

The Hidden Words (Arabic Part) – a personal summary

by Filip Boicu

August 2025

The Hidden Words is one of the mystical works of Bahá'u'lláh that draws extensively on imagery from the traditions of Sufi poetry and Islamic philosophy¹. The first part of the book has been revealed in the Arabic language, the second part in Persian. This is a highly subjective and personal summary of little to no use except maybe for those who have already performed a similar exercise and want to compare notes. The aim of this exercise was to enable me to traverse the entire Arabic section in one go, however imperfectly. It should not be viewed as an instance of Bahá'í studies. This exercise might also be seen to constitute a subjective experiment in ascertaining if the current arrangement of the Hidden Words displays continuity and organizational sequence, although many such arrangements can be envisaged, depending on the reader.

Arabic

Intro: Trust/Divine trust + Covenant.

- Heart #1
- Tahqiq vs. Taqlid² #2
- Beloved ↔ Lover #3-10
- Light of God as Immanence of God #11-14
- Turn to thy Transcendent Lord (in contentment) #15-18
- Beloved → Lover #19-20
- Nobility #21-23
- Ethics (personal & social) #24-30
- Death as joy, light, reunion with God and eternal life /Nearness to God #31-37³
- Accepting the beautiful robe of God (observing His commandments out of love, submission to Him, magnifying his Name, martyrdom/baqá) #37-47
- Tests and calamities (contentment) #47-51
- Detachment #52-57
- Tawhīd⁴/baqá⁵/reunion with the Divine #58-64

¹ The text in full is available here: https://bahai-library.com/bahauallah_hidden_words#P64. A comparison with alternative translations can be found here: https://bahai-library.com/bahauallah_hidden-words_arabic_1903

² Savi, Julio. *Towards the Summit of Reality: An Introduction to the Study of Bahá'u'lláh's Seven Valleys and Four Valleys*. George Ronald, 2008, (search by index)

³ A grey highlight indicates multiple parallel meanings in the same HW or HW sequence.

⁴ Savi, Julio. *Towards the Summit of Reality: An Introduction to the Study of Bahá'u'lláh's Seven Valleys and Four Valleys*. George Ronald, 2008 (search by index).

⁵ Alison Marshall. *How to Get out of It: Faná' and Baqá' in the Early Writings of Baha'u'llah*. https://bahai-library.com/marshall_faná_baqá. Accessed 14 Aug. 2025.

- Divine Hiddenness and self-censorship/
veiling as grace #65-67
- The oneness of humanity #68
- Guard His Word (gems and mysteries) #69
- My bounty complete #70
- Write with light, love, or life's blood #71

Attempt at an Expanded Summary

Arabic

Intro: Trust/Divine trust + Covenant.

Pure, kind, and radiant heart. #1
Independent Search for Truth, freedom of thought (tahqiq as opposed to taqlid). #2

Love sequence (the dynamic of Beloved/Lover and Lover/Beloved). Maybe the whole Arabic Hidden Words could be summarized as “I am the one who loves you and I am who you love, the only love that can satisfy you in the whole universe”. The essence of all religions is that God is extending an act of love to man waiting for a response – it is the most amazing of things to see the lengths to which this call of love is manifested, the claims and the demands it makes and so on. In that sense, in my estimation, the entire content and structure of the Hidden Words is about love. #3-10

- Imago Dei (image of God) = the mirror mechanism (Kenosis and Imitatio Dei as future axes); Love = the origin of creation. #3
 - No Name or Spirit of Life without loving God back. #4
 - “If thou lovest Me not, My love can in no wise reach thee”. #5
 - God's love is our paradise; our heavenly home, reunion with God. #6
- This has been destined for you. Enter therein!
- If thou lovest God, then Faná and Baqá/Tawḥīd – ‘collapsing the subject object dichotomy’. Die in Me so I may eternally live in thee. #7
 - No peace without Faná. Love of God must transcend all that is/self. #8
 - His Love is His stronghold. Enter it for safety and eternal life. #9
 - This Love (Spirit, Word of God, Primal Will) is already inside us, accessible and near. “Thou art My stronghold; enter therein”. #10

