

# Qaṣídiy-i-Izz-i- Varqá'íyyih (Ode of the Dove)

REVEALED BY BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

A Provisional Translation by  
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## INTRODUCTION

The history of when and how this poem by Bahá'u'lláh came about is extremely interesting, but rather than rehearse it ourselves, we have simply included Shoghi Effendi's own description from *God Passes By*. However, there are a couple of important points for the reader's attention.

First, the elaborate notes at the end of the poem are by Bahá'u'lláh and we have simply translated them as faithfully as we could. Needless to say, the reader would do well to examine these carefully inasmuch as they are obviously authoritative insights into both particular allusions and the overall intent of this remarkable work.

Second, rather than discussing here how this poem incorporates one of Bahá'u'lláh's most significant utilizations of the allegorical or symbolic portrayals of the Ḥúríyyih (the Maid of Heaven), we have included that discussion in our article "Bahá'u'lláh's Symbolic Use of the Veiled Ḥúríyyih." Nevertheless, the reader should

appreciate from the outset that the dialogue portrayed in this beautiful poem is, as Bahá'u'lláh Himself notes, not to be taken literally but, rather, as a figurative or symbolic representation of an internal reflection by Bahá'u'lláh as He converses with the Holy Spirit that dwells within Him and speaks through Him.

We have, as much as possible, translated the poem line for line and word for word, though we have taken some liberties when it has been necessary to convey accurately the tone, the tenor, and the sometimes allusive and elusive meaning underlying the literal words and phrases. As with any translation of poetry from one language to another—especially languages that belong to entirely different family of languages as, in our case, from Arabic to English—it is impossible to convey most of the exquisitely beautiful sound effects, one of the central features of poetry. But we have attempted to convey the sense and feel of the rhyme, line, and meter.

John S Hatcher, Amrollah Hemmat,  
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## COMMENTS BY SHOGHI EFFENDI

"Amazed by the profundity of His insight and the compass of His understanding, they [the students and teachers at the seminary in Sulaymaniyyih] were impelled to seek from Him what they considered to be a conclusive and final evidence of the unique power and knowledge which He now appeared in their eyes to possess. 'No one among the mystics, the wise, and the learned,'

they claimed, while requesting this further favor from Him, 'has hitherto proved himself capable of writing a poem in a rhyme and meter identical with that of the longer of the two odes, entitled *Qasidiy-i-Ta'íyyih* composed by Ibn-i-Farid. We beg you to write for us a poem in that same meter and rhyme.' This request was complied with, and no less than two thousand verses, in exactly the manner they had specified, were dictated by Him, out of which He selected one hundred and twenty-seven, which He permitted them to keep, deeming the subject matter of the rest premature and unsuitable to the needs of the times. It is these same one hundred and twenty-seven verses that constitute the *Qasidiy-i-Varqá'íyyih*, so familiar to, and widely circulated amongst, His Arabic speaking followers.

Such was their reaction to this marvelous demonstration of the sagacity and genius of Bahá'u'lláh that they unanimously acknowledged every single verse of that poem to be endowed with a force, beauty and power far surpassing anything contained in either the major or minor odes composed by that celebrated poet.

This episode, by far the most outstanding among the events that transpired during the two years of Bahá'u'lláh's absence from Baghdad, immensely stimulated the interest with which an increasing number of the ulamas, the scholars, the shaykhs, the doctors, the holy men and princes who had congregated in the seminaries of Sulaymáníyyih and Kirkuk, were now

following His daily activities. Through His numerous discourses and epistles He disclosed new vistas to their eyes, resolved the perplexities that agitated their minds, unfolded the inner meaning of many hitherto obscure passages in the writings of various commentators, poets and theologians, of which they had remained unaware, and reconciled the seemingly contradictory assertions which abounded in these dissertations, poems and treatises" (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, 122–24).

# Ode of the Dove

Concerning the Essence of the Holy Spirit:  
Private not public praise of the Beloved

He is the Exalted, the Most Glorious

1

The light from such a countenance so attracted me;  
its brightness outshone every bright sun,

2

as if the effulgence of the sun had become resplendent by the light of Her beauty  
as it shone forth among the planets and glistened.

3

The musk of Amá<sup>1</sup> was released through Her joy!  
From Her loftiness did the station of Exaltation become exalted!

4

At Her call the trumpet of Resurrection Day sounded!  
Her breeze swept away the shadows of clouds,

5

With Her dazzling brilliance, the Túr of eternity appeared!  
Through Her radiance the radiance of Bahá shone forth!

6

From Her West, the sun of the Manifestation became manifest!  
From Her East, the full moon of moons<sup>2</sup> became eclipsed,

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1 See note 8 in *The Call of the Divine Beloved*, 105, which quotes from a tablet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to explain this allusion in full. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá states: “Amá’ is defined as an extremely thin and subtle cloud, seen and then not seen. For shouldst thou gaze with the utmost care, thou wouldst discern something, but as soon as thou dost look again, it ceaseth to be seen. For this reason, in the usage of mystics who seek after truth, ‘Amá’ signifieth the Universal Reality without individuations as such, for these individuations exist in the mode of uncompounded simplicity and oneness and are not differentiated from the Divine Essence.”

