

Just state the word, Your Cause,

[3]

and they'll lay scattered at Your blessed feet

5

Raise up Your sunny head above souls' peaks

that all from every point may see You plain

6

Reveal that face bright as the orb of night

[4]

make verdant with Your grace this withered straw

7

From Your ocean, heaven's rivers ask one drop

[5]

Let flow paradise, since You are Lord and King!

8

The atoms beg their share of light from You:

through Your unquestioned boundless grace, illumine!

9

The seeds turn up their mouths unto the heavens

hoping for Your gifts: anointing glory

[6]

10

Rain the droplets of Your mercy on them

O Ruler of the realms, King of the Throne!

11

Rend through these curtains of a hundred folds

Regale us now with glimpses of Your face

12

Pile up provisions for us through Your grace,

for Your munificence is past all doubt.

13

Make our West light up with global dawn

[7]

Spice this drink with cheer like vintage wine

14

Light up the heart's light with the shafts of light
[8]

that they may see in Your face Sinai's lights

15

Unsheathe the dagger of Divinity
and swiftly slay those hostile to Your Faith

16

Stoke your Lordly fire, incinerate
the heretics who war against You

17

They are nocturnal bats; but raise Your head,
O Sun of day, and burn all dark away

18

Clarify this vintage of grief-tainted dregs
[9]

Light up this candle which the night oppressed

19

You stood up in our soul, the world arose
[10]

to make clear through Your cause "Be and it was"
[11]

20

Soul's glory!
[12] in remembrance of Your face

I'll speak whole volumes of Your character

21

to rouse with wisdom all the spirits
to see who'll pay the price for Your love's pearl

22

I'll strike a conflagration through the world,
consume the veils concealing heaven's holies

23

I'll lead the Mystic Maiden from her veil,
draw back the curtain from the hidden light

24

I'll give a hint, since You've returned in spirit,
Of Love's eternal unseen mystery

25

Soar, fiery bird, through exposition's heaven[13]
till no more sign of being can be seen

26

Purify these envy-riddled hearts
Guide these consciences which lack all compass
[14]

27

Let those heedless, Great One, of Your covenant,
sip the ancient chalice to regain their wits,

28

to transport us with Your melodies, my Friend,
past rubrics like "intoxicated," "sober"

29

Heraldic angel of Bahá! Spirit's Lord!
[15]

Inspire the dead with new vitality

30

He is that primal tree branched from the heart
redeem Him from earthmire, from air and water

31

that He, released, may transcend form and matter,
His candle may set solar stars ablaze

32

Plant this tender sapling in the heart's soil
and keep it sacred, safe from sun or shade:

[16]

33

protect it from contrariness of wind,
set free from pagan supposition's hold,

34

make strong and firm its roots in soil of soul,
and raise its branches past the firmament

35

Bring anew a new green spring for all to see
raise up the dead for Your Resurrection

36

Love's oceans all are surging with Your tide,
immortal birds through Your awareness know

37

From Spirit's Egypt send us that coat's scent
[17]

Reveal right here the burning bush of Moses
[18]

38

Your face, my Beauty, sets the spring in motion
and with it, spring brings countless mystic truths:
[19]

39

Each rose, an album of the beauteous Friend
Each heart He fills with God's Edenic grace
[20]

40

No fall will ever overtake such springs
[21]

all flowers circumambulate round Him

41

Such spring as this the soul cannot conceive
Such spring as this reanimates the spirits

42

For fair-faced youths the mortal springs bring ardour,
while such a spring as this brings love of God

43

Mortal springs will wane and fade out in the end
Such springs as this we designate "immortal"

44

Earthly spring arrives in nature's season
This spring basks in light from His breath-taking face
[22]

45

Those earthly springs bring forth the tulip buds
This spring ethereal now fills up with wails
[23]

46

The eternal spring which shines in this King's light
illumines vistas of God's court and throne
[24]

47

All cross the threshold of His court's Pavilion;
You of insight, look, if you have eyes, and see!

48

When our King casts the veil from off His face,
eternal springs will blossom in the skies
[25]

49

When our Friend casts the cover from His face,
eternal springs will shine with undimmed glory

50

His face in springs eternal bathes us all
– No garden's rose can draw our eyes from Him

51

His remembrance blots out thought of treasure

[26]

His daystar makes us shine throughout the world

52

Should breezes touch us from His pleasant spring,
you'll see Joseph after Joseph come in view

53

Should breezes reach us from this rosy bower,
you'll see Josephs of the spirit fill the world

54

You'll see the bodies seeming just like souls
- the souls confirmed by victories all the time

55

In the Beloved's sacred springtime sing
countless expositions; yet who can hear?

[27]

56

Such Exposition transcends any tongue;
how could these nobodies grasp its meaning?

[28]

57

This Exposition's not just words and sound -
this Exposition's life itself, undying

58

You'll see the lovers in this endless spring,
a million strong, freely offer up their lives

[29]

59

This is the Spring of Spiritual Might,
the holy vernal tidings of the Lord

60

If this zephyr's breeze wafts over you
your fleeting soul will drain the immortal cup

61

If breezes touch you from the Friend's abode,
give life – which comes from Him –
in sacrifice

62

See this Spring's tulips of unicity,
[30]

the Friend's locks: hyacinths of sanctity.

63

Buds of mystic knowledge line this stream bank,
all turn longingly in search of Him
[31]

64

Its cypress trees evoke that Darling's stature,
Its leaves a book depicting our Friend's cheeks,

65

Its ringdoves drunk on beauty of the Friend,
Its nightingales on cups of "Am I not"
[32]

66

The songbirds in desire of tryst with Him
all drunk on breezes of the grace of "He"
[33]

67

This nightingale's soft melody, if heard,
[34]

would purge creation's souls of jealousy

68

The seas of meaning surge with Exposition
The Ark of Being rides this bounty's crest
[35]

69

Every wind-flower blooming in this spring
[36]

tells countless truths and mysteries of that Friend

70

The Friend's dark locks emit a fragrant musk!

His hand of bounty showers you with gifts

71

Like salamanders in the fire, His curls;

[37]

they coil about the fire of the Friend's face

72

The holy songbird, separate from the Friend,

burns up both skin and marrow with laments

73

Should it heave a sigh in separation's throes

it would inflame the souls of the elect

74

(The elect alone enjoy a share of this –

so from such bounteous grace take warmth, my friend!)

[38]

75

Waft from the soul Your scent of musk divine

that these degenerates may catch sweet hints

76

This is the spring of endless spirit

- not a spring soon chased away by autumn

77

In this holy springtide, spirit blossoms

in its atmosphere, the light of Noah shines

78

It boards the passengers into the Ark

[39]

and grants each one of them untold dominion

79

Beauty of God! Emerge from out the veil,

so that the sun may rise up in the west!

[40]

80

Unseal the musk of God's own privileged knowledge

Open treasure chests of mysteries unseen –

81

so that the dead discern Your scent of musk

so that Your wine will stir the numb to mirth

82

Through kind largesse, clothe in Your robe of Might

[41]

this Meek one of the earth of unity

83

This fleeting one – outfit in garb immortal

This abject wretch – give taste of honied riches

84

That He might step out fully from the curtain

and rend contingent being's veil to shreds,

85

intoxicated and impelled, emerge,

like a candle in the glass of "they return"

[42]

86

It was in Your garden that this thistle grew,

so make through it a thousand gardens bloom

[43]

87

Upon each garden, then, inscribe a name

and write the ancient secrets on each leaf

88

that Your face may beam with rays resplendent

and fill the earth and heavens with Your light

89

Waft over them with mercy's generous breeze;

Tear from this afflicted one all heedless veils

[44]

90

Grant, bright-miened Sovereign, to the spirits pure

the sheltering shade of Your Divine Lote tree

91

Unlock for them a Gate

[45]

to Ridván's meaning

[46]

For God's sake! do not bar this Gate to them

92

that I may step unveiled into the world,

expound upon one of Your righteous signs

93

He said: By God, by God, my righteous man,

don't tell the ignorant the signs of Truth!

94

God, God! O Tongue of God! Tell this secret

soft and slow, have patience with the people;

95

perchance Your grace may take them by the hand

and free them from all fear of this and that

96

Stretch the wings of meaning, fly aloft,

soar through the spheres of nearness unto Him,

97

near Him in spirit, not by taking steps

Strive with soul and enter realms eternal

98

To thus traverse the heavens in a flash

is easy if you bow your head in prayer

99

In Exposition of this let me speak –

that from the Fount of Life you quaff your share

100

and reach the Riván of eternity

and find your way to where you meet with God

101

and fathom what is meant by "Cross the earth"

[47]

and soar like spirit through His atmosphere -

102

Since at this moment you're enmeshed in clay,

How can you sense the scent of heart's Ridván?

103

Strip yourself of all restriction's garments

and sanctify your soul from limitation

104

Illumine your heart's darkness with His light

Make yourself in spirit's realm the leader

105

Your darkness once dispelled, His light arises;

His Sinai's rays will sparkle on your heart

[48]

106

Once night comes to an end, the morning dawns

Majestic breezes of the spirit blow

107

You are, and your corrupted soul, that darkness

[49]

God's self-revelation, your Water of Life

108

Just pass beyond the darkness of your self;
you'll quaff, always refreshed, the wine of life
109

Then step into the shade of Soul's own Khezzr
[50]
that from the realms of darkness you'll be freed
110

The Khezzr of old drank deep, was freed from death
while this new Khezzr grants countless founts of life
111

To all He has bestowed the water of life
To the sole King, he's sacrificed his soul!
112

That Khezzr through striving finally arrived;
This Khezzr at once made fountains flow with life
113

That Khezzr ran after traces of the fount
This Khezzr is chased each step by flowing founts
114

Return, O spirit's Glory,[118]
from this trek,
and so hunt down a million meanings more!
115

Don't hunt the vagrant beasts, leave them to their graves!
[119]

Capture mystic meaning's prize on Sinai's plain
116

You hunted lovers' souls down on the plains
till all souls passed beyond the plane of Being.
117

You have no chance to tell the nightingale,
O King of All, of secrets of the Rose
[120]

118

Let a bird fly from the falconer's forearm
and bring back mysteries from the farther realms

119

And now hunt for the mystic bird of meaning;
[121]

Open a treasure with the key of "Be"
[122]

120

The promise that you made, fulfill it now,
you whose light has brightened earth and heaven!

