves comment. In par. 16, Baha’u’llah says that he has ‘enjoined courtesy (*al-adab*) and equity (*al-inṣāf*)’ throughout most of his Tablets. This claim, though grand, is true to fact. It is interesting that this pronouncement should immediately follow his instruction that people should ‘adorn (themselves) ... with the raiment of justice (*ridā’ al-‘adl*)’ – indicating that justice, equity and courtesy are all somehow related. In one of his other writings, Baha’u’llah notes that ‘equity’ (or ‘fair-mindedness’, as the word *inṣāf* has been translated in this particular instance) is ‘but one of the expressions’ of justice.<sup>79</sup> In a similar vein, Baha’u’llah also says ‘It is through justice that every one is rendered his due’ (par. 47). It is in this way that justice – normally the prerogative of sovereigns and institutions – can be demonstrated on an interpersonal level by any individual.

This Tablet has intrinsic interest sufficient to warrant a study on historical grounds alone. Yet, this text is a spiritual document as well. It is, after all, a scripture, and, in Baha'i belief, a 'revelation' by God, through Baha'u'llah. This is where history doubles as homily – where the narrative itself edifies. In fine, Baha'u'llah's Paradise of Justice transforms received notions of 'justice' and elevates this virtue to new heights of aspiration and praxis.

Not only does Baha'u'llah's Paradise of Justice widen the reach and scope of justice, it does more. Justice, moreover, is made sacred. Justice is divine, according to Baha'u'llah. Justice, after all, derives from the 'Name' of God as 'The Just' (*al-'ādil*). (See par. 47.) In other words, although typically considered a 'secular' concern within rather specific institutional confines, Baha'u'llah allegorizes, personifies, symbolizes and otherwise expatiates on 'Justice' in such a way as to vivify the concept. This rhetorical strategy operates on multiple levels, consistent with the several audiences addressed – kings, rulers, people in general and the Babis in particular, not to mention the recipient, Āqā Siyyid Muḥammad-Riḍā Shahrīrādī, whom Baha'u'llah acclaims as 'one of the embodiments of justice' whose 'justice is his faith in God' that is 'unmatched by any other' (par. 53). From this we may tentatively conclude: Justice – encompassing, as it does, both faith and action – is the essence of the Baha'i concept of salvation, both individual and societal.

Mīr Muḥammad-Riḍā – immortalized by Baha'u'llah's Paradise of Justice – lives on, as the exemplar and paradigm of 'justice' that originates in faith and expresses itself in courtesy, fair-mindedness, equity and service to others, alive to the spiritual as well as social dimensions of life in the wider scheme of things. Baha'u'llah's metaphor of 'Paradise' is reflexive: not only is 'Paradise' a reality in the afterlife, but an angelic mode of [p. 119] being in this life. For those who aspire, 'Paradise' inspires. Here,

‘Justice’ is its own ‘Paradise’. To create a world of justice and equity is to realize Paradise on Earth. If ‘Justice’ is somehow a ‘Paradise’, then ‘Paradise’ is no longer otherworldly. ‘Paradise’ is a this-worldly paradigm of how things ought to be, and can become. That is the mission of the charismatic prophet-founder, and a function of the sacred text.

As revelatory text, Baha’u’llah’s Paradise of Justice is best analyzed within the phenomenology of revelation, and therefore may be characterized as a document that is inspired, and informed, by flashes of inspiration. As such, it is not a systematic text – nor does it pretend to be, in any sense of the word, a treatise. There is a certain ‘creative’ element of prophetic revelation (leaving truth-claims aside) that is intended to inspire faith, enlighten consciousness and motivate action on the part of the believers.

**Directions for Further Research:** The fact that Baha’u’llah’s Paradise of Justice presents ‘justice’ multidimensionally invites further study on the basis of its wider implications in relation to social discourse and good governance.

One notable effort in this direction is Udo Schaefer’s two-volume treatise, *Baha’i Ethics*.<sup>80</sup> The section ‘Justice in Baha’u’llah’s Scriptures’,<sup>81</sup> includes discussion of Baha’u’llah’s Paradise of Justice. Space does not permit a review of Schaefer’s analysis here, except to say that future research should build upon the foundation that Schaefer has laid for further study of Baha’i concepts of justice, as these pertain to the wide-ranging and comprehensive panoply of other virtues set forth in Baha’i texts as well. It may be said that Schaefer’s work represents the first systematic study of the Baha’i ethics, to which the present study may, in some way, contribute.

Another important work in this vein that should not go unnoticed is Shapour Rassekh’s review of justice as it is portrayed and defined in Baha’i literature, entitled *Mafhūm-i*

*'Adl dar Āthār-i Mubāraki-yi Baha'i.*<sup>82</sup> Like Schaefer, Rassekh also mentions Baha'u'llah's Paradise of Justice in his article, in addition to other writings from Baha'u'llah, 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi that discuss the concept of justice.

Although all of these writings bear on the Baha'i concept of justice and present a much fuller picture, what distinguishes the Paradise of Justice is the way that it correlates and interrelates adjunct notions of 'justice' – such as faith, virtue, ethics, as well as distinctively individual and institutional parameters of justice – as a multidimensional paradigm, by which this cardinal virtue can best be promoted on the widest possible scale.

### **Translation: Riḍwān al-'Adl: Paradise of Justice**

- (1) This is the Paradise of Justice (*riḍwān al-'adl*), which hath appeared as a token of God's grace and been adorned by Him with glorious and wondrous fruits.
- (2) In the Name of the All-Just, the All-Wise.
- (3) This is a Tablet in which God hath raised up His Name, 'The Just', (*al-'ādil*) and from which He hath breathed the Spirit of Justice (*rūḥal-'adl*) into the mortal frames of all that dwell on earth, that they may arise to rule [p. 120] over themselves and over others with pure justice (*'adl al-khāliṣ*) – a justice from which they shall not deviate by one jot or one tittle.
- (4) O this name! We, verily, have made thee one of the suns of Our most excellent names between earth and heaven. Shed thou thy mighty and wondrous splendour upon the whole of creation, that perchance they may gather together beneath thy shadow, cast the ways of oppression behind their backs, and be illumined by thy hallowed and resplendent light.
- (5) O this name! We have indeed made thee the very source of Our justice amidst such

among Our servants as are near unto Us. Through thee, We have manifested the justice of every just one, and have adorned the sincere ones among Our servants with thine ornament.

- (6) O this name! Beware lest this station deceive thee and prevent thee from showing humility before God, the Almighty, the Most Powerful. Know thou that thy relationship unto Us is the same as any other relationship; no distinction is there between thee and all else besides thee that have been created in heaven and on earth. For when We ascended the throne of justice (*'arsh al-'adl*), We fashioned all created things through a single word from Our side. Thy Lord is the All-Wise, and His wisdom encompasseth all things. We have exalted certain names to the kingdom of eternity as a token of Our grace, and I verily am the Most Powerful, the Most Exalted, the Mighty, the Incomparable.
- (7) Say: No relationship is there between God and His creation. Sanctified is He from whatsoever He hath created, and from the remembrances of such among His servants as make mention of Him. Indeed, the relationship which is attributed to Him and mentioned in the Tablets hath been revealed through the decree that was sent down from the Heaven of the Divine Will, Which was brought into being through My all-pervading and all-compelling behest. Nevertheless, We have singled thee out and exalted thee in this Tablet, that thou mayest render thanks unto thy Lord, and be of them that are rid of all attachment to any one but Him. Beware lest the loftiness of thy name debar thee from God, thy Lord and the Lord of all worlds.
- (8) Verily, We exalt whomsoever We will through Our behest. We have, from eternity, been powerful to do what We have willed, and to ordain what We have pleased. Behold naught within thyself but the radiance of the Sun of the Word of Revelation, which hath shone forth above the horizon of the Will of thy Lord, the

Compassionate, the Merciful. In like manner, behold naught within thine essence any power, any strength, any movement, or any tranquility unless it be bidden by God, the Sovereign, the Almighty, the All-Powerful. Be thou animated by the breezes of thy Lord, the Most High, the All-Glorious, and not by that which wafteth from the precincts of passion and desire. Thus biddeth thee the Pen of the Most High, that thou mayest be reckoned with them who observe Our precepts.

- (9) Beware lest thou follow the example of the one We adorned with the ornament of names in the kingdom of creation – the one who, when he looked upon his own self and perceived the loftiness of his name, repudiated God, Who created him and sustained him, and thereupon fell from the most exalted station to the depths of degradation.<sup>83</sup> [p. 121]
- (10) Say: The Names are as raiments; We adorn those of Our servants We desire with them, and We take them away from whomsoever We will through Our behest. I am the All-Powerful, the Ordainer, the Omniscient. We take no counsel with Our servants before divesting them of this bounty, even as We consult them not before We bestow Our blessings upon them. Know, then, the command of thy Lord, and be of them who possess manifest certitude. The power We hold over all things can never be wrested from Us, neither can the Hands of Our power ever be chained up, couldst thou but understand.
- (11) Say: The station of every name that knoweth his Lord, and doth not transgress his limit, shall wax greater at every moment, and the Day-Star of the tender mercies of his Lord – the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Generous – will shine upon him continually. He shall ascend the ladder of detachment until he reacheth a station none can describe, save the One Who created it. He speaketh not except by the leave of his Lord, and moveth not unless it be ordained by Him. He is, in truth, the Almighty, the Just, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

- (12) O this name! Pride thyself in this, that We have made thee the dawning-place of Our justice (*mashriqa 'adlinā*) amidst all people. The day is approaching when We shall raise up manifestations of thee upon the earth, through whom We shall roll up the standard of oppression and unfurl the banner of justice between the heavens and the earth. It is through them that God shall blot out every trace of injustice from the earth, and adorn the whole of creation in every land with these names. All beings, both seen and unseen, shall rejoice at their advent, for they are the mirrors of My justice (*marāyā 'adlī*) amidst My servants, and the daysprings of My names amidst My creation. Through them, the hands of oppression shall be severed, and the arms of command strengthened. Such is the decree We have set forth in this holy and preserved Tablet.
- (13) O this name! We, verily, have made thee an ornament of the sovereigns (*zīnatan li'l-mulūk*). Blessed are they that adorn their bodies with thee, act with equity (*ya'dilu*) and complete sincerity (*al-ḥaqq al-khāliṣ*) towards their subjects, and decree for them what God Himself hath decreed in His mighty and everlasting Book. No better adornment is there for them than thee, for it is through thee that their sovereignty is made manifest, their praise is glorified, and their names are remembered in the Kingdom of God, the Almighty, the Most Great. Whoso depriveth himself of thee would indeed be as one denuded (*'arīyyun*) before the entire creation, though outwardly he be clothed in the finest garments of silk (*ḥurar al-ālamīn*).
- (14) O concourse of rulers! Crown your heads with the diadems of justice (*akālīl al-'adl*), that the regions of every land may be illumined with their light. Thus have We bidden ye in token of Our grace unto you.
- (15) O concourse of kings! Erelong will God make manifest on earth kings who will



recline on the couches of justice (*namāriq al-‘adl*), and will rule amongst men even as they rule their own selves. They, indeed, are among the choicest of My creatures in the entire creation.

(16) Adorn yourselves, O people, with the raiment of justice (*ridā’ al-‘adl*), inasmuch as the exercise thereof befitteth all mankind, did ye but know [p. 122] it. Thus have We enjoined courtesy (*al-adab*) and equity (*al-inṣāf*) upon you in most of Our Tablets, that ye may be of them who comprehend. The Almighty ordaineth naught for a soul unless it be what is best for him, and what shall profit him in this world and in the world to come. He, verily, is independent of the doings of every doer, and of the knowledge of every man of discernment and understanding.

(17) Through this name, God hath shed His splendour upon all things in this Tablet. Well is it with them who are illumined with its light and have attained thereunto, for they are the truly devoted among Our servants. With the Hands of Our power, We have planted trees of justice (*ashjār al-‘adl*) in this Paradise, and have watered them with the waters of Our grace. Every one of those trees will, ere long, bear fruit. Such is the irrevocable decree We have set forth, for truly We are potent to command.

(18) O ye who are the embodiments of justice (*mazāhir al-‘adl*)! When the breezes of power have wafted over all things, summon ye the people of the Bayān (*malā’ al Bayān*), and call their attention to this Great Announcement.

(19) Ask of them: O people! By what proof have ye believed in ‘Alī (the Bāb), but denied the One Who brought you glad-tidings in all the Tablets? Ponder this, O concourse of foolish ones, and fear ye God, O assemblage of the heedless.

(20) Do ye claim to believe in the One Who heralded Mine advent though you have

repudiated Me, the All-Powerful, the All-Wise? Ye are even as the ones who believed in John the Baptist, who summoned men to the Kingdom of God, yet when Christ, the Word Himself, appeared unto them, they rejected Him and condemned Him to death.

- (21) The curse of God be upon the oppressors! At all times, and in the loudest voice, that herald imparted glad-tidings unto men. He exhorted them to swear fealty unto Christ, and informed them of His imminent advent. At last, out of his love for Christ, he yielded up his spirit to Him, the Almighty, the Wondrous.
- (22) And when the veil of concealment was rent asunder, and the Word of God appeared unto men, they cavilled at Him and protested, saying: ‘This Man hath violated the decree of John the Baptist!’ Thus did their souls prompt them in such wise that they were deprived of the Presence of their Lord, the Almighty, the Most Powerful.
- (23) One of the infidels among them said: ‘The thing for which the son of Zechariah (John the Baptist) came to this world hath not yet come to pass, neither hath his law been established amongst men. Unseemly indeed would it be for any one to appear until that law is established’. Such was the reasoning by which they waxed disdainful before the Spirit of God (Jesus Christ) and rejected His Truth. Still others among them said: ‘John the Baptist baptised men with water. The One Who hath appeared unto us, however, doth baptise with the Holy Spirit, yet He associateth with the sinful!’
- (24) And now ye hear the same arguments made by the people of the Bayān in these days. They repeat that which the followers of John the Baptist said [p. 123] aforetime; nay worse, they utter such things as have never been uttered before. Woe betide them that follow these infidels!
- (25) Say: O people of the Bayān! Blush before the beauty of your Lord, the All-Merciful, Who appeared in the midmost heart of the world with a clear and

irrefutable proof. The One Who came unto you aforetime by the name of ‘Alī informed you of Me and heralded unto you My coming, and He moved not except through His love for Me, and breathed not except to make mention of Me, the Most Powerful, the Most Wondrous. He proclaimed unto you that every luminous one would be eclipsed by His splendour, that every woman that hath a burden in her womb would cast her burden,<sup>84</sup> and that every bearer of a trust would cast it aside. Such is the decree that hath descended from the Heaven of the Will of your Lord, the Most High, the All-Knowing.

(26) The appointed Hour (*as-sā‘a*) came upon you in your heedlessness, for when the Beauty of the Beloved shone forth above the horizon of the Will of your Lord – the Almighty, the All-Powerful – you turned away from Him, cavilled at Him, rejected His signs, and ascribed partners unto Him, and in this heedlessness you persisted until you resolved to shed His blood – the blood of the Most Holy, the Most Pure, the Most Powerful, the Most Luminous.

(27) Say: O people! Fear God, and confine not His command to your own limitations. He, verily, ordaineth as He pleaseth through His behest, and He is indeed the Help in Peril, the Almighty, the Most Powerful.

(28) Say: I swear by God that He speaketh in My breast, calleth out to My spirit, and giveth utterance through My tongue. It is He that hath wakened Me with the breezes of His command, and hath caused Me to speak between heaven and earth.

(29) Say: I swear by God – the Almighty, the Most High – that I am in your midst, and hear from you that which no ear hath heard before. Nevertheless, God hath, in truth, made Me manifest, and I have been bidden not to worship any one but Him, and to remind you of that which is better for you than all that is in the kingdoms of earth and heaven. Had it been in My power, I would have never consented to

manifest Myself unto these makers of mischief. Yet, the Almighty is unconstrained in His bidding; He doeth as He willeth, and ordaineth as He pleaseth.