2 Compare with the passage: “Thus, it hath become evident that the terms ‘sun,’ ‘moon,’ and ‘stars’ primarily signify the Prophets of God, the saints, and their companions, those Luminaries, the light of Whose knowledge hath shed illumination upon the worlds of

7

and from Her hair wafted the scent of pure Divinity,  
 and by glancing at Her face, the eyes of Beauty became enlightened.

8

Indeed, the beam from Her face guided the face of Guidance.  
 The fire from Her face purified the soul of Moses.

9

The most exalted breasts turned to be pierced by arrows from Her eyes.  
 The head of Existence stretched forth its neck toward the noose of Her tresses.

10

And mine utmost longing is (to be) wherever Her feet have passed,  
 And the throne of Amá is the lowly earth she trod.

11

In every eye my tears were shed to attain reunion with Her,  
 and I burned in every fire because of my separation.

12

I spread myself out far and wide with the fondest wish  
 that She might tread upon my heart.

13

In every face I sought (a semblance of) reunion with Her.  
 On every plain I inscribed in the sand a sign of nearness.

14

And whenever I rushed toward reunion with Her light,  
 after attaining nearness, I was wounded by the arrow of remoteness.

15

And if I stretched forth my beseeching hands for reunion with Her,  
 with sword she replied, "This shall be the recompense for My lovers!"

16

And my sole yearning hath been but to hold fast,  
 while Her relentless intent remaineth but to sever my grasp.

17

I said, "May my soul and all bestowed on me be but a sacrifice for our reunion!  
Have mercy on me and disclose not my shame!

18

"And bestow upon me as a sign of Thy love  
a reunion that will endure forever, even to eternity!

19

"I swear by the joy of manifestation, by the appearance of which the whole of creation  
was illumined and, in truth, mine own resurrection was consummated,

20

"I swear by Hussayn's sorrow, by reason of which the sadness of Existence  
brought forth mine own perfection into the world of being,

21

"that Thou art are the desire of my heart and the beloved of mine inmost self,  
the custodian of my soul, and the source of my light and life!

22

"Bestow upon me the victory of reunion after this separation!  
Bestow upon me the delight of companionship after all my suffering!

23

"The flame of every fire was ignited by my burning,  
and the manifest realm was illumined by my sighs.

24

"The heat from my craving has dried up the ocean of Amá,  
and the stream of Exaltation itself cannot quench any portion of my thirst.

25

"All the blood I witnessed in every land  
was but a token of the blood trickling from mine eyes.

26

"And compared to my tears, the vast ocean is merely a drop,  
and compared to my burning, the flame Khalil<sup>3</sup> endured was less than a spark.

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3 Khalil is Abraham and the verse alludes to Abraham's survival in the fire. See Qur'an 21:66–69.

27

“And from my sadness, the tumultuous sea of happiness became stilled,  
and from mine anguish did springs of afflictions stream forth.

28

“My splendor became shrouded, my illumination ensconced,  
and my light extinguished by the haughtiness of the scoffer.

29

“My bones are now brittle, my body worn to a sigh,  
and my heart shriveled from the incessant flame of my yearning.

30

“My ardor for Thee hath crushed me! My love for Thee hath sifted me into dust,  
and separation from Thee hath melted me, yet reunion with Thee  
remaineth my desire,

31

“and the mystery of my mourning cleft the heavens asunder,  
and mine inmost torment shattered to dust the ground of my heart,<sup>4</sup>

32

“and the tears from mine eyes recount my heart's ardor,  
and my jaundiced face signifieth the flame of mine inmost self.

33

“Each night I grieve from rebukes the scoffers have hurled!  
Each day in tears I pray and plead for assistance!

34

“I have attained such a state of bitter abasement  
that tongues falter attempting to recount it.

35

“Because of my heart's tribulation, in every chamber of Paradise  
the húrís have adorned themselves in robes of black.

36

“I became sorrowful from the sadness I found in every heart,  
and every happiness caused me but sorrow.”

---

4 Compare Qur'án 77: 9-10.

37

Suddenly, from behind me, Her voice said, "Hush!  
Cease thy lamenting about all thou hast endured!

38

"Countless Husayns like thee are enthralled with Me!  
Numberless are the 'Alís like thee amongst My lovers!

39

"Numerous are the lovers who occupy a station loftier than thine!  
I have chosen countless pure ones like thee,

40

"lovers who lamented at every moment, yet never attained  
the light of reunion to enjoy even a single glance from Me!

41

"Compared to My dawning, the midday sun is like a star,  
and compared to the light from My appearance, the light of the world is  
but a flicker.

42

"Compared to the splendor of My mystery, the mystery of existence is but an ant.  
The igniting fire of My love made all enkindlement like a spark.

43

"By My craft, the nature<sup>5</sup> and form of the revelation of the Beloved was manifest,<sup>6</sup>  
and by My palm was the splendor of Moses' palm made luminous.<sup>7</sup>

44

"And the essence of Cause itself derived from the manifestation of My Cause,  
and the justice of Command derived from the justice of My wisdom.

