

126 THE BAHÁ'Í STUDIES REVIEW 1999

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH'S "MATHNAVÍY-I MUBÁRAK"
A PROVISIONAL VERSE TRANSLATION

He is the Most Glorious!

You!
Life-force of God's throne,
compassion's sun!
Time's universe
has birthed
no light like Yours! 1

From seeing God, creation's eyes are barred,ⁱ
or in few words I'd show the Unseen world 2
that all souls might pledge fealty to Youⁱⁱ
that every heart become a thrall to You 3
that all the world grow drunk and mad with love,
with both hands offering up their willing souls; 4
Pride of the age!
Just state the word, Your Cause,ⁱⁱⁱ
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^{iv}
make verdant with Your grace this withered straw 7
From Your ocean, heaven's rivers ask one drop^v
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^{vi} 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^{vii}
Spice this drink with cheer like vintage wine 14

- i 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.
- ii “Fealty” to be read as three syllables: fê-al-ty.
- iii One meaning of the noun *amr* (plural *avâmer*) is “command,” “order;” this meaning occurs in Baha’i 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.
- iv 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.
- v *Qatre mi-juyad ze bahr-at kowsari*: This could also be understood as: the drop seeks from Your ocean heaven’s stream.
- vi 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.
- vii 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.

- Light up the heart's light with the shafts of light^{viii}
 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^{ix}
 Light up this candle which the night oppressed 19
 You stood up in our soul, the world arose^x
 to make clear through Your cause "Be and it was"^{xi} 20
- Soul's glory!^{xii} 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^{xiii}
 till no more sign of being can be seen 26
 Purify these envy-riddled hearts
 Guide these consciences which lack all compass^{xiv} 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!^{xv}
 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:^{xvi} 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^{xvii}
Reveal right here the burning bush of Moses^{xviii} 38
Your face, my Beauty, sets the spring in motion
and with it, spring brings countless mystic truths:^{xix} 39
Each rose, an album of the beauteous Friend
Each heart He fills with God's Edenic grace^{xx} 40
No fall will ever overtake such springs^{xxi}
all flowers circumambulate round Him⁴¹
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^{xxii} 45
Those earthly springs bring forth the tulip buds
This spring ethereal now fills up with wails^{xxiii} 46

The eternal spring which shines in this King's light
illuminates vistas of God's court and throne^{xxiv} 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^{xxv} 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^{xxvi}
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,

130 THE BAHÁ'Í STUDIES REVIEW 1999

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? ^{xxvii}	56
Such Exposition transcends any tongue;	
how could these nobodies grasp its meaning? ^{xxviii}	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 ^{xxix}	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, ^{xxx}	
the Friend's locks: hyacinths of sanctity.	63
Buds of mystic knowledge line this stream bank,	
all turn longingly in search of Him ^{xxxi}	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" ^{xxxii}	66
The songbirds in desire of tryst with Him	
all drunk on breezes of the grace of "He" ^{xxxiii}	67
This nightingale's soft melody, if heard, ^{xxxiv}	
would purge creation's souls of jealousy	68
The seas of meaning surge with Exposition	
The Ark of Being rides this bounty's crest ^{xxxv}	69
Every wind-flower blooming in this spring ^{xxxvi}	
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; ^{xxxvii}	
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 elect⁷⁴
(The elect alone enjoy a share of this –
so from such bounteous grace take warmth, my friend!)^{xxxviii} 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^{xxxix}
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!^{xl} 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^{xli}
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"^{xlii} 86

It was in Your garden that this thistle grew,
so make through it a thousand gardens bloom^{xliii} 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^{xliv} 90
Grant, bright-miened Sovereign, to the spirits pure
the sheltering shade of Your Divine Lote tree⁹¹
Unlock for them a Gate^{xlv} to Riván's meaning^{xlvi} –
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 that96
- 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 prayer99
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”,^{xlvii}
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 Riván? 103
Strip yourself of all restriction's garments
and sanctify your soul from limitation104
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^{xlviii} 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^{xlix}
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 Khezz^l
that from the realms of darkness you'll be freed 110
The Khezz of old drank deep, was freed from death
while this new Khezz 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 Khezz through striving finally arrived;

Bahá'u'lláh's Mathnaví 133

This Khezr at once made fountains flow with life 113
That Khezr ran after traces of the fount
This Khezr is chased each step by flowing founts 114