121

Deck the world with Your spring's vernal verdure;
make Eden envious of Your own Ridván

122

Of Truth, make blossom fields of wind-flowers
within this atmosphere of soul's springtide

123

So make each rose a nightingale's sign
To all the kings explain the heart's rosé
[123]

124

For at this moment there are strangers here
(though stranger here and confidant are one)
[124]

125

O morning breeze, from tresses of the Friend
bring fragrances of spiritual musk

126

O clouds of spiritual bounty, rain
so that the shells may all engender pearls

127

The mysteries divine: deciphered, shown!

The meaning "cross the earth" is mentioned, told!

[125]

128

Then, you who're drunk on chalices of pride,

exchange your fiery selfish souls for light,

129

and cross the span of earth with just one breath

[126]

to win release from confines of your cage

130

Till you enter in the shelter of the Friend,

you've no conception of what's pith, what's husk

131

Your legs of meaning stand quagmired in mud,

ignorant of His fair and radiant face

[127]

132

Once harbored in the King of soul's soft shadow

it's time to uproot heart from worldly earth

133

For a while at first in dust you wallowed

but in the end you pass beyond the sun

134

See how, sojourner, you crossed spirit's worlds

in an instant without lifting up a foot!

135

Now fragrance from sweet meadows of the soul

wafts by, perfuming us and earth in scent

136

Again that bounteous Riván's soulful musk

wafts by, and blows away all things that were

137

Of "heed" and "heedlessness" we here lose hold

Both drunk and sober have been carried off

138

Sobriety erased, effacement fades

[128] –

The drunk finds wits, no sober one remains

139

Whatever names and ways the world once had

have been proved fleeting since my King appeared

140

For Names, though striving towards Him for an age,

could never comprehend His smallest station

141

All that your eye and ear have seen and heard,

sure guide,[129]

above all that, He's holier.

142

Then how with ear and eye of insight void

perceive the inner mystery of the Beloved?

143

Open your eye anew to the new Friend

[130]

Clear your inner ear, then listen!

144

Ignorant eyes see nothing but the dust,

Gnostic eyes see primordial secrets

145

Gnostic eyes see down the road a million years –

Ignorant eyes can't see the King's own face!

[131]

146

Once someone posed this question to a gnostic:

O you, who've grasped the mysteries of God

147

O you, by bounty's wine intoxicate,
do you recall the day of "Am I not?"
[132]

148

He said: I do recall that sound, those words,
[133]

as if it were but yesterday, no less!
[134]

149

It lingers ever in my ears, His call,
that sweet, soul-vivifying voice of His.
[135]

150

Another gnostic, who had climbed beyond,
[136]

had bored the mystic pearls divine, replied:

151

That day of God has never ended nor
has fallen short, we're living in that day!
[137]

152

His day's unending, not pursued by night –
That we're alive on such a day's not strange

153

Had Time's Soul ceased its yearning for this day,
then Heaven's court and throne would fall to dust

154

For through God's power this eternal day
was made unending by His Majesty.

155

Then you, my dear, please heed this paradox
and mind the counsels of God's mysteries,

156

that you may find soul's nurture in His wisdom,
your life be for His face a sacrifice

157

that you may always hear His melodies
and deeply drain the chalice of His grace

158

that you may comprehend love's mysteries,
quaff Love's rejuvenating streams of wine
[138]

159

I'll never flinch from riff-raffs' brandished swords
though infidels may slay me over and over

160

From the start my soul drank deep Your vintage
At last I'll give my life to Your remembrance

161

O Bahá! Kindle once again the fire,
burn up earth's learning and investigation

162

and clean its soul of worldly qualities;
unlock one symbol of the hidden mysteries,

163

cast a wave up from the depths of mystic seas
and crack the Ark of superficiality

164

Pour out a glass that frees me from myself,
that I, like champions,[139]
may slash through veils.

165

You, through whose name the Tree of Life bears fruit,
whose hand wields manifest the powers of Truth,

166

A world entire in Your palm's destiny
tumultuous now, grows tranquil by Your plan

167

Light up, bright King, this candle and through it,
illuminate the various directions.

168

This lantern flame which You've illumined
and protected in protection's glass,
[140]

169

with magnanimity's oil You've succoured it
and tapered it with wicks of God's Command -

170

Protect it, then, from all oppression's winds
that Your irradiant light may shine through it

171

Make hands of enemies fall short of it,
Orb of command! Of "We, in truth," the King!
[141]

172

Look at your candle, how it's buffeted
by calamitous contrary winds!

173

It's through Your beauty's rays it gets its light
let no contingency, then, snuff it out

174

Since You have kindled it, then quench it not
Since You have made it quick, extinguish not

175

You whose kindness makes a mote into a sun,
whose wrath reduces lions into sparrows,

176

Your candle, O Creator, stands exposed
by harsh winds buffeted from every side

177

If You wish, even water turns to fire
but if You don't, the fire itself turns cold

178

Through Your wisdom, demons turn to angels
Through Your command, hell's fire turns into light

179

Should You wish, the winds will work like oil,
will make the spirits blaze and give off light
[142]

180

O Bahá'u'lláh, how fierce Your fire!
it burns the lovers' beings all to stubble

181

You struck the hearts with one spark from the flame
and set afire whole forests on Sinai

182

So, from each heart You've conjured burning bushes:
[143]

O Moses, here it is! come running fast,

183

behold the meaning of the fire of God
and free yourselves from grip of the Egyptians!

184

O Sacrifice of God,[144]
do not forsake

love's altar; give your life in paths of love!

185

Come soul-shorn and headlorn to the Friend's lane,

thus worthy of the folk whose realm this is.

186

Spirit of God![145]

Step in the vale of love[146]

walk the road, blaze a trail, the Cross in tow
[147]

187

Above the skies and physical ascent
[148]

climb, King of soul and body's Jubilation!

188

You're spirit's nightingale on spirit's rose
Won't you please, O Host of spirit, return?

189

Your home, Spirit-Falcon: the King's forearm –
so aim directly for your home right here!

190

You, likewise, Noah, break the body's Ark
and hurl yourself into the Sea of Light!

191

Don't seek self-preservation; Drown this self!
then you'll come up for air in God's embrace
[149]

192

Seek out the King's protection, not the ship's
– the King's preserve will then provide refuge

193

You, too, hasten Moses, come to Soul's Sinai!
Forget your cloak and sandals, rush unrobed!
[150]

194

that you may know the mysteries of that Fire
which flames from each lock of the Loved One's hair

195

His locks a fire that burn the soul of love –
both faith and unbelief and love's set ways -

196

His locks a fire that dance on Mount Párán
[151]

The back of Time's bent by His curly strands

197

O Dove,[152]

leave now the tale of Fire's mysteries
Don't bring the pearls of Soul before the blind –

198

This Staff[153] –
the Hand of Truth wields as a sword
and cuts contingent outward forms to shreds

199

All other staffs[154]
are hewn from orchard tree
but this Staff's brought to be through Truth's command

200

Those staffs in stuff like clay and water grow;
Behold this Staff, composed of hot heart's fire!

201

This Staff is a consuming fire whose flame
burns through the veils of falsehood, counterfeit

202

This Staff's the wind that smote the folk of Hud
[155]

first sifting faithful out from infidel

203

This Staff became an ark in Noah's age
and then in Jesus' time to spirit changed

204

O Moses, you must rush to Soul's Sinai –

Your fire roars with animated flames

205

Forget the sandals! fly through spirit's realm

like wind, and leave belief and soul behind

206

(O Bird-soul, fly beyond ephemeral space

to feast eternal with cherubs rosy-cheeked)

[156]

207

The fire of Moses flares in His Lote tree

[157]

His breaths respire with hosts of Christ-like spirits

208

That Moses saw the fire on Sinai glow

This Moses saw his soul ablaze with fire

209

(Upon the Mount of Soul full many creeds

[158]

are manifest like branches lade with fruit)

210

God's Mount, His breast; the Friend's bright flame, His fire

Snow-white, His hand; and Sinai is His heart

211

(Not with the whiteness His command created,

but whiteness that itself creates Command!)

212

Now, in this age, Love's Mount Párán

[159] appears

as our Friend rends the veil from off His face

213

The scent of soul now permeates the air

but I know not from where this fragrance comes

214

I do know, though, the tresses of the Friend
draw souls forth with their scent to sacrifice

215

The musk of God has been released, unsealed –
His memory brought our souls to share a secret

216

Blow, breeze of spiritual morning, soft –
Blow, sacred zephyr of the Merciful

217

Intoxicate the souls with your aroma
bear them up past being's world to "Am I not"
[160]

218

The Immortal Phoenix from the Mount of Faith
[161]

has winged its way into the infinite
[162]

219

and crossed at single stroke the world's horizons
through confirmations from the Spirit-King

220

Now from the Friend's Throne once again it comes
and infinite the melodies it sings

221

His rosy face makes dead of winter spring
His lips of ruby make the night daybright

222

His tresses make the lovers suffer long
His absence brings beloveds abject need

223

His hair lassoes brave champions by the neck

The head of God's hosts wounded by His shafts

224

His lips rob every lover's soul of wit

the souls of kings for union with Him yearn

225

The eye of inner soul – look well, you'll see –

was made to light up by His beauty

226

Had it not been for His eye, the founts of light

would not have sprung or flowed throughout the world

227

His rose brings ample gardens into blossom

His cheeks abloom with inner meaning's roses

228

Where He dwells, Moses' fire seeks its light

In His face, the soul of Christ seeks spirit

229

From behind the veil should He but step one night,

He'll light a hundred worlds up like the sun

230

What's night, if not the dark tress of that beauty?