45

"And the ebullition of the ocean was formed by the vibration of Mine inmost  
being,  
and the Holy Spirit wafted (into the world) from the light of My glory,

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5 Qur'án 30:30.

6 Qur'án 30:30; 10:105.

7 Qur'án 20:22.

46

“and from but a glimpse of Me did the Moses of eternity swoon,<sup>8</sup>  
and from the force of a flash of My light did Túr become crushed.

47

“By the resurrecting power of My Cause did souls gather at Judgment Day!  
From the trumpeting of My spirit did the dried bones become revived,<sup>9</sup>

48

“and the soul of Cause circumambulated the temple of Its command;  
indeed, the spirit of that temple became established by the light of My  
countenance,

49

“and the kingdom of exalted knowledge contained in ‘B’ is naught but a secret,  
and secretly did ‘B’ prostrate itself before My Point.<sup>10</sup>

50

“All guidance hath issued forth from the dawn of My command,  
and all exaltation ascended from My descent.

51

“Through My benevolence the birds sing delightful songs,  
and through My melody the humming of helpless bees resounds.

52

“Though vain imaginings thou didst devise a fountain of your own,  
and for the love of a stranger you imbibed from a spring other than mine.

53

“Thou didst bring attributes which thou didst associate with Me,  
and thou didst attribute names to me unbecoming My true self.

54

“Thou didst devise whatever essence thou imagined and attributed it to Me!  
Such invention is limiting, and assigning limitations to Me is the greatest  
error of all.

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8 Qur’án 7:143.

9 Qur’án 36:78–79, and compare Ezekiel 37:1-14.

10 The letter “B”; See Bahá’u’lláh’s note at end of poem.



55

“Thou didst think to attain reunion with Me through thine own ingenuity. Alas, it cannot be!

A covenant exists between us in which thou art treated faithfully only if thou art faithful,

56

“imbibing from every cup the tribulations of the world  
and watering the river of anger with thine own life’s blood,

57

“and abandoning all hope for the slightest respite,  
and repressing all desire for the things of this world,

58

“(and) shedding the heart’s blood is obligatory in the religion of Love,  
and burning of the heart for love is the first requirement of My Covenant,

59

“(and) sleepless nights, because people will sting (thee) like scorpions,  
and each day (will there be), the harangue of incessant reproach,

60

“but by the standards of Faith, deadly poison is like a refreshing drink,  
and according to My creed, destiny’s rage is like affection.

61

“Therefore, abandon this claim of love, or else be content with whatever transpires!  
Such is the rule established for those who would tread My path!”

62

Then ardently I called to Her, “O My Beloved!  
“My fondest wish and my heart’s desire,

63

“now am I truly prepared to endure whatsoever Thou dost wish through Thy  
majesty and might!  
Now will I cherish whatsoever Thou hast decreed for me!

64

“Verily, I now desire only what is pleasing to Thee,  
and truly my only longing is for whatever Thou hast have ordained.

65

“Here is my chest to welcome the arrows of Thy sovereign might!  
 Here is my body, ready to receive slashes from Thy fierce swords!

66

“Thy fire is my light, and Thine anger my fond desire!  
 Thy attack is my solace, and Thy command my highest wish!

67

“Behold now the tears in mine eyes, how plentifully they flow!  
 Then witness how every joy in my heart hath been annihilated!

68

“Each day everyone attacked me with arrows!  
 Each night was I slain by swords of rejection!

69

“In each verse I read was a book blaspheming me!  
 Each moment I encountered censure from everyone!

70

“Every moment I was mocked by the accusation of (being) idolatrous.  
 Every moment I was struck by the arrow of rejection,

71

“as if the tribulations of the universe had descended upon my soul,  
 as if every blade of anger had been sharpened for my neck alone.

72

“Jacob’s grief and Joseph’s confinement,  
 Job’s afflictions and Abraham’s fire,

73

“Adam’s regret and Jonah’s fleeing,<sup>11</sup>  
 and David’s bewailing and Noah’s lamentation,

74

“and Eve’s separation and Mary’s burning sorrow,  
 and Isaiah’s affliction and Zachariah’s anguish—

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11 Jonah’s flight to the ship. See Qur’án 37:139–44.

75

“all that occurred to each of these is but a drop of my sorrow,  
and truly, all other adversity was caused by the dripping of my anguish.

76

“Now, behold me—alone, wandering about this remote region!  
And now, witness my companionship with the wild beasts in this far desert.

77

“And from the tears of my eyes do waters gush forth from the heavens,  
and from tapping my heart, springs gushed forth and joined together as  
decreed.

78

“And from the force of my sorrow was the essence of Eternity rent asunder,  
and from the flame of my distress did the throne of Exaltation crumble  
and perish.

79

“All the redness of existence came from the redness of my heart’s blood!  
Tears flowing from my eyes caused every twig in existence to sprout.

80

“For me, the bitterness of adversity suffered in the path of Thy love is sweet,  
while the sweetness of this life from any other source is bitter.