Return, O spirit's Glory,^{li} from this trek,
and so hunt down a million meanings more! 115
Don't hunt the vagrant beasts, leave them to their graves!^{lii}
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^{liii} 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,^{liv}
Open a treasure with the key of "Be",^{lv} 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 Riván 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^{lvi} 124
For at this moment there are strangers here
(though stranger here and confidant are one)^{lvii} 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!^{lviii} 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^{lix}
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^{lx} 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 sun¹³⁴
 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^{lxi} –
 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 station¹⁴¹
 All that your eye and ear have seen and heard,
 sure guide,^{lxii} 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^{lxiii}
 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!^{lxiv} 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?"^{lxv} 148
 He said: I do recall that sound, those words,^{lxvi}
 as if it were but yesterday, no less!^{lxvii} 149
 It lingers ever in my ears, His call,
 that sweet, soul-vivifying voice of His.^{lxviii} 150
- Another gnostic, who had climbed beyond,^{lxix}
 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!^{lxx} 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^{lxxi} 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,^{lxxii} 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,^{lxxiii} 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!^{lxxiv} 172
Look at your candle, how it's buffeted

136 THE BAHÁ'Í STUDIES REVIEW 1999

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^{lxxv} 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.^{lxxvi}
 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,^{lxxvii} 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!^{lxxviii} Step in the vale of love^{lxxix}
 walk the road, blaze a trail, the Cross in tow^{lxxx} 187

Above the skies and physical ascent^{lxxxii}
 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

Bahá'u'lláh's Mathnaví 137

- Don't seek self-preservation; Drown this self!
then you'll come up for air in God's embrace^{lxxxii} 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!^{lxxxiii} 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 Páran^{lxxxiv}
The back of Time's bent by His curly strands 197
- O Dove,^{lxxxv} leave now the tale of Fire's mysteries
Don't bring the pearls of Soul before the blind – 198
This Staff^{lxxxvi} – the Hand of Truth wields as a sword
and cuts contingent outward forms to shreds 199
All other staffs^{lxxxvii} 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^{lxxxviii}
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)^{lxxxix} 207
The fire of Moses flares in His Lote tree^{xc}
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^{xc})

- 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^{xcii} 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"^{xciii} 218
- The Immortal Phoenix from the Mount of Faith^{xciv}
 has winged its way into the infinite^{xcv} 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^{xcvi} 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^{xcvii} 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^{xcviii} 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^{xcix} –
a thousand realms of meaning you will see 250
His eye perceives no thing except God's face

140	THE BAHÁ'Í STUDIES REVIEW 1999	
	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! ^c	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, ^{ci}	
	that you may make divine ascent to God, ^{cii}	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 ^{ciii}	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 ^{civ}	
	which has been purified of all but Him	260
	Once His House, through love of such a heart, was raised ^{cv}	
	Both House and Him within the House were hid ^{cvi}	261
	Know this, O youth! His House resides in hearts	
	and was not raised upon mere stone and clay ^{cvi}	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; ^{cvi}	
	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, ^{cix} and	
	the mystic treasures of His close approach ^{cx}	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 ^{cx}	

until you reach the precincts of the Source^{cxii} 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^{cxiii} 272
If you have read the Hadíth "There was God"^{cxiv}
then you know secrets of "There's naught but Him"^{cxv} 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^{cxvi}
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^{cxvii} 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;^{cxviii}
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^{cxix} 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^{cxx} 290

Since you have heard the reed pipe's plaint of love, ^{cxxi}	
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 ^{cxxii}	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 ^{cxxiii}	
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 ^{cxxiv}	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 ^{cxxv}	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 ^{cxxvi}	
enslaving him, reducing him to fetters ^{cxxvii}	305
Like prey he fell into the hunter's hands ^{cxxviii}	
Like straw, snatched up by wind, thrown down to dust ^{cxxix}	306
Will no messenger be heading to Iraq,	
to tell of parting's pain, separation's tale? ^{cxxx}	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	