Sequence about the Light of God (knowledge, love, spirit of God, Names and Attributes) inside us, to which we must turn (Immanence of God). This sequence is anticipated in HW10, a transitional HW which ends one sequence and starts the other. #11-14

- “Thou art My lamp and My light is in thee”. The light of God is inside us and we must awaken this inner light (knowledge/inspiration). #11
- The essence of His light is in us (Names and Attributes, intellect, love) from the time of creation. “Be thou content with it”. #12
- ‘Essence of My light’ = “essence of knowledge”. The Primal Will is

inside us; I can connect to Him from the inside by turning unto my own self. #13

- Do not fear; as the Light of God, we are eternal. Reunion with the Primal Will in the realm of glory is possible through the love of God. #14

Sequence which enjoins us to interact with God/Primal Will directly, in His Transcendence (Here, God is both immanent and transcendent).

The main idea here is that contentment can&should only be found in God. #15-18

- Turn towards God (or the Primal Will) and renounce all else. No one is like Him in the entire universe; the search for Being will only take you to Him. #15

- His command: “Forget all save Me and commune with My spirit”. #16

- Be thou content with God and seek no other helper. Only He can suffice you. #17

- Be content with what has been ordained for you by God as this will profit you if you are content. #18

Back to Sequence of Love (Beloved/Lover Dynamic = I have given you My spirit (the capacity to Love, etc.) so that you could/would become My lover). #19-20

- I have breathed within you “a breath from My own Spirit”, so you can be My lover. Why have you forsaken Me “and sought a beloved other than Me?” #19

- God has a claim on us as lover. We can see His Grace, Love and Light in (our potentialities) and about us – they cannot be concealed. #20

Sequence about Nobility (admonishments not to ignore our noble station and potentialities) as a way to later introduce ethical principles. Notice the link with contentment - we have contented with that which is less good. #21-23

- You have turned away from “the choicest fruits” (these fruits are what is good for us in “the realm on high”), for something less good. [“Fruits” = Divine Virtues/Names and Attributes: nearer to Love/Knowledge/Beauty etc.?] #21

- You were created noble but have abased yourself. Rise up. #22

- I call you to the eternal, but you seek what perisheth instead. Why have you turned away from My desire and followed your own? #23

From here on a switch is made to an outline of ethical principles through a transitional HW24 which summarizes in abstract terms HW25-30. All these ethical injunctions could be conceived of as prerequisites to achieving or maintaining unity (which would signal an ethics of unity), but also, as contextual to Baghdad and the Bábi community of that time. #24-30

- Humility as a sign of self-knowledge. Know your limits and do not “claim what it beseemeth thee not” in relation to the Manifestation of God (or other human beings). Recognize and show obedience to the Manifestation of God (and charity/subservience to other human beings). #24

- “Vaunt not thyself over the poor”. (Vaunting thyself over the

poor displays vainglory, arrogance and disdain but at a deeper level implies patterns of oppression.) First social teaching in the Hidden Words but might also be contextual to Baghdad and the Bábi community. #25

- Shun/avoid **fault-finding** in others, which implies feelings of superiority (arrogance, disdain, vainglory) and ignorance of one's own faults, or you will be accursed by God. #26

- Avoid **backbiting**. HW 25-27 are very strong commandments. Not following them results in being accursed by God/the Manifestation, which possibly implies condemnation and damnation. #27

- This Hidden Word is a call to live the justice we proclaim and a very clear rejection of **hypocrisy** in moral and spiritual life. A call for integrity. It's not just a caution — it's an outright disqualification: **such a person is "not of Me."**⁶ #28

- A moral double-check as a divine command: Don't *misrepresent* others; Don't *misrepresent* yourself.⁷ #29

- Show humility, generosity/charity, compassion/empathy, recognition of human dignity ("for his face is My face") and selflessness (put the needs of others first) to all human beings. "It's essentially saying: *When you face another in need, you are facing the sacred—treat that encounter accordingly.*" (ChatGPT) #30