81

“On my neck, scars from shackles of iron appeared.  
On my feet remain the marks from links of chain.

82

“Not a day passed that I was not seared  
indirectly by the insinuations of poems or directly by rebukes in prose.

83

“Indeed, my soul was uprooted and my heart dissolved,  
and indeed, my inner being boiled from the fervor of my distress.

84

“I remained without spirit, soul, or heart!  
That I survived at all is my greatest astonishment.

85

“Verily, exaltation of all that lies in my heart is cause for what I have been made to endure.

Oh, would that whatever exalted my nature had never existed to begin with!<sup>12</sup>

86

“Thus it was that adversity assaulted me from every direction such that at every moment I was afflicted by yet another ordeal.

87

“In solitude I ascended to the apex of Unity!  
In my inmost heart I attained complete reunion.

88

“Though I am only able to describe Thee in terms of what mine own eyes have beheld,

Thine own vision can only discern evidence available to (Thine) All-Perceiving eyes.<sup>13</sup>

89

“If my understanding was limited, the limitation was imposed by Thee, and if I dared to portray Thee, my portrayal derived solely from Thee.

90

“And from my own dejection did the gloom of night emerge, and from the joy in my heart did the light of day achieve its brilliance.

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12 This is an incredibly poignant statement. In other occasions, Bahá'u'lláh said that, were it left to Him, He would not have manifested Himself, but it was only the will of God that compelled Him to continue: “By God besides Whom there is none other God!” is His emphatic assertion to Shaykh Sultan, as reported by Nabil in his narrative, “But for My recognition of the fact that the blessed Cause of the Primal Point was on the verge of being completely obliterated, and all the sacred blood poured out in the path of God would have been shed in vain, I would in no wise have consented to return to the people of the Bayan, and would have abandoned them to the worship of the idols their imaginations had fashioned” (Shoghi Effendi 126).

13 Compare “No vision can grasp Him, but His grasp is over all vision: He is above all comprehension, yet is acquainted with all things” (Qur’án 6:103), or the translation by Shoghi Effendi of Bahá'u'lláh's allusion to this same verse: “No vision taketh in Him, but He taketh in all vision; He is the Subtile, the All-Perceiving” (Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitáb-i-Íqán* ¶104).

91

“It matters not that for now I have been rejected;  
I became entirely jubilant the day I was awakened!<sup>14</sup>”

92

“By the light of His friendship, I enjoyed the company of holiness,  
and I immigrated from the land of Tá<sup>15</sup> during the time of my remoteness.

93

“And through the illumination of my inner being, I attained belief in the Light,  
and I ascended (to realm of) spirit through the joy of mine own heart.

94

“I call on thee, O Spirit of life, to abandon this self  
that hath become emptied of all life.

95

“Then, O Spirit of Amá, descend from Thy throne on high,  
for there is no greatness remaining for Thee in my abject station.

96

“O my heart, I am calling out to thee! Depart!  
There is no glory for thee in this contemptible realm.

97

“And O my patience, be reconciled with all the afflictions thou hast endured  
for the contentment of thy Beloved, whether in comfort or in adversity!”

98

With heavenly affection She called to me and said, “Calm thyself!  
“Verily, I have become aware of all that thou hast recounted.

99

“Relinquish all thou hast understood before—and thence worshipped.  
Indeed, for Me (even) idolatry is but a recognition of the unity of God.

100

“In My sight the most glorious glory of Túr is abject,  
and to Me the most luminous beam of light is but darkness.

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14 Compare with, “I was asleep on My couch, when lo, the Breeze of God wafting over Me roused Me from My slumber” (Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings* 41:1).

15 Tehran.

101

“Thy verses depicting Me are accurate, but appropriate only to a mere vassal!  
 Thy verses of adoration are apt, but with the competence of a mere servant!

102

“And certainly I have eternally existed in an immaculate state,  
 and certainly I have been infinitely stainless.

103

“In My sight, so many of the just ones were cruel,  
 even as so many of the knowledgeable ones were ignorant.

104

“In My sight, so many of the enduring ones were evanescent,  
 even as to Me, many a mystic knower knew not a single letter.

105

“In My sight, so many suppliants were but ruffians,  
 and many who prostrated themselves never attained a moment’s humility.

106

“All the heavenly verses are established in the realm of My essence,  
 and all the luminous scriptures descended from My Book.

107

“By a mere particle of Mine, the enveloping sun was darkened,<sup>16</sup>  
 and from but a drop of Mine, the ocean of existence was formed.

108

“All the joyous melodies created by the peoples of the earth  
 are to Me no more than the cry of an ant or the buzz of a bee.

109

“From the ecstasy of (My) joy, all minds became joyous!  
 From the song of My spirit all souls acquired life.

110

“By the droplets of My command did all the adored ones become lords,  
 and at its trickling did every lord attain lordship.

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16 See Qur’án 81:1.

111

“Indeed, the land of the spirit was trod in obedience to My command,  
and verily, the kingdom of Túr became the place where I trod.

112

“Because of My light, the star of manifestation shone forth,  
and because of My gladness the sun of happiness bestowed its splendor.