What's morn, if not the light of that Friend's face?

231

Each and every monarch in Love's city

has scattered for the sake of love his soul

232

God's beauty in His beauty stands revealed

and from His lips the hearts quaff soulful wine

233

All the world's entangled in His hair

their wounded chests all heave in pain for Him

234

When the Zulaykhá of Beauty saw that face
in the place of her hand, she cut her heart
[163]

235

He blew with just one breath of His own spirit
and brought a million Christ-like spirits to life

236

But this does not describe Him –
just His light,
from which you, who're made of attributes, draw life
[164]

237

But find a way His beauty to describe,
and you will cross a thousand seas of meaning

238

One ray, devout one, being thus described,
imagine the description of Himself!

239

When the lover's eye espied His beauty,
it cut all heart-ties to this world and beyond

240

The wave of love's seas surges with His wave
Love's phoenix finds its zenith in His heights

241

Your eye receives its light from His, and so
to turn to any other's a dark deed

242

Since the soul's eye takes its light from Him,
what shame were it to light upon another!

243

Your eye came into sight from Truth's own eye

to see naught but His beauty in the world

244

(I tell this mystery sotto voce, friend;

I bore this pearl in secret, kind companion!

245

that the evil eye may never touch Him

that the stranger may not find the way to Him)

246

Perceive this in your limbs and members, all;

Cast off the fetters of the folk of darkness

247

For your ear has heard His mystic melodies,

and hearkened to His music's soulful secrets

[165]

248

Now that the handiwork divine's revealed,

turn your eyes to it and from all worldly folk

249

Look to the world with His eye, if you can

[166] –

a thousand realms of meaning you will see

250

His eye perceives no thing except God's face

His bird takes perch nowhere except His lane

251

With Him united, lovers' souls burn up;

their hearts, in separation, blaze with flame

252

So both in separation and reunion

the life-lorn, soul-shorn lover burns, my son!

[167]

253

Then know that love of Truth is your companion
that you may soar away from worldly trappings
254

Love means a letting go of mortal life
to claim with heart and soul eternity
255

Seek to hear the secret meaning, if you can,
[168]
that you may make divine ascent to God,
[169]
256

that spirit's harvest grow upon your palm tree,
and give forth luminous and sacred fruits
257

O Breeze, bring us fragrance from His tresses
Clouds, sprinkle on us showers of His grace
[170]
258

that the meadows of His lovers' souls
may bring forth Love's most beautiful tulips
259

The throne of God is but the lover's heart
[171]
which has been purified of all but Him
260

Once His House, through love of such a heart, was raised
[172]

Both House and Him within the House were hid
[173]
261

Know this, O youth! His House resides in hearts
and was not raised upon mere stone and clay
[174]
262

And when His light has bathed and cleansed your heart
your heart becomes His seat – it's His Sinai!

263

God's House, a Lover now from head to toe,
shines ever effulgent with the Beloved

264

When Love returns, the veil of reason burns;
[175]

of virtue, knowledge, gnosis, harvests burn

265

Since none but Him is in the House, my son,
from wall to wall know all is His command

266

Know, then, your eye and ear and hand from Him
and He will see for you and take your hand

267

The gnostic soul, His highest temple,
[176] and

the mystic treasures of His close approach
[177]

268

And now a new way must be found, my son –
this counsel you must heed with all your soul –

269

So rise beyond reunion/separation
[178]

until you reach the precincts of the Source
[179]

270

Separated, you're as sure as in the fire;
reunited with Him, you are febrile, ill

271

Enter the pure and everlasting realm,

the plane where all but Him do fade away

[180]

272

If you have read the Hadíth "There was God"

[181]

then you know secrets of "There's naught but Him"

[182]

273

Walk this path with striving feet to free yourself

from either care: the Friend's absence or union

274

When you sense for sure the spirit's mystery –

that there is nothing anywhere but God

275

then wash away in spirit's stream the mire

that you may see the Pure One's emanations

276

that you may see reunion in reunion

that you may see your heart with Beauty shine

277

Such union never will be contradicted

such union never ends in separation

278

If you've an ear for fatherly advice,

both are blasphemy: reunion, absence!

279

Fly, regal bird, from either consequence

[183]

into His, the Sovereign's, sphere of Unity

280

But I fear your feet will lose their footing,

that evil suppositions cloud your mind

281

I must explain the meaning for you,
uproot satanic whisperings from your heart
282

free you from games, evil, hauteur, unrest
lest this exposition[184]
tempt you into pride
283

Know this: His emanations are reunion
which shine within you endless, unconditioned
284

Within you He has placed His light, in trust;
[185]

Strive hard to make it become manifest!
285

Then in yourself, my sweet, seek union with Him
and you'll no longer feel the Friend's absence
286

You are yourself the storehouse of God's treasure,
yet heedless, you chase after this and that
[186]
287

Until His attributes appear in you,
know yourself as lost, in separation
288

His bounty has not left you portionless
of His names and ways and qualities, o sage!
289

Through His grace, He's opened gates unto you
do not, like ingrates, close those opened gates
[187]

290

Since you have heard the reed pipe's plaint of love,

[188]

recognize it now renewed this day through love

291

You've heard the reed pipe sing, now look Who plays it

(or you'll stay wholly heedless of the King!)

292

The Piper felt a stranger to the world

and so He donned the reed pipe as His veil

[189]

293

Tear off the veil then from your face, at last

and show alone the Piper to the world

294

Slice the veils to pieces like a champion

[190]

to show God, the Giver's, effulgence revealed

295

Cry out pipe-like in your separation

until the Piper makes new pact with you

296

At the clarion call of spirit's Piper

all simmering lovers' breasts begin to boil

297

With this reed pipe's sighs light conflagrations

to purge the world of egotism's trace

298

When all the scum burns off the creed of Self

pure reed alone remains within the world

[191]

299

Your eye, lit with His light –

O you who know! –

at last can see, perceives alone the Piper

300

So listen to the mysteries of the Piper,
that you inhale these roses' sweet fragrance!

301

A single spark of His love's fire caught hold
and scorched the royal harvest of existence

302

When Beauty drew the curtain from His face
it tore away each sovereign's veils of glory
[192]

303

As if eyelashes were arrows, that Darling
cast His glance, pierced breastbones in the monarch's soul

304

swift struck the regal crown from off his head
[193]

enslaving him, reducing him to fetters
[194]

305

Like prey he fell into the hunter's hands
[195]

Like straw, snatched up by wind, thrown down to dust
[196]

306

Will no messenger be heading to Iraq,
to tell of parting's pain, separation's tale?
[197]

307

Wrenched from you, fervent pining souls are scorched
Separation's arrows pierce the hearts of kings

308

Between you and I, city of spirit,
a million mythic mountains intervene

309

No messenger have I but fire-hot sighs
Unless the zephyr's breeze can spread the news

310

My hand cannot attain the date-palm's fruit
My soul's eyes weep deep seas in separation

311

O Zephyr, fly off now from the Beloved
waft sweetly to the exiles of Baghdad
[198]

312

and ask:
City of the Lord!
How sit still,
now that the Friend's departed from your side?

313

Your lover languishes away in prison,
[199]
suffering like Husayn on plains of Karbalâ:
[200]

314

One Husayn,
untold Yazîds have hemmed him in!
[201]

One Friend,
and hostile demons all around,
[202]

315

Like Moses
held among the folk of Egypt,
or God's Spirit
detained among the Jews,
[203]

316

or cast like Joseph

deep into the well –

that endless pit from which there's no way out.

317

Your nightingale's afflicted in a cage!

[204]

Bars keep him in, almost choking out His breath...

318

RETURN TO TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

End Notes

See the Koran, 7:143. Moses asks God to reveal Himself in person, to which God replies "thou shalt not see Me." Instead, God reveals his majesty on a mountain, which splits apart from the force of the Lord's *mysterium tremendum*, knocking Moses unconscious.

"Fealty" to be read as three syllables: fé-al-ty.

One meaning of the noun *amr* (plural *avâmer*) is "command," "order;" this meaning occurs

in Bahá'í theology to distinguish between the realm of God's command (*amr*) and the contingent realm of creation (*khalq*). However, *amr* also has the meaning of "cause," "affair" (plural *omur*), as in the phrase "The Cause of God" (*Amr Allâh*). I have attempted to preserve both meanings by rendering "word" and "cause." Literally, the line appears to suggest that as soon as God's cause is revealed, or as soon as God commands, all will respond to that announcement with exuberant joy.

i.e., the moon, which in the dark, pre-electrified skyline, was an impressive sight dominating the nightscape, and compared frequently in Persian poetry to the beautiful, radiant face of the beloved, which likewise dominated and illumined the field of vision of the lover.

Qatre mi-juyad ze bahr-at kowsari: This could also be understood as: the drop seeks from Your ocean heaven's stream.

Glory here renders "Bahá", a double meaning alluding to Bahá'u'lláh himself. Thus the earth's face turns to heaven, hoping that in the absence of the Báb, God will send down Bahá, in a shower of glory.

Among the signs of the Day of Resurrection and the appearance of the Qá'im is sometimes included that the sun would rise from the west.

We are probably meant to understand a double meaning for *núr* in this line: both light, and the place from which Bahá'u'lláh's family came, *Núr*. The line literally reads, Give *núr* to the *núr* of the heart with the lights of *Núr*.

The word "d-r-d" can be read as "dard" or "dord", meaning respectively "pain"

or "dregs." Either one could make sense here, but the verb used here, to purify or clarify (*sâf kardan*), suggests a wine image, clearing the cask of dregs before pouring it out. In this case the "wine" of divine revelation is adulterated with the dregs of grief, perhaps over the martyrdom of the Báb or the exile of Bahá'u'lláh.

