

Musibat-i-Hurúf-i-'Álín, the Suffering of the Exalted Letters,

Revealed by Bahá'u'lláh

Provisional Translation by Joshua Hall

I

He is that He is.

Glory be unto Thee, O Lord my God! How is the pen to write and the ink to flow, inasmuch as the gentle breezes of affection have been stilled, the daystar of the divine decree hath arisen from the horizon of fulfillment, the sword of tribulation hath been unsheathed from the scabbard of creation, the firmament of sorrow hath been upraised, and the arrows of hardship and the darts of trials have rained down from the clouds of fate, in such wise that the stars of joy in the hearts of Thy loved ones have fallen, every measure of happiness in the souls of Thy chosen ones hath been effaced, and successive tribulations have waxed so severe that no man hath the power to bear them, nor any soul the ability to withstand them. For the doors of hope have been slammed shut, the sweet-scented breezes of fidelity have ceased to waft, and the odours of extinction have been diffused.

I swear by Thy glory! The pen weepeth, the ink crieth aloud, the Tablet hath swooned away, bodies have trembled, and pillars have quaked. Alas, alas, for what hath been decreed and come to pass! Verily, this is the first token of Thy loving Providence.

II

Thou art He Who kindled the lamps of love in the niche of providential care, and Who nourished them with the oil of learning and wisdom, until they became radiant and refulgent. By their illumination did the lights of Thy oneness shine forth in the niche of Thy sovereignty, and the foundations of the house of Thine eternity were established in the gardens of Thy hallowed Being. In the globe of Thy grace and the crystal glass of Thy mercy didst Thou protect them, lest they be assailed by the winds of antipathy.

Thereafter Thou didst clothe them in the vesture of Thy generosity and compassion, and made them manifest in the kingdom of attributes in the temple of Thy names. And when their creation reached its consummation and they were made well-pleasing, the gales of annihilation struck them and left them bereft of the fragrances of eternity, until their lives were taken, their niches shattered, and their lights extinguished. Alas, alas, for what hath been decreed and come to pass! Verily, this is a token of Thy latter decrees.

III

How am I to make mention, O my God, of the marvels of Thy handiwork and the mysteries of Thy wisdom, inasmuch as Thou hast created that gleaming white fluid out of the substance of divine bounty? Thou hast made it to flow from the loins of the fathers, generation after generation, until it attained unto one among Thy servants. Thereupon, Thou didst make the subtle, limpid fluid to descend into the shell of one of Thy handmaidens, didst nurture it with the hands of Thy mystery and by the essence of Thy tender mercy therein, and didst design it in accordance with the exigencies of Thy wisdom, until Thou didst fashion it in the mother's womb, clothe it with the most noble form, and invest it with the most excellent attributes.

Thereafter, Thou didst cause him to depart from the womb, and didst suckle him, nourish him, feed him, bestow Thy grace upon him, exalt him, stand him erect, and deliver him unto the stage of maturity, until Thou didst enable him to reach that boundless extremity in Thy fashioning, and that limitless exaltation in Thy creation, in such wise that Thou didst lift him unto the heaven of Thy Cause and the atmosphere of Thy transcendent holiness, didst cause him to attain unto the lofty heights of the wayfarer's journey, didst detach him from every side, and didst return him from Thyself unto Thyself, such that he came and stood present before Thee.

But the moment he entered Thy presence, O my God, Thou didst strip his body, for Thou didst love naught else beside him, and Thou didst divest him of his attire, for Thou didst not desire aught else except him. Thou didst cause him to dwell in an abode bereft of any friend to have compassion for him, any companion to console him, a dwelling without either a lamp or bed. Therein did he abide, lowly, impoverished, alone, and seeking Thy refuge.

Alas, alas! On account of this were the gentle breezes of honor shut out from the realm of eternity, the dove of the Cause was no longer able to warble her melodies, creation tore asunder its yellow robe, the celestial Maiden cast ashes upon Her face, and the eyes of divine majesty in the inmost souls of contingent being wept crimson tears. Alas, alas, for what hath been decreed and come to pass! Verily, these are among Thy grievous afflictions.