113

“Every single verse of God—those illumined signs of revelation—  
as well as the places of the decent of revealed verses, the dawning places  
of holiness,

114

“the essence of all reflection—those jewels of thought,  
those ornaments of enlightenment, that manifestation of all wisdom—

115

“indeed, the command that instigated all of these derived from My single  
command ‘Be!’<sup>17</sup>  
And from the kindness of My heart was every new thing generated.

116

“When thou turned away from My face, thou didst think thou hadst turned  
towards it,  
and thou didst fly to the water of vain imaginings pouring from the  
fountain of illusion.

117

“Because thou didst not secure thyself in the concealed Divine Light  
That I had implanted within thee, thou didst squander away all that I  
created.

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17 “Shoghi Effendi, in letters written on his behalf, has explained the significance of the ‘letters B and E’. They constitute the word ‘Be’, which, he states, ‘means the creative Power of God Who through His command causes all things to come into being’ and ‘the power of the Manifestation of God, His great spiritual creative force’. The imperative ‘Be’ in the original Arabic is the word ‘kun’, consisting of the two letters ‘kaf’ and ‘nun’. They have been translated by Shoghi Effendi in the above manner. This word has been used in the Qur’án as God’s bidding calling creation into being” (in Bahá’u’lláh, *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* note 188).

118

“Hold fast to the cord of the Cause in its conspicuous appearance!  
Recognize the Face of Light in its concealment!

119

“Then, free from allusions, rend asunder the veil of nearness  
that thou mayest behold directly the Sanctified Countenance within thyself!

120

“Then become serene because the powers of the kingdom have become agitated!  
Then become patient because the hidden Eyes of Divinity have shed tears!

121

“And within thee have I concealed a truth that transcends all knowledge.  
Even every enlightened mind is unable to comprehend it!

122

“Relish the companionship of that holy mystery concealed within thee!  
If thou art trustworthy, then disclose it not.

123

“If thou removest the veil from the countenance of what thou hast observed,  
all existence will vanish in the twinkling of an eye.”<sup>18</sup>

124

In this manner was the command issued from the Kingdom of Grandeur!  
From this command emanated the mystery of power!

125

Blessed are those who have attained loyalty and steadfastness!  
Blessed are those who have enlisted in this new Cause!

126

Blessed are the lovers who have shed their life's blood!  
Blessed are the confidants who have held fast the cord of my loving kindness.

127

Blessed are the chaste ones because they have hastened  
from every quarter to enter the shade of my Sovereignty.

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18 See Bahá'u'lláh: “If the veil were lifted, and the full glory of the station of those that have turned wholly towards God, and have, in their love for Him, renounced the world, were made manifest, the entire creation would be dumbfounded” (*Gleanings* 93:15).



NOTES FOR "ODE OF THE DOVE"

WRITTEN BY BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

*Line 4*

This is a reference to the mountains moving, moving even as the clouds do. As God has said, "You see the mountains, and you assume they are stable, yet they move like clouds. These are the signs of the Day of Resurrection and what must transpire in that Day."<sup>19</sup>

*Line 7*

Because of the pure breezes that wafted from her hair, the fragrance of glory and exaltation, together with the musk of grace and glory, is blowing from the left of the Divine Paradise ferrying delight. The musk of mercy and glory is (likewise) moving from the left of the Sublime Paradise proffering the blessings with the right hand of the dwellers of the garden of the Eternal King. By inhaling the diffusion of its delightful fragrances and by quaffing the wondrous cup of the immortal, new and incomparable wine, the dust and the moldering bones of the essences of existence may perhaps become blessed with eternal and everlasting life and become thereby the object of glory. By observing her countenance, the eyes of beauty itself—of which the sun is but the most meager sign—also became illumined, lustrous, and bright. Thus is God, her creator, sanctified beyond (the praise of men) or the allusion of words.

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19 Qur'án 27:88.

*Line 8*

When Moses sanctified and purified the feet of His divine reality, which were entrusted to His human temple, from the "sandals of vain imaginings," and then withdrew the hand of divine power from the robe of Benevolence covering the bosom of Grandeur, He entered the holy, sanctified, and blessed desert of the heart, which is naught but the place of the throne of Splendor of the Eternal and the throne of exaltation and the attributes of Sovereignty. And when he reached the land of *Túr*,<sup>20</sup> which had descended from the right side of the blessed point of light, He inhaled and smelled the pure fragrance of the spirit from the Eternal East, and perceived from every direction the lights of His holiness, the Everlasting King.

After the unveiling of the lamp of "I am," He became inflamed and ignited by the heat of the fragrance of the Divine love and by the sparks from the flames of the fire of Oneness in the lamp of His heart. And from the wine of reunion with the countenance of the Incomparable Lord and the pure wine of His Eternal Holiness, He entered the desert of eternal sobriety after the annihilation of the station of contradictions.