Qá'im is the word translated as "arose." This line, and indeed the entire strophe, would appear to be addressed to the Báb, and alludes to his station as Imami Shiism's promised Qá'im, one who would arise to fight for the Cause of 'Alí and Husayn, and their descendants. Literally, the line would mean "a world arises to its feet for you, the Qá'im, just as you stand tall within our hearts and soul."

The phrase *kun fa yakûn* appears several times in the Koran (e.g., 2:117), meaning that God wills a thing by speaking it, and it comes to be; literally, God commands "Be," and it comes to be. In Bahá'u'lláh's poem the phrase is alluded to, but it appears as *kun fa kân*, using the imperative and then the past tense of the verb "to be" in order to complete the rhyme with *jân*. The word "amr" can mean Cause or command, so we can understand either "so that there will appear from your command of 'Be and it Was'," or, as I have preferred, "so that there will appear from your Cause/religion 'Be and it Was.'"

The word translated here as "glory" is again Bahá, but this word could also mean the indemnity or compensation paid to the family of a slain person (*khun-bahâ*, "blood-money"). Thus, we could understand this to mean something like "Redemption of the soul," the compensation one receives for having offered his or her life.

Exposition renders the word *Bayán*, which can have an ordinary meaning, but which could also be taken as an allusion to the two books by that name of the Báb, one in Persian, one in Arabic.

The poetic convention typically calls for the second instance of a word in a given line of Persian verse to have a different meaning; hence the second occurrence of *qalb* here should have a meaning other than the usual "heart." *Qalb* can also mean "conscience" (and "inversion," among other things), as well as false coin. The text in *Âsâr-e qalam-e a'lâ* reads *naqd kon*, meaning to assay or test the purity of a metal coin. The *Mishkín Qalam* text is inconclusive, because of blotches on this line, but it also appears to read *naqd kon*. One is therefore tempted to read this as "Assay these unwatched-over consciences," or "Assay the mettle of these wandering values."

However, the word *bi-rasad* ("unwatched" or "wandering" in the above renderings) suggests an association with astronomy, rather than one with counterfeit coinage (The 1914/1332 text of Faraj Alláh Zakíy al-Kordí reads *bi-rasad* with the letter *sin* rather than with *sâd*, which seems to be a mistake).

Dr. Khazeh Fananapazir has informed me that in his family recitation tradition of this poem, the first word has been read as *naqdh kon*, with a dot over the *dâl*. This reading makes more sense, as *naqdh kon* would mean to deliver, save,

lead out of trouble, and it has a Koranic basis. For example, Koran 3:103 (a verse in which the word "hearts" [qulûb] also occurs earlier), concludes as follows: "You were on the edge of a pit of fire, and God led you from it. Thus does God make clear to you His signs, that you may be guided." The idea of guidance or deliverance fits better with the astronomical rasad, for sailors and caravan drivers would navigate at night by the stars and be saved from perdition. In view of the flight imagery in the previous line, it seems particularly appropriate.

For these reasons I have opted to read naqdh kon, "to deliver," and qalb in the meaning of "conscience." A conclusive resolution of the matter would, however, require an examination of the most authoritative manuscripts of the poem.

Esrâfil (cognate with the Hebrew "Seraphim") is the angel who will blow the trumpet on the Day of Resurrection, according to Islamic apocalyptic legend. I have translated "Heraldic Angel" here, as the allusion would seem to be to the Báb announcing the advent of Him Whom God would make manifest.

Mírzá Haydar-'Alí wrote to 'Abdu'l-Bahá asking about the Master's station as appointed interpreter of Bahá'u'lláh's writings. In the course of this letter, Haydar-'Alí quotes about thirty lines from the "Blessed Couplets" of Bahá'u'lláh (from lines 25 to 41 and again from lines 147 to 157), including this one, which uses the word aghsán for branches, a word that Bahá'u'lláh later used in the singular in many tablets to refer to his sons, designating 'Abdu'l-Bahá as the Most Great Branch (Ghusn-i A'zam) and Mírzá Muhammad-'Alí as the Greater Branch (Ghusn-i Akbar). In reply to Haydar-'Alí, 'Abdu'l-Bahá replies insisting that his station is that of servitude to Bahá'u'lláh, and that by Expounder of the text (mobayyen-e mansus) is meant interpreter of [his father's] words (mofasser-e kalemât). In the end of the reply, 'Abdu'l-Bahá quotes this line of the Mathnaví-yi Mubáarak and insists that he seeks no titles, stations, praises or other distinctions, but as the verse suggests, he flees from both the sun and shade of fame. A facsimile of both Haydar-'Alí's letter and 'Abdu'l-Bahá's response can be seen in Mohammad-'Ali Fayzi, Hayât-e Hazrat-e 'Abd al-Bahâ, 3rd edition (Langenhain, 1994) 58-61.

An allusion to the scent of Joseph's coat, which was sent to his father, the blind Jacob, to prove that Joseph was still alive. The scent of this coat, proving that his son was still alive, restored Jacob's sight to him.

"Burning Bush" for Sidrih, as in sidratu'l-muntahá of the Koran, which designates the tree that marked Muhammad's utmost approach to God on his ascension into the heavens. It is translated by Shoghi Effendi as the Divine Lote Tree (beyond which there is no passing), or sometimes rendered in transliteration: Sadratu'l-Muntahá (Gleanings, 70). In the Persian Hidden Words, #7, Sedre-ye ertefâ'-e 'eshq is rendered as "the celestial Tree of love."

Here, however, as in the rest of Bahá'u'lláh's Mathnaví (see, e.g., lines 182-3 and 208, and the notes that go with them), Moses' burning bush and the

Divine Lote Tree are identified etymologically and theophanically, symbolizing the sacred nearness of the divine presence in revealing itself to the Manifestations. For an excellent study of this motif in Jewish, Islamic and Bahá'í scripture, see Stephen Lambden, "The Sinaitic Mysteries: Notes on Moses/Sinai Motifs in Bábí and Bahá'í scripture," in Moojan Momen, ed., *Studies in Honor of the Late Hasan M. Balyuzi* (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1988) 65-183.

Mírzá Haydar-'Alí copies it as *shaqâyeq âshkâr* (wind-flowers evident), whereas the other texts have *haqâyeq bi-shomâr* (countless mystic truths). See Fayzi, *Hayât-e Hazrat-e 'Abd al-Bahá*, op. cit.

Literally, every heart through Him is made a paradisaal river (Kowsar, a river in paradise referred to in the Koran) of God's beneficence (*fazl*).

"Fall" here in its (American) sense of autumn. Though this may, following upon the mention of "Edenic grace" in the previous line, inadvertently create an overtone of Adam, Eve and the Serpent, the Persian original does not evoke the fall from heaven.

Literally, this spring comes from the light of the face of the heart-stealer, an epithet of the typical beloved in Persian poetry, who carries with him (or her) the hearts away.

Literally, those springs bring out the tulips and these springs now have their wailing. Tulips, though associated with spring and beauty, can also suggest mourning, their red bulbs evoking the blood of those who have been laid to rest in the earth during the past year. While earthly spring is normally a time of joy, the spring of 1863 was a time of sorrow for Bahá'u'lláh's exile (compare the concluding lines of the poem). It may not be completely impertinent here to mention that the ten days of 'Âshûrâ, the Shiite period of ritual mourning for Husayn, began in 1863 at the very end of spring; the 10th of Muharram, the day of Husayn's martyrdom, fell on 27 June in 1863.

For the meter, "ethereal" should here be read as three syllables: e-thé-re-al.

This suggests the scene on the plain of Resurrection, as envisioned in Islamic apocalyptic narratives.

Literally: these springs will pitch their tent upon the skies. This image of the king and his royal entourage pitching their tents on the plain is elevated here into the heavens, as something visible to the entire world.

Reading *Kân* here in its Persian sense of a mine of precious stones. However, the word has a different meaning in Arabic, as in the phrase *mâ kân*, would mean what has past. It is tempting to understand this as an ellipsis for *zêkr-e mâ kân*, the remembrance of all that has been in the past, but the wording does not, I think, support such a reading.

"Yet who can hear" renders *vali ku mahrami*, literally "where is a confidant," that is a close, compatible friend who can be trusted with a secret.

"Countless expositions" renders *sad bayân*, which can be read, as noted earlier, as allusions to the two works of the Báb by that name. However, Bahá'u'lláh uses the phrase *Rabî' al-Bayân* (literally, Spring of Exposition/Bayân) in the tablet of *Ridván* to symbolize the advent of the new Manifestation and the renewal of the divine message (see *Gleanings XIV*, where Shoghi Effendi translates this phrase as "The Divine Springtime"). Both spring (*rabi'*) and exposition (*bayân*) appear in this line of the *Mathnaví* as well, and though not paired together, would nevertheless seem to echo the passage from the *Ridván* tablet. That same tablet also contains the phrase *rahîq al-bayân* ("the wine of utterance").

Bayân means "exposition," but once again, could perhaps be understood as an allusion to the books of that name by the Báb. "These Nobodies" for in *nâ kasân*, which in Persian conveys less of a sense of social station, and more of baseness or failure to observe the standards expected of a just and noble human being.

Sad hezâr, literally 100,000, but one hundred thousand, which Shoghi Effendi often translated as "a myriad," does not denote a specific number, so much as it means "countless" or "unimaginably vast." "Million" not only fits the meter, but I think better connotes innumerable today than a more finite number like 100,000.

Towhid, the unity of God, a central doctrine of Islam, is rendered here as "unicity." Its surface meaning suggests the doctrine that God is starkly one (not multiple as in pagan belief or triune as in Christianity), and does not give birth in physical form (See *Koran*, Sura 112). For Muslim pietists and mystics, though, it often meant seeing God's handiwork in everything. "Sanctity," which comes in the second hemistich, renders *Tajrid*, which connotes disentangling, or abstracting, God from material and limited conception of His attributes.