IV

Glory be unto Thee, O Lord, my God! After Thou didst enable him to ascend unto the realms of Há, the throne of eternity; after his dying to his own self and his living in the celestial splendour in the heights of manifestation; and after his attaining unto himself, his knowing of himself, his realization of his light, and his recognition of his beauty, Thou gavest him to drink from the wondrous crystal springs begotten of the essence of Thy hidden knowledge, didst attire him with the robe of guidance, and didst proffer unto him the brimming cups of divine virtue, until he gave ear unto the melody of the Dove in the midmost heaven.

There he stood, transfixed at the Supreme Vision, before the holy sanctuary of divine grandeur. Thereupon he clung to the yellow handhold in the crimson spot, sufficient now in his own being, and subsisted by virtue of his own essence. He saw with his own eyes such as he beheld, apprehended with his own heart such as he understood, and ascended with his all to such heights as no man can ever surpass in his love for Thee, his acquiescence under Thy decree, and his submission under Thy trials.

In this most exalted condition, this most lofty, most sublime station did he abide, until Thou didst breathe over him the breaths of Thy decree and the winds of Thy trials, and didst take from him all that Thou hadst given him out of Thy generosity, such that his feet were bereft of the power to walk, his hands from the ability to grasp, his eyes from beholding Thy beauty, his ears from hearkening unto Thy melodies, his heart from the knowledge of the stations of Thy unity, and his soul from certitude in the Manifestations of Thy oneness. Thou wert yet unsatisfied, however, until Thou didst strip him of the robes of Thy loving-kindness, didst cast him out of the palaces of glory unto the dust of abject lowness, and from the acme of affluence into the depths of deprivation. In the earth's womb did he dwell, alone, estranged, naked, bereft, and exiled. Alas, alas, for what hath been decreed and come to pass! Verily, this is a token of Thy dire calamities.

V

Verily Thou art He Who planted a goodly tree in a blessed and clement land, Who gave it to drink of the camphor water from the springs of Divine Dispensation, Who reared it by the power of Thy sovereignty, and protected it by the hands of Thine omnipotence, until it grew lofty and exalted.

Its root Thou madest firm in the earth of Thy will, by virtue of a name from amongst Thy names, and its branch Thou madest to rise up unto the heaven of Thy behest. Firmly established and exalted, it became the bearer of high-reaching and lofty branches, an indomitable trunk, and inaccessible and mighty boughs. Upon its branches dwelt the spirits of Thy sublime divinity and rested the doves of Thine hallowed eternity. Upon it were suspended birdcages of light, wherein songbirds of divine majesty were chanting and doves of holiness were warbling. They, one and all, made mention of their Lord God in the wondrous tongue with melodies and peerless utterance upon the branches. By virtue of their hymns were the hearts of the faithful enraptured, and the souls of those brought nigh confirmed.

And when it had attained its most exalted station, it was assailed by the fierce lightning of Thy wrath and the raging tempests of Thy trials, such that its branches snapped, its leaves withered, its fruits fell, its birdcages were shattered, and its songbirds took flight, in such a pass that it was razed to the ground, uprooted with branches fallen. 'Twas as though it had never been planted, never been created, never been called into being, nor made lofty and exalted. Alas, alas, for what hath been decreed and come to pass! Verily, this is a token of the supreme might of Thy sovereignty.

VI

Verily, Thou art He Who sent down the mandate of compelling power from the realm of glory, by Whose leave Destiny's decree dawned as Thou didst preordain it in the kingdom of creation, in order that the abode of divine majesty be established upon stakes of unyielding, fortified iron. Thou didst form it out of the dust of loving-kindness from the garden of Thine eternity, and Thou didst build it upon four pillars of the temples of Thy transcendental unity, and didst beautify it with the daystars of Thine eternity, didst adorn it with the pure gold of Thy mercy, didst ordain that its doors be embellished with crimson ruby in Thy name, the Exalted, the Most High, and its walls inlaid with the pearls of Thy most excellent attributes in Thy supreme and most glorious Remembrance, and its ceiling and throne Thou didst hew out of scintillating, clear diamond, in Thy consummate, ancient, and truest Remembrance. Glorified be God, He Who fashioned and created this exalted abode, and Who revealed and ordained it!