- (30) Look not upon Me, O people, with your eyes, or with the eyes of your leaders. I swear by God that this would avail you not, even were you to seek the aid of the former and the latter generations.
- (31) Say: O people! Behold My beauty with Mine eye, for if you look upon Me with any other sight, you will never recognize Me. Thus hath it been sent down in the Tablets of God, the Almighty, the All-Powerful, the All-Wise.
- (32) Say: O people! It is neither through Mine own Self nor for Mine own Self that I cry aloud unto you; rather, God crieth out as He willeth through His own Self for His servants, and unto this do My groaning, and My wailing, and the lamentation of My heart bear witness, if ye be of them who judge fairly. [p. 124]
- (33) This indeed is the Leaf that hath been stirred by the winds of the Will of God. Hath it any power of its own to remain still? No, by the One Who hath caused Me to speak in truth! The winds move as they will, and God indeed is powerful over whatsoever He pleaseth. The movement of that Leaf, and the manner in which it stirreth, bear witness to its truth, would ye but understand.
- (34) Consider, O people, the Flute (*mizmār*) that resteth beneath the fingers of the Will of His Lord, the All-Merciful, and how He doth breathe His sanctified breath into it. Can that Flute remain silent in its inmost self? Nay, by your Lord, the Almighty, the Beneficent! He will, rather, make manifest from it diverse melodies as He willeth, and He verily is the All-Powerful, the Ordainer, the Omnipotent. Can the sun that riseth above the horizon of Revelation shine aught but light from itself? Is it able, moreover, to deprive anything of its light? Nay, by the essence of glory! And unto this doth every fair-minded (*munṣifin*) and discerning one (*baṣīrin*) bear witness.

- (35) Say: O people! Verily, it is the fingers of your Lord – the Most High, the All Glorious – that move this Supreme Pen. This is not My doing, rather is it the bidding of God, your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers. And do ye, O concourse of infidels, protest this Pen? Or do ye cavil at the One Who hath caused it to move through His sovereignty?
- (36) Say: Woe betide you! The dwellers of the Realms above are astonished by your deeds. The Eye of Justice weepeth sore over Me, and the Reality of Justice bewaileth the harm I have sustained and the calamities I have endured. It bemoaneth, moreover, that which hath befallen Me at the hands of them who were created through My Will, who pride themselves in standing in My Presence and seek blessings from the dust that My feet – the feet of the Blessed, the Almighty, the Sublime – have trodden.
- (37) O thou who art the embodiment of justice! I complain unto thee concerning them who have disbelieved in Me and ascribed partners unto Me, even after Mine advent hath been promised in every Tablet – and in the Tablet, too, that God hath preserved in His inviolable treasuries, which He hath safeguarded from even the most discerning ones among His creation.
- (38) Say: O people! Ye have entered Paradise, and have attained unto a Rose (*wardan*). Inhale it, then, if ye find its fragrance to be sweet. Fear ye God, and be not of them who gainsay Him, nor of them who recognize Him and then disclaim Him. Ye would indeed be numbered with the infidels for such an act. Were a person with a keen sense of smell to be found, he would, of a certainty, be able to detect – among all the things that are made manifest from Me – the fragrance of the Most Holy, the Most Powerful, the Most Generous.
- (39) O ye who are the embodiments of Justice (*maẓāhir al-‘adl*)! Ye were called into

being through My behest, and were risen up by My command. Beware lest your rank prevent you from humbling yourselves before your Lord – the Almighty, the Omniscient – on the day when He shall come down unto you overshadowed with clouds and invested with a mighty sovereignty. On that day, He shall breathe the spirit of life into the entire creation; [p. 125] adorn the whole of Paradise with My Name, the Name of the Almighty, the Beneficent; regenerate mankind with the ornament of the All-Merciful; and attire all things with the raiment of names that belongeth to the Wondrous Creator. That indeed is a day for which ye have been created. Fear ye God and take heed, lest ye deprive yourselves of so great a bounty.

(40) O ye who are called by this Name! Let not the names deceive you on that day. Hasten ye to the court of grace, even if the clouds of Revelation should rain down the darts of wrath upon you. Take heed that ye not tarry for less than a single moment. On that day, none shall have any possessions to their name, for command on that day will be with God, the All-Powerful, the All-Wise.

(41) Say: Be ye faithful, O people, to the Testament of God, and break not the Covenant of the One with Whom you covenanted from time immemorial (*dharr al-baqā'*) in the Presence of God, the Almighty, the All-Powerful, the Omniscient.

(42) Say: Open your eyes! I swear by the One True God that He hath been made manifest on this day, at this very moment, and that He hath come overshadowed with clouds.<sup>85</sup> Blessed is God, the Quickener, the All-Powerful, the Most Lofty, the Almighty.

(43) Thereupon were the inmates of heaven and earth stricken with terror, and the entire company of the Concourse on High moaned, except for them who were seized by the Hand of the All-Glorious, invested with the sovereignty of the Most Powerful, the Most Exalted, the Most High – the Hand Whose Finger of decree hath rent asunder the veil before their eyes, and hath delivered them from the company of the

ones who doubted the Presence of God, the Sovereign, the Almighty, the All-Glorious.

- (44) Say: By God! Every name hath been changed, everything hath cried out in lamentation, and every soul hath become perturbed, save them who were quickened by the breezes of sanctity that wafted from the precincts of your Lord, the All-Merciful – the breezes that awakened them from their slumber, and cleansed them from the defilement of the infidels.
- (45) Alter thou these verses, O Tongue of Eternity, for the ears of men are incapable of hearing that which hath been sent down from the firmament of Thine Essence and the heaven of Thy Will. Impart unto them, in accordance with their capacity, that which Thou dost possess, for this verily is manifest justice.
- (46) O people of the earth! Know ye that justice consisteth of innumerable degrees (*marātib wa maqāmāt*) and incalculable meanings (*ma'ānī*), yet We have given you only a sprinkling (*rashḥ*) from this Ocean, that it may cleanse you from the defilement of oppression (*danas al-ẓulm*) and cause you to be numbered with the sincere ones. Know verily that the essence of justice (*aṣl al-'adl*) and the source thereof (*mabda'ihī*) are both embodied in the ordinances prescribed by Him Who is the Manifestation of the Self of God amongst men, if ye be of them that recognize this truth. He doth verily incarnate the highest, the infallible standard of justice (*mīzān al-'adl*) unto all creation. Were His law to be such as to strike terror into the hearts of all that are in heaven and on earth, that law is naught but manifest [p. 126] justice. The fears and agitation which the revelation of this law provokes in men's hearts should indeed be likened to the cries of the suckling babe weaned from his mother's milk, if ye be of them that perceive. Were men to discover the motivating purpose of God's Revelation, they would assuredly cast away their fears, and, with

hearts filled with gratitude, rejoice with exceeding gladness.

(47) Say: If the autumn winds strip the trees of their vernal adornment (*ṭarāz*), this is only to allow for the emergence of another adornment. Thus hath it been decreed by the Almighty, the All-Powerful. It is through justice that every one is rendered his due, even as ye behold this in the manifestations of the world of being; it is not as most of the people imagine. Ponder, then, that ye may understand the purpose of what was revealed by the Wondrous Pen.

(48) Say: That justice which causeth the pillars of tyranny to quake and the foundations of misbelief to crumble is the recognition of this Revelation (*zuhūr*) in this resplendent dawn, wherein the Sun of Bahā shineth with manifest sovereignty above the horizon of eternity. And whoso believeth not therein hath abandoned the stronghold of justice (*ḥiṣn al-‘adl*), and his name is recorded among the oppressors in God’s mighty and guarded Tablets.<sup>86</sup> Even if a man were to strive until the end that hath no end and bend every possible effort to deal equitably with others, if he should ever hesitate in his recognition of this Cause, he would verily have committed an injustice against his own self, and would be regarded as one of the oppressors.

(49) Bestir yourselves, O people, in anticipation of the days of Divine justice (*ayyām al-‘adl*), for the promised hour is now come. Beware lest ye fail to apprehend its import and be accounted among the erring.

(50) Say: O people! Adorn your bodies with the ornament of justice (*ṭarāz al-‘adl*). Enjoin ye that which God Himself hath enjoined, and be not of them that transgress their bounds.

(51) Say: Should anyone drink even a drop of water in accordance with My command, it verily would be preferable to the acts of worship and devotion offered by the entire creation, for God doth not accept an act from any one unless it be adorned with the



ornament of My leave amidst all people.

- (52) Act ye, O people, in accordance with what We have bidden you in the Tablets that were sent down from the Kingdom of God, the Help in Peril, the Almighty, the All Powerful. He whose sight is restored through the sweet savours that waft from the raiment of My Name – the Name of the All-Merciful – shall discern in all things the signs of his Lord, the Just (*al-‘ādil*), the All-Wise.<sup>87</sup>
- (53) O Supreme Pen! Raise up the servant who was named ‘Riḍā after Nabīl’,<sup>88</sup> and cause him to be one of the embodiments of justice in this contingent realm. Verily, his justice is his faith in God, and it is a justice unmatched by any other.
- (54) O servant! Hearken thou unto the shrill voice of the Pen of the Most High, and gather all men upon the shore of the Most Mighty Ocean, which hath emerged through this Most Ancient and Everlasting Name. Protect thou [p. 127] the servants of the All-Merciful, lest the blows dealt by the evil suggestions of the manifestations of Satan transform the faces of them that have recognized their Lord. Such is the commandment of thy Lord – the Almighty, the Beneficent – unto thee. Act thou in accordance with what the All-Powerful, the Beauteous, hath bidden thee.
- (55) Be thou a barrier between the forces of unbelief and the hosts of the All-Merciful, lest that blasphemous horde transgress their bounds.<sup>89</sup> Thus hath the decree been sent down from the Kingdom of the judgment of thy Lord, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. We, verily, have made thee a means of Our remembrance amidst Our servants, and a fortress for Our creation in this world, that thou mayest shelter them from the darts of doubt and draw their attention to this Announcement, through which the temples of names have trembled, the faces of men have been changed, the earth of vainglory hath been cleft,<sup>90</sup> and the fruit hath fallen from every lofty and wondrous tree. Blessed art thou for having utterly abolished the idol of vain

imagination through the power of thy Lord, for having cast off from thy body the robe of blind imitation, and for having adorned it instead with the raiment of Divine Unity through this Name, the Most Holy, the Blessed, the Most Exalted, the All-Encompassing.

(56) Know thou, then, that the People of the Bayān cavilled at their Lord, and rejected the One in Whom they had already believed, and this after We had admonished them in all the Tablets not to let any thing betwixt earth and heaven prevent them from recognizing Me in the hour of Mine advent. Some among them have repudiated Me even as they read My Words, and others glory in the Book that was revealed aforetime through My power.

(57) Say: If, in this day, the whole earth were to be filled with the knowledge contained in prized and precious books, yet from these books neither the sweet-smelling savours of My command nor the fragrances of My love could be detected, then this knowledge would not be worthy of mention in the Presence of God, thy Lord and the Lord of all worlds.

(58) Say: Woe betide you, O people! The purpose of all that hath descended from the Kingdom of the Bayān was to make mention of Me and celebrate My praise, did ye but know it.

(59) Say: Fie upon you for having broken the Covenant of God and cast it behind your backs! In so doing, ye have returned unto your abode in the nethermost hell.

(60) O My name! I am left alone amidst the people of the Bayān in the absence of the One Who revealed that Book only to make mention of Me, the Wronged One, the Incomparable.

(61) Say: Fear ye God, O people! I swear by Him that the Primal Point breathed not except to make mention of Me, and spoke not unless it was to celebrate My praise,

and that the Beloved of His heart was none other than My luminous and resplendent Beauty.

- (62) O My name! Know thou that the infidels ascribed oppression unto the One through Whom the embodiments of justice were raised up, and from Whom the light of grace shone forth. Such is the manner in which those oppressors acted against Me. Ere long will the cruelty of these oppressors [p. 128] change this earth and frustrate the affairs of men. Thus informeth thee the Tongue of Him that speaketh the truth and is the Knower of all things.
- (63) The tablets of fire have been spread throughout every land, and the manifestation of Satan passeth you by with a book in hand. Then say: O servants of the All Merciful! Cast it behind your backs, and turn your faces towards the Word of God, the Mighty, the Wondrous. Verily, nothing that hath ever been revealed from the beginning that hath no beginning, or will ever be sent down from the supreme and glorious firmament, can compare with a single letter of that Word.
- (64) O My name! Cleanse My servants of every fragrance that is not of Me, attract them with the wonders of My melodies and My words, and cause them to soar in the atmosphere of My nearness and good-pleasure, that perchance they may attain unto the sanctuary of My glory and the habitation of My grandeur. This is what hath been sent down in truth, and it verily is a thing sent down by thy Lord, the Exalted, the Omniscient.
- (65) Do thou forbid them to shed blood. We, verily, have made this unlawful unto them in all the Tablets, yet they have treated the Laws of God with scorn. They have abandoned the stronghold of command, and are accounted among the wayward. The harmful effect of their deeds hath redounded upon the very Root of the Tree; such is the decree, if only thou wouldst hear it. They who dispute with and wage war against men have indeed forsaken the Paradise of Justice, and have been

numbered with the oppressors in the sublime and preserved Tablets.

(66) As for them who suffer martyrdom in the path of God in these days, they are the most exalted among the entire creation. They make mention of their Creator openly, and the multitude of their enemies are powerless to prevent them from the remembrance of their Lord, until such time as they are martyred and attain the Object of their desire. And when their souls ascend, the entire company of the Concourse on High shall stand ready to receive them bearing the banners of this Cause. Such is the decree that hath, in truth, been set forth at the behest of the Most Powerful, the All-Wise.

(67) Say: O My Lord and My Master! Thou art the One Who hath planted the trees of justice (*ashjār al-'adl*) in the Paradise of Thy Revelation and Thy Wisdom. Shelter them, O My God, from the raging storms of fate and the rolling thunder of calamity, that their boughs and their branches may grow and develop beneath the shade of Thy bounty and the canopy of Thy mercy. O My God! Cause them who are the chosen ones amongst Thy creatures and the truly devoted amidst Thy servants to abide beneath the shadow of their leaves. Thou verily art powerful over whatsoever Thou willest, and Thou verily art the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Merciful.

(68) We have, in truth, created the Paradise of Justice (*riḍvān al-'adl*) through Our strength and power, and have sent it unto Thee with a glorious and wondrous fruit. Taste, then, the fruits of these trees, and rest beneath the shadow of their leaves, that thou mayest be protected from the fire of the infidels [p. 129]

(69) Thus have We perfected this Bounty unto thee, that thou mayest render thanks unto thy Lord and be accounted among the grateful. Praise be to God, the Lord of the Worlds.

# LAWH-I-BURHÁN

(Tablet of the Proof)

**Bahá'u'lláh**

This Tablet was revealed after the martyrdom of the King of Martyrs and the Beloved of Martyrs (see *God Passes By* pages 200-201) and was addressed to Shaykh Muhammad Báqir, denounced by Bahá'u'lláh as the 'Wolf'. In this Tablet Bahá'u'lláh refers to Mír Muhammad Husayn, the Imám Jum'ih of Isfahán, surnamed the 'She-Serpent', who was Shaykh Muhammad Báqir's accomplice in the persecution of the Bahá'ís. (See *God Passes By*, pages 198, 200-201 and 219). The Epistle to the Son of the Wolf was addressed to Shaykh Muhammad Taqíy-i-Najafí, the son of Shaykh Muhammad Báqir.