The image of buds here perhaps evokes the narcissus (a daffodil-like flower, which looks something like an opened eye), typically compared in Persian poetry to the languid eye of the beloved. Unlike the Narcissus of Greek mythology, who gazed at his own reflection in the water, these blossoms of gnostic insight (*ghonche-hâ-ye ma'refat*) look longingly for the divine beloved. *Z'in tarf-e ju*, "from this bank of the stream," perhaps also hints that the search is conducted with furtive glances (*tarf-e 'ayn*), and from a distance (across the river), as the lover would transgress against modesty by staring boldly and impudently at the unattainable beloved.

This refers to a passage in the *Koran* (7:172), in which God asks the descendants of Adam at a primordial meeting, "Am I not your Lord," and the people reply "Yes! We testify to this." This motif occurs again in the poem at lines 148 and 218.

"He" rendering *Hu*, from the Arabic third person masculine pronoun meaning simply "he" (*huwa*). It is used among Sufis as a *zêkr*, or meditative mantra, and appears in Persian poetic and esoteric texts as a mystical name of God, simply

"He" in its most abstracted, and at the same time monistic sense, as the source of all being and existence.

"If heard" for *ar zâher shavad*, meaning literally, "if it is manifested." Since *zâher* and its derivative *mazhar* have a technical meaning in the writings of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, this word here suggests the manifestation of God's message.

Lajláj suggests tossing or heaving on the depths of the sea, and, as Dr. Khazeh Fananapazir has kindly informed me, in the writings attributed to Imam 'Alí, *lajláj* is often paired with *mavváj* (surging), the word with which it rhymes in this poem.

The flower here – *shaqâyeq* meaning anemone, peony, or as Shoghi Effendi translates it (Persian Hidden Word, #18), wind-flowers – does not seem to me to have any particular symbolic significance, but occurs because it rhymes with *truths* (*haqâyeq*).

Persian folklore holds that salamanders lived in fire. Here, the bright face of the beloved is likened to fire, while the dark curls coiling about his face are likened to salamanders.

"Friend" renders *habíb*, which is probably just a general apostrophe to the reader and not addressed to anyone in particular (see the note to line 253). However, "Habíb" was the title or nickname given to *Jináb-i Muníb* in the *Súriy-i Asháb*, addressed to him by Bahá'u'lláh from Edirne. *Jináb-i Muníb* accompanied Bahá'u'lláh from Baghdad to Istanbul and from there to Edirne, and thus was with Bahá'u'lláh during the time that the *Mathnavíy-i Mubárák* was revealed. For the meter of the English, read "The elect" and "fiery" and "bounteous" all as two syllables: th' elect, fie-ry, boun-tous.

The Persian reads *bar neshânad ahl-e keshti râ be-folk*, but perhaps intends a visual play on the last word, f-l-k. Since Perso/Arabic script does not supply the short vowels, f-l-k could otherwise be vowelled and read as *falak* (meaning "the heavens"), particularly because the phrase *bar neshânad be falak* (to elevate someone high into the heavens) is a common metaphor in Persian. In this line the meaning, the meter, and the rhyme (with *molk*) all require us to read *folk* (Ark), giving us literally "he seats the people of the boat within the Ark", but there is perhaps a hint of a secondary image (especially in view of the imagery of atmosphere and sun that appear in lines 78 and 80), of a celestial ark swimming across the skies. "The passengers in the boat" (*ahl-e keshti*) probably intends the People of Bahá in the Crimson Ark (*al-safînat al-hamrâ'*), or the Ship of God (*safînat Allâh*), or the Ark of Bahá (*fulk al-Bahâ'*), a connection made explicit in Bahá'u'lláh's *Tablet of Carmel* (*sawfa tajrî safînat Allâh 'alayka wa yazharu ahl al-Bahâ' alladhîna dhakarahu fî Kitâb al-asmâ'*). Reference to the Ark (in the sense of the Ark of Noah, not the Ark of the Covenant [*tâbût*]) is also to be found in other places in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh, such as *innahu min ashâb al-safînat al-hamrâ' allatî ja'ala-hâ Allâh li-ahl al-Bahâ...*, and again *rakibta 'alâ fulk al-Bahâ' wa kunta sâyiran 'alâ bahr al-kibriyâ*, and finally in

Persian, ahl-e Bahâ ke dar safine-ye elâhiyeh sâken-and.... For the English translation of these passages, see Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1939; reprint 1976), 16, 212, 302 and 170, respectively.

See line 14 of the poem and the accompanying endnote.

Literally, "This meek one of the earth of unity, through largesse, clothe with a robe of might, O Ruthful one." I take the apostrophe here (ay vodud) as an address to God (O compassionate one), which I have indirectly suggested through the adjective "kind" before largesse, and the pronoun "Your" before "robe of Might."

This combines an allusion to the Koranic verse of the light (24:35), with the Bábí doctrine of "return" (raj'at). The Koran speaks of the lamp of God shining with a flame lit from a blessed olive tree that is neither of the East nor of the West. This has often been understood as a symbol for God's Manifestations. Various forms of the word "return" also occur in the Koran, but almost always in the sense of human beings returning to God after death or after the Day of Reckoning. Here "return" suggests the doctrine of "return" (raj'at), as explained by the Báb in the Bayán, the idea being that the Prophets return as the light in the lamp of God. A few years prior to the Mathnaví, Bahá'u'lláh explained this doctrine of "return" as follows in the Kitáb-i Iqán (167-8):

Likewise, strive thou to comprehend the meaning of the melody of that eternal beauty, Husayn, son of 'Alí, who, addressing Salmán, spoke words such as these: "I was with a thousand Adams, the interval between each and the next Adam was fifty thousand years, and to each one of these I declared the Successorship conferred upon my father." He then recounteth certain details, until he saith: "I have fought one thousand battles in the path of God, the least and most insignificant of which was like the battle of Khaybar, in which battle my father fought and contended against the infidels." Endeavour now to apprehend from these two traditions the mysteries of "end," "return," and "creation without beginning or end."

Though he himself feels inadequate to and unworthy of the task, Bahá'u'lláh has been raised up in God's garden, and so asks the Holy Spirit which appeared in the Báb, and has now re-appeared in him (as light appears the same in different lamps), to make gardens of truth and beauty appear through him.

The 1914/1332 text reads *sad golestân âr az vay now padid*, whereas the other texts read *to padid*. The latter reading seems syntactically preferable to me, but the former would mean "so make a thousand [literally 100] new gardens bloom through him."

Literally, tear off the veils of heedlessness from this afflicted one.

"Gate" renders Báb, and the word occurs again in the second half of the couplet, alluding to the Manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the person of the Báb: Do not allow the Gate of the Báb to be closed shut, but re-open it on to the Ridván of meaning.

Ridván (pronounced Rezvân in Persian), connotes contentment or good-pleasure (of God), but is also the proper name of the angel guarding the gates to paradise. In a Bahá'í context, of course, it alludes to the garden outside Baghdad where Bahá'u'lláh announced his prophetic mission to his companions. For this reason, I have left it untranslated.

This is an allusion to a belief among Sufis that a true saint had power to move through the imaginal world at will, or to "cross the earth" (tayy al-arz is the phrase used here, and in line 128 below, but it is elsewhere referred to in the Sufi tradition as tayy-e makân, tayy-e zamân, tayy-e zamin). In the hagiographies of Sufi saints, this concept of crossing the earth often leads to fabulous stories about teleportation, telekinesis, premonitions or extra sensory perception (Cf. the story of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba in the Koran, 27:23-44, where the Queen's throne apparently crosses the earth in the twinkling of an eye).

However, the classical meaning of tayy al-arz, and the one to which Bahá'u'lláh apparently refers here, distinguishes between the gnostic (tayyâr or bird, representing the journey of the soul), and the ascetic (sayyâr or traveller on foot, making a more mundane journey). This terminology is noted by Abû Nasr al-Sarrâj in his Kitâb al-luma' for the different kinds of wayfarers on the Sufi path. Rumi also alludes to it in his Masnavi (M5:2180 and 2191-2):

The gnostic constant towards the King's throne arcs
The ascete travels each month one day's road....
Love has a thousand feathers and each one
soars over the throne beyond the Pleiades
The fearful ascete charges on his feet
Lovers fly lighter than lightning and air

Ibn 'Arabî speaks at length of the imaginal, spiritual world, upon which Henri Corbin has elaborated at length in his *Spiritual Body, Celestial Earth: From Mazdean Iran to Shi'ite Iran*, tr. Nancy Pearson (Princeton University Press, 1977).

The 1914/1332 text reads bâzêgh, whereas both the Âsâr-e qalam-e a'lâ text and the Mishkín Qalam text read bâreq. Either reading gives very much the same meaning, but bâreq forms a more complete rhyme with moshreq, corresponding better with the expected rules of Persian prosody.

See Koran which explains that the unbelievers are as if in a deep sea of darkness (24:40), or that their spiritual blindness has left them "deaf, dumb and blind" (2:18). Zu al-Qarnayn, usually identified with Alexander the Great, is said in the Koran to have travelled into the land of the setting sun and found a spring of water (18:86), and Muslim tradition has elaborated this into Alexander's search for the Water of Life. In order to find it he first had to cross through the realm of darkness (zolomât). This word Zolomât occurs in lines 108-9 of the Mathnaví, and the singular form (zolmat appears in lines 105-6 and 110).

In Islamic lore, the mythical figure Khezr (Khidr, sometimes associated with the Biblical Elijah), is believed to have initiated Moses into the ways of esoteric knowledge and to have guided Alexander through the realms of darkness to the Water of Life. Khezr, who is the focus of lines 110-115 of Bahá'u'lláh's Mathnaví, is not mentioned by name in the Koran, but commentators identify him with the man described as "one of God's servants" in a parable from the Sura of the Cave (Surat al-kahf, K18:65-82). Bahá'u'lláh here calls himself the new Khezr.

Note: the jump from #49 to #118 in the footnote reference numbers is in the original document. I do not know if anything is missing, or not. [-J.W., 2010]

Bahá is the word rendered here by glory. Hence, "O Spirit of Bahá," a clear allusion to Bahá'u'lláh himself.