And after it had attained unto the pinnacle of perfection, and had been manifested in the most beauteous form, it remained in such wise until its appointed time was come. Thereupon, the firmament of Thy trials was upraised in the divine realm of Thine ascendancy, and the angels of Thy wrath pronounced over it Thy word of destruction. The foundation of the House was made to quake, until its pillars collapsed, its thrones fell, its doors lay demolished, its walls crumbled, and every indication thereof was effaced.

'Twas as though it had never been built upon Thine earth, been reared in Thy domains, or been called into being in Thy lands. All its dust was scattered, its memory was forgotten, and every trace thereof had vanished. Alas, alas, for what hath been decreed and come to pass! Verily, this is a token of the marvels of Thine immutable judgement. Praise be unto Thee for the excellence of Thy most sweet decree!

VII

I swear by Thy glory, O my God! Not a single plaint do I yield Thee for what hath occurred at Thy behest, rather I beseech Thy forgiveness for all that I have mentioned, all that I have recounted, and all that I have uttered in my trespasses, which speak only of mine own heedlessness of Thy remembrance and my renunciation of the gardens of Thy nearness, for I recognize the exigencies of Thy wisdom, am cognizant of the ordering principles of Thy transcendent sovereignty, and know of a certainty that, through the power of Thy grace, Thou shalt never deal with Thy servants in a manner that doth not befit Thine exalted majesty, or become the marvels of Thy beneficence, and that the mandate of the return doth not shine forth from the horizon of Thy might and the kingdom of Thy behest, save that Thy servants may attain unto the pinnacle of Thy grace and the greatest measure of Thine overflowing generosity.

I know full well that he who ascended unto Thee and came before Thee, hath verily risen unto the heavens of Thy sublime eternity, hath dwelt in the holy precincts of Thy lordship, hath mounted the throne of glory before the effulgent light of Thy beauty, and hath reposed in the cradle of life eternal at the manifestation of Thine exalted divinity. It is as though I behold him at this very moment soaring on the wings of majesty in the expanse of Thy hallowed mercy, marching through the realms of the spirit of Thy oneness, drinking from the brimming cup of reunion with Thee, and partaking of the nourishing repast of Thy nearness and close embrace. May my life be offered up for this glorious honor, this supreme token of divine solicitude!

And yet, inasmuch as Thou hast concealed from Thy creatures what Thou hast revealed unto Thy Servant, the decree of separation is most difficult for humanity, the time of parting as ordained by Thee is most trying unto Thy thralls, and the appearance of death in the temples of eternity is a cause of sorrow to Thy loved ones. Thus hath befallen Thy lovers what no man could reckon, no soul could grasp, no heart could contain, nor any mind could bear, and the token thereof is this hardship wherewith they are afflicted, and this suffering wherewith they are encompassed, which hath set the heart and soul aflame, and raised tumult in Thy lands.

Indeed, not an eye remaineth unless it weepeth, nor a single head unless it be made bare on account of grief, nor a single heart unless it be bereaved, nor any light unless it be darkened, nor any soul unless it be severed, nor any happiness unless it be exchanged for sorrow.

Alas, alas, for what hath been decreed and come to pass! Verily, this is a token of Thy decree as confirmed in the crimson tree.

VIII

O my God, my Beloved and mine Aspiration, Thou knowest full well that these hardships have arisen from the horizon of Thy decree and have encompassed the contingent realm and whatsoever abideth therein. They have overcome all created things and all that pertaineth unto them. But Thou hast chosen in these times two women: the first Thou hast named after her whom Thou hadst singled out and made to be the mother of all creation, and the second Thou hast named after her whom Thou hadst chosen above all the women in the world.

These tribulations hast Thou visited upon them in such a time when neither of them hath a mother who might rend asunder her garment, or cast ash upon her head, or commiserate with them in their loss, or weep for what hath befallen them, or divest her head by reason of what hath afflicted them. Neither have they companions to keep them company and still their weeping, nor confidants to dry the tears from off their cheeks, nor maidservants to veil their hair, nor any who might have compassion on them and be a solace unto them in their bereavement, or weep for their sufferings, or dye their hands, or comb their locks after they have been disarrayed in grief.

