

Four Valleys: Tablet study outline

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Note: my comments here are only partial, for two reasons: (1) much of the information that could be included here has already been posted, in the Tablet study outline for the Seven Valleys; (2) since the Tablet is available in translation, most students entered sufficient answers for sections like "contents" and "themes," thereby obviating a list here.

Name of Tablet in Arabic or Persian: Chahár Vádí

Translation into English:

The Four Valleys. Most of the bibliographic material relevant to Bahá'í mysticism, as well as some of the translation history of the Four Valleys, has been listed in the previous masterkey for the Seven Valleys. *‘Bahá'u'lláh: King of Glory* mentions it only briefly, on p. 163, as does *‘God Passes By* on pp. 122 and 140. Julio Savi explores the themes and symbolism in the Four Valleys in his "Will, Knowledge, and Love as Explained in Bahá'u'lláh's Four Valleys," from the *‘Journal of Bahá'í Studies* 6:1 (1994). John Walbridge discusses these in *‘Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*, 157-158 and 288. David Langness also meditates on the work in his "Mystical Content and Symbology of Bahá'u'lláh's Four Valleys," available on the internet at Baháí-library.org/essays/four.valleys.html.

Significance of Name:

Describes four successive stages of the mystic's path from which he or she journeys toward the goal of the Divine. Dr. Ayman adds: "The word "valley" is translation of "vaadi". Vaadi has several meanings or connotations. It may refer to a stretch of land between hills or mountains, often with a river flowing through it (Oxford Dic.) or path. There are other connotations for this word in both Arabic and Persian such as , a way of thinking, a sect or school of thought, a plain, a desert, a stage, ...etc.. Therefore we should not always expect "vaadis" to come one after the other. One usage of this word, in oriental Mysticism, is to refer to consecutive stages in the path of true knowledge."

Tablet was revealed in: Persian

Name of Recipient: Shaykh 'Abdu'r-Rahman-i-Talabani of Karkuk

Reason for Revelation of the Tablet: Shaykh 'Abdu'r-Rahman, who had met Bahá'u'lláh in Sulaymaniyyih, wrote to Him with some questions, which unfortunately are not preserved.

Questions asked that are answered in Tablet: The (lost) questions mentioned above.

Date of Revelation: Though Taherzadeh does not specify, Walbridge, in *Sacred Acts* 157, places the date of this work at 1857.

Place of Revelation: Baghdad

Role of Amaneuensis or Secretary: As a letter, it is possible that Bahá'u'lláh penned the Four Valleys Himself. And, on pp. 64-65, He writes: "When I entrusted this message of love to My pen, it refused the burden, and it swooned away. ... What I had written ere this hand hath been eaten by the flies, so sweet is the ink. ...And now the hand can write no more, and pleadeth that this is enough."

Other Tablets revealed at about the same time: See list in masterkey for Seven Valleys.

Style, subject, and genre of the Tablet: [?]

Style: This tablet seems to have been written mostly in the tone of "command and authority."

Subject: This tablet seems to contain many subjects, such as "Writings dealing with interpretation of the old Scriptures, religious beliefs and doctrines of the past"; "Mystical Writings"; "Tablets dealing with subjects of learning and knowledge, divine philosophy, mysteries of creation, medicine, alchemy, etc."; and

"Tablets exhorting men to education, goodly character and divine virtues."

Genre: "Essay or book revealed as a letter to an individual."

Voice of Tablet: [?] Bahá'u'lláh, using also quotations from the Qur'an to speak for God and Muhammad, and quotations from Sufis to provide Sufi viewpoints.

Outline Contents of Tablet (if possible): See other student lists

List the Principal themes of the Tablet: See other student lists

Tablet's relationship to other tablets:

At the end of the Seven Valleys, Bahá'u'lláh writes that "the heart is endowed with four stages, which would be recounted should a kindred soul be found" (41).

While

Savi speculates that the Four Valleys are those Bahá'u'lláh had here

promised, this
connection is not known for sure.

— Four Valleys: Tablet study outline (Used by permission of the curator)