Literally, leave off hunting onagers to the grave. The line is predicated on a pun that is difficult to mimic in English. The Iranian royal hunt, particularly in the Sasanian period, focused on the wild onager (gur). Gur also means "grave." So, let the gur lead themselves to the gur.

The 1914/1332 and the Mishkín Qalam text both read

nist forsát tâ to az asrâr-e koll
pish-e bolbol gu'î ay soltân-e mol

This would mean: there is no opportunity for you, o Sultan of wine, to tell the secrets of all in the presence of the nightingale. I have, however, adopted the variant given in the Âsâr-e qalam-e a'lâ text:

nist forsát tâ to az asrâr-e gol
pish-e bolbol gu'î ay soltân-e koll

In view of the well-established topos of the nightingale and the rose in Persian poetry, this reading makes far more sense: there is no opportunity for you, O Sultan of all, to tell the secrets of the rose to the nightingale. But compare line 124, below, where the same topos reappears, and the words gol and mol both appear, though not in the rhyme position.

This is the Simorgh, the mythical bird which in Ferdowsi's Shâh Nâme protects the epic warriors of Iran with its magic feather.

See the note to Line 20.

Literally, "Then make the symbol/sign/secret of the nightingale appear in every rose; Explain the wine in the heart to the kings." The Persian plays upon the internal rhyme of gol (rose), traditionally associated with the adoring nightingale, and mol (sweetened or mulled wine), a staple of the ceremonial wine banquet at the Iranian court. In an attempt to preserve something of the gol/mol sound play, I have translated mol as rosé. Rosé, being a specifically French wine, is something of an anachronism or a cultural solipsism here, but I trust this poetic license will not greatly jar or intrude upon the meaning.

In Persian poetry, the lover typically cannot tell his love to strangers or in

public, but only to his trusted confidants who are sympathetic to him and will not reveal his secret. Those unsympathetic will mock or reprove him for being in love. Bahá'u'lláh had at this time confided his station only to a restricted circle of his companions, but as he would soon make a general announcement, the distinction between confidant and stranger was becoming irrelevant.

See the note to line 101 of the poem.

The Persian plays upon the word *nafs*, meaning the concupiscent, or selfish, soul (this must be trained so that the spiritual soul, *ruh*, gains control); and the word *nafas*, meaning breath.

Ignorant and radiant should both be read as two syllables here for the meter: *ig-nrant, rad-yant*.

Sobriety (*sahv*) and effacement (*mahv*) are both technical terms for the Sufis. Sobriety refers to the temperate expression of mystical truths, as opposed to the ecstatic outbursts (*shathiyât*) that sometimes result in accusations of blasphemy, as was the case with Hallâj. Effacement can be (like *fanâ*) the fading away of the selfish self, the concupiscent soul, allowing the divine virtues to appear in their place. It may also refer to the absolute contingency of all created being in comparison to the divine essence, which alone can truly be said to exist.

ay rashid, literally a mature person, guide, or leader, probably used here as a general term of endearing address to the reader, though it could also be a masculine proper name.

The language here is reminiscent of Bahá'u'lláh's Persian Hidden Words, #12. For the meter, read the following all as two syllables: "the inner" (*th'in-ner*); "mystery" (*mys-try*); "Beloved" (*be-loved*).

The Persian reads:

cheshm-e 'âref sad hezârân sâle râh

cheshm-e jâhel mi-nabinad ru-ye shâh

Compare this with the following verse from the Mathnaví of Jalâl al-Din Rumi (5:2180):

sayr-e 'âref har dami tâ takht-e shâh

sayr-e zâhed har mahi yek ruze râh

The gnostic constantly attains the king's throne

The ascete in a month makes one day's progress

The similarity of theme and phrasing of these verses suggests that Bahá'u'lláh is deliberately alluding to or echoing Rumi.

See lines 66 and 218, and the note to line 66.

Compare the passage from Rumi's Mathnaví, 1:2106-2111 in Nicholson's edition,

in which the Caliph 'Umar has a dream, wherein he hears the call (nedâ) of God coming to him, described as follows:

That call which is the root of every shout and song –

That is the Call itself, and all the rest but sound

The Turk and Kurd, the Persian and the Arab, all

have understood that Call, and not by ears or lips!

Why talk of Turk and Tâjik and of Ethiop?

Even wood and stone have understood that Call!

At every moment "Am I not" is heard from it

bringing essence and appearance into being.

But were they not replying "Yes" in affirmation,

Their coming into being from nothing would be naught!

[or, their coming into being from nothing would be "Yes"!]

ku b-d-i bud seems susceptible of various readings, but I understand it to read k-u be-di bud (a reading which a diacritical mark supplied in Mishkín Qalam's text seems to support), meaning "which it/he was yesterday," i.e., for that was (just) yesterday.

The Kitáb-i Badí' quotes a variant of this line:

The sound of it's still ringing in my ears

and His soul-vivifying spirit's voice.

The second hemistich in this reading (I cite a manuscript of the Kitáb-i Badí' copied in shekaste hand, 15 lines to the page, acquired by Abul-Qasem Faizi in the fall of 1940, in which this passage occurs at pp. 99-100) is as follows:

v'ân sedâ-ye ruh-e jân-afzâ-ye u

On the other hand, the Âsâr-e qalam-e a'lâ text, Mishkín Qalam's calligraphic version, and the 1914/1332 Cairo text all read:

ân sedâ-ye khub-e jân-afzâ-ye u

The text critical principle of *lectio difficilior* would incline us to accept the more complex wording of the Kitáb-i Badí' text, as would, also, the fact that the Kitáb-i Badí', written later, may represent an authorial emendation to the line. However, I have translated as per the version attested in all of the printed editions of the Mathnaví consulted.

Compare the phrasing of this line with Rumi's Mathnaví 4:394:

bar sedâ-ye khub-e jân-pardâz-e to

This hemistich also exhibits a slight, non-essential variant. The Kitáb-i Badí' records 'árifí dígar (another gnostic), whereas the âsâr-e qalam-e a'lâ text, along with the Cairo text of 1332 A.H., and the Mishkín Qalam text, have 'árif-i dígar (the other gnostic). Since only one gnostic has been thus far introduced, the reading of the Kitáb-i Badí' seems logically preferable in this case.

Âsâr-e qalam-e a'lâ, Mishkín Qalam and the 1914/1332 Cairo text all read:

goft ân ruz-e khodâ âkher na-shod

mâ dar ân yowm-im o ân qâser na-shod

In the text of the Kitáb-i Badí', instead of yowm (the Arabic word for "day"), we find ruz (the Persian word for "day") repeated again in the second hemistich. Though there is no difference either way in the meaning, the repetition of the word ruz seems stylistically inferior, and, in any case, the printed editions of the poem all attest the ruz/yowm variation. Therefore, unless we assume that the Kitáb-i Badí' version replaces any earlier version of the poem, the ruz/yowm reading seems preferable.

Literally, taste the wine of eternity from the rivers of love. This is a Koranic image of paradise, in which wine that does not cause inebriation flows eternally from a fountain.

Safdar, a brave champion who tears through the enemy lines, is sometimes used as an epithet of 'Alí.

See Koran 24:35 for the famous verse of the light guiding men to God, literally by an oil that is neither from the east or west, and is protected in a lamp, set within a niche. The 1914/1332 text, as well as the Mishkín Qalam text, read: in cherâgh-at r cho(h) rowshan karde'i, whereas âsâr-e qalam-e a'lâ text reads in cherâghi râke rowshan karde'i. The difference in meaning is insignificant; the second version seems to flow more smoothly, but the first is a more complex reading (choh being a more difficult reading that a scribe would not be likely to accidentally introduce into the text), and perhaps therefore represents an earlier or more authentic reading.

Literally, the Moon of Command and the Shah of Innamá. Innamá is an Arabic phrase which occurs often in the Koran, meaning, "verily." It occurs in some places in the Koran referring to Muhammad, such as (8:7): "Verily thou art a warner and to all people, a guide." One occurrence in the Koran is believed by Shiites to apply to Imam 'Alí (5:55): "Verily your guardian (walíy) is God and His messenger and those who have believed, those of you who perform the prayers and bring alms and bow in prayer." As this was revealed, 'Alí was kneeling in prayer and gave his ring to a beggar. Generally speaking, though, we can interpret this as a reference to the Manifestation, who speaks with the voice of God.

The 1914/1332 text reads in the second hemistich nuri shavad, but the Âsâr-e qalam-e a'lâ text and Mishkín Qalam both read nuri bovad, which, on the

principle of *lectio difficilior*, is to be preferred, though neither reading will affect the meaning. In the first instance the last syllables of *nuri* and *dohni* would rhyme, with *shavad* being understood as a refrain (*radif*). In the second case, the last syllable of *shavad* rhymes with the last syllable of *bovad*. 143. In this line, "burning bushes" translates *Sidrih* (*sedre-hâ*), properly *lote* trees. In the previous line, *sad hezârân Sedre*, literally a hundred thousand Divine *Lote Trees*, has become a forest on Sinai. See line 38 and the accompanying note.

A traditional epithet for the son which Abraham, in conformity to divine command, took to sacrifice (*Ishmael*, according to the Koran and Isaac, according to the Bible). For those in Bahá'u'lláh's immediate circle, this might also possibly have had an overtone of allusion to áqá Sayyid *Ismá'íl-i Zavári'í*, who Bahá'í tradition records was so overwhelmed by the vision of the next world which Bahá'u'lláh revealed to him in Baghdad, that he slit his own throat.

An epithet for Jesus.

See the second of Bahá'u'lláh's Seven Valleys.

Bâ salib az râh o ham bi-rah biâ. The *Mishkín Qalam* text omits the *o* (...*az râh ham...*), with no change in the meaning. *Az râh o ham bi-rah*, a phrase suggesting by whatever means possible, whether prepared or not, but literally "by the path or without a path," which becomes in the translation "walk the path, blaze a trail." Perhaps this means to evoke the image of Christ, veering side-to-side under the weight of the Cross as he walks along the *Via Dolorosa*.