1

HE is the Almighty, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise! The winds of hatred have encompassed the Ark of Bathá, [Mecca.] by reason of that which the hands of the oppressors have wrought. O Báqir! Thou hast pronounced sentence against them for whom the books of the world have wept, and in whose favour the scriptures of all religions have testified. Thou, who art gone far astray, art indeed wrapt in a thick veil. By God Himself! Thou hast pronounced judgement against them through whom the horizon of faith hath been illumined. Unto this bear witness They Who are the Dawning-Places of Revelation and the Manifestations of the Cause of thy Lord, the Most Merciful, Who have sacrificed Their souls and all that They possessed in His straight Path. The Faith of

God hath cried everywhere, by reason of thy tyranny, and yet thou disportest thyself and art of them that exult. There is no hatred in Mine heart for thee nor for anyone. Every man of learning beholdeth thee, and such as are like thee, engulfed in evident folly. Hadst thou realized that which thou hast done, thou wouldst have cast thyself into the fire, or abandoned thine home and fled into the mountains, or wouldst have groaned until thou hadst returned unto the place destined for thee by Him Who is the Lord of strength and of might. O thou who art even as nothing! Rend thou asunder the veils of idle fancies and vain imaginings, that thou mayest behold the Day-Star of knowledge shining from this resplendent Horizon. Thou hast torn in pieces a remnant of the Prophet Himself, and imagined that thou hadst helped the Faith of God. Thus hath thy soul prompted thee, and thou art truly one of the heedless. Thine act hath consumed the hearts of the Concourse on high, and those of such as have circled round the Cause of God, the Lord of the worlds. The soul of the Chaste One [Fátimih, daughter of Muhammad.] melted, by reason of thy cruelty, and the inmates of Paradise wept sore in that blessed Spot.

2

Judge thou fairly, I adjure thee by God. What proof did the Jewish doctors adduce wherewith to condemn Him Who was the Spirit of God, [Jesus.] when He came unto them with truth? What could have been the evidence produced by the Pharisees and the idolatrous priests to justify their denial of Muhammad, the Apostle of God when He came unto them with a Book that judged between truth and falsehood with a justice which turned into light the darkness of the earth, and enraptured the hearts of such as had known Him? Indeed thou hast produced, in this day, the same proofs which the foolish divines advanced in that age. Unto this testifieth He Who is the King of the realm of grace in this great Prison. Thou hast, truly, walked in their ways, nay, hast surpassed them in their cruelty, and hast deemed thyself to be helping the Faith and defending the Law of God, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. By Him Who is the Truth! Thine iniquity hath made

Gabriel to groan, and hath drawn tears from the Law of God, through which the breezes of justice have been wafted over all who are in heaven and on earth. Hast thou fondly imagined that the judgement thou didst pronounce hath profited thee? Nay, by Him Who is the King of all Names! Unto thy loss testifieth He with Whom is the knowledge of all things as recorded in the preserved Tablet. When thou didst pen thy judgement, thou wast accused by thy very pen. Unto this doth bear witness the Pen of God, the Most High, in His inaccessible station.

3

O thou who hast gone astray! Thou hast neither seen Me, nor associated with Me, nor been My companion for the fraction of a moment. How is it, then, that thou hast bidden men to curse Me? Didst thou, in this, follow the promptings of thine own desires, or didst thou obey thy Lord? Produce thou a sign, if thou art one of the truthful. We testify that thou hast cast behind thy back the Law of God, and laid hold on the dictates of thy passions. Nothing, in truth, escapeth His knowledge; He, verily, is the Incomparable, the All-Informed. O heedless one! Harken unto that which the Merciful hath revealed in the Qur'án: `Say not to everyone who meeteth you with a greeting, "Thou art not a believer."' [Qur'án 4:96] Thus hath He decreed in Whose grasp are the kingdoms of Revelation and of creation, if thou be of them that hearken. Thou hast set aside the commandment of God, and clung unto the promptings of thine own desire. Woe, then, unto thee, O careless one that doubttest! If thou deniest Me, by what proof canst thou vindicate the truth of that which thou dost possess? Produce it, then, O thou who hast joined partners with God, and turned aside from His sovereignty that hath encompassed the worlds!

4

O foolish one! Know thou that he is truly learned who hath acknowledged My Revelation, and drunk from the Ocean of My knowledge, and soared in the atmosphere of

My love, and cast away all else besides Me, and taken firm hold on that which hath been sent down from the Kingdom of My wondrous utterance. He, verily, is even as an eye unto mankind, and as the spirit of life unto the body of all creation. Glorified be the All-Merciful Who hath enlightened him, and caused him to arise and serve His great and mighty Cause. Verily, such a man is blessed by the Concourse on high, and by them who dwell within the Tabernacle of Grandeur, who have quaffed My sealed Wine in My Name, the Omnipotent, the All-Powerful. O Báqir! If thou be of them that occupy such a sublime station, produce then a sign from God, the Creator of the heavens. And shouldst thou recognize thy powerlessness, do thou rein in thy passions, and return unto thy Lord, that perchance He may forgive thee thy sins which have caused the leaves of the Divine Lote-Tree to be burnt up, and the Rock to cry out, and the eyes of men of understanding to weep. Because of thee the Veil of Divinity was rent asunder, and the Ark foundered, and the She-Camel was hamstrung, and the Spirit [Jesus.] groaned in His sublime retreat. Disputest thou with Him Who hath come unto thee with the testimonies of God and His signs which thou possessest and which are in the possession of them that dwell on earth? Open thine eyes that thou mayest behold this Wronged One shining forth above the horizon of the will of God, the Sovereign, the Truth, the Resplendent. Unstop, then, the ear of thine heart that thou mayest hearken unto the speech of the Divine Lote-Tree that hath been raised up in truth by God, the Almighty, the Beneficent. Verily, this Tree, notwithstanding the things that befell it by reason of thy cruelty and of the transgressions of such as are like thee, calleth aloud and summoneth all men unto the Sadratu'l-Muntahá [The Sacred Lote-Tree, the Tree beyond which there is no passing (See Qur'án 53:8-18). A symbol of the Manifestation of God. (See God Passes By p. 94.)] and the Supreme Horizon. Blessed is the soul that hath gazed on the Most Mighty Sign, and the ear that hath heard His most sweet Voice, and woe to whosoever hath turned aside and done wickedly.



5

O thou who hast turned away from God! Wert thou to look with the eye of fairness upon the Divine Lote-Tree, thou wouldst perceive the marks of thy sword on its boughs, and its branches, and its leaves, notwithstanding that God created thee for the purpose of recognizing and of serving it. Reflect, that haply thou mayest recognize thine iniquity and be numbered with such as have repented. Thinkest thou that We fear thy cruelty? Know thou and be well assured that from the first day whereon the voice of the Most Sublime Pen was raised betwixt earth and heaven We offered up Our souls, and Our bodies, and Our sons, and Our possessions in the path of God, the Exalted, the Great, and We glory therein amongst all created things and the Concourse on high. Unto this testify the things which have befallen Us in this straight Path. By God! Our hearts were consumed, and Our bodies were crucified, and Our blood was spilt, while Our eyes were fixed on the horizon of the loving-kindness of their Lord, the Witness, the All-Seeing. The more grievous their woes, the greater waxed the love of the people of Bahá. Unto their sincerity hath borne witness what the All-Merciful hath sent down in the Qur'án. He saith: 'Wish ye, then, for death, if ye are sincere.' [Qur'án 2:88] Who is to be preferred, he that hath sheltered himself behind curtains, or he that hath offered himself in the path of God? Judge thou fairly, and be not of them that rove distraught in the wilderness of falsehood. So carried away have they been by the living waters of the love of the Most Merciful, that neither the arms of the world nor the swords of the nations have deterred them from setting their faces towards the ocean of the bounty of their Lord, the Giver, the Generous.

6

By God! Troubles have failed to unnerve Me, and the repudiation of the divines hath been powerless to weaken Me. I have spoken, and still speak forth before the face of men: 'The door of grace hath been unlocked and He Who is the Dayspring of Justice is come

with perspicuous signs and evident testimonies, from God, the Lord of strength and of might!' Present thyself before Me that thou mayest hear the mysteries which were heard by the Son of `Imrán [Moses.] upon the Sinai of Wisdom. Thus commandeth thee He Who is the Dawning-Place of the Revelation of thy Lord, the God of Mercy, from His great Prison

7

Hath leadership made thee proud? Peruse thou what God hath revealed to the Sovereign ruler, the Sultán of Turkey, who hath incarcerated Me in this fortified stronghold, so that thou mayest be informed of the condition of this Wronged One, as decreed by God, the One, the Single, the All-Informed. Art thou happy to see the abject and worthless as thy followers? They support thee as did a people before them, they that followed Annas, who, without clear proof and testimony, pronounced judgement against the Spirit. [Jesus.]

8

Peruse thou the Kitáb-i-Íqán and that which the All-Merciful hath sent down unto the King of Paris [Napoleon III.] and to such as are like him, that thou mayest be made aware of the things that have happened in the past, and be persuaded that We have not sought to spread disorder in the land after it had been well-ordered. We exhort, wholly for the sake of God, His servants. Let him who wisheth turn unto Him, and him who wisheth turn aside. Our Lord, the Merciful, is verily the All-Sufficing, the All-Praised. O concourse of divines! This is the day whereon nothing amongst all things, nor any name amongst all names, can profit you save through this Name which God hath made the Manifestation of His Cause and the Dayspring of His Most Excellent Titles unto all who are in the kingdom of creation. Blessed is that man that hath recognized the fragrance of the All-Merciful and been numbered with the steadfast. Your sciences shall not profit you in this day, nor your arts, nor your treasures, nor your glory. Cast them all behind your

backs, and set your faces towards the Most Sublime Word through which the Scriptures and the Books and this lucid Tablet have been distinctly set forth. Cast away, O concourse of divines, the things ye have composed with the pens of your idle fancies and vain imaginings. By God! The Day-Star of Knowledge hath shone forth above the horizon of certitude.

9

O Báqir! Read and call thou to mind that which was said of old by a believer of thy stock: 'Will ye slay a man because he saith my Lord is God, when He hath already come to you with signs from your Lord? If he be a liar, on him will be his lie, but if he be a man of truth, part of what he threateneth will fall upon you. In truth God guideth not him who is a transgressor, a liar.' [Qur'án 40:29]

10

O thou who art gone astray! If thou hast any doubt concerning Our conduct, know thou that We bear witness unto that whereunto God hath Himself borne witness ere the creation of the heavens and of the earth, that there is none other God but Him, the Almighty, the All-Bounteous. We testify that He is One in His Essence, One in His attributes. He hath none to equal Him in the whole universe, nor any partner in all creation. He hath sent forth His Messengers, and sent down His Books, that they may announce unto His creatures the Straight Path.

11

Hath the Sháh been informed, and chosen to close his eyes to thine acts? Or hath he been seized with fear at the howling of a pack of wolves who have cast the Path of God behind their backs and followed in thy way without any clear proof or Book? We have heard that

the provinces of Persia have been adorned with the adornment of justice. When We observed closely, however, We found them to be the dawning-places of tyranny and the daysprings of injustice. We behold justice in the clutches of tyranny. We beseech God to set it free through the power of His might and His sovereignty. He, verily, overshadoweth all that is in the heavens and on earth. To none is given the right to protest against anyone concerning that which hath befallen the Cause of God. It behoveth whosoever hath set his face towards the Most Sublime Horizon to cleave tenaciously unto the cord of patience, and to put his reliance in God, the Help in Peril, the Unconstrained. O ye loved ones of God! Drink your fill from the well-spring of wisdom, and walk ye in the garden of wisdom, and soar ye in the atmosphere of wisdom, and speak forth with wisdom and eloquence. Thus biddeth you your Lord, the Almighty, the All-Knowing.

12

O Báqir! Rely not on thy glory, and thy power. Thou art even as the last trace of sunlight upon the mountain-top. Soon will it fade away, as decreed by God, the All-Possessing, the Most High. Thy glory and the glory of such as are like thee have been taken away, and this verily is what hath been ordained by the One with Whom is the Mother Tablet. Where is he to be found who contended with God, and whither is gone he that gainsaid His signs, and turned aside from His sovereignty? Where are they who have slain His chosen ones and spilt the blood of His holy ones? Reflect, that haply thou mayest perceive the breaths of thine acts, O foolish doubter! Because of you the Apostle [Muhammad.] lamented, and the Chaste One [Fátimih, daughter of Muhammad.] cried out, and the countries were laid waste, and darkness fell upon all regions. O concourse of divines! Because of you the people were abased, and the banner of Islám was hauled down, and its mighty throne subverted. Every time a man of discernment hath sought to hold fast unto that which would exalt Islám, ye raised a clamour, and thereby was he deterred from achieving his purpose, while the land remained fallen in clear ruin.

13

Consider the Sultán of Turkey! He did not want war, but those like you desired it. When its fires were enkindled and its flames rose high, the government and the people were thereby weakened. Unto this beareth witness every man of equity and perception. Its calamities waxed so great that the smoke thereof surrounded the Land of Mystery [Adrianople.] and its environs, and what had been revealed in the Tablet of the Sultán was made manifest. Thus hath it been decreed in the Book, at the behest of God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting.

14

O My Supreme Pen! Leave Thou the mention of the Wolf, and call Thou to remembrance the She-Serpent [The Imám-Jum'ih of Isfahán, see page 203.] whose cruelty hath caused all created things to groan, and the limbs of the holy ones to quake. Thus biddeth Thee the Lord of all names, in this glorious station. The Chaste One [Fátimih.] hath cried out by reason of thine iniquity, and yet thou dost imagine thyself to be of the family of the Apostle of God! Thus hath thy soul prompted thee, O thou who hast withdrawn thyself from God, the Lord of all that hath been and shall be. Judge thou equitably, O She-Serpent! For what crime didst thou sting the children [The King of Martyrs and the Beloved of Martyrs.] of the Apostle of God, and pillage their possessions? Hast thou denied Him Who created thee by His command 'be, and it was'? Thou hast dealt with the children of the Apostle of God as neither `Ád hath dealt with Húd, nor Thámúd with Salíh, nor the Jews with the Spirit of God, [Jesus.] the Lord of all being. Gainsayest thou the signs of thy Lord which no sooner were sent down from the heaven of His Cause than all the books of the world bowed down before them? Meditate, that thou mayest be made aware of thine act, O heedless outcast! Ere long will the breaths of chastisement seize thee, as they seized others before thee. Wait, O thou who hast joined partners with God,

the Lord of the visible and the invisible. This is the day which God hath announced through the tongue of His Apostle. Reflect, that thou mayest apprehend what the All-Merciful hath sent down in the Qur'án and in this inscribed Tablet. This is the day whereon He Who is the Dayspring of Revelation hath come with clear tokens which none can number. This is the day whereon every man endued with perception hath discovered the fragrance of the breeze of the All-Merciful in the world of creation, and every man of insight hath hastened unto the living waters of the mercy of His Lord, the King of Kings. O heedless one! The tale of the Sacrifice [Ishmael.] hath been retold, and he who was to be offered up hath directed his steps towards the place of sacrifice, and returned not, by reason of that which thy hand hath wrought, O perverse hater! Didst thou imagine that martyrdom could abase this Cause? Nay, by Him Whom God hath made to be the Repository of His Revelation, if thou be of them that comprehend. Woe betide thee, O thou who hast joined partners with God, and woe betide them that have taken thee as their leader, without a clear token or a perspicuous Book. How numerous the oppressors before thee who have arisen to quench the light of God, and how many the impious who murdered and pillaged until the hearts and souls of men groaned by reason of their cruelty! The sun of justice hath been obscured, inasmuch as the embodiment of tyranny hath been stablished upon the throne of hatred, and yet the people understand not. The children of the Apostle have been slain and their possessions pillaged. Say: Was it, in thine estimation, their possessions or themselves that denied God? Judge fairly, O ignorant one that hath been shut out as by a veil from God. Thou hast clung to tyranny and cast away justice; whereupon all created things have lamented, and still thou art among the wayward. Thou hast put to death the aged, and plundered the young. Thinkest thou that thou wilt consume that which thine iniquity hath amassed? Nay, by Myself! Thus informeth thee He Who is cognizant of all. By God! The things thou possessest shall profit thee not, nor what thou hast laid up through thy cruelty. Unto this beareth witness Thy Lord, the All-Knowing. Thou hast arisen to put out the light of this Cause;

ere long will thine own fire be quenched, at His behest. He, verily, is the Lord of strength and of might. The changes and chances of the world, and the powers of the nations, cannot frustrate Him. He doeth what He pleaseth, and ordaineth what He willeth through the power of His sovereignty. Consider the she-camel. Though but a beast, yet hath the All-Merciful exalted her to so high a station that the tongues of the earth made mention of her and celebrated her praise. He, verily, overshadoweth all that is in the heavens and on earth. No God is there but Him, the Almighty, the Great. Thus have We adorned the heaven of Our Tablet with the suns of Our words. Blessed the man that hath attained thereunto and been illumined with their light, and woe betide such as have turned aside, and denied Him, and strayed far from Him. Praised be God, the Lord of the worlds!