And by means of the ecstasy of His eagerness for reunion, He became aware of the city of insatiable delights. Whereupon He entered that city whose

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20 The land of *Túr* refers to Sinai—*Túr* is mentioned in the Qur'án (see, for example, 19:52) in reference to Mount Sinai where Moses received His Revelation from God.

people were oblivious (of their Lord) when He became a companion of the Ancient Flame of God and became illumined with the light of the Almighty Lord, even as He informed the people, “*Wait! I have discovered a fire!*” (Qur’án 20:10).

When He understood and comprehended the countenance of guidance from the favors of the Ancient of Days from that Tree that belongs neither to the East nor to the West,<sup>21</sup> He was honored and urged to turn aside from the ephemeral face of distinction and turn to the eternal face of the Everlasting God. Thereupon He discovered the face of exalted and marvelous guidance from the enkindled fire that was concealed in the hearts of the heavenly (ones). That is why he uttered “*or I might discover guidance in the fire.*”<sup>22</sup>

Understand also the intent of the blessed verse that says, “*the one who made for you a fire from a green tree.*”<sup>23</sup>

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21 “Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The parable of His Light is as if there were a Niche and within it a lamp: the Lamp enclosed in Glass: the glass as it were a brilliant star: lit from a blessed Tree, an Olive, neither of the East nor of the West, whose Oil is well-nigh luminous, though fire scarce touched it: Light upon Light! Allah doth guide whom He will to His Light. Allah doth set forth Parables for men, and Allah doth know all things” (Qur’án 24:35).

22 “Behold, he saw a fire, so he said to his family, ‘Tarry ye; I perceive a fire. Perhaps I can bring you some burning brand therefrom or find some guidance at the fire’” (Qur’án 20:10).

23 “Say, He will give them life Who

O would that a hearer could be found so that a drop from the depths of the sea of fire and this conflagration full of sparks would have been mentioned! But better it is, indeed, that this pearl remains concealed in its shell within the divine ocean and contained within the chamber of mystery so that every vacillating one becomes deprived and every confident believer becomes a pilgrim of the Kaaba of Grandeur and enters the sanctuary of Glory. Then how auspicious is it when one who consumes concern for his body with the fire of love and becomes a companion of the Essence of Spirit so that he attains the lofty grace of tranquility and becomes nourished by the exquisite blessing of honor.

And regarding all that which we have mentioned about Our Prophet—may peace be upon Him—regarding the stations of guidance and the conditions of the purification of self to the rank of Moses, the meaning concerns the manifestation of these effulgences in the world of existence. Otherwise, His Holiness (Moses) has been eternally guided by God, and will forever be (guided), even as the sun of guidance shone from Him and the moon of benevolence appeared from Him and the

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created them for the first time! For He is well-versed in every kind of creation, the same One Who produces for you fire out from the green tree. Then behold! Ye kindle therewith (your own fires)! Is not He Who created the heavens and the earth able to create the like thereof? Yea, indeed! For He is the Supreme Creator, infinite of skill and knowledge! Verily, when He intends a thing, He commands, ‘Be,’ and it is!” (Qur’án 36:79–82).

divine fire was ignited from the fire of His essence and the Eternal light was illumined by the light of His visage.

The words of His Holiness Moses themselves remove all vain imaginings. When Pharaoh asked about the man He murdered, He answered: *“I did it when, when I was among those who are astray. Then I fled from you when I feared you, and my Lord granted me a command and appointed me among those sent (by Him).”*<sup>24</sup>

Though the page has ended, the subject is endless and will remain unfinished.

*Line 9*

The word “*Sahm*” means “arrow,” and this line means that the breasts of those who are most exalted and illumined will eagerly face towards the arrows, which are the eyelashes of the Beloved. The word “*Vahq*” (from the root *viháq* meaning “lariat”) implies here that the head of the universal divine reality is stretched out before the “lariat” of Her curls so that it will become entangled in this snare. Therefore, the breast that is not pierced by arrows will be deprived, and the head that does not become entangled by this lariat will be annihilated.

Praised is He Whom we have been praising, and exalted is He beyond any words you might devise.

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24 “I did it then, when I was in error. So I fled from you (all) when I feared you; but my Lord has (since) invested me with judgment (and wisdom) and appointed me as one of the Messengers” Qur’án (26: 20–21).

*Line 11*

The first part of the line means that whichever exalted eyes mysteriously concealed in the hidden worlds, as well as those eyes that exist in the manifest realm of existence that cried and wept, regardless at what time or in what situation, did so as a result of the separation of this servant from seeing the lights of the countenance of the Beloved. This is that which can be understood from this poem, but it is a mystery that *no one knows except God, whereas we understand less than one letter of its complete meaning.*

Also delve into the meaning of the second half of the verse, so that in the realm of your existence, your enthusiasm, eagerness, ecstasy, attraction, love and ardor may become manifest and you may become ennobled thereby and attain your furthest tree and the furthest mosque, which symbolize submission to the order and command of God. *And indeed your exalted Lord is a trustworthy witness for you and Our just Vicegerent.*

*Lines 12-13*

These two verses mean that I have spread myself out by traversing every land, even into the remotest regions, from the land of heart and higher, even to endless heights hidden in veils of mystery, then (back) to the world of existence, so that perhaps I might (gain admittance) into the heart wherein lie the hidden mysteries. Truly, this is of the paramount desire of all the divine and holy hearts.