An allusion to the Night Journey, or spiritual ascent, of Muhammad into the heavens to meet with God. Bahá'u'lláh obliquely alludes to this ascent elsewhere, in the *Hidden Words* (Persian #7).

Literally, that you may raise your head in God's collar (*jayb*). Though it is tempting to see this as a modern image of a life-preserver, what is more likely intended is that once having slain the selfish aspect of our baser being, what will remain is the divine soul, attired with divine attributes, so close to God as to be sharing the same garment.

The Persian uses the word *'oryân*, which means either "naked," or "plain" (in the sense that a thing is said or viewed bluntly or clearly). The idea here seems to be that the spirit of Moses should appear plainly and quickly, without pausing to don its prophetic insignia of sandals and cloak.

The mythopoetic mountain in the "hallowed precincts" of Time (perhaps pre-eternity), where God made a covenant with man in the presence of the angels. See Bahá'u'lláh's *Hidden Words*, Persian #71. See also line 213, below.

The dove (*Varqâ*), both here and in Bahá'u'lláh's *Qasídiy-i 'Izz-i Varqâ'iyyih* or the *Tablet of Ahmad*, seems to symbolize the Holy Spirit.

An allusion to the staff of Moses.

The Mishkín Qalam text of the poem has "This Staff" (in 'asâ), which seems to be an error, since a contrast is being drawn through these lines between an ordinary staff and the Staff of God.

Among the tribe of 'Âd, God designated Hud as a messenger or prophet, calling the people to recognize the one true God, but they rejected him and were destroyed by a calamity. The Koran alludes to this story four times, pointing out the parallel to the situation of Muhammad and the Quraysh. Three times it does not specify how the tribe of 'Âd was destroyed (Suras 7, 11, 26), but in Sura 46 it specifies that a cloud, which they supposed to be a rain cloud, swooped down upon their dwellings like a horrific wind, destroying all but Hud and those who believed in him.

tâ be-bazm-e bâqi-ye ân gol-rokhân (read bâqe-yân for the meter) is probably an allusion to the Koranic vision of paradise, wherein feasts of delectable foods and drink are enjoyed with beautiful companions (of remarkable eyes, though not necessarily of rosy cheeks). See, for example, Súras 37, 38, 52, 55.

See lines 38 and 182-3, and accompanying notes.

dar miân-e kuh-e jân bas farq-hâ, literally "between the mountain of (the various) souls there are many differences", though one might also read ferqe-hâ (sects). All of these different manifestations of the tree of Soul, like various fruits growing from the various leaves/branches (varqe-hâ), are good.

See the note to line 197, above.

For "Am I not," see lines 66 and 148, and the note to line 66. "Being's world" translates arz-e hasti, literally the world, or plane, of being/mortal life.

Read "The Immortal" as just three syllables : Th'Immortal.

This image comes from the Hidden Words, Persian #1.

According to the story of Joseph in the Koran (Sura 12), Joseph is purchased as a slave in Egypt by a powerful man. The wife of his owner, finding him irresistibly attractive, attempts to seduce him and tears his shirt from behind as he tries to run out of the house. She then accuses him of attacking her, and he is put in prison. However, to stop the gossip of the women in town, the wife invites her friends to see Joseph, giving them knives first, presumably to cut the fruit she has served them. When Joseph enters, dazzled by his beauty, the women all cut their hands. This story is elaborated in Jewish and Islamic literature, and the characters are given names; the wife is given the name Zulaykhâ, and she and Joseph are the subject of Persian miniature paintings and a verse romance by the 15th century poet Jâmi. The legend also exists in the west; in English, Zulaykhâ is known as "the wife of Potiphar."

The 1914/1332 text and the Mishkín Qalam text both read hast-ash hayât (she, he or it has life), whereas the Âsâr-e qalam-e a'lâ text reads hast-at hayât (you have life). This makes some difference in understanding the

theological import of the line; though either reading seems equally plausible, I have translated according to the latter.

This line probably intends for the reader to call to mind the opening lines of Rumi's Mathnaví, where the listener is admonished to heed the mystic secrets to which the reed flute gives voice.

Bahá'u'lláh in the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf (Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1941) quotes from the Báb as follows (151): "Behold ye Him with His own eyes. Were ye to behold Him with the eyes of another, ye would never recognise and know Him" (be cheshm-e u u-râ be-binid va agar be-cheshm-e ghayr molâheze konid har gez be-shenâsâ'i va âgâhi fâ'ez na-shavid). This quote, as Bahá'u'lláh explains, refers to his "Most Great Revelation." It would appear that Bahá'u'lláh here alludes to this verse of the Báb, and thereby calls upon the Bábís to recognize the new Manifestation. I am indebted to Dr. Khazeh Fananapazir for pointing out this allusion.

In a common convention of didactic or homiletic Persian poetry, the poet addresses the reader as a father would address a son, or as a teacher addresses a disciple. It is in this context that the lines containing apostrophes like "my son", "companion," "my friend," "devout one," etc., should be understood. It does not necessarily mean that the poet has a specific person or addressee in mind. See the note for line 75.

Another allusion to the secret of the reed pipe (serr-e nay) to which the reader of the beginning of Rumi's Masnavi is encouraged to listen.

An allusion to the Me'râj, or Muhammad's spiritual "Night Journey" into heaven. See the notes to line 268, below.

An allusion to Bahá'u'lláh's own poem, Rashh-i 'Amá, "Sprinklings of the Divine Cloud."

This alludes to a Hadith which Bahá'u'lláh quotes directly in one of his other tablets: "My earth and My heavens cannot contain Me, but the heart of my faithful servant contains Me" (See Mâ'ede-ye âsmâni, ed. 'Abd al-Hamid Eshrâq-Khâvari [Tehran: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 128 B.E./1971] 1:58). Compare also the Hidden Words, Arabic #58 and 59.

This hemistich is susceptible of different interpretations and could be understood to mean any of the following: Once the heart's house was built with the Love of God; once God's house was built through the love of God; once God's house was built through the love of that lover.

House (bayt) alludes to the Ka'bih, the House of God in Mecca, to which pilgrimage is made. The Ka'bih is kept draped in a black cloth and is, therefore, as it were, physically hidden. Metaphorically, since the heart is the home of God, it, too, is hidden inside the human chest.

After the errata on the colophon page of the 1914/1332 edition, the editor reports that for this line some of the manuscripts consulted gave the reading u na bayt o bayt-e u mastur shod (He is not the house, and His house is hidden),

and this is the reading that the Mishkín Qalam text appears to give. The *Âsâr-e qalam-e a'lâ* text, however, reads *u be bayt o bayt-e u mastur shod* (he is in the house, and His house is hidden), and it is this latter variant I have adopted for the translation.

Compare this and the following lines with the story of the building of the *Masjed-e Aqsâ*, the Farthest Mosque, in the *Mathnaví* of Rumi, 4:388-90 and 4:466-486, which also refers to the House of the heart and the construction of the walls of such a temple consisting of more than the physical stones and clay.

Sufi poetry, including especially Rumi's *Mathnaví*, grapples with the opposition between human reason, or the limited rational faculties ('*aql*), and love ('*eshq*). Love is seen as an overpowering force that carries reason away, and in so doing empowers the mystic to validate his trans-rational experience of the Divine and his longing to be with God. Reason is, on the other hand, equated with the traditional religious knowledge and book learning of the *ulama*.

See Koran 17:1. God took his servant for a journey by night from the Sacred mosque, in Mecca, to "the farthest mosque" (*masjed al-aqsâ*), or the most distant place of prostration to and worship of God. This is traditionally associated with the temple of Solomon in Jerusalem (see Rumi's *Mathnaví* 4:388ff and 466ff, where David and then Solomon undertake this project), and an actual mosque was built here in A.H. 68 (687 A.D.), on the complex of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. The more metaphysical "distant temple," or literally, place of prostration in worship (*masjed*), mentioned in the Koran is the referent here, and not the actual *Aqsâ Mosque*.

This alludes to the story of the Prophet Muhammad's Night Journey (*Me'raj*) into heaven, the basis for which is in the Koran (17:1 and 53:6-11). Muhammad is taken up into the heavens, brought into the highest horizon and allowed to approach to within two bow lengths of God (as far as two arrows can be shot), or perhaps even nearer than this. At this spot, God revealed to him what He revealed (i.e., the Koran).

However, Muhammad cannot proceed closer to the Divine Essence than the *Sadratu'l-Muntahá*, the Divine Lote Tree beyond which there is no passing. This tree is also equated, in Bahá'í theology, with the Manifestation of God. Bahá'u'lláh refers elsewhere to this tradition of Muhammad's journey into heaven: "Whoso hath recognized the Day Spring of Divine guidance and entered His holy court hath drawn nigh unto God and attained His Presence, a Presence which is the real Paradise, and of which the loftiest mansions of heaven are but a symbol. Such a man hath attained the knowledge of the station of Him Who is "at the distance of two bows," Who standeth beyond the *Sadratu'l-Muntahá*." *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, trans. Shoghi Effendi (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust) 70. See also line 256, above.

Hajr or *hejrán* (absence, separation) and *vasl* or *vesâl* (union, reunion, embracing the beloved) are terms originating in love poetry, which later took

on a theological significance. In Sufi terminology, absence can stand for the absence of Divine confirmation, as the sense that grace has left the mystic in a state (hâl) or station (maqâm) of contraction (qabz), whereas union represents the state or station in which the mystic feels the grace of God open freely to him (bast) in the form of visions or divine confirmations. These terms can also stand for divine transcendence (absence) and divine immanence (union), or in the case of progressive revelation, the absence of the Manifestation and his return.

These words inform the next several lines of the poem. They will be respectively translated as separation, absence, emptiness (hajr, commonly pronounced hejr in Persian); and as union, reunion (vasl, and vesâl in line 277), depending on the meter.