Bahá'u'lláh's Mathnaví 143

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^{cxxx} 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,^{cxxxii}
suffering like Husayn on plains of Karbalâ.^{cxxxiii} 314
One Husayn,
untold Yazîds have hemmed him in!^{cxxxiv}
One Friend,
and hostile demons all around,^{cxxxv} 315
Like Moses
held among the folk of Egypt,
or God's Spirit
detained among the Jews,^{cxxxvi} 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!^{cxxxvii}
Bars keep him in, almost choking out His breath... 318

End Notes

- viii 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*.
- ix 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 (*sáf 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.
- x *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."
- xi The phrase *kun fa yakún* 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 *ján*. 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.'"
- xii 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-bahá*, "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.
- xiii 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.
- xiv 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'lá* 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 Zakiy al-Kordi reads *bi-rasad* with the letter *sin* rather than with *sád*, 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 *dál*. 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.

- xv *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.
- xvi 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 *aghshán* 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 *Mathnaviy-i Mubárak* 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-Bahá*, 3rd edition (Langenhain, 1994) 58-61.
- xvii 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.
- xviii “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.
- xix 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.
- xx 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*).
- xxi “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.
- xxii 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.
- xxiii 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 'Ashûrâ, 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-thére-al.

- xxiv This suggests the scene on the plain of Resurrection, as envisioned in Islamic apocalyptic narratives.
- xxv 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.
- xxvi 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.
- xxvii "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 *Mathnavi* 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").
- xxviii *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.
- xxix *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.
- xxx *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.
- xxxi 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 taraf-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.

- xxxii 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.
- xxxiii "He" rendering *Hu*, from the Arabic third person masculine pronoun meaning simply "he" (*huwa*). It is used among Sufis as a *zeker*, 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.
- xxxiv "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.
- xxxv *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.
- xxxvi 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*).
- xxxvii 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.
- xxxviii "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 *Mathnaví-i Mubáarak* 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.
- xxxix
- The Persian reads *bar neshânad ahl-e keshti rá 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 vowelised 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-safinat al-hamrá*'), or the Ship of God (*safinat Alláh*), or the Ark of Bahá (*fulk al-Bahá*'), a connection made explicit in Bahá'u'lláh's Tablet of Carmel (*sawfa tajrî safinat Alláh 'alayka wa yazharu ahl al-Bahá' alladhîna dhakararhum 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-safinat al-hamrá' allatî ja'ala-hâ Alláh li-ahl al-Bahá...*, and again *rakibta 'alâ fulk al-Bahá' wa kunta sâyiran 'alâ bahr al-kibriyâ*, and finally in Persian, *ahl-e Bahá 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.
- xl See line 14 of the poem and the accompanying endnote.
- xli 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.”

- xlii 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.”

- xliii 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 ár 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.”

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

xlv

“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.

- xlvi *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.

- xlvii 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 zamín*). 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 Abú Nasr al-Sarráj in his *Kitáb 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).

xlvi The 1914/1332 text reads *bâzegeh*, 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.

xlx 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).

l 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.

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

lii

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*.

liii The 1914/1332 and the Mishkín Qalam text both read

nist forsat tâ to az asrâr-e koll
pish-e bolbol gu'i 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 forsat tâ to az asrâr-e gol
pish-e bolbol gu'i 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.

liv This is the *Simorgh*, the mythical bird which in Ferdowsi's *Shâh Nâme* protects the epic

- warriors of Iran with its magic feather.
- lv See the note to Line 20.
- lvi 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.
- lvii 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.
- lviii See the note to line 101 of the poem.
- lix 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.
- lx Ignorant and radiant should both be read as two syllables here for the meter: ig-nrant, rad-yant.
- lxi 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.
- lxii *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.
- lxiii 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" (mystery); "Beloved" (be-loved).
- lxiv 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 *Mathnavî* 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.
- lxv See lines 66 and 218, and the note to line 66.
- lxvi Compare the passage from Rumi's *Mathnavî*, 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"!]

lxvii *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.

lxviii The *Kitáb-i Badi'* 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 Badi'* 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 Badi'* text, as would, also, the fact that the *Kitáb-i Badi'*, 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

lxix This hemistich also exhibits a slight, non-essential variant. The *Kitáb-i Badi'* records '*ârifî 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 '*ârif-i dígar* (the other gnostic). Since only one gnostic has been thus far introduced, the reading of the *Kitáb-i Badi'* seems logically preferable in this case.

lxx

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 Badi'*, 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 Badi'* version replaces any earlier version of the poem, the *ruz/yowm* reading seems preferable.

lxxi

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.

lxxii

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

lxxiii

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 text, as well as the Mishkín Qalam text, read: in *cherâgh-at r cho(h)*

rowshan karde'i, whereas *Āsâr-e qalam-e a'lâ* text reads in *cherâghi ráke 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.