# Tablet of Seven Questions

**Bahá'u'lláh**

translated by Shahriar Razavi.

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originally revealed as "Lawh-i-haft purish".

## Introduction

From Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, vol. 3, pp 272-3:

The Council of Zoroastrians which was set up by Mánikchí Sáhíb<sup>[1]</sup> consisted of the most prominent Zoroastrians of Yazd. At one time there were nineteen councillors, six of whom became Bahá'ís. As we have already mentioned, Kay-Khusraw-i-Khudádád, the first believer, was among them. Others who joined the Faith were men of learning or people held in high esteem by the community. Notable among them was the renowned Ustád Javán-Mard, the Secretary of the Council. He was a teacher by profession and became a devoted believer. He wrote a letter to Bahá'u'lláh and asked some questions. The *Lawh-i-Haft Pursish*, in pure Persian, was revealed in his honour.<sup>[2]</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, in this Tablet, calls him by a new name, Shír-Mard (Lion of a man). . . Shír-Mard was the first Zoroastrian Bahá'í to be buried instead of



having his body disposed of in the Dakhmih<sup>[3]</sup> as was the custom among his people.

In the Name of the Lord of Utterance, the All-Knowing!

Praised be the Sanctified Lord Who, from the effulgence of the Sun of Grace, hath illumined the world. From the letter "*Bá*" there hath appeared the Most Great Ocean, and from the letter "*Há*," the Pure Essence. He is the Almighty, Whose purpose the power of men can never frustrate, nor can the hosts of kings hinder His utterance. Thy letter was received and from it was heard thy call. Therein the pearls of love were hid, and the mysteries of kindness concealed. I beseech the Peerless Lord to confirm thee in aiding His Cause and to assist thee in guiding the sore-thirst in the wilderness of ignorance to the water of life. He is the Able, the All-Powerful. To that which thou hath asked of the Ocean of Knowledge and the Day Star of Wisdom, We now make reply.

The first question: "First, in what tongue should God, the Peerless, be worshipped and in what direction is it befitting to turn?"

The beginning of all things is the worship of God, which followeth upon recognition of Him. Sanctified must be the eyes if they are to recognise Him. Sanctified must likewise be the tongue to utter His praise. In this Day, the faces of the learned and the wise are turned in His direction; nay, every direction itself is inclined towards Him.

O Shír-Mard! I beseech God that thou be a man of action in the arena, and by the power of the Omnipotent, arise and say: "O high-priest!<sup>[4]</sup> Ears have been given you that they may hearken to the mystery of Him Who is the Self-Dependent, and eyes that they may

behold Him. Wherefore flee ye? The Incomparable Friend is manifest. He speaketh that wherein lieth salvation. Were ye, O high priests, to discover the perfume of the rose garden of understanding, ye would seek none other but Him, and would recognise, in His new vesture, the All Wise and Peerless One, and would turn your eyes from the world and all who seek it, and would arise to help Him"<sup>[5]</sup>

The second question is regarding religion and faith.

The Faith of God hath, in this Day, been made manifest. He Who is the Possessor of the World is come to guide the people. His faith is righteousness and His ordinance forbearance. This faith bestoweth eternal life and this ordinance leadeth men to the world of detachment. Therein, all faith and religion is contained. Cling ye thereunto and hold fast.

The third question: "In what manner should we deal with the people of this day who have segregated themselves into separate religions, each regarding their own religion and faith as superior and more exalted than others, so that we may not suffer at their hands and tongues?"

O lion amongst men! Regard suffering when endured in the path of the Omnipotent as comfort itself. Endured in His path, every pain is a mighty remedy, every bitterness, sweetness itself and every abasement an exaltation. Were men to seek and understand, they would readily offer up their lives for this suffering, for it is the key to treasures. Outwardly, it is abhorrent, but inwardly it is pleasing. We accept and affirm that which thou sayest. The people of this day, bereft of the sun-like effulgence of the true Friend,

have considered Him their enemy. Shouldst thou wish to be free from suffering, recite this utterance which hath emanated from the Pen of the All-Merciful:

"O my God, O my God!<sup>[6]</sup> I testify to Thy oneness and Thy singleness. I beg of Thee, O Thou Who Possessor of Names and Fashioner of Heavens, by the influence of Thine exalted Word and the potency of Thy Supreme Pen, to aid me with the standards of Thy power and might, and to protect me from the mischief of Thine enemies, who have broken Thy Covenant and Testament. Thou art, verily, the Almighty, the Most Powerful."<sup>[7]</sup>

This invocation, like unto a mighty fortress and a powerful host, shall protect and deliver thee.

The fourth question: "Our Books have announced the appearance of Sháh Bahrá́m with manifold signs to guide the people..."

O friend! Whatsoever hath been in the Books hath been revealed and made clear. From every direction, the signs have been manifested. The Omnipotent one is calling, in this Day, and announcing the appearance of the Supreme Heaven. The world is illumined by the light of His appearance, yet few are the eyes to behold. Ask of the one true God to bestow wisdom upon His servants. Wisdom leadeth to understanding and hath ever been the cause of salvation. The understanding of the mind is derived from insightful vision. Were the people to gaze with their own eyes, they would, in this Day, behold the world illuminated with a new light. Say: the Day-Star of Wisdom is manifest and the Sun of

Knowledge evident. Happy the one who attaineth thereunto, who seest and recognizeth Him.

The fifth question is regarding the bridge of *irá*, "paradise" and "hell".

Verily the Messengers have come and spoken the truth. That which the Divine Harbinger hath announced, hath been and shall be made manifest. The world is established upon reward and punishment. Heaven and hell have ever been and are confirmed by knowledge and wisdom, for the existence of reward and punishment requireth them. The first station and the foremost status is the paradise of Divine contentment. Whosoever attaineth His contentment, is reckoned among the denizens of the most exalted paradise, and, upon the ascension of his soul, shall attain that which mere pen and ink are powerless to describe. The *irá*, "the balance", "paradise", "hell-fire" and whatsoever hath been mentioned and written in the Divine Books, is clear and evident to those with seeing eyes and to men of great insight. At the hour of the manifestation and appearance of the Day-Star of inner mystery, all dwell in the same station and then God uttereth that which He willeth. He who heareth Him and accepteth Him is called an inmate of paradise. The *irá*, "the balance" and whatsoever hath been mentioned regarding the Day of Resurrection hath now occurred and come to pass. This day is the Greatest Resurrection. We cherish the hope that, aided by the wine of heavenly inspiration and the Fount of divine bounty, thou shouldst attain the station of discovery and vision, and witness inwardly and outwardly all which hath been mentioned.

The sixth question: "After relinquishing the body and the departure of the soul to the other place..."

In this regard, a while ago there appeared from the Pen of Knowledge that which sufficeth the wise and bestoweth greatest felicity upon the learned. Verily, We say, the [departed] soul deriveth happiness from goodly deeds and benefiteth from charity and generosity offered in the path of God.

The seventh question is concerning the name, lineage and ancestry of the Noble One.

Regarding this matter, 'Abú'l-Faḍl-i-Gulpáygání, upon him be My Glory, hath written of the Heavenly Books that which bestoweth knowledge and increaseth understanding. The Faith of God is endowed with power and might. Erelong will that which the Tongue hath uttered be manifested. We beseech God to empower thee to assist Him. He is the All-Wise, the Most Powerful. Shouldst thou obtain and peruse the *Súrah-i-Ra'ís* and the *Súrah-i-Mulúk*, thou wouldst find thyself no longer in need of that which thou hast asked and wouldst arise in service to the Cause of God in such wise that neither the cruelty of the world nor the power of its people would prevent thee from rendering assistance to the Ancient and All-Possessing One. I beseech God to confirm thee in that which shall cause the exaltation and the perpetuation of thy name. Strive, perchance thou mayest obtain these aforementioned Tablets [*Súrahs*] and acquire therefrom a portion of the pearls of wisdom and utterance which have been revealed from the treasury of the Pen of the All Bountiful.

Glory be upon thee and upon all who have remained sure, steadfast, firm and faithful.

## Notes

[1] A member of the Zoroastrian community of Yazd, 'Irán. The 'Council of Zoroastrians' which he founded was recognized by the Sháh as a support for the Zoroastrian community in that city. Though he did not become a believer, Mánikchí Sáhib was friendly to the Faith and received several Tablets from Bahá'u'lláh, one of which is discussed in Taherzadeh, Adib. *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, Vol. 3, pp 270-1. For a time, Mánikchí Sáhib employed 'Abú'l-Fadl-i-Gulpáygání, as a secretary, as the latter was a recognized master of the pure Persian language, which the former highly admired (MW's note).

[2] According to the *Leiden List of the Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, this Tablet was revealed in the 'Akká period.

[3] An open tower, usually built outside the city in which the dead bodies of Zoroastrians are placed and exposed to nature. After the flesh has been devoured by vultures, the bones are thrown into a deep well (Taherzadeh's note).

[4] Remainder of this paragraph translated by Shoghi Effendi, cited in *The Promised Day is Come*, p. 77 (SR's note).

[5] Shoghi Effendi's translation ends (SR's note).

[6] Prayer translated by the Research Department at the Bahá'í World Center, Haifa (SR's note).

[7] Translation by the Research Department at the Bahá'í World Center ends here (SR's note).

# **Sijn-i-Akbar (The Great Prison)**

## **The Event of Bahá'u'lláh's Incarceration in the Síyáh Chál Prison of Tehran**

Shahrokh Monjazeb

Fall 2002 marks the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Bahá'u'lláh's imprisonment in the infamous Dungeon of Tehran and the auspicious birth of the Bahá'í Revelation. As the Bahá'í world gathers to commemorate this momentous event it is hoped that this article will shed more light on the historical details of this period by exploring firsthand accounts of this event including some rare testimonies by Bahá'u'lláh Himself.

In his monumental analysis of the first Bahá'í century, Shoghi Effendi, the appointed Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith and its authorized interpreter, categorizes the years of Bahá'u'lláh's life into four distinct and significant stages<sup>1</sup>. According to Shoghi Effendi, the first stage in the life of Bahá'u'lláh lasted for twenty-seven years (beginning with His birth on November 12, 1817 and ending with the Báb's Declaration<sup>2</sup> of His divine Mission on May 22, 1844), and was “characterized by the care-free enjoyment of all the advantages conferred by high birth and riches, and by an unflinching solicitude for the interests of the poor, the sick and the down-trodden.”<sup>3</sup> The second stage was Bahá'u'lláh's “active and exemplary discipleship in the service of the Báb”<sup>4</sup> from 1844 to mid August 1852 when Bahá'u'lláh and countless other Bábís were unjustly imprisoned, tortured and the greater number of them brutally murdered by the order of the Qájár government of Iran. The next stage in Bahá'u'lláh's life, according to Shoghi Effendi,

though short in duration (from mid August 1852 to mid December of the same year) is “immortalized, as it drew to a close, by the sudden eruption of the forces released by an overpowering, soul-revolutionizing Revelation.”<sup>5</sup> And the fourth and final stage, which culminated with the passing of Bahá’u’lláh on May 29, 1892, was the forty-year period of His glorious and stupendous ministry as the supreme Manifestation of God on earth. The purpose of this article is to explore in detail the third stage of Bahá’u’lláh’s life, namely, the four-month period of His imprisonment in the Síyáh Chál and the event of His “Hidden Declaration”<sup>6</sup>.

### **The Shameful Assassination Attempt on the King and its Consequences**

On August 15, 1852, obsessed by the woeful tragedy of the Báb’s martyrdom, three<sup>7</sup> obscure Bábís who held the Sháh directly responsible of that crime ventured to kill the young Náḡiri’d-Dín Sháh (r. 1848-1896) and failed. Immediately after this episode, the blame for its design was directly placed on the entire body of the Bábí community. The result was a bloody and horrific campaign of mass persecution by the Persian government who, with the help of the Shí‘a clergy, set out to exterminate all the followers of the Báb. The British Ambassador in Tehran, Lt-Colonel Justin Sheil, made the earliest documented account of this event on August 16, 1852 to his superior, Earl Malmesbury, the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. It reads:

A violent attempt was yesterday made to slay the Shah. His Majesty is residing at his summer encampment a few miles from Tehran. He had just mounted his horse to proceed on a hunting excursion of a few days, when three, or as some say six men, went close up to him as if to present a petition, according to the practice of this country. One of the parties placed his hand on the Shah’s dress, and on being repulsed drew a pistol from his girdle, one of his confederates at the same time seizing the Shah’s horse’s reins. The



animal finding himself checked, reared and the Minister of Finance, who chanced to be close at hand, pulled the Shah from his horse. In falling, the shot took effect in the loins of the Shah, but the pistol being loaded with only partridge shot and a few slugs, the wound is merely skin deep, and I am assured by the Shah's skilful French surgeon [Dr. E. Cloquet] that not the least ground for alarm exists. So intent was the assassin on affecting his object that he immediately drew a formidable dagger, and in spite of several desperate wounds, persisted in assailing the Shah, ripping up the entrails of one of the attendants, nor did he cease his efforts until he was slain. Two of his confederates were captured, one being severely wounded. In the fray, two other pistols were discharged at the Shah. His Majesty is said to have displayed calmness and firmness in this trying scene.

Today, to reassure the minds of the people, and satisfy them of the reality of the Shah's safety, salutes of 110 guns have been fired; the large body of troops encamped near Tehran have been brought to the Royal camp to view the Shah, as well as the Clerical body, the civic authorities, and the bazaars are to be illuminated for several nights.

Yesterday afternoon the Russian Minister [Prince Dolgorouki] and I waited on the Shah to offer congratulations on his escape. We found him seated as usual on such occasions, and His Majesty presented no appearance of alarm or agitation, but he repeated often with fierceness that this attempt had instigators. . . .

It is incredible that the assassins should devote themselves to certain death, unless through religious fanaticism, and it is asserted and believed with confidence that the attempt on the Shah's life owes its origin to Bábee<sup>8</sup> vengeance. The two survivors declare themselves to belong to this faith, that they were ready to die, and that they had come to

seek death and paradise, or rather annihilation. The only symptom of conspiracy was the escape of three of the assassins, which was certainly a remarkable circumstance, as the Shah on these occasions is attended by a retinue of several hundred persons who surround him on all sides.

The Shah is said to feel deep mortification that he should be engaged in a struggle of some minutes without a simultaneous rush being made by his attendants on the assassins. I attribute this backwardness to panic and consternation, and the narrowness of the road where the attempt was made.