Unusual sequence with multiple layers of meaning. "Death as joy, light, reunion, and eternal life" is an apt summary for HW31-37. This is relatively explicit for HW31-34. However, HW34-37 can be read both as continuing the discussion on death/eternal life and as introducing the theme of "Nearness to God". Death is something to rejoice about ("a messenger of joy") as it is the instrument of reunion with the Divine, eternal life and eternal peace, drawing close to God, meeting God and mirroring forth His beauty, entering the Light. But this eternity and destiny can be lost forever, if one does not accept and embody the Revelation and recognize the Manifestation of God. All of this can be read as a veiled account of preparation for martyrdom. #31-37

- Death comes unheralded; bring thyself to account each day as you will need to account for your deeds (divine judgment). #31

- Death is a messenger of joy; it is light. Do not grieve, do not hide from the light made to shed on thee its splendour. #32

- The light calls you to the court of holiness and eternal peace. Rejoice! This can be a description of both death (as reunion) and life in this realm (light as revelation). [One can be in this life and attain to the life of the

⁶ With the help of ChatGPT.

⁷ Suggested by ChatGPT.

Kingdom at the same time.] However, the primary intended meaning here is death. “Joyful tidings of light” must mean death considering the HW sequence before and after.

#33

- Reunion with God/Primal Will/The Manifestation is possible as after our death the light of His countenance is leading us towards reunion. Death is meeting God. Rejoice and do not grieve or hide. This HW also seems to apply to martyrdom.

#34

- Advice that applies to both worlds (but the overall context before was that of dying/death): sorrow not save thou art far from God/rejoice not save thou art drawing near and returning unto God.

#35

- Advice that applies to both worlds (but the overall context before was that of dying/death): rejoice in thine heart so you can be “worthy to meet Me and mirror forth My beauty”. Key point here: whether in this life or next we can meet God/Primal Will/ The Manifestation and reflect their qualities if we aspire to this/if love for God is in our hearts.

#36

- But this eternal life and the meeting of God can be lost forever if one does not accept the Revelation (beauteous robe = revelation; water = divine verses or divine knowledge = water of life = Spirit).

#37

Sequence: Accepting the beauteous robe of God

#37-47

- This Hidden Word can be read as containing in nuce the implications of what it means to accept the beauteous robe of God, that is, His Revelation: a) accept His commandments because of love of Him (might correspond to the first and third of *The Four Valleys*), b) make mention of Him/magnify His Cause (might correspond to the second of *The Four Valleys* – “men whom neither merchandise nor traffic beguile from the remembrance of God”), c) submission unto Him (might correspond to the first of *The Four Valleys*) and d) reaching the state of tawhīd/baqá and becoming a martyr in His path (the fourth valley of *The Four Valleys*). If this is accurate it would imply careful sequencing with HW 37 having a transitional role as the end of one sequence and the beginning of another.

#37

- “Walk in My statutes for love of Me”. Key in conceptualizing the nature of Bahá’í Law. The legalistic, “rule-oriented, formal, and positivistic body of law”⁸ is de-emphasized in favour of a different legal approach: “Obedience to the law is a conscious choice that one must make out of that experience of love; it is not the arbitrary imposition of will by an external power”⁹.

#38

- “Neglect not My commandments if thou lovest My beauty”. Confirms that the mystical path (of spiritual development and nearness to God) requires abiding by the laws of the Manifestation. This also counters divergent Sufi

⁸ Danesh, R. P. *Dimensions of Bahá’í Law*. Bahá’í Publishing, 2019, p.198.

