

Tablet of Fitnih (Tribulations) and Its Recipient: Shams-i Jahán

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Abstract

One of the clearly visible characteristics of the Cause of God in the earlier stages of its development was its acceptance by a large number of eminent people from the ranks of the learned. Yet another characteristic of the Faith was that several Qájár princes as well as some government officials of higher ranks joined the Faith. However, acceptance of the Faith by princesses was rare to the extent that we can cite at this time only one who is recorded as having recognized the station of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh—Princess Sháms-i Jahán. She was a grand-daughter of Fátḥ-i-'Alí Sháh and an aunt of Náṣiri'd-Dín Sháh. The Princess became one of the believers of the Báb, met Ṭáhirih, later travelled to Baghdád and met Bahá'u'lláh, recognized His station and became one of His ardent adherents despite the fact that He had not disclosed His station. Bahá'u'lláh conferred upon her the title of: *Varaqtu'r Riḍván* (Leaf of Paradise). She was an accomplished poetess and her book of poems is now available but has not been translated into English. She used "Fitnih" meaning test and tribulations as a pseudonym in her poems. In this paper we will review her life story as recorded and reflected in her poems. Bahá'u'lláh revealed a significant Tablet in her honour, known as the "Tablet of Fitnih". The Tablet revealed in Arabic is about two to three pages in length. The salient features of this Tablet are discussed in this paper which contains a warning concerning the tribulations arising as a result of upcoming trials and pointing clearly to the difficulties which lie ahead. The trials described in the Tablet would be so pervasive that they would encompass everything, disturbing people's minds, renting asunder the heaven of knowledge and causing the stars of knowledge in the heaven of the Cause to fall down. A provisional English translation of the Tablet is provided by the author of this paper and is placed at the end of the article.

Introduction

In the study of past religions and their history or their scriptures, we come across the fact that many of the early believers during the developmental stages of these revelations were ordinary people. For example, in the Qur'án we read:

“And when it is said unto them: believe as the people believe, they say: Shall we believe as the foolish believe? Beware! They indeed are the foolish? But they know not.” (Baqarih or Cow, 2:13)

Also:

“The chieftains of his folk, who disbelieved, said: We see thee but a mortal like us, and we see not that any follow thee save the most abject among us, without reflection. We behold in you no merit above us—nay, we deem you liars.” (Húd, 11:27)

A cursory review of the Bible or examination of the lives of the disciples of Jesus Christ supports this statement.

On the other hand, when we study the history of the Bábi and Bahá'í revelations we find that a large number of eminent individuals believed in this Faith. Bahá'u'lláh, in the Kitáb-i Iqán, says:

“In this most resplendent Dispensation, however, this most mighty Sovereignty, a number of illumined divines, of men of consummate learning, of doctors of mature wisdom, have attained unto His Court, drunk the cup of His divine Presence, and been invested with the honour of His most excellent favour. They have renounced, for the sake of the Beloved, the world and all that is therein. We will mention the names of some of them, that perchance it may strengthen the faint-hearted, Among them was Mullá Husayn, who became the recipient of the effulgent glory of the Sun of divine Revelation. But for him, God would not have

been established upon the seat of His mercy, nor ascended the throne of eternal glory. Among them also was Siyyid Yahyá, that unique and peerless figure of his age, Mullá Muḥammad ‘Alí-i-Zanjání; Mullá ‘Alí-i-Bastamí.... and others, well nigh four hundred in number, whose names are all inscribed upon the ‘Guarded Tablet’ of God ...” (KI 223)

The early prominent followers of the Báb were not exclusively among the learned; they included government officials, princes, other prominent people and in particular one Qájár Princess by the name of Shams-i Jahán. She was a unique person, a distinguished figure, a poetess and possessed many other talents. We will present in this paper the story of her life as gleaned through her poetry and from other sources. She was the recipient of several Tablets from Bahá’u’lláh one of which is the Tablet of Fitnih (Tribulations), a translation of which is presented at the end of the paper. We will also discuss this Tablet in further detail.