*“As to the youth ^ádiq-i-Tabrízi,” writes Nabil, “the fate he suffered was as cruel as it was humiliating. He was seized at the moment he was rushing toward the Sháh, whom he had thrown from his horse, hoping to strike him with the sword he held in his hand. The Sháfir-Báshí, together with Mustawfiyu’l-Mamálik’s attendants, fell upon him and, without attempting to learn who he was, slew him on the spot. Wishing to allay the excitement of the populace, they hewed his body into two halves, each of which they suspended to the public gaze at the entrance of the gates of Shimírán and Sháh-‘Abdu’l-‘Aqím.” (Nabil’s Narrative, pp. 609-10) The French diplomat and orientalist Comte de Gobineau adds that: “They ordered the body of ^ádiq, the Bábí who had been murdered, to be tied to the tail of a mule and dragged over the stones as far as íhrán, so that the entire population could see that the conspirators had failed.” (Les Religions et les Philosophies dan l’Asie Centrale, p. 234. Of the fate of ^ádiq’s two other accomplices, Nabil writes: “His two other companions, Fat`u’lláh-i-Ïakkák-i-Qumí and Ïájí Qásim-i-Nayrízi, who had succeeded in inflicting only slight wounds on the Sháh, were subjected to inhuman treatment, to which they ultimately owed their death. Fat`u’lláh, though suffering unspeakable cruelties, obstinately refused to answer the questions they asked him. The silence he maintained in the face of manifold tortures, induced his persecutors to believe that he was devoid of the power of speech. Exasperated by the failure of their efforts, they poured molten lead down his throat, an act which brought his sufferings to an end. His comrade, Ïájí Qásim, was treated with a savagery still more revolting He was stripped of his clothes, lighted*

*candles were thrust into holes driven into his flesh, and he was thus paraded before the eyes of a multitude who yelled at and cursed him. The spirit of revenge that animated those into whose hands he was delivered seemed insatiable.” (Nabil’s Narrative, pp. 610-11*

At the time of the attempt on the sovereign’s life, Bahá’u’lláh was the guest of the Prime Minister Mírzá Áqá Khán-i-Núrí<sup>10</sup> at the village of Afchih, in the outskirts of Tehran.

His host Ja‘far-Qulí Khán, the prime minister’s brother was in Shimírán when the assassination attempt occurred and having been acquainted first hand with the situation he immediately wrote to Bahá’u’lláh and apprised Him of what had happened. He told Bahá’u’lláh that the Sháh’s mother, Malik Jahán Mahd-i- ‘Ulyá, was filled with hate and vengeance as a result of the plot to kill her son. He added that she was openly denouncing Bahá’u’lláh before the court and people as the mastermind of that odious act and was trying diligently to implicate the prime minister himself as an accomplice. Ja‘far-Qulí Khán “urged Bahá’u’lláh,” writes Nabil-i-Zarandí, “to remain for a time concealed in that neighborhood, until the passion of the populace had subsided. He dispatched to Afchih an old and experienced messenger whom he ordered to be at the disposal of his Guest and to hold himself in readiness to accompany Him to whatever place of safety He might desire.”<sup>11</sup>

As soon as Ja‘far-Qulí Khán’s letter containing the appalling news reached Bahá’u’lláh, however, He decided to immediately present Himself to the authorities. Bahá’u’lláh knew that, because of His reputation as a Bábí leader, He would inevitably fall under suspicion. Hence, refusing the advice of His host to remain for a time hidden in that vicinity, He mounted His horse the following morning and rode intrepidly towards the headquarters of the imperial army at Niyávarán. On the way Bahá’u’lláh stopped at the home of His brother-in-law Mírzá Majíd Khán-i-Áhí in the village of Zarkandih a short distance from where He was heading. Mírzá Majíd Khán, who was married to Bahá’u’lláh’s younger sister Nisá’ Khánum, was the secretary to the Russian

ambassador Prince Dolgorukov and his house was in the Russian Legation compound adjoined to the main building of the Embassy.

<sup>8</sup> *“A new sect in Persia, whose chief tenet seems to be a sort of materialism, that every atom is God, and that the Universe is God.” This note was made by ambassador Sheil himself.*

<sup>9</sup> *Sheil to Malmesbury No. 99, 16 August 1852: British Foreign Office 60 171. Cited in M. Momen,*

*The Bábí and Bahá’í Religions 1844-1944 Some Contemporary Western Accounts, pp. 130-31.*

<sup>10</sup> *Entitled I’timádu’-d-Dawlih, he was Náḅiri’-d-Dín Sháh’s second prime minister from 1851 to 1858. A man with self-serving ambition, he was the chief instigator of the Bábí persecutions that followed the attempt on the life of the Sháh.*

<sup>11</sup> *Shoghi Effendi, The Dawn-Breakers, pp. 602-03.*

Nabíl writes that soon after Bahá’u’lláh’s arrival at Zarkandih some attendants of ʿĀjí ‘Alí Khán-i-ʿĀjibu’-d-Dawlih, the Chief Steward of the royal household, recognized Him and informed their master who in turn informed the King. He adds that:

The news of the arrival of Bahá’u’lláh greatly surprised the officers of the imperial army. Náḅiri’-d-Dín Sháh himself was amazed at the bold and unexpected step, which a man who was accused of being the chief instigator of the attempt upon his life had taken. He immediately sent one of his trusted officers to the legation, demanding that the Accused be delivered into his hands. The Russian minister refused, and requested Bahá’u’lláh to proceed to the home of Mírzá Áqá Khán, the Grand Vazír, a place he thought to be the most appropriate under the circumstances. His request was granted, whereupon the minister formally communicated to the Grand Vazír his desire that the utmost care should be exercised to ensure the safety and protection of the Trust his government was delivering into his keeping, warning him that he would hold him responsible should he fail to disregard his wishes.

Mírzá Áqá Khán, though he undertook to give the fullest assurances that were required, and received Bahá'u'lláh with every mark of respect into his home, was, however, too apprehensive for the safety of his own position to accord his Guest the treatment he was expected to extend.<sup>12</sup>

In order to prevent the fury of the royal court from being directed towards Mírzá Áqá Khán, into whose hands He was delivered by the Russian envoy, Bahá'u'lláh decided not to proceed to the prime minister's home and instead set out for Niyávarán and turned Himself over to the government authorities. At the royal army encampment He was at once arrested and, according to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, was detained and interrogated for three days<sup>13</sup>. Unable to illicit any self-incriminating confession from Bahá'u'lláh or produce any evidence to implicate Him in the conspiracy to assassinate the Sháh, the government ordered that He be transferred to Tehran and be cast into the Síyáh Chál prison.

During His transfer from Niyávarán, Bahá'u'lláh was forced, under the blazing sun of a midsummer day, to walk a distance of some twenty-four kilometers to the Capital, barefoot and in chains. On the way He was scorned and ridiculed and pelted with stones by the hostile crowd who thronged the roadsides. It is reported<sup>14</sup> that among the abusive populace was an old woman who wished to fling a stone at Bahá'u'lláh, but was unable to keep up with the procession. Seeing her condition, Bahá'u'lláh requested the escorting guards to slow down so that the elderly woman could achieve her desire.

In Tehran Bahá'u'lláh was taken immediately to the Síyáh-Chál (the Black Pit), the foulest, unsanitary and disease infectious underground dungeon in the Capital. In His monumental epistle addressed to Shaykh Mu'ammad-Taquí-i-Najafí, a highly influential Shí'a clergy and a self-professed enemy of Him and His Cause, Bahá'u'lláh describes the circumstance of His arrest and imprisonment in connection with the attempt on the life of the Sháh in these words:

By the righteousness of God! We were in no wise connected with that evil deed, and Our

innocence was indisputably established by the tribunals. Nevertheless, they apprehended Us, and from Níyávarán, which was then the residence of His Majesty, conducted Us, on foot and in chains, with bared head and bare feet, to the dungeon of Tihrán. A brutal man, accompanying Us on horseback, snatched off Our hat, whilst We were being hurried along by a troop of executioners and officials. We were consigned for four months to a place foul beyond comparison.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 603-04.

<sup>13</sup> *Fáðil-i-Mázindaráni, Asráru'l-Áthár*, vol. 1, p. 236. In *A Travellers Narrative 'Abdu'l-Bahá again confirms that Bahá'u'lláh's detention at Níyávarán did last for "several days" (A Travellers Narrative, p. 31).*

### **The Condition of Bahá'u'lláh's Imprisonment**

The subterranean dungeon into which Bahá'u'lláh was thrown had originally served as a water reservoir for one of the city's public baths. Having been abandoned for some years, the government had turned it into a torturous prison where it would consign only the worst prisoners. Let Bahá'u'lláh Himself describe, in graphic detail, the condition of that horrendous place:

As to the dungeon in which this Wronged One and others similarly wronged were confined, a dark and narrow pit was preferable. Upon Our arrival We were first conducted along a pitch-black corridor, from whence We descended three steep flights of stairs to the place of confinement assigned to Us. The dungeon was wrapped in thick darkness, and Our fellow-prisoners numbered nearly a hundred and fifty souls: thieves, assassins and highwaymen. Though crowded, it had no other outlet than the passage by which We entered. No pen can depict that place, nor any tongue describe its loathsome smell. Most of these men had neither clothes nor bedding to lie on. God alone knoweth what

befell Us in that most foul-smelling and gloomy place!<sup>16</sup>

In the Síyáh Chál, Bahá'u'lláh's feet were put in stocks and around His neck were placed chains of such heavy weight<sup>17</sup> that their mark would remain imprinted upon His body until the end of His life. According to His son 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who then was eight years of age, Bahá'u'lláh "was chained to five other Bábís; these fetters were locked together by strong, very heavy, bolts and screws."<sup>18</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá also recounts that "the weight of the chain that was put around Bahá'u'lláh's neck was so heavy that it would push His head down to the ground, and as such, a wooden strut was used to raise up the chain and His neck."<sup>19</sup> Bahá'u'lláh Himself, in a prayer composed several years later, remembers those cruel and infamous chains as "the chains that broke My neck due to their extreme weight."<sup>20</sup> And in His epistle to Shaykh Najafí, He writes: "Shouldst thou at some time happen to visit the dungeon of His Majesty the Sháh, ask the director and chief jailer to show thee those two chains, one of which is known as Qará-Guhar, and the other as Salásil. I swear by the Day-Star of Justice that for four months this Wronged One was tormented and chained by one or the other of them."<sup>21</sup>

Shackles and chains were not the only form of corporal torture that Bahá'u'lláh was subjected to in the Síyáh Chál. He recounts that, in addition to being in chains and fetters, both of His thumbs were also bound together behind his back. An act, which according to Him was greatly arduous and distressful. He recalls: "The weight of the chain placed about Our neck was difficult to bear, but having the thumbs of both hands bound together behind one's back was even more toilsome.

The royal guards relentlessly kept us under observation, but the executioners would show us kindness. One even brought Me a cup of tea and some grapes, but as I was in chains and My hands were bound, I was unable to eat them."<sup>22</sup>

For the first three days and three nights Bahá'u'lláh was not allowed any food or drink. When He was permitted a small ration of food, it was poisoned by the guards, an attempt which, though ineffective in its purpose, left grave traces on His health for years to come.

Bahá'u'lláh was kept for four months in such cruel and afflictive conditions. He Himself recounts, in great detail, the condition and circumstances of His incarceration inside the Síyáh Chál. The following is the entire account as recorded by Nabíl-i-Zarandí:

We were all huddled together in one cell; our feet in stocks, and around our necks fastened the most galling of chains. The air we breathed was laden with the foulest impurities, while the floor on which we sat was covered with filth and infested with vermin. No ray of light was allowed to penetrate that pestilential dungeon or to warm its icy-coldness. We were placed in two rows, each facing the other. We had taught them to repeat certain verses, which, every night, they chanted with extreme fervour. “God is sufficient unto me; He verily is the All-sufficing!” one row would intone, while the other would reply: “In Him let the trusting trust.”<sup>23</sup>

The chorus of these gladsome voices would continue to peal out until the early hours of the morning. Their reverberation would fill the dungeon, and, piercing its massive walls, would reach the ears of Nábirí'd-Dín Sháh, whose palace was not far distant from the place where we were imprisoned. “What means this sound?” he was reported to have exclaimed. “It is the anthem the Bábís are intoning in their prison,” they replied. The Sháh made no further remarks, nor did he attempt to restrain the enthusiasm his prisoners, despite the horrors of their confinement, continued to display.

One day, there was brought to Our prison a tray of roasted meat, which they informed Us the Sháh had ordered to be distributed among the prisoners. “The Sháh,” We were told, “faithful to a vow he made, has chosen this day to offer to you all this lamb in fulfillment of his pledge.” A deep silence fell upon Our companions, who expected Us to make answer on their behalf. “We return this gift to you,” We replied; “we can well dispense with this offer.” The answer We made would have greatly irritated the guards had they



not been eager to devour the food we had refused to touch. Despite the hunger with which Our companions were afflicted, only one among them, a certain Mírzá ʔusayn-i-Mutavallíy-i-Qumí<sup>24</sup>, showed any desire to eat of the food the sovereign had chosen to spread before us.

With a fortitude that was truly heroic, Our fellow-prisoners submitted, without a murmur, to endure the piteous plight to which they were reduced. Praise of God, instead of complaint of the treatment meted out to them by the Sháh, fell unceasingly from their lips—praise with which they sought to beguile the hardships of a cruel captivity.

Every day Our gaolers, entering Our cell, would call the name of one of Our companions, bidding him arise and follow them to the foot of the gallows. With what eagerness would the owner of that name respond to that solemn call!

Relieved of his chains, he would spring to his feet and, in a state of uncontrollable delight, would approach and embrace Us. We would seek to comfort him with the assurance of an everlasting life in the world beyond, and, filling his heart with hope and joy, would send him forth to win the crown of glory. He would embrace, in turn, the rest of his fellow-prisoners and then proceed to die as dauntlessly as he had lived. Soon after the martyrdom of each of these companions, We would be informed by the executioner, who had grown to be friendly to Us, of the circumstances of the death of his victim, and of the joy with which he had endured his sufferings to the very end.

We were awakened one night, ere break of day, by Mírzá ‘Abdu’l-Vahháb-i- Shírází, who was bound with Us to the same chains. He left Káʔimayn and followed Us to ʔíhrán, where he was arrested and thrown into prison. He asked Us whether We were awake, and proceeded to relate to Us his dream. “I have this night,” he said, “been soaring into a space of infinite vastness and beauty. I seemed to be uplifted on wings that carried me wherever I desired to go. A feeling of rapturous delight filled my soul. I flew in the midst of that immensity with a swiftness and ease that I cannot describe.” “Today,” We replied,

“it will be your turn to sacrifice yourself for this Cause. May you remain firm and steadfast to the end. You will then find yourself soaring in that same limitless space of which you dreamed, traversing with the same ease and swiftness the realm of immortal sovereignty, and gazing with that same rapture upon the Infinite Horizon.”

That morning saw the gaoler again enter Our cell and call out the name of ‘Abdu’l-Vahháb. Throwing off his chains, he sprang to his feet, embraced each of his fellow-prisoners, and, taking Us into his arms, pressed Us lovingly to his heart. That moment We discovered that he had no shoes to wear. We gave him Our own, and, speaking a last word of encouragement and cheer, sent him forth to the scene of his martyrdom. Later on, his executioner came to Us, praising in glowing language the spirit which that youth had shown. How thankful We were to God for this testimony which the executioner himself had given!<sup>25</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Shoghi Effendi, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 607-08. <sup>15</sup> Bahá’u’lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 20. <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20-21.

<sup>17</sup> The weight of the notorious chain that was placed around Bahá’u’lláh’s neck is reported to have been about “seventeen Mann” (*Ghadími, Jamál-i-Abhá*, p. 33) which is over 50 kilograms or 110 pounds.

<sup>18</sup> Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 72.

<sup>19</sup> ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Khaṭábát*, p. 126.

<sup>20</sup> Shoghi Effendi, *Tawqí‘át-i-Mubárakih*, p. 436.

<sup>21</sup> Bahá’u’lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 77.

<sup>22</sup> *Ghadími, Jamál-i-Abhá*, pp. 36-37.