*Lines 17-18*

*Or: All that which was allotted to me from the stations of speech and meaning, and what I understood of Her from (my perspective in) the realm of names and attributes, in addition to that (wisdom) with which God vouchsafed unto me in both the hidden and the manifest realms, all this I sacrificed so that I might once encounter You and behold You (if only) with one glance. I now beg Your forgiveness, O my God, for (the meagerness) of that which I have accomplished in Your presence, but by Your grandeur, O my God, if I were not privileged to meet You, I would still desire to abide in Your presence, for naught else but this will suffice me, nor could my heart be satisfied by aught else, even were You to bestow upon me all that is in the heavens and on the earth. Thus I beseech You, O my God, by the One who beheld in Your path what no one else but Him had witnessed, that You would bestow upon your servant the signs of Your great love and the ensigns of your glorious affection so that my soul could be satisfied with that which You expect from him. Verily, You are omnipotent over all things.*

*Line 28*

The “blamer,”<sup>25</sup> that is, most of those who dwell in the realm of existence, or,

25 This term is defined by the context of the lines that follow as those who cavil at the guidance and understanding from God revealed through His Manifestations, especially those teachings that seem contradictory to inherited traditions and commonly accept interpretations of scripture.

by God, that which no eye has beheld and no ear has heard and no tongue could recount, nor any imagination conceive, like rains streaming down from the heaven of the ignorant servants. *Say, O people of the earth, content yourselves entirely with Him who manifests naught in His heart but the rays of the morn of Amá. Fear God and contend not with Him. If you find yourself unable to love Him, at least do not detest Him.* So long as God’s love becomes manifest in existence, I have no concern for aught else. We praise God that He made Us independent of their love and their mention, for He is the One Who is omnipotent over all things.

*Line 49*

1. *Through the letter “B,” existence appeared and through the Point, the worshipper and the worshiped were distinguished from one another—a reference to the hadith which says, “Whatsoever appears in the Qur’án is contained in the phrase ‘praised be Thou’”. . . unto the end of the hadith.*<sup>26</sup>

2. The meaning of “the Point” is *uncountable and incalculable and limitless and imperishable*, since the Promised Countenance and the Almighty

26 The tradition goes like this: “‘Ali said: ‘All that is in the Qur’án is contained in the first Surah. All that is in the first Surah is contained in *Bismi’llahi’r-Rahmani’r-Rahim*. All that is in *Bismi’llahi’r-Rahmani’r-Rahim* is contained in the “B” of *Bismi’llah*. All that is contained in the “B” of *Bismi’llah* is contained in the point which is beneath the ‘B.’ And I am that Point” (from Cameron, *Disconnected Letters of the Qur’an*, 62).

Word and the Divine Temple was designated as the greatest throne, the dwelling place for the descent and the abode of the Hidden Essence, with this exalted name and supreme title and this appellation being assigned solely to that same Temple, for *He Himself is My witness*.

*Line 73*

1. Qur'án 21:87

2. Both Noah and David lamented and supplicated (God for assistance). The story of Noah is well known, but the lamentation of David and the extent to which he suffered and was afflicted can be discovered only by (reading) the Psalms.

*Line 117-123*

These lines refer to the sign of splendor from which the grandeur of the rays of the morn of 'Amá,<sup>27</sup> and to the manifestations of the dawning of the sun of holiness and exaltation which, from the sun of existence and the moon of the Desired One and the Point of the Exalted One, dawned and appeared unto the realities of all existing things and unto the essence of the hearts of all created things. And from the drops of the water of divine existence, and from the drops from the spring of perpetual, crystalline water, all existing beings in the kingdom of names were granted eternal and everlasting life and were embellished and bedecked with ethereal robes, with exquisite attire, with garments perdurable and eternal.

Yet with all this bestowal, we did not become confirmed by this most great sign and by this most supreme gift and by the inextinguishable lights and by these imperishable gifts. Neither did we become steadfast through this imperishable elixir and through this inexhaustible grace, and through this perpetual honor and this eternal nobility.<sup>28</sup> We were veiled from the holy utterances of the Holy Spirit and the fragrant breezes from the nearness of the Illumined One to such a degree that were a thousand Davids in the realm of existence to sing the psalms and songs of joy in the most wondrous and revivifying melodies over the rotting bones of the servants of God, these people would yet fail to become quickened and respond inasmuch as their chance (to receive) the downpour of that mercy from the heaven of power has vanish from their midst, and all have become imprisoned in the cages of their bodies as a result of their attraction to their natural desires. They are thus unconscious and have become so preoccupied in the land of ignorance that they will never become conscious nor attain the station of union and nearness, even though this is the principal goal (of their existence).

It is the cause of incalculable grief and regret that we (did now allow

28 Interestingly in this passage Bahá'u'lláh uses the collective "we" to include Himself among humankind even though He is indicting the failure of humanity to respond adequately to God's grace. Later in the note, He shifts to the third person, referring to the negligent ones as "they."