⁹ Idem, pp.18-19.

approaches, which were not uncommon at the time. #39

- “Were thou to speed through the immensity of space and traverse the expanse of heaven” thou wouldst find that the Primal Will commands the universe. The law or command (or sovereignty) of God spans the universe and there is no escaping it. #40

- Magnifying His cause opens access to understanding divine mysteries and to eternal life. #41

- Injunction to kenosis (show humility, so God can graciously visit thee) and to arise for the triumph of His cause, so that you can attain ‘the victory’ [of obtaining ‘the gem of Divine Virtue’?] while on earth. #42

- God will remember you in heaven and your eyes and His will be solaced then, if you have made mention of Him on earth. #43

- “Thy hearing is My hearing, ... Thy sight is My sight” – The station of *tawhīd* (seeing only the Face of God in everything) or *baqá* (God living in us): collapsing subject-object dichotomy. In this state of reunion one becomes the meeting point between one’s perception of God, and God’s simultaneous perception of ourselves. Thus, while one becomes aware of God’s exalted sanctity from within one’s being, His Being becomes aware and bears witness to this internal transformation.¹⁰ This HW connects with HW7 (but there the accent was on *faná*/kenosis as a prerequisite for *baqá*) and also with the description of the Fourth Valley in *The Four Valleys*. #44

- “Seek a martyr’s death in My path” (with contentment) to achieve nearness to God in His realm of glory. #45

- Becoming a martyr in His path makes one the manifestation of His command and the revealer of His light in the highest paradise. #46

- Martyrdom is greater than the creation of the universe and the light of both worlds, in His sight. #47

Sequence: Tests and calamities (contentment). It could be argued that this continues the earlier sequence that starts with HW37: accepting the Revelation (‘the beauteous robe’) also means accepting His teachings about tests and difficulties. [Notice that HW37 was both the end of one sequence (death as joy, light, reunion and eternal life) and the beginning of another (‘My beauteous robe’) that ended with *baqá* and martyrdom.] #48-51

- Patience (and fortitude) under His trials and decree is a sign of the love of God. [Why?] #48

¹⁰ Inspired by Toshihiko Izutsu. *Toshihiko Izutsu Sufism And Taoism*. 1984. *Internet Archive*, <http://archive.org/details/ToshihikoIzutsuSufismAndTaoism>

- [Because] the true lover yearneth for tribulation/tests as a way to prove his love. #49

- [Because] without adversity, one could not learn to act as one that is content with the Divine Will, understand Divine knowledge, or become Spirit. Tests have an epistemological value in that they quicken spiritual growth. Our life path is actually designed or operating as His path – the path to Him, and obstacles/trials are a key part of it. “Love for God (or the divine) isn’t proven in ease — it’s proven in difficulty.” (ChatGPT) “Those ‘content with My pleasure’ are the faithful who endure hardships yet remain spiritually at peace because they know they are pleasing God. The question implies: How could you truly share in their spiritual station unless you have also faced trials for the sake of the same cause?” (ChatGPT) #50

- We should hasten towards calamity and His providence even as outwardly it is fire and vengeance, for inwardly this is light and mercy transforming us into an eternal light and an immortal spirit. #51

Sequence: Detachment #52-57

- Meet both prosperity and abasement with the same calm heart (equanimity), not letting such external conditions control your inner state (detachment). [reminiscent of the Stoic idea of apatheia & the Buddhist concept of equanimity]. (with help from ChatGPT) #52

- Do not be sad about poverty or fear abasement for in time the Lord of wealth will visit you and glory will rest on you [in His kingdom]. #53

- If you seek the Kingdom and everlasting life “forsake this mortal and fleeing sovereignty”. [Mortal and fleeing sovereignty = the world and/or worldly sovereignty (worldly power, wealth, fame, social status, control)?] “This *Hidden Word* is about choosing where to anchor your heart — in the temporary or in the eternal.” ChatGPT #54

- This world is here to test us. Do not be attached to this world for with fire He tests the gold and with gold He tests His servants. [“Heat burns away impurities so that only the pure metal remains.” “The world is a proving ground for the soul” (Chat GPT)]. Prove yourself! #55

- “Thou dost wish for gold and I desire thy freedom from it”. God recognizes our wealth in our sanctity from material wealth. [crazy wisdom] To His knowledge we oppose our fancy about what constitutes wealth. #56

- The wealth you have is the wealth God has bestowed upon you. Therefore, this is the wealth of God. As you bestow His wealth over the poor so you store up for yourself eternal treasures in heaven [access to spiritual qualities – love, beauty, knowledge, joy etc. - and the Divine]. But “to offer up thy soul is a more glorious thing”. By alluding to the station of true poverty and absolute nothingness and to baqá/tawhīd this HW seems to relate to the

7th Valley in *The Seven Valleys* and to the 4th Valley in *The Four Valleys*.
Notice there is crazy/unconventional wisdom here too.