<sup>23</sup> In a Tablet revealed during the latter years of His banishment to ‘Akká, Bahá’u’lláh confirms the chanting of a very similar verse in the *Síyáh Chál*. He writes: “. . . in the Prison We often would intone this blessed verse: ‘He is sufficient unto me, and sufficient unto all things, and sufficient is God as the All-sufficing!’” [*Hú-wa Yasbí wa Yasbu Kullih-Shay wa Kafá-billáh-i*

Yasiban]” (*Bahá'u'lláh, L'áli'ul-ʿIkmat*, vol. 2, p. 282).

<sup>24</sup> *This man had already proven himself to be a coward and a shameless apostate. Four years earlier, fearing for his wretched life, he had recanted his faith as a Bábí and abandoned his fellow defenders at the Fort of Shaykh ʿabarsí. After the treacherous fall of the Fort, to absolve himself once again of any connection with the beleaguered Faith, Mírzá Yúsayn impudently approached Quddús, on the day of His martyrdom, and brutally struck Him in the face, as Quddús was being dragged through the streets of Bárfurúsh.*

### **The Bábí Pogrom of 1852**

Within a few days of the King's assassination attempt, the central Government, encouraged by the royal Court, began its campaign to round up all the Bábís across the country and put them to death. According to foreign diplomatic documents<sup>26</sup>, the initial executions, which included such high ranking Bábí personages as ʿáhirih (Qurratu'l-ʿAyn) and the Báb's “amanuensis of revelation” (kátib-i-wa'y) Siyyid Yúsayn-i-Yazdí, began as early as a week after the attempt on the life of the Sháh. The most dramatic description of these public genocides was documented by an Austrian diplomat, Captain Alfred von Gumoens, who, having observed in horror the Bábí killings, resigned his post in Iran and returned to his country. The following is an extract from a letter<sup>27</sup>, dated 29 August 1852, which Gumoens wrote to one of his friends back in Austria:

Dear Friend, My last letter of the 20th inst. mentioned the attempt on the King. I will now communicate to you the result of the interrogation to which the two criminals were subjected. In spite of the terrible tortures inflicted, the examination extorted no comprehensive confession; the lips of the fanatics remained closed, even when by means of red-hot pincers and limb-rending screws they sought to discover the chief conspirator. All that transpired was that they belonged to the Bábí sect. This sect was founded about

fifteen years ago by a certain Báb, who was shot by the King's command. The most faithful of his adherents fled to Zanján, where two years ago, they were reduced by the Royal troops, and, as was generally believed, were exterminated without regard for age or sex. Like all religious intolerance, this unmeasured persecution produced exactly the opposite of the effects intended. The Báb's teaching gained more and more ground, and is at the present moment diffused through the whole country.

Very skillfully had the Prophet [i.e. the Báb] pointed out to the disciples of his teaching that the way to Paradise lay through the torture-chamber. If he spoke truly, then the present Sháh has deserved great merit, for he strenuously endeavours to people all the realms of the Saints with Bábis! His last edict still further enjoins on the Royal servants the annihilation of the sect. If these simply followed the Royal command and rendered harmless such of the fanatics as are arrested by inflicting on them a swift and lawful death, one must needs, from the Oriental standpoint, approve of this; but the manner of inflicting the sentence, the circumstances which precede the end, the agonies which consume the bodies of the victims until their life is extinguished in the last convulsion are so horrible that the blood curdles in my veins if I endeavour to depict the scene for you, even in outline. Innumerable blows with sticks which fall heavily on the back and soles of the feet, branding of different parts of the body with red-hot irons, are such usual inflictions that the victim who undergoes only such caresses is to be accounted fortunate. But follow me my friend, you who lay claim to a heart and European ethics, follow me to the unhappy ones who, with gouged-out eyes, must eat, on the scene of the deed, without any sauce, their own amputated ears, or whose teeth are torn out with inhuman violence by the hand of the executioner; or whose bare skulls are simply crushed by blows from a hammer; or where the bázár is illuminated with unhappy victims, because on right and left the people dig deep holes in their breasts and shoulders and insert burning wicks in the wounds. I saw some dragged in chains through the bázár, preceded by a military band, in whom these wicks had burned so deep that now the fat flickered convulsively in the

wound like a newly-extinguished lamp.

Not seldom it happens that the unwearying ingenuity of the Orientals leads to fresh tortures. They will skin the soles of the Bábís' feet, soak the wounds in boiling oil, shoe the foot like the hoof of a horse, and compel the victim to run. No cry escaped from the victim's breast; the torment is endured in dark silence by the numbed sensation of the fanatic; now he must run; the body cannot endure what the soul has endured; he falls. Give him the coup de gr<sup>^</sup>âce! Put him out of his pain! No! The executioner swings the whip, and – I myself have had to witness – the unhappy victim of hundred-fold tortures run! This is the beginning of the end. As for the end itself, they hang the scorched and perforated bodies by their hands and feet to a tree head-downwards, and now every Persian may try his marksmanship to his heart's content from a fixed but not too proximate distance on the noble quarry placed at his disposal. I saw corpses torn by nearly 150 bullets. The more fortunate suffered strangulation, stoning or suffocation: they were bound before the muzzle of a mortar, cut down with swords, or killed with dagger thrusts, or blows from hammers and sticks. Not only the executioner and the common people took part in the massacre: sometimes Justice would present some of the unhappy Bábís to various dignitaries and the Persian [recipient] would be well content, deeming it an honour to imbrue his own hands in the blood of the pinioned and defenseless victim. Infantry, cavalry, artillery, the ghuláms or guards of the King, and the guilds of butchers, bakers, etc., all took their fair share in these bloody deeds.

One Bábí was presented to the crack officers-corps of the garrison; the general in command dealt the first blow, and afterwards each one as his rank determined. The Persian troops are butchers, not soldiers. One Bábí fell to the share of the Imam-Jum'a [the Muslim clergy who leads the Friday Prayers] who put him to death. Islám knows nothing of charity!

When I read over again what I have written I am overcome by the thought that those who are with you in our dearly beloved Austria may doubt the full truth of the picture, and accuse me of exaggeration. Would to God that I had not lived to see it! But by the duties of my profession I was unhappy often, only too often, a witness of these abominations. At present I never leave my house, in order not to meet with fresh scenes of horror. After their death the Bábís are hacked in two and either nailed to the city gate, or cast out into the plain as food for dogs and jackals. Thus the punishment extends even beyond the limits which bound this bitter world, for Musulmán's who are not buried have no right to enter the Prophet's Paradise.

Since my whole soul revolts against such infamy, against such abominations as recent times, according to the judgment of all, present, I will no longer maintain my connection with the scene of such crimes. Though I were to be offered honors and gold here, I long for Europe's civilization . . . I have already asked for my release, but have so far received no answer; in the East everything is delayed, only the executioner's axe moves fast.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> *Shoghi Effendi, The Dawn-Breakers, pp. 631-34.*

<sup>26</sup> *See M. Momen, The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions 1844-1944 Some Contemporary Western Accounts, pp. 132-38.*

<sup>27</sup> *This brutally graphic letter, depicting the Iranian savagery, was published in its entirety in Oesterreichischer Soldatenfreund on 12 October 1852 and again in English in The Times of London on October 23.*

<sup>28</sup> *M. Momen, The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions 1844-1944 Some Contemporary Western Accounts, pp. 132-34.*

<sup>29</sup> *Situated in the province of Mázinarán.*

<sup>30</sup> *All of Bahá'u'lláh's wealth was inherited from His father, Mirzá 'Abbás-i-Núrí, who passed away in 1839. Mirzá 'Abbás was an eminent administrator in the court of the Qájár king Fat'-'Alí Sháh (r. 1797-1834) and had come to hold many important and responsible posts in the ministerial capacity.*

<sup>31</sup> *Kháji Shamsu'd-Dín Mu'ammad-i-Shirází, better known as Ýáfi of Shirá (1320-91 C.E.),*

is

*considered one of the greatest Persian poets of all times. His book of poetry, the Diván-i-ʿĀfiṢ, has been translated into many European languages including English.*

### **Confiscation of Bahá'u'lláh's Properties & Assets**

While Bahá'u'lláh laid in chains and shackles in the Siyáh Chál the Government ordered its soldiers to storm His ancestral district in Núr<sup>29</sup> and to confiscate all His properties<sup>30</sup>. In the village of Tákur, Bahá'u'lláh's lavishly furnished home, which He had inherited from His father, was completely robbed of its material wealth and the building itself was demolished. His luxurious house in Tehran was also ransacked and its valuables carried away. In fact so grave was the plundering that Bahá'u'lláh's family were forced to flee their home and seek refuge at a destitute part of town. In one of his talks given in August of 1915, 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke about some of Bahá'u'lláh's opulent household possessions which, in those days, were plundered by the state:

Prayer beads made of pearls—one of the most precious of the household possessions of the Blessed Beauty, and valued at 10,000 túmáns in the currency of those days—had been spared for us. Every bead was the size of a hazel-nut, and in the middle of each was embedded an emerald. After our possessions had been looted, we were obliged to leave this string of beads in a trust for 1,000 túmáns.

Since interest charges were accumulating, we could not afford to reclaim it. Today, if those same prayer beads were still in our possession, they could be sold for 100,000 túmáns in Paris.

Another precious object which was in the possession of the Blessed Beauty was the book of ʿĀfiṢ<sup>31</sup> in the handwriting of Mír 'Imád<sup>32</sup>.

Mu'ammad Sháh sent an envoy to enquire about the price of the book. The Blessed

Beauty gave the reply: “The book contains 12,000 verses; with each verse valued at one ashrafí [a gold coin], the book therefore has a value of 12,000 ashrafís.” Mu‘ammad Sháh’s answer was: “With 12,000 ashrafís, we are able to outfit two full regiments of soldiers.”

Yet another of the valuable possessions of the Blessed Beauty was the prayer of Kumayl<sup>33</sup> in the handwriting of the Imám ‘Alí, son of Abú-‘álib, in the Kufic style of calligraphy. The scholars of that day, including Mír ‘Imád, had testified in writing that the handwriting was that of the Imám ‘Alí. It was truly of such value that no price could be put on it.

Vast amounts of jewellery and many precious objects were in our possession, but all of them were lost.<sup>34</sup>

### **Bahá’u’lláh’s “Hidden Declaration”**

“At a time when the Cause of the Báb seemed to be hovering on the brink of extinction,” writes Shoghi Effendi, “when the hopes and ambitions which animated it had, to all human seeming, been frustrated, when the colossal sacrifices of its unnumbered lovers appeared to have been made in vain, the Divine Promise enshrined within it was about to be suddenly redeemed, and its final perfection mysteriously manifested. The Bábí Dispensation was being brought to its close (not prematurely but in its own appointed time), and was yielding its destined fruit and revealing its ultimate purpose—the birth of the Mission of Bahá’u’lláh. In this most dark and dreadful hour a New Light was about to break in glory on Persia’s somber horizon. As a result of what was in fact an evolving, ripening process, the most momentous if not the most spectacular stage in the Heroic Age of the Faith was now about to open.”<sup>35</sup>

According to Bahá’u’lláh Himself it was in the midpoint of these torturous months in “the Great Prison” that He “received the first intimation<sup>36</sup> of His sublime mission”<sup>37</sup> as the



Promised One of all ages. In a Tablet, revealed decades later, during the years of His banishment to ‘Akká, Bahá’u’lláh, while expatiating on the object and goal of His Revelation, makes a rare allusion to the precise time when the details of His divine Mandate were revealed to Him in the Síyáh Chál. He writes:

. . . Suddenly on the second day of the month of nativity [i.e. Mu’arram], before sunrise, all [Our] manners of expression as well as speech and thought were transformed; a transformation which heralded the joyful tidings of [Our] Ascension. This [revolutionizing] transformation continued successively for twelve days, during which the waves of the Ocean of divine Utterance surged and the splendors of the Day Star of Assurance shed their radiance.<sup>38</sup>

From this passage it can be positively inferred that the initial revelations began on the 2nd of Mu’arram 1269 A.H.<sup>39</sup> and lasted until the 14th of the same month. As the first of Mu’arram 1269 A.H. (the first day of the Muslim New Year) fell on October 15, 1852, “the twelve day event” of these inaugural revelations would have taken place from October 16th to the 27th, 1852. In His epistle to Shaykh Najafí, Bahá’u’lláh further elaborates on His personal experience of this momentous event. He states:

During the days I lay in the prison of ‘ihrán, though the galling weight of the chains and the stench-filled air allowed Me but little sleep, still in those infrequent moments of slumber I felt as if something flowed from the crown of My head over My breast, even as a mighty torrent that precipitateth itself upon the earth from the summit of a lofty mountain. Every limb of my body would, as a result, be set afire. At such moments My tongue recited what no man could bear to hear.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>32</sup> *One of the most celebrated Persian calligraphers of the time of the Safavid king Sháh ‘Abbás the Great (r. 1587-1628) who is credited with perfecting the nasta’līq style of Persian*

*calligraphy. It is said that he was put to death by the Sháh's order in 1615 for his adherence to the Sunní path of Islam.*

<sup>33</sup> *Kumayl-ibn-Zyád-i-Nakha'i was an avowed disciple of Imám 'Alí (the son-in-law of the Prophet Mu'ammad and the first of the twelve Shí'a Imáms of Islam) who is noted for the important oral traditions he has left from the Imám. He was killed by his enemies around the year 701 C.E..*

<sup>34</sup> *A.A. Furútan, Stories of Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 14-15.*

<sup>35</sup> *Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, pp. 91-92.*

<sup>36</sup> *According to The Concise Oxford English Dictionary "intimation" is a noun derivative of the verb "intimate" which means to "state or make known." Shoghi Effendi's statement that Bahá'u'lláh "received the first intimation of His sublime mission" implies that it was at this point that Bahá'u'lláh was given His divine Mandate, or in other words, the scope of His Revelation was "intimated" or "made known" to Him. It should not, however, be misconstrued as implying that it was the first occasion in which Bahá'u'lláh became aware of His own reality as the Manifestation of God. In his explanation of Bahá'u'lláh's enunciation to Náḅiri'd-Dín Sháh, in the Law`-i-Sultán, which reads: "O King! I was but a man like others, asleep upon My couch, when lo, the breezes of the All-Glorious were wafted over Me. . .", 'Abdu'l-Bahá states: "Sleeping and waking is passing from one state to another. Sleeping is the condition of repose, and wakefulness is the condition of movement. Sleeping is the state of mystery; wakefulness is the state of manifestation the Holy Manifestations have ever been, and ever will be, Luminous Realities; no change or variation takes place in Their essence. Before declaring Their manifestation, They are silent and quiet like a sleeper, and after Their manifestation, They speak and are illuminated, like one who is awake." (Some Answered Questions, pp. 85-86).*

<sup>37</sup> *Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 93.*

<sup>38</sup> *Fáḍil-i-Mázindaráni, Asráru'l-Áthár, vol. 2, p. 18. The English rendering of this passage is made by the current writer and as such must only be viewed as a provisional translation of Bahá'u'lláh's matchless Utterance.*

<sup>39</sup> *"After Hijra." The Prophet Mu'ammad's migration or hijra from the city of Mecca to Medina in 622 A.D. is the basis for the Muslim calender which uses the lunar reckoning of time as*

*oppose to the solar convention in use in the western world.*

<sup>40</sup> *Bahá'u'lláh, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 22.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid., p. 21.*

One night, in a dream, these exalted words were heard on every side: “Verily, We shall render Thee victorious by Thyself and by Thy Pen. Grieve Thou not for that which hath befallen Thee, neither be Thou afraid, for Thou art in safety. Ere long will God raise up the treasures of the earth—men who will aid Thee through Thyself and through Thy Name, wherewith God hath revived the hearts of such as have recognized Him.”<sup>41</sup>

In a more mystical reference to His divine experience in the dungeon of Tehran, Bahá'u'lláh, in the *Súriy-i-Haykal* (*Súrih of the Temple*), written some decade and a half later, recounts in symbolic terms how the “Most Great Spirit”, personified as a maiden, appeared before Him and announced His station to the rest of the world:

While engulfed in tribulation I heard a most wondrous, a most sweet voice, calling above My head. Turning My face, I beheld a Maiden—the embodiment of the remembrance of the name of My Lord—suspended in the air before Me. So rejoiced was she in her very soul that her countenance shone with the ornament of the good-pleasure of God, and her cheeks glowed with the brightness of the All-Merciful.