- lxxiv 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.
- lxxv The 1914/1332 text reads in the second hemistich *nuri shavad*, but the *Āsâr-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*.
- lxxvi 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.
- lxxvii 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'il-i Zavári'i, 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.
- lxxviii An epithet for Jesus.
- lxxix See the second of Bahá'u'lláh's *Seven Valleys*.
- lxxx *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*.
- lxxxi 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).
- lxxxii 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.
- lxxxiii 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.
- lxxxiv 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

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- Hidden Words*, Persian #71. See also line 213, below.
- lxxxv 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.
- lxxxvi An allusion to the staff of Moses.
- lxxxvii 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.
- lxxxviii 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.
- lxxxix *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, Suras 37, 38, 52, 55.
- xc See lines 38 and 182-3, and accompanying notes.
- xcí *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.
- xcii See the note to line 197, above.
- xciii 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.
- xciv Read "The Immortal" as just three syllables : Th'Immortal.
- xcv This image comes from the *Hidden Words*, Persian #1.
- xcvi 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."
- xcvii 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.
- xcviii 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.

- xcix 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.
- c 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.
- ci 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.
- cii An allusion to the *Me'râj*, or Muhammad's spiritual "Night Journey" into heaven. See the notes to line 268, below.
- ciii An allusion to Bahá'u'lláh's own poem, *Rashh-i 'Amâ*, "Sprinklings of the Divine Cloud."
- civ 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 Eshraq-Khâvari [Tehran: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 128 B.E./1971] 1:58). Compare also the *Hidden Words*, Arabic #58 and 59.
- cv 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.
- cvi 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.
- cvii Compare this and the following lines with the story of the building of the *Masjed-e Aqsâ*, the Farthest Mosque, in the *Mathnavi* 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.
- cviii Sufi poetry, including especially Rumi's *Mathnavi*, grapples with the opposition between human reason, or the limited rational faculties ('*aq*l), 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.
- cix 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-aqsá*), 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 Aqsá Mosque.

^{cx} 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.

^{cx} *Hajr* or *hejrân* (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.

^{cxii} Here there is another allusion to the *Me’raj* 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 *Mathnaví*, 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.

^{cxiii} An allusion to Koran 55:26-7.

^{cxiv} 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.”

- ^{cxv} Perhaps an allusion to the Hadíth, "There is none but Him in the house" (*Laysa fī al-dár ghayruhu dayyár*), a suggestion I owe to Dr. Khazeh Fananapazir.
- ^{cxvi} '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.
- ^{cxvii} 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*.
- ^{cxviii} Compare this and the following lines with the *Hidden Words*, Arabic #11, #10 and #12.
- ^{cxix} 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, *dowî* in order to rhyme with the first hemistich's *to'i*. None of the manuscripts encourage it, but if we read *dô'î* (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.
- ^{cxx} 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-y-i Mubáarak" 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.
- ^{cxxi} An explicit reference to the opening passages of Jalál al-Din Rumi's *Mathnaví*.
- ^{cxxii} 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.
- ^{cxxiii} *Safdar*, see line 224.
- ^{cxxiv} 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 "nî" (which as a separate word in Persian would be read as *nay*, meaning reed pipe) remain among us.
- ^{cxxv} 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.
- ^{cxxvi} 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.

- cxxvii Perhaps an allusion to what befell Bahá'u'lláh upon becoming a Bábí, his arrest and imprisonment and finally his incarceration in the Siyáh Chál. The chains on Bahá'u'lláh were so heavy that he gave each one a name.
- cxxviii 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.
- cxxix 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.
- cxxx 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.
- cxixxi *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”.
- cxixxii The *Kitáb-i Badi'* (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.
- cxixxiii
 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.
- cxixxiv 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.
- cxixxv “Friend” here is an epithet for the Prophet, Muhammad. The *Kitáb-i Badi'* (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'*.

^{cxxxvi} 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.

^{cxxxvii} 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).