#57

This sequence continues the theme of HW57 but by bringing it in explicit focus: the specific injunction now is to attain the station of tawhīd/baqá/reunion with the Divine.

#58-64

- “The temple of being [human consciousness?] is My Throne”.
“Cleanse it of all things” so there I may be established and abide.

#58

- Your heart (that is, your consciousness) is My home, the seat of My revelation. “Sanctify it for My descent”. [When you acquire divine qualities, you become the self-manifestation of God.]

#59

- “Rúmi writes of this episode:
*The hand of Moses was spreading from his bosom a radiance that surpassed the moon in the sky,
Saying (implicitly), ‘That which thou wert seeking from the terrible celestial sphere hath uprisen, O Moses, from thy own bosom,
In order that thou mayst know that the lofty heavens are the reflexion of the perceptive (rational) faculties of Man.’*”¹¹
The white and shining hand of Moses represents divine power (“celestial dominion”), divine knowledge and divine guidance.
“Bahá’u’lláh exhorts the ‘Son of Man’ (*ibn al-insán*, human beings collectively) to mystically repeat the miracle of Moses’ snow-white hand. By putting his ‘hand’ into the divine ‘bosom’ (*jayb*), man may experience the radiant epiphany of God from his own bosom.”
(Lambden, cited in Savi)¹²

#60

- “Ascend unto My heaven, that thou mayest obtain the joy of reunion” and “quaff the peerless wine”. “Reunion” is likely a reference to tawhīd. The wine likely represents the love of God and the knowledge of God (water of life); a “symbol of the Revealed Word”¹³, but also, of immortality/eternal life and divine ecstasy as reunion with God. The implied cup-bearer is an allusion “to the Manifestation of God Who pours the wine of His quickening teachings for His lovers, so that they may be quickened by its powers”.¹⁴

#61

- The Sun of Revelation is in its highest point, shining upon us with the light of God – beauty, revelation, enlightenment, reunion, and immortality. However, for many a day we have been fast asleep, busying ourselves with “fancies and idle imaginings”. How much longer will we remain asleep? We are not recognizing the Manifestation or His Revelation because we are busy with our own fancies. This is an issue of where our attention or

¹¹ Savi, Julio. *Towards the Summit of Reality: An Introduction to the Study of Bahá’u’lláh’s Seven Valleys and Four Valleys*. George Ronald, 2008, p.184.

¹² Idem, p.186.

¹³ Idem, pp.127-128.

¹⁴ Idem, p.132.

consciousness is being directed.

#62

- The Burning Bush or Primal Will in the station of Lāhūt is bringing you enlightenment. If you can free yourself from the veils of idle fancies and enter My court, you may/will be fit to attain everlasting life and to become worthy of meeting Me (Primal Will). Then, neither death, nor weariness or trouble [no more tests?] will visit thee. Again, this is a reference to tawhīd/reunion with God (the ultimate goal) as described in the Fourth Valley of *The Four Valleys*. Meeting God (as Primal Will) is possible.

#63

- Embrace the unity with God (tawhīd) and eternal life God has prepared for you so that you may become the revelation of God's everlasting being for all eternity. [Does that mean that such a soul would become the manifestation/exemplar of such virtues as Love in other realms, for all time?]

#64

Sequence: Divine Hiddenness and self-censorship/veiling as grace. At this point, the Hidden Words turn to another theme: that God is infinitely more exalted, glorious and majestic than we can ever conceive or try to understand. In truth, the human heart can only contain God insofar as He reveals Himself in a limited self-manifestation suited to our capacity—never in the fullness of His Essence or true nature.