Betwixt earth and heaven she was raising a call, which captivated the hearts and minds of men. She was imparting to both My inward and outer beings tidings, which rejoiced My soul, and the souls of God's honoured servants. Pointing with her finger unto My head, she addressed all who are in heaven and all who are on earth, saying: “By God! This is the Beauty of God amongst you, and the power of His sovereignty within you, could ye but understand. This is the Mystery of God and His Treasure, the Cause of God and His glory unto all who are in the kingdom of Revelations and of creation, if ye be of them that

perceive.”<sup>42</sup>

Such were the circumstances in which the Sun of Truth arose in the city of ṣíhrán—a city which, by reason of so rare a privilege conferred upon it, had been glorified by the Báb as the “Holy Land,” and surnamed by Bahá’u’lláh “the Mother of the world,” the “Dayspring of Light,” the “Dawning-Place of the signs of the Lord,” the “Source of the joy of all mankind.” The first dawning of that Light of peerless splendor had, as already described, broken in the city of Shíráz. The rim of that Orb had now appeared above the horizon of the Síyáh Chál of ṣíhrán. Its rays were to burst forth, a decade later, in Baghdád, piercing the clouds which immediately after its rise in those somber surroundings obscured its splendor. It was destined to mount to its zenith in the far-away city of Adrianople, and ultimately to set in the immediate vicinity of the fortress-town of ‘Akká.

The process whereby the effulgence of so dazzling a Revelation was unfolded to the eyes of men was of necessity slow and gradual. The first intimation which its Bearer received did not synchronize with, nor was it followed immediately by, a disclosure of its character to either His own companions or His kindred. A period of no less than ten years had to elapse ere its far-reaching implications could be directly divulged to even those who had been intimately associated with Him—a period of great spiritual ferment, during which the Recipient of so weighty a Message restlessly anticipated the hour at which He could unburden His heavily laden soul, so replete with the potent energies released by God’s nascent Revelation.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Bahá’u’lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>43</sup> M.A. Fiyḏí writes that Bahá’u’lláh was released at “the end of the month of ^afar 1269” (*Ṙadirat- i-Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 83). The last day of the month of ^afar was December 12 and since Bahá’u’lláh left for exile exactly a month later, on January 12, 1853, as was demanded by the

royal edict, it would be safe to surmise that Bahá'u'lláh was released from the the Síyáh Chál on December 12, 1852.

<sup>44</sup> Bahá'u'lláh's daughter Bahíyyih Khánum, who was then six years of age, recounts many years later, that she and her family did observe a change in Bahá'u'lláh after His release from the Síyáh Chál. Her recollections were documented by Lady Blomfield, an early British Bahá'í, who published them in her book. Bahíyyih Khánum recalls: "Jamál-i-Mubárák [the Blessed Beauty] had a marvellous divine experience whilst in that prison [the Síyáh Chál]. We saw a new radiance seeming to enfold him like a shining vesture, its significance we were to learn years later. At that time we were only aware of the wonder of it, without understanding, or even being told the details of the sacred event." (Blomfield, *The Chosen Highway*, p. 45).

<sup>45</sup> Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 102-3.

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## **Holy Mariner (Persian)**

**Bahá'u'lláh**

Translation by Juan Cole

Source: Ishraq-Khavari, ed., *Ma'idih-i Asmani*, 4:339-341.

He is the Foreigner, the Persian, the Iraqi.

When the passengers on the divine ark had clung to one of the names, with the permission of the holy mariner in the pre-existent vessel, then did it set sail upon the sea of names. They traversed the stations of limitation, so that they might make for the Yemen of the powerful sovereign of oneness, arriving at the shore of divine unity. Thus might they drink from the chalice of transcendence. Indeed, by the aid of the lord, that eternal ark set sail upon and plied the spiritual waters of wisdom.

Then they reached a place where the name, the Still, became dominant over their course, so that the ship of the spirit was becalmed, unable to move.

At that moment, the impregnable command of the lord descended from the holy and everlasting heavens. The mariner of eternity was ordered to teach a single letter of the hidden word to the people of the ark. Thus did they, by the succor of the Unseen, pass

through the valley of psychological bewilderment and arrive at the great court of spiritual unity, attaining the Mount Qaf of eternal life and the presence of the lord of souls. When the people of the ship attained to the word of the spiritual friend, they were immediately filled with meaning, and soared into the sacred sky. By the divine grace and mercy, they passed beyond the peaks of carnal desire and the deepest levels of negligence and blindness. At that moment the breezes of paradise wafted upon their bodies from the sanctuary of the All Merciful. After they soared in the heavens of divine nearness, they traversed the spiritual stations in the place of safety and security. Finally, they halted at the homeland of lovers. The inhabitants of this station arose to serve them and show them kindness. The immortal attendants and the holy servers poured ruby wine liberally. Intoxication with the wine of divine knowledge, and the cup of eternal wisdom induced such love and distraction that they escaped from their own being and that of existing things. They gave their hearts to the beauty of the friend. For ages and centuries they settled and dwelt in that pleasant and spiritual station, in that divine and holy rose garden, with perfect joy and happiness.

Then the gales of divine tests and the winds of lordly temptation blew from the Sheba of the everlasting Cause. They became distracted by the beauty of the wine server and grew heedless of the immortal countenance, to the extent that they imagined the shadow to be the sun and phantoms to be light. They set out for the ladders of the greatest name so that they might scale those heavens and arrive at that seat and place. When they rose toward it, the divine assayers descended upon them with the sacred touchstone, by the irresistible decree of the lord. When these emissaries did not perceive the scent of the spiritual youth, they forbade entry to all. Afterwards, there occurred what is inscribed upon the guarded tablet.



Then, you who dwell upon the plain of divine love and drink the wine of unceasing forgiveness, do not exchange nearness to the beauty of the friend for both worlds. Do not prefer the presence of the wine server to meeting him, and do not give your heart to the intoxicant of ignorance and heedlessness in preference to his wine of knowledge and wisdom. Lips are for mentioning the beloved; do not defile them with filthy water. The heart is the home of everlasting mysteries, do not busy it with perishable things. Seek the water of life from the fountain of the beauty of the All-Praised, not from the manifestations of Satan.

Yes, this ephemeral youth here mentions the highest station of the love of the divine friends. He does so by reference to the wonders of the text of divine unity and the gems of the wisdom of the self-sufficient sovereign. Thus, perhaps some might recognize the value of courage and gallantry, and put off the shirt of negligence and carnal appetites. Perhaps they will visit the illumined beauty of the pure, radiant and sanctified friend in the land of love, detachment, amiability and exaltation. Thus would they receive the lights dawning from the morn of his brow and the effulgence of the perspicuous day, to at least the extent that they would be enabled to unite their inner and outer selves. We have passed beyond the loftiness of abstraction, the sublimity of divine oneness, the ultimate recognition that God is above all attributes, and the most great sanctification. Now, they must put forth their utmost effort and give their unswerving attention, so that their inward secrets not be contrary to their overt behavior, nor their outward deeds at variance with their inner mysteries. We have traversed the stage of expending the self for others. Arise to expend justice and fairness upon the souls that pertain to you.

In the end, however, you prefer the cloak of carnal longing and desire to the robe of divine benediction, and you exchange the song of the nightingale of immortality for the disagreeable croaking of death that issues from the throats of the hateful and rebellious.

How miserable a trade you make! We are from God and to him do we return. God willing, we maintain the hope that the immortal temples of glory shall, through the adornment of holiness and the divine attributes, appear illumined, gentle, pure and undefiled like the eternal sun. This is not difficult for God.

# The Surah of Sorrows

**Bahá'u'lláh**

Translated by Juan R.I. Cole

Source: Athar-i Qalam-i A'la, vol. 4

Notes: [Late Edirne/Adrianople period, 1867-68. Published in Baha'u'llah, Athar-i Qalam-i A'la, vol. 4 (Tehran: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 2nd. Rev. edn., 1968), pp. 75-98. This Tablet was addressed to "Ali Sayyah Maraghah-i: See 'Abdu'l-Hamid Ishraq-Khavari, Ganj-i Shayigan (Tehran: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 124 B.E. - J.R.I.C.)

This is the Surah of Sorrows, which was revealed by the All-Merciful to the one who hath turned his face toward the All-Praised at this time, when all have forsaken the shadow of God and his compassion, and have taken Satan unto themselves as a helper.

In the name of God, the Inaccessible, the most Holy, the most Mighty, the All-Glorious.

Thou who swimmest in the realm of divine unity, plunge into the ocean of grandeur that became manifest with My name, the most glorious, whereupon were launched the arks of eternal life, which were boarded by those servants who detached themselves from this world. They soared with the wings of holiness into the expanse of these gales, which appeared in this heaven that was exalted in the cloud of the unknowable essence. Thus

did the grace of thy Lord encompass them, that they might give thanks to God and be of those who were recorded in the tablets as among the grateful.

Thou shouldst, in truth, say: "In the Name of God" and "By God," and then enter into the deluge of this ocean. For those near to God have failed even to attain its shores, much less to plunge into it. Yet the tongue of the beloved hath thus commanded thee. Fear no one and put thy trust in Him, and He will safeguard thee, as He protected those who came before you. He is powerful over all things.

By God, the Eternal Truth! Today is thy day. Emerge from behind the veils of silence, and speak forth between the heavens and the earth. Apprise the people of the glad-tidings of this announcement, whereby the earth of haughtiness was split, the heavens of resistance were cleft asunder, the mountains of malice were leveled, and the edifice of rancor was razed--leaving the hosts of the blind idolaters shuddering in terror. Gaze at those who joined partners with God, and at what issued from their lips.

One among them asks, "Hath God become manifest, and hath the sun risen from the horizon of sanctity?"

Say: Yea, by My lord, it hath risen by virtue of a sovereignty that hath encompassed the worlds. As for you, O blind ones of the earth, open your eyes that you might behold it dawning forth, radiant and effulgent. It will, in truth, remain visible in the center of the heavens with the power of grandeur, might and splendor, and can never be eclipsed by the rejection of those who turn away, or the idolatry of those who join partners with God. Thus was the truth of the Cause apparent.

Another says, "That is the one who utters falsehoods concerning God!"

Say: Woe unto thee, fickle worshipper of many gods! Is this anything but an inspired revelation, which God taught Him at the Lote-tree beyond which there is no passing, when He beheld the signs of his lord? By God, his feet will never stumble on anything created between the heavens and the earth. At one time He speaketh in the tones of 'Ali (the Bab) in the farthest realm, at another in the melodies of Muhammad in the kingdom of creation, and at yet another after the manner of the Spirit (Jesus) in the heavens of eternal life. Then He speaketh with the accents of grandeur in this beauty that hath dawned forth on all things. By virtue of his effulgence, the forms of all things took on the shape of "There is no God but Him." Verily, He is the beloved in the heart of the adored one, and He is the one who is worshipped in all that was and shall be. But most of the people are veiled from Him, even after He manifested himself with all the verses. That which appeared with Him was a witness for Him.

Would that thou wert present at this moment before the throne, and that thou hadst heard how the melodies of immortality issue from the human temple of Baha'. By God, the Eternal Truth, should the ears of all contingent beings become purified, and should they hear even one such song, they would, one and all, swoon dazed upon the earth in the presence of your lord, the Almighty, the Bestower. When, however, they rose in opposition to God, He caused them to be deprived of the wonders of His grace. Before your lord, at this time, they are no more than handfuls of cast-out clay. If thou wouldst contemplate what issued from their lips, by God, thou wouldst hear what was never heard from the Jews when we sent Jesus with a perspicuous book. Such words were not voiced by the community of the Gospel when we caused the sun of everlasting life to dawn upon

them from Mecca, sending Him to them with clearly visible lights, nor by the people of the Qur'an when the heavens of mystical insight were cleft and God came in the shadows of His name, the All-Merciful, in the beauty of "Ali (the Bab) with the truth.

Now that We have arrived at the mention of this blessed, inaccessible, exalted and hallowed Name, which was wondrous in very truth, two powerful emotions have invaded My breast. I behold My heart ablaze with the flames of sorrow over what befell the Beauty of the All-Merciful at the hands of the people of the Qur'an. It is as if My entire frame is aflame at this moment with a fire that, if it had its way, would consume all who are in this mortal realm. God is to this My witness. Likewise, I see that my eyes are weeping--nay, all My members, to the extent that teardrops are streaming from each hair of My head, at the calamities rained down upon Him by the wicked, who slew God and knew Him not. At a time when they were taking pride in one of His names, they suspended Him in the air and riddled Him with the bullets of their malice.

Would that the universe had never been created, the world never brought into being, no Prophet sent nor any Messenger dispatched, no Cause established among God's servants, no name of God manifested between the heavens and the earth, no scriptures, Books, Psalms, Tablets or Writings revealed--and that the Ancient Beauty had never been afflicted among the sinful, nor suffered at the hands of those who openly proclaimed their unbelief and perpetrated what no one in all the worlds had ever perpetrated. By God, the Eternal Truth! O "Ali, if thou gazest at all My limbs and members, at My heart and My breast, thou wilt find the marks of the bullets that struck the Temple of God! Alas, alas, thus hath the Revealer of verses been prevented from sending them down, this Ocean been prevented from surging, this Lote-tree from bearing fruit, this Sun from shining, and these heavens from rising high. Thus hath the matter been ordained at this time.

Would that I were as nothing, that My mother had never borne Me, and that I had never heard what befell Him at the hands of those who worshipped Names and slew their Revealer, Creator, Fashioner and Sender. Woe be unto them, inasmuch as they followed the prompting of their passions, and committed that which caused the Maids of Heaven to swoon in their chambers. Then the Spirit's face was soiled in the dust because of what those wolves wrought toward the Lord of lords. Thus, all things weep at the tears I shed for Him, and all lament at My wailing for My separation from Him. I have reached the point in My bereavement where the hymns of everlasting life will never be sung by My lips, nor will the spiritual breezes waft from My heart, and were it not for the invulnerability of My soul My mortal frame would have been cleft in two and I would have been annihilated.

Behold, the Manifestation (the Bab) Who preceded Me doth weep, and addresseth thee, saying, "O 'Ali, by God, the Eternal Truth! If thou wilt but look upon My heart and My breast, upon what is concealed within Me and what is manifest, upon My internal state and My outward condition, thou wilt discover scars from the darts of rancor that struck My later Manifestation. By My Name, the All-Glorious! Thus do I bewail, and all who are in the Concourse on High mourn at My weeping for Him. I groan, and all who are in the canopies of Names lament. I cry aloud, and the denizens of the cities of eternity break into tears at My grief for this Wronged One, Who hath fallen among the people of the Bayan. By God, they have done to Him what the community of the Qur'an never perpetrated against Me. Alas, alas for what hath befallen Him at their hands! Then did all beings whether in the mortal realm or in the kingdom of heaven, fall distraught upon the earth at what had overtaken that Beauty, Who was seated upon the throne of nearness to God. Woe unto them and what their hands wrought at morn and eve!"

Behold, the Ancient Beauty crieth: O Pen of the Most High, change the subject of Thy discourse from this mournful theme that hath saddened all contingent beings and everything that can be said to exist. Make mention of aught else, and show mercy to the people of the Concourse on High. By God, the Eternal Truth, the Throne in all its grandeur hath well nigh collapsed, as hath the Seat in its loftiness.

