

in Him and steadfastness
in His Cause—thereby coming to perfection as a creature of God—and then
finally succumbing to the
assailing tides of entropy and finding his final abode in the womb of the
earth, paralleling his
beginning in the womb of his mother. Bahá'u'lláh assures us that this is
all in the design of God and is
the realization of what He has ordained in His wisdom.

Bahá'u'lláh portrays a similar process with a heavenly Tree and a divine
House, depicting the most
sumptuous images of beauty, perfection, and wealth, along with the ultimate
decline of the very same.

The symbolic weight of these allegories should not be overlooked, and it is to
be noted that the full
depth and significance of this Work cannot be encompassed by a short outline.

To this point the Tablet has assumed the tone of a plaint and lamentation,
while expressing
resignation to God's decree and immutable judgement; it begins to transition
in part seven, however,
with Bahá'u'lláh's beseeching God's forgiveness for all that he had
written in lamentation, affirming
that God never deals unjustly with His servants, but rather ordains for them
that which is the best for
them in accordance with His divine wisdom; for if man never underwent the death
of the body, he
could not obtain true life in the spirit. Bahá'u'lláh exclaims that it is
as though He can behold
Muhammad Vazír traversing the heavenly realms of God and attaining unto the
Beatific Vision, but
that this reality which is known to Him is veiled from humanity, and so death
is a cause of hardship
and grief.

In the eighth part, we see another transition in Bahá'u'lláh's
narrative, for He then makes mention
of Havvá, who, her name meaning 'Eve', is described as being the namesake
of the mother of all
creation. He then makes mention of Maryam as she whom God singled out from
amongst all women,
insofar as she is named after Mary, the mother of Christ. He recounts, in
heart-rending language, their
suffering which followed the death of Muhammad Vazír and their lonesomeness
in that they were
bereft of a mother to grieve for them, companions to console them, handmaids to
care for them and to
comb their locks which had been disarrayed in grief. Bahá'u'lláh prays

for these two women,
beseeching God to solace and succour them, and closes the Tablet with a final supplication in the memory of Muhammad Vazír.

This Tablet can well be considered as one among the most moving works of the Baghdad period,
though previously inaccessible to the West on account of its not being translated into English.

Bahá'u'lláh Himself translated it from the original Arabic into Persian at the request of some believers.

This rendering He said was not literal, as that would not “be in accord with sweetness”; it could thus be regarded as being revealed anew in the Persian mode. The differences between the two versions are often very slight, although there is occasionally new material in the Persian translation, such as an address to the people of the Bayán, possibly reflecting the change in audience. The following provisional translation is based on the original Arabic text as found in Ad'iyih-i-Hadrat-i-Mahbúb.

To this day, the Suffering of the Exalted Letters is often recited at funerals by Bahá'ís of Eastern extraction, by virtue of its themes of birth, death, and the very purpose of human life and existence. It offers us a narrative illustration of the grieving process, beginning with shock and bereavement, sorrow and lamentation, moving to resignation and acquiescence, and finally ending in an understanding of death and human purpose as ordained by God. This Tablet is in its essence a meditation authored by one of no less a station than a Manifestation of God on the human journey and our ultimate goal.

The Tablet itself, as expressed earlier in this introduction, resists a brief encapsulation, and its richness, depth, and inner significance can perhaps only be opened by the contemplative and prayerful heart. It is my hope that the following provisional translation of this sublime example of God's Revelation will lead its readers to a greater appreciation of the Baghdad period in Bahá'u'lláh's ministry, and be a consolation to all those that have suffered the pain of bereavement.

I would like to express my thanks and gratitude to Adib Masumian for his proofreading of the translation against the Arabic text, sometimes including consultation with

Bahá'u'lláh's Persian

rendering, as well as for his invaluable suggestions which improved the quality of this translation.

— Suffering of the Exalted Letters (Used by permission of the curator)