God humbles Himself—emptying and limiting His glory (humbles Himself, humiliates Himself, undergoes kenosis, limits Himself)—in order to communicate with us at our level of understanding. This self-limitation is first enacted by God, then by the Primal Will, and then again by the human aspect of the Manifestation, creating multiple layers of divine self-veiling and self-censorship across different levels of reality.

#65-67

- God is infinitely more majestic and glorious than we can ever conceive or try to understand. As a sign of His loving-kindness and mercy to us God has preserved His true reality hidden, enabling us instead to operate with such limited concepts as His “majesty” and “glory” as a token of His grace (for these are categories that only revert to ourselves and not adequate for His depiction).

#65

- You will struggle to love Me and mention Me as minds cannot grasp Me nor hearts contain Me. Here is a paradox that reinforces this point: “A pure heart is as a mirror; cleanse it with the burnish of love and severance from all save God, that the true sun may shine therein and the eternal morning dawn. Then will thou clearly see the meaning of ‘Earth and heaven cannot contain Me; what alone can contain Me is the heart of him that believeth in Me.’” (The Seven Valleys, para. 44)

#66

- “All that I have revealed unto thee ... hath been in accordance with thy capacity and understanding, not with My state and the melody of My voice”. [Not only the level of knowledge but the style too would differ otherwise?]

#67

Switch to the principle of “the oneness of mankind” in HW68. From now on there are no more ‘sequences’ on can identify, just individual Hidden Words.

- We have “created you from the same dust” (that is, “from one same substance”) so “that no one should exalt himself over the other” and so that “by your deeds and action” you would be “even as one soul” (the principle of the oneness of humankind as a prerequisite for spiritual development, divine knowledge, and eternal life).

#68

- Guard “the pearls of My mysteries and the gems of My knowledge” “from the strangers amidst My servants” [Azalis? etc.] and “from the ungodly amongst My people” [opponents of the Faith?]. This HW links to the Persian HW36 which completes it.

#69

- Know that I have “fully revealed to thee My word” and “have desired for thee that which I have desired for My Self”. Be content and “thankful unto Me”. Although this marks only the close of the Arabic section, and *The Hidden Words* is among Bahá’u’lláh’s earlier works, there is nonetheless a sense of completeness in the Revelation conveyed here, either in terms of the content of the Revelation or its level of intensity. It suggests that a mission has been brought to fulfilment—that the bounty of God has been fully unveiled, that the Manifestation of God has done everything possible to assist us reach our divine station of reunion with God in this life or the next. One possible explanation is that the opening paragraph of the *Arabic Hidden Words* refers solely to the Arabic section of the book. In this view, only the *Arabic Hidden Words* would serve as a summary of “what has been revealed unto the Prophets of old,” while the *Persian Hidden Words* would represent a more direct expression of Bahá’u’lláh’s own, distinct revelation. Alternatively, the same statement might allude to Bahá’u’lláh’s having opened a clear path to God and to the recognition of His Manifestation.¹⁵

#70

- Write all that I have revealed to you with the ink of knowledge upon the tablet of your consciousness. [?] If that is not in your power, then write it with the ink of love through the actions in your life. [?] If this you cannot do either, then write with the ink of martyrdom in My path. “Sweeter indeed is this to Me than all else, that its light may endure for ever”. This HW seems to rehearse the sequence of the Valleys of 1) knowledge (mar’ifah, personal, intuitive, inner knowledge that incorporates rational knowledge and the constant remembrance of God = teaching & promoting the teachings), 2) love (of the Manifestation, expressing His commandments in action) and 3) mystic union (tawhīd/reunion, complete selflessness, seeing with the eye of God, hearing with His ear, speaking with the Word of God) in *The Four Valleys*.

#71

¹⁵ This paragraph has been partially rephrased with the aid of ChatGPT and then re-edited.