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27 See footnote 1.

ourselves) to be guided by the very Essence of guidance, nor did we follow the Essence of eternity. Neither did we advance to the Sinai of the *Túr*<sup>29</sup> of His nearness, nor did we reject the symbols of His denial. We failed to become attracted to the ecstasies of His Holy Spirit and failed to follow the guiding lights of His glory.

Among the requisites for becoming a follower are dedication of the soul—an honor we failed to attain—and adorning (ourselves) with the robe of steadfastness—which we likewise failed to achieve.

Verily, we are seated in the midst of the Sea of Essence, even as we wait for a sip of water. And we reside under the bountiful glare of the Sun of Eternity, even as we search for a lamp. Such is the condition of this servant and all God's servants in whatever region they reside. And even if fire from the Tree becomes ignited, we fail to become enkindled, but instead we attempt to extinguish that light.

*Fortunate is he who in battle is clothed with the robe of justice.* If you become distinguished by this greatest of attributes, you will certainly attain the bounty of *Abhá*. This is that primordial cord by whose motion everything in existence moves and by whose stillness, all are still who dwell in the cities of the Adored One.

So it is that we must cleanse and burnish our hearts (to rid ourselves) of base, corrupting, and abominable imaginings so that the wondrous face of justice will raise its head from behind the

mountain of *Qáf*<sup>30</sup> and we could then perceive the transcendence of Eternal felicity and the enchantment of divine love emanating from the quivering wings of the Everlasting Dove and the approbation of the resplendent souls. We could then rest and reside on the cushion of love. This is our supreme desire, the station of *or even closer*.<sup>31</sup>

Also, in all affairs we need to avoid association with those who have turned away from God and not for a moment attempt to justify companionship with them since, according to God, wicked souls will dissolve pure souls, even as flames consume dry wood and heat dissolves the cold snow. *O, refrain from the company of those whose hearts are hard (and) impenetrable to the mention of God.*

In any case, what has been discussed by way of interpreting this verse has been devised as a boon to the insight of those who have turned away (from God) and as a mercy to the eyes of those who (are filled with) such hate

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30 *Qáf* is a legendary high mountain made of emerald that surrounds the world and is the place in which the phoenix (*'anqá*) has made its nest. In mystical literature it refers to the spiritual and divine realm in which human hearts need to abide. In the Persian Hidden Word no. 1, "the mount" is a translation of the word *Qáf*: "The first call of the Beloved is this: O mystic nightingale! Abide not but in the rose-garden of the spirit. O messenger of the Solomon of love! Seek thou no shelter except in the Sheba of the well-beloved, and O immortal phoenix! dwell not save on the mount of faithfulness."

31 See note for line 268.

that they would not perceive its meaning, but instead would interpret it according to their own desires.

These poems were uttered during a period of wandering in the region of exile in the lands of the Ottoman Empire,<sup>32</sup> and not one of the clergy or the scholars of this region objected or criticized (me), but I imagine that after this interpretation, even the wild beasts among these people will object, and in their delusion will tread the path of vain imagination and error and blindness. *Indeed, this path was taken for God's sake, whether the (people) are thankful or unappreciative and whether (they are) advancing (toward the truth) or fleeing it.*<sup>33</sup> When the seal of the container of musk is opened, everyone with a sense of smell will become aware, while everyone with rheum will be denied. But even if everyone were to become afflicted with rheum, no imperfection would beset the perfume of Eternity nor would any deceit contaminate the musk of Khatá.<sup>34</sup>

*Then praised are You, O Lord my God. I call on You at this time when traces of sadness descended on me from You, traces which, if they overflowed into the realm of existence, would cause both the hidden and the*

*manifest realms to become annihilated to such an extent that this disturbance would almost cause the soul to depart. By Your grandeur and by Your Hidden Eternity, were I to breathe (a word about my sorrow), the essence of hearts would burn, and the sky and all that is therein would be cleaved, and the earth and all that is thereon would be destroyed. Then, alas, the fragrance of loyalty would never waft from the garden of Glory, and the scent of eternity would never drift from the city of Bahá, and the dove of Amá would never sing on the crimson leaves, and the cock of Glory would never crow in the loftiest realm. By the majesty of the One Whom You made great and Him Whom You made to be the manifestation of Your divinity and the source of Your lordship, I have cannot recall the utterances and all that You taught me in the past from the wonders of Your knowledge and the plentitude of Your wisdom. Even so, I was forgotten and neglected, as if I had never been seen on the plane of existence. By the life of Ali and the persistence of Muhammad and the spirit of the Chosen One and the mercy of the Merciful One and the attraction of the Praised One and the wonderment of the Most Laudable One and the joy of the Beloved One and the glory of the Sanctified One, I cherish no desire to remain in the kingdom of existence, even for a moment, and verily, God Himself is my witness.*

32 Present-day Iraq.

33 A reference to Qur'án 76:3.

34 A city in China celebrated for its musk-producing animals: "See foes as friends; see demons as angels; give to the tyrant the same great love ye show the loyal and true, and even as gazelles from the scented cities of Khatá and Khután offer up sweet musk to the ravening wolf" ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections* 72).

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