Here there is another allusion to the Me'râj story. Islamic lore elaborated upon Muhammad's journey into the presence of God, indicating that he travelled on a winged horse named Borâq to a certain distance and then continued on a kind of flying carpet or cushion (rafrâf). In this sense, we might think of it as something fluffy and buoyant bearing Muhammad into God's presence in the highest heaven; therefore it appears here as "precincts."

In the Hidden Words (Persian #7), Bahá'u'lláh mentions this rafrâf, which Shoghi Effendi translated as "heights" (rafrâf-e emtenâ'-e qorb = the glorious heights above), for rafrâf also means "place," "station." Shaykh Ahmad speaks of the Green Place (rafrâf-e akhzar), one of the levels of heaven. Paired with another adjective, rafrâf-e asnâ or rafrâf-e a'lâ, this means the highest level or an exalted station.

There is perhaps also an allusion in this line to the opening section of Rûmî's Mathnavî, where "origin" is the divine pre-existence of the soul from which we are separated, just as the reed is cut from the reed bed. Our physical lives are spent trying to return to that original source.

An allusion to Koran 55:26-7.

Perhaps an allusion to the Hadîth: Kâna 'llâhu wa lam yakun ma'ahu min shay'in, "There was God, and there was nothing with Him."

Perhaps an allusion to the Hadîth, "There is none but Him in the house" (Laysa fî al-dâr ghayruhu dayyâr), a suggestion I owe to Dr. Khazeh Fananapazir.

'aqabe (read 'aqbe here for the meter) is a difficult or dangerous passage in a mountain, and is also the name of a stony hill near Minâ between Mecca and 'Arafât, on the pilgrimage route. The semantic range of the root '-Q-B also includes something which ensues from something else, a consequence or punishment.

Again, the word Bayán is used. A double meaning could be understood here: That you not fall from the book of the Bayán into pride. Several Bábís seem to have made claims of some sort to be Him Whom God will make manifest; this may be an allusion to those folk who filled with pride after reading the Bayán.

Compare this and the following lines with the Hidden Words, Arabic #11, #10 and #12. 186. The Mishkín Qalam text appears to read pay-ye insân davi, which though syntactically awkward, could mean "you're running around like this." Asâr-e qalam-e a'lâ and the 1914/1332 text both have pay-ye inân davi, meaning "you're running after these" (alluding to absence and separation). In either case, the last word should probably be recited in its colloquial form, dowi in order to rhyme with the first hemistich's to'i. None of the manuscripts encourage it, but if we read do'i (with a hamza), this could also be understood as "you are two," since the passage speaks of the perception of duality between God and servant.

The line actually refers to a verse of the Koran (5:67) in which the Jews claim that no prophet can come after Moses, that the hands of God are chained up. Just a year or two before composing this poem, Bahá'u'lláh had explained this verse of the Koran at some length in his Kitáb-i-Iqán (135-38), including this sentence: "Thou art surely aware of their idle contention, that all Revelation is ended, that the portals [gates, abváb, plural of báb] of Divine mercy are closed, that from the day-springs of eternal holiness no sun shall rise again...." This line in the "Mathnaví-i Mubárak" Blessed Couplets" reads hamchun Yahúd, meaning literally, "just like the Jews" and the line would therefore be rendered "do not close those gates, as did the Jews" (i.e., by failing to recognize Jesus or Muhammad). I have translated "like ingrates" here for purposes of internal rhyme and wordplay, and because the point is the failure of any religious community to recognize the subsequent Manifestation.

An explicit reference to the opening passages of Jalâl al-Din Rumi's Mathnaví.

An allusion to the fact that Muslim women, when in the company of strangers or non-family members, veil themselves; similarly, Iranian kings would sometimes remain veiled from their interlocutors at court by a curtain. Here, Bahá'u'lláh, as God's pen, does not wish to speak openly and clearly, but has donned the garb of Rumi's reed flute as a veil, under cover of which form, he announces his claim to the Bábís.

Safdar, see line 224.

The Persian literally says that when the "ma" (in and of itself, a particle of negation) of "mani" (egotism, "I-ness") is burned up throughout the world, then will only the eternal "ni" (which as a separate word in Persian would be read as nay, meaning reed pipe) remain among us.

The "sovereigns" perhaps alludes to the various Bábí heroes, all of whom were eclipsed by Bahá'u'lláh, as Him Whom God will make Manifest.

Perhaps an allusion to the fact that Bahá'u'lláh began to wear the tâj, a crown-shaped felt hat, from the time he went to the Ridván Garden and announced his mission; see Balyuzi, King of Glory 176.

Perhaps an allusion to what befell Bahá'u'lláh upon becoming a Bábí, his arrest and imprisonment and finally his incarceration in the Síyáh Chál. The

chains on Bahá'u'lláh were so heavy that he gave each one a name.

The 1914/1332 text and the Mishkín Qalam text both read: hamcho sayd u dast-e sayyâdi fetâd, whereas the Âsâr-e qalam-e a'lâ text reads hamchu saydi dast-e sayyâdi fetâd, which seems to flow better to my ear, though there is no difference in the meaning.

Compare the Persian Hidden Words, #23, in which the "Celestial Youth" is veiled in "the darkness of dust" and caught in the "talons of owls" (the owl being a bird of inauspicious omen, and one that inhabits ruined places). Likewise, in #77, we find the "doves of holiness" caught in the "claws of the dogs of earth," which is perhaps an allusion to the Bábí leaders and martyrs.

i.e., returning to Bahá'u'lláh's house in Baghdad and the Bábí community back in Iraq, which Bahá'u'lláh left behind when exiled to Istanbul.

Zowrá'iyân, literally the people of Zowrá'. Zowrá' in the Bahá'í writings is used as an epithet of Baghdad, or of the Tigris. Etymologically, Zowrá' could suggest visitants or pilgrims to a shrine or holy place; it may also simply be an adjective meaning inclined, sloped or crooked (perhaps a description of the course of the Tigris?). In this context, where the people of Zowrá' seem identified with "the City of the Lord" (See line 313), I take it to mean those who did not accompany Bahá'u'lláh on his exile to Istanbul, but stayed behind in Bahá'u'lláh's house in Baghdad, or in the city itself. However, Zowrá' is also used to refer to Tehran, or more specifically, a place in the old city of Rayy, where, according to a tradition ascribed to Ja'far al-Sâdeq (the sixth Imam), eighty men of religion would be martyred. The Bábís saw this prophecy fulfilled in the persecutions following the attempt on the life of Nâser al-Din Shâh. Since Tehran was the birthplace of Bahá'u'lláh, the City of God may therefore alternatively, or simultaneously, be an allusion to Tehran, which, however is more often described by Bahá'u'lláh as the "Land of Tâ" (Arz-e Tâ' or Ard al-Tâ'). See Riâz Ghadimi, Farhang-e loġhât-e montakhabe (University of Toronto Press, 1986), s.v. "Zowrá'" and "Tâ" and "Arz-e Tâ".

The Kitáb-i Badí' (Faizi manuscript, 263) has: yâr-e to dar dast-e a'dâ mobtalâ, "your lover languishes in hostile hands."

Âsâr-e qalam-e a'lâ, Mishkín Qalam and the 1914/1332 text, however, all read: yâr-e to dar habs o zendân mobtalâ. Bahá'u'lláh was not imprisoned, strictly speaking, until his arrival in the town of Akka (and the second version may very well date to the Akka period), but he was under house arrest in Edirne and, in view of the Ottoman government's summoning him to Istanbul, his freedom had been restricted and his movements proscribed. Bahá'u'lláh's followers who remained behind in Baghdad, however, were taken away as captives to Mosul, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá says in Memorials of the Faithful, 30, 81, 102, 108, 152-3.

Karbalâ lies to the southwest of Baghdad, not in the direction that Bahá'u'lláh and his band of exiles followed, and must obviously be meant

metaphorically here. However, as Karbalâ was an open unpopulated plain in Iraq at the time of Husayn's martyrdom, it would have been a particularly apt comparison for the rugged open ground that Bahá'u'lláh crossed on his way to Istanbul.

Yazîd, the son of Mu'âwiyya (who had usurped the Caliphate from Imam 'Alî), became Caliph in 680 and was responsible for the slaughter of the Imam Husayn and his tiny band of followers.

"Friend" here is an epithet for the Prophet, Muhammad. The Kitáb-i Badí' (Fayzi ms, 263) quotes this line, giving the text as: o sad Abu Jahl-e 'anid, "and a hundred hostile Abu Jahls," a reference to the uncle of the Prophet Muhammad, who bitterly opposed him. It does not seem to me that a scribe could accidentally mistake the reading sad Abu Jahl for in hame div. It therefore seems likely that this difference reflects a deliberate change made by Bahá'u'lláh in quoting this verse in the Kitáb-i Badí'.

God's Spirit is an epithet of Jesus. Asâr-e qalam-e a'lâ, Mishkín Qalam and the 1914/1332 text all read The Spirit of God detained among the Sebtîân (the twelve tribes of Israel descended from Jacob, hence the children of Israel), hence Jesus detained among the Jews. However, the Kitáb-i Badí' (Fayzi ms, 263) reads Jâhedân (atheists, those who war against God) instead of Sebtîân. This difference seems unlikely to result from scribal error, and is therefore once again more likely to be due to authorial revision.

Possibly this alludes to the story in Rumi's Masnavi of the parrot in the cage of a merchant (Masnavi, Book 1, 1547-1848). The bird, alternately called parrot (tuti) and nightingale (bolbol, 'andalib) feigns to be dead, causing the merchant to open its cage and set it free. This story gives Rumi the occasion to say that the parrot whose song comes from revelation (vahy) created before the beginning of creation – his song is hidden within you (1717-18). He also speaks of the bird whose every breath contains one hundred messages from God (1578), and of being veiled from speaking the divine secrets (1761-2). Elsewhere, Bahá'u'lláh himself alludes to the motif of the human soul as a bird caught captive in the cage of worldliness (e.g., Persian Hidden Words, #38).

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