When We heard this call, We ceased our recounting of sorrows and returned to Our previous theme, that thou mightest be informed thereof. O "Ali, be not dejected at the misfortunes that rained down upon Our former Manifestation, and then upon Our latter one, which We have recited for thee. Gird up thy loins to aid the Cause of God, and arise for this purpose with an invincible power and rectitude. Look, then, upon the state of those persons, and what issueth from their lips in these days, wherein the sun hath dawned forth with all its rays and every trustworthy seeker hath been illumined thereby. By God, thou hearest from them what no one hath ever heard from anyone, for they seek to establish their cause by appealing to verses which We Ourselves revealed to Him Whom We sent with the truth, Whom We made a mercy to all who abide in this mortal realm. Yet when verses greater than any they heard aforetime are recited for them, they oppose them and flee away. If they find the power within themselves, they then slay whoever relateth these verses to them. Know well their station, that thou mightest gain insight into that which is with them.

Say: O people, He in Whom ye have seen the power, dominion, epiphany and grandeur of God, and in Whom lie wondrous might and strength that ye have not discerned--He hath revealed from the heavens of His grace the equivalent of all that was sent down in the Bayan. Fear God, O people, and strive for piety in this Cause. Do ye idly dispute with



Him, by virtue of Whom the suns shone forth, the moons were illumined, the stars were embellished, rivers flowed, oceans billowed forth, the sky was raised aloft, the earth of holiness was spread out, and the trees brought forth their fruit? Woe be unto you, and to him who commanded you to deny God and to join partners with the Beauty of Him Who ascended the Throne with a sovereignty that encompassed the worlds. By God, O thou who gazest toward God! There hath befallen Me at their hands that which ears have not heard, nor eyes witnessed. Behold, the eyes of all contingent beings weep for Me, all the tribes in the kingdom of names and attributes lament for the harm that hath overtaken Me, and tears flow from the eyes of grandeur behind the veils of the All-Glorious, the Inaccessible.

When he who fleeth from foxes and hideth his face behind earthen jugs in fear for himself perceived that We had raised aloft the Cause of God with the authority of Power and Might, and that the Names of God had become renowned in the East and the West, he then repented of having lain in concealment. He emerged from behind the veil with a burning hatred and consulted one among My servants about accomplishing My murder. He desired to spill this blood, which, were but a droplet thereof to be sprinkled upon the contingent beings, all of them would repeat, "Verily, I am God; there is no God but He." Thus did he conspire within himself, after We raised him and instructed him morning and evening. When the hosts of God's revelation descended upon Us and safeguarded Us from his evil and his plotting, he then arose to implement another scheme, such as perplexed the inhabitants of the realm of names, and the Concourse on High. God standeth witness to what I say. He attributed things to Me which, shouldst thou but hear them from a man of insight, would amply inform thee of what hath befallen this Wronged One at the hands of those who arose against him with a tryanny, the magnitude of which all the Tablets attest.

O Pen of the Most High, make mention to Thy beloved of that which one of Satan's party cried out in the land of Iraq, saying "O People of Baha! Why do ye teach the Cause of God, your Lord, and call the people to God, who created all things by His command? For the utmost rank the servants can attain is that of Azal. Since he steppeth down from his station and faileth to seize what he hath been given, how will your teaching and recitation profit God's servants?" Thus did his carnal self deceive him, and he spoke words that roused the fury and wrath of God against him and against all those who speak as he doth, thus depriving themselves of attaining to the shore of mystical insight.

Say: "Woe be to thee, thou joiner of partners with God, because of what thou hast imagined in regard to the Name of Azal. Verily, We created him, as We created all the names, that they might point to their Creator and Fashioner, and persevere in the Cause of their Lord. For God, all Names are equal. He giveth and taketh, and is not asked concerning what He willeth. He knoweth all things with wisdom. Any excellence ye may have discovered in any soul resideth in his faith in God, his acceptance of His Manifestation, and his turning in that direction, which was beloved from all eternity. Explain, O thou wretch, how it is that Dayyan could become abased, if no one else could? O thou of the one eye, consider thine own self. Dost thou perceive the faults of others while remaining heedless of what is in thine own self? Woe unto thee, inasmuch as thou hast been taught by Satan, who disbelieved in God, and whose manifestation We have made an object lesson for all creatures."

Say: "O denier of God, would that thou hadst seen and known him whom thou hast taken as a lord apart from God. By God, the Eternal Truth, hadst thou set eyes on him and

recognized him, thou wouldst have fled a thousand miles or more away from him! God well knoweth this. Say: O thou ignorant man! We preserved him and trained him up, praised him and admonished him, to which thou art a witness. Yet he hath warred with Me and rejected My verses. It behooveth thee, then, to oppose him, rather than rising up against the One Who created thee and him from base water. Ask him by what proof he believed in the Primal Point, and, before Him, the Messenger of God, and by what proof he denied Him Who became manifest with all the signs, and plotted His murder, and mightily shunned Him.

"Apart from all that, O thou idolater, it hath ever remained Our wont to take and to give. Hast thou not seen the stone about which We commanded Our servants to circumambulate, how We divested its form of the robe of acceptance, and bestowed this grace upon another Spot? Would that ye did but know it. Therefore, be fair in thyself-though We well know that thou art never equitable, and with Us is a knowledge of the heavens and the earth. We know what thy father taught thee night and day, what he whispered in thy breast and the spirit he breathed into thee, whereby all men are transformed into fools. Then ask from the one whom thou hast taken as thy lord, apart from Me, saying: 'O thou who hath turned away! Be just within thyself. Hast thou heard of any Manifestation in the world of creation greater than the One Who hath become manifest and Who speaketh at this moment from the center of eternity? He saith, 'Verily, I am your Lord, the Exalted, the Most High, upon this sanctified and glorious horizon.'

"Hast thou seen any words greater than these, revealed in truth from the realm of immortality by this Youth, who giveth utterance in these vast heavens? Nay, by My beauty that hath dawned forth upon and illumined the worlds! Nevertheless, thou hast followed him who was created by the motion of My Pen, and who conspired against My

life after We safeguarded him throughout the months and years. O thou who art sighted and yet blind, in such wise that thou seest thyself but shalt never witness thy Lord, by Whose command the names and their kingdom, the attributes and their realm, and all created things were brought into being! Hast thou ever looked into mirrors that turn away from the sun shining upon their faces, that turn away from light, illumination and reflection? Nay, by My Self, the All-Merciful, wert thou among the insightful! Likewise, gaze into the mirrors of the names. It is incumbent upon them to enter into the shadow of their Lord, to receive the effulgences that emanate from the sun of immortality, and to become illumined with its lights and radiance. Otherwise, they shall be deprived, and shall remain bereft of the radiance that shone forth by virtue of the Eternal Truth.

"Didst thou not witness in My former manifestation, how the divines who flourished in this world and mounted the stages of mystical insight, worshipping God night and day, were declared idolaters and unbelievers, and had the cloak of faith torn from about their shoulders? Yet house-cleaners who were anonymous to all were invested by God with the mantle of guardianship and prophecy. Therefore, behold the power of thy Lord, and be not an overbearing wrongdoer. Did it behoove those on the earth to raise objections against God, asking "If they who built up the religion of God, who worshipped, prostrated themselves, and obeyed His Command, becoming great scholars in the land, were consigned to hellfire, then how shall we ever attain an exalted station?"

Say: "O thou who joinest partners with God! Thou speakest as the idolaters spoke aforetime, in the Dispensation of each Manifestation. Thou wilt never realize what thou sayest. Rather, the angels of retribution will be dispatched by the Almighty, the All-Powerful, to smite thee upon thy mouth. Then know that at the time of the Manifestation, all names subsist in a single region. Whoso ascendeth unto God meriteth

the attribution to him of all Our most beautiful names, and whoso halteth upon the path shall never be mentioned in God's presence. Thus have We revealed this matter in all the Tablets, wert thou but informed thereof. Should We desire to take a handful of clay, to breathe into it the spirit of life, and to render it a manifestation of all the names and attributes, We would be able to do so, nor is this a difficult matter for God. It would remain in this station as long as it clove to the shadow of its Lord. The moment it departed therefrom, however, all that was bestowed upon it would be withdrawn and it would be returned to the dust in mighty affliction.

"O thou foolish man! Thou has failed to inform thyself of the essence of the matter. Shouldst thou encounter that which thou graspest not, ask Him from Whose Pen flow the oceans of knowledge and meaning, that He might elucidate for thee the wonders of knowledge of which thou wert heedless, that thou mightest persevere in the Cause of thy Lord."

Nay, by My Life, O 'Ali! They had no desire to discover what was veiled from them. Verily, thou seest them ambling along like sheep who know not their shepherd. Or rather, if thou discernest them with the eye of thine innate nature, thou wilt find that they are wolves who wish to scatter God's flocks and to lap up their blood. Thus have We reckoned their cause in this Tablet, which hath descended from the exalted realm of glory. Thou shouldst protect thyself from them, then speak forth with the melodies of everlasting life between the earth and the heavens. Make mention of this Most Great Name, whereby the heaven of names was cloven in two. Fear no one and put thy trust in God, and He shall preserve thee from every cast-out idolater. He will confirm thee in His Cause, the spirit will speak in thy breast, and the gales of paradise blowing from the

abode of thy Lord, the All-Merciful, will cause thee to tremble. He doth, verily, call thee to account.

Beware not to grow despondent over any matter. For We have not forgotten thee, and yearn to see thee. We beseech God to bring us together in truth. Verily, He answereth those who call upon Him.

Would that thou wert with Us in prison, and that thou didst know what hath befallen this Wronged Beauty at the hands of those who shall never be able to speak a word in My presence, whose very essences were brought into being by the will of My Pen. Thus wouldst thou witness what is now concealed from thee. Hearken to that which the Pen of the Most High enjoineth upon thee, and sit not in thy home, nor rest within thyself. Enter into the abode of the idolaters among the people of the Bayan with the Announcement of God and His Cause. Say: O people, I have come unto you in truth with a mighty proof. If ye possess a greater one, produce it, and if ye have witnessed with your own eyes anything more awesome than the power and sovereignty of God that we have beheld, set it forth without a moment's delay. If, however, ye perceive yourselves to be incapable of meeting this challenge, then fear God and refrain from idly disputing with Him through Whom the Cause of God was raised aloft, your names were exalted, and that Proof appeared to which ye yourselves appeal in vindicating the truth of your cause. Fear God, and be not sinful unbelievers in this mortal realm.

O thou who swimst in the sea of meaning, at this time the ocean of grandeur hath billowed forth in My name, the All-Glorious, and casteth up for all contingent beings the pearls of the mention of thy Lord, the Exalted, the Most High. By God, the eye of creation hath never seen their like, nor hath the vision of God's handiwork witnessed their

peer. Would that We could find a trustworthy soul into whose keeping We could give them, or a man of keen sight, to whom We could show them, or an expert to whom We could describe how they sparkle and gleam with effulgences. Behold, when We ascended into the heaven of the divine decree, We saw no one, and we remained perplexed and sorely grieved within ourselves. Be thou joyous at the droplets of this sea that have been sprinkled upon thee. For thereby wast thou purified from the odors of those in whose faces thou wilt discern naught but the soot of hellfire, who disbelieved in God in every age and time, and who were deprived of the breezes of the All-Merciful.

Say: These rivers run to the sea of pre-existence, just as they branched out from it. Blessed is he who hath quaffed from them and thereby been enabled to dispense with all who dwell upon the earth. Verily, the sea of pre-existence along with what issueth from it and what mergeth with it, is but one wave of the Ocean of Grandeur, which was created by My Name, the Most Glorious. Thus do We reveal to thee one of the mysteries that were hidden from the eyes of the worlds. Upon the shore of this sea a wilderness was brought into being such as no one hath traversed from beginning to end. Therein the call of God was raised up from every side, and no Prophets of Messengers passed by save that the gentle fragrances of God captivated Them in this valley. When They subsequently attained to the Dome of the Most Glorious, which was fashioned from the light of the Divine Essence in the center of that valley, They fell dazed upon their faces in the earth. They thus submitted themselves to the authority of that Beauty, Who became manifest with the truth in this mantle. Therein, the sincere ones perceive the perfume of the All-Merciful. Thus was the matter decreed.

O 'Ali, by God, the call of God, thy Lord, the Exalted, the Most High, hath never ceased and shall never cease in that wilderness. At all times there is heard from its gardens and

its hills the saying, "There is no God but Him; and He Who became Manifest in My Name, the All-Glorious, is the Beloved of all the creation and the Adored One of the Concourse of Eternity. He hath ever been and ever shall be, and of this is God well aware." Blessed, then, is the man who walketh therein, and the ear that heareth the melodies that emanate from every side, perceiving the mysteries that repose therein. For these remain veiled behind the pavilions of splendor. Would that there were a lover who might turn his face in its direction, an upright person who might persevere therein, or one possessed of a heart who might make haste and detach himself from all the worlds.

O 'Ali, by God, this Cause is great beyond mention; it is too manifest to remain concealed, and too exalted to be affected by being shunned by those who turn away, or the plotting of any obdurate schemer. Say: O people, disgrace not yourselves, and feel shame before God, Who desireth only to bestow His grace upon you. He hath, at all times, sent down upon you from the Lote-tree of holiness ripe and glorious fruits. Eat of God's bounty as ye will. Fear God, wreak not corruption in the land, and be not remote from the seats of nearness unto God. By God, the nightingale shall never be prevented from warbling his melodies, neither by the panting of all the dog upon the earth nor by the howling of all the wolves. Thus did we send down the verses in truth, as a revelation from the Mighty, the All-Wise. Whoso, in this day, denieth this Cause shall bring upon himself the malediction of every atom, even that of his own soul, essence, hand and tongue. He is deaf within himself, and shall never hear, inasmuch as the veils of heedlessness have covered his ears. Thus doth the matter appear at this time from the horizon of the divine decree.

Happy are ye, insofar as ye shall never find for yourselves anyone to share in these fruits that came forth from the Lote-Tree of thy Lord, the Exalted, the Most High. God hath



singled you out for them, as He has all those who turn toward them with pure and sincere hearts. Taste thou of these fruits, be grateful for the wonders of thy Lord's grace that have been bestowed upon thee, and let thy joy be manifest. God hath reserved them for those of His servants who are nigh unto Him, and hath caused those who join partners with Him to be deprived thereof. We have caused the gentle gales of the All-Merciful to blow upon thy breast, spirit and heart from the right hand of the All-Praised. Thus mightest thou live by virtue of His life, endure forever in His immortality, speak forth His praise, make mention of His Name, turn toward His countenance, and gaze upon His beauty. Verily, His grace to thee hath ever continued to be great, wondrous, invincible and sublime.

Grandeur, majesty and glory be upon thee from the Visage of everlasting life that hath appeared in His Name, the most Glorious. Thereby hath every object been exalted, everyone of high rank brought low, every existent annihilated, and every lost one endowed with life. Through this Countenance, every sun was darkened and every moon eclipsed, every star fell, everyone endued with certainty was disturbed, every exalted one vanished, every steadfast believer was shaken, everyone at rest was set in motion, every fire was extinguished, and all ashes burst into flame! Every praised one became reprehensible and every evil one became praiseworthy. Thus, all that was concealed became manifest, all that had been secluded was unveiled, all curtains were rent, all embers were reborn, every door was knocked at, every crown spoke and every proof was endowed with grandeur. Owing to that blessed Face, every patient was cured, every ill one was purified, every sickly one found his remedy, every blind one saw, every treasure was uncovered, every earth quaked, and every heaven was cleft. In this wise, every upright man was corrupted and every villain became just, every scholar was made a fool, and every ignorant became learned. Every person of courage fled and every coward

discovered his valor, and every parched one quenched his thirst. Then every trumpet was sounded, every Hour struck, every horn blasted, every ray of light was replaced by gloom, and every fruit fell to the earth. All fertile land grew dry and all dry land turned green. The breeze of God wafted, whereby all contingent things were given life aforetime, and whereby all beings shall be revived afterwards. Thus hath the grace of God encompassed thy soul, thy spirit, thy physical body, and thine ethereal body.

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