Wherefore, O my God, inasmuch as Thou hast decreed by Thy command such as Thou didst ordain, and hast made to pass such as Thou didst destine by Thy mandate, do Thou bestow Thy grace upon them both, clothe them in robes of silk and in luminous vestures with the word of glorification, that their eyes may be solaced by the marvels of Thy mercy, and their sorrow be transformed into the essence of joy and the splendour of the light in the orient of Thy Sacred Mount. Incline Thou their ears unto the warblings of Thine essence from the sidrah of Thine exalted eternity and the tree of Thy hallowed oneness, and unto the melodies which stupefy the minds of men when heard, before whose revelation souls tremble, and at whose appearance spirits are enraptured.

Nourish them, moreover, with the fruits of the tree of Thy lordship, and enable them to taste the wine of life everlasting that floweth from the springs of Thine eternity. Set them on the path unto the wellspring of Thy nearness and the city of reunion with Thee, and grant that they may repose in the precincts of Thy mercy neath the shade of the garden of Thy presence. Pour over them such patience as is given by Thee. Enable them and those in their company to trust in Thee, to be severed from aught else except Thee, to be engaged in Thy remembrance, to delight in Thy name, to long for Thy beauty, to hasten unto Thine embrace, to drink from the brimming cup of Thy nourishing bounty, to circle round Thine Essence, to repose in the cradle of Thy nearness, to take flight in the heaven of Thy love, to walk in the lands of Thy good-pleasure, to hasten unto the repository of Thy light, to seek the excellence of Thy decree, to be content when Thy trials are sent down, to be patient in Thee, and to be well-satisfied with Thee, that their gaze may be set upon the marvels of Thy mercy and their hearts may await the revelation of Thy munificence, for they have not taken unto themselves any lord besides Thee, any beloved but Thee, or any aspiration save Thee.

And I beseech Thee by Him Whom Thou didst make manifest in the past and shalt make manifest in the future to forbid neither them nor Thy servants from the holy sanctuary of Thy grandeur, nor turn them back from the gates of the city before whose threshold all in the heavens and earth have gathered, and at whose door they stand—the city which none hath entered save those whom Thou hast singled out in Thy generosity, and whom Thou hast made mirrors of Thine Own Self, manifestations of Thine Essence, daysprings of Thy glory, orients of Thy holiness, abodes of Thy spirit, treasuries of Thy Revelation, lamps of Thy light, embodiments of Thy knowledge, and waves of the ocean of Thy wisdom.

Inasmuch as Thou art potent to do as Thou willest and sovereign to do as Thou pleasest, and art in truth the Omnipotent, the Self-Subsistent, cause this guest who hath come before Thee to rise above all that Thou hast exalted, until he entereth the pavilions of majesty behind the tabernacles of divine oneness in the precincts of Thy name, the All-Glorious, and of Thine Essence, the Most Exalted, before the Tree of the farthest extremity, the Garden of sheltering refuge, and Thy most radiant spirit, that the holy fragrances diffusing from the Primal Point—the Most Exalted Centre, the Most Exquisite

Gem—may overcome him, and that he may revolve around His beauty, circle round the holy sanctuary of His glory, and behold the light of His attributes in the Kaaba of His names.

Clothe him, then, in the robes of gladness, that he may thereby enter the fold of the concourse of manifestation and give ear unto the sweet accents of nearness from the Camphor tree, that the snow-white dove may warble the song of enraptured ecstasy in this crimson leaf—and indeed in every tree—with the melody of the All-Compelling in this flame kindled from this fire, proclaiming that there is none other god but Him, the King, the Omnipotent, the Almighty, the All-Powerful, and that He is God, the Sublime, the All-Encompassing, the All-Subduing.

And with these words is Mine utterance ended: Praise be unto God, the Incomparable Lord of unsurpassed might! Verily Thou shalt fulfil, O my God, such as is hoped, and this indeed is a token of Thy consummate, ancient, and veritable bounty.

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