Notes:

1. In my estimation, the most unusual (otherworldly) Arabic Hidden Words are HW 32-34 and HW64 & HW46.

2. I believe that there is a clear logic in the sequencing or order of these Arabic Hidden Words and that this is most clearly showing in the fact that some Hidden Words are transitional, anticipating and summarizing in more abstract terms a series of successive (but more specific) Hidden Words or acting as the end of one sequence and the beginning of another. I would, therefore, argue that their arrangement has been done with great care. That said, the original manuscript suggests that the Hidden Words were recorded in a manner that avoids assigning them any particular order or sequence. Their current arrangement was made by Mulla Zaynu'l-'Abidin—honored by Bahá'u'lláh with the title Zaynu'l-Muqarrabín ('The Ornament of the Near Ones')—who served as one of His secretaries. Here is how Moojan Momen¹⁶ explains this:

"This work is reported to have been dictated by Bahā'u'llāh over a period of time as he walked along the banks of the Tigris River during his exile in Baghdad. The original manuscript exists, and a facsimile is on display in the Mansion of Bahji, near 'Akkā in Israel. This manuscript shows that the individual sections were written down randomly on a large piece of paper. They were organized in the present order by Mollā Zayn-al-'Ābedin Najafābādi, known to Bahais as Zayn-al-Muqarrabin, one of Bahā'-Allāh's secretaries, under Bahā'-Allāh's instructions (Ma'ani, I, pp. 1-2; Shoghi Effendi, p. 140). The title of the work was given to it by Bahā'-Allāh, ...".

3. Maybe the Arabic Hidden Words could be summarized as "I am the one who loves you and I am who you love, the only love that can satisfy you in the whole universe". The essence of all religions is that God is extending an act of love to man waiting for a response – it is the most amazing of things to see the lengths to which this call of love is manifested, the claims and demands it makes and so on (Adib Taherzadeh and Nader Saiedi have described this dynamic as that of the Covenant – which, of course, seems accurate). In that sense, the entire content and structure of the Hidden Words is not only about the Covenant but also about love, in my estimation. Equally, it is my perception that the theme of the Covenant shines through more in the Persian Hidden Words.

4. One could also say that the structure and sequence of the Arabic Hidden Words follow in general lines the arc of descent and ascent, with emphasis being placed on elevating the bird of the human soul from the realm of Nasut to Malakut or higher. Thus, Taherzadeh's words seem to me a nearly perfect summary of the Arabic Hidden Words: *"The chief aim of Bahá'u'lláh in The Hidden Words is to detach man from this mortal world and to protect his soul from its greatest enemy, himself. The Hidden Words provides a means by which, in the terms of the above analogy, the bird of the human heart can cleanse its wings from the defilement of this world and resume its flight into the realm of God."*

5. The second Hidden Word seems to suggest that the reader should make their own summaries of such works, rather than relying on those of others.

6. I have found it difficult to develop a basic understanding of the *Hidden Words* without first reading Bahá'u'lláh's earlier works in chronological order and relating them to both literary analysis and the Sufi mystical-philosophical tradition. The text is so richly poetic and imbued with symbols from Islamic mysticism that a literary approach, combined with a basic familiarity with Sufi concepts, becomes essential for a basic interpretation. This is so because many if not most of the key concepts and terms (and the entire body of metaphors and symbols) derive from Sufi and Islamic philosophy and poetry ("comb" for example) – which has led me to accept that for decades I have been devaluing

¹⁶ Moojan Momen. 'KALEMĀT-E MAKNUNA'. *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kalamat-e-maknuna/>. Accessed 18 Aug. 2025.

the Islamic cultural substrate needed for understanding such works, not getting very far as a result. As such, I now view an introduction to Sufi and Islamic philosophy and poetry as necessarily prior to Bahá'í education and the study of the Bahá'í writings.¹⁷

¹⁷ See, for example, Toshihiko Izutsu. *Toshihiko Izutsu Sufism And Taoism*. 1984. *Internet Archive*, <http://archive.org/details/ToshihikoIzutsuSufismAndTaoism>.