The Life History of Shams-i Jahán

The story of the noble life and spiritual exploits of this princess has been pieced together from brief mention in different parts of the historical events of the time. It is a story worthy of exploration. This paper attempts to bring together her story from scattered sources and present it briefly and as completely as may be possible at this time.

The author of Zuhúru’l-Ḥaqq writes: “Amongst the most famous and well respected Bábís who came to Baghdád on those days for a visit, who discovered the station of Bahá’u’lláh and could not stop talking about it was a princess called Shams-i Jahán known as Ḥájjiyyih Princess “Varaqtu’r Riḍván—Fitnih”, an aunt of Náṣiri’-d-Dín Sháh whom the Abhá Beauty commanded to return to Iran.” (Kitab-i Zuhúru’l-Ḥaqq, vol. iv, pp. 194-195)¹

At this time, we have no information regarding the life of the Princess until she became attracted to the Faith. In the life of princess Shams-i Jahán, a few matters stand out that we will try to clarify;

these are: her connection and relationship to the ruling dynasty of Qájár, her belief in the Báb, her connection to Ẓáhirih; her recognition of the station of Bahá'u'lláh, her connection with other believers, her final visit to Bahá'u'lláh in Adrianople, and her poetry.

1. Princess Shams-i Jahán and Qájár Family

Princess Shams-i Jahán was a grand-daughter of Fátḥ-i-'Alí Sháh, the second monarch in Qájár dynasty. Her father was Prince Muḥammad Riḍá Mírzá, one of the sons of Fátḥ-i-'Alí Sháh. He was the Governor of the northern province of Gílán for some time. For the detailed Genealogy of the Princess, refer to the following site:

<http://www.royalark.net>

This web site contains information regarding dynasties of the rulers of the world. Selecting Iran, and then Qájár from the link enables viewing of her particulars in the following link:

<http://www.royalark.net/Persia/qajar14.htm>

It should be noted that Princess Shams-i Jahán had a cousin by the same name. This Princess Shams-i Jahán never became a believer and was not even close to the Faith. She was also a grand-daughter of Fátḥ-i-'Alí Sháh, but her father was Prince Muḥammad-'Alí Mírzá; It is worth mentioning that some scholars have confused the two cousin-princesses who share the name, Shams-i Jahán, with each other. They have referred to the brothers of one and assumed they were the brothers of the other Shams-i Jahán. The mother of the Shams-i Jahán of interest to us is a lady from the district of Núr in the province of Mázindarán.

2. Princess Shams-i Jahán to Believe in the Báb

Princess Shams-i Jahán heard a true story about the Báb from her tutor, Siyyid Muḥammad Gulpáyiganí. Siyyid Muḥammad was one of the followers of Ẓáhirih who was in Karbilá with her and returned to

Iran in her company. The year that Princess Shams-i Jahán started her tutelage with Siyyid Muḥammad Gulpáyiganí is not reflected in her poems; neither is the year when she joined the ranks of believers in the Báb. So, we must reconstruct the story of her life from the information available at present with timelines and time estimates based on the description of various events as they appear in the history. She became a believer around the time of the martyrdom of the Báb. By this time, she was an accomplished person and most likely in her early twenties.

3. Princess Shams-i Jahán to Meet Ṭáhirih

We know that Ṭáhirih was arrested shortly before the martyrdom of the Báb and was put under house arrest in the house of Tíhrán's chief of police, Maḥmúd Khán-i Kalántar. Two incidents connect Shams-i Jahán with Ṭáhirih. The first one is described in detail in the Princess' poems. We note that most of the Bábís were unaware of the whereabouts of Ṭáhirih at this time. Most probably, Siyyid Muḥammad was an exception due to his former association with Ṭáhirih. The following story has been extracted from Shams-i Jahán's poems:

“I was searching for the truth and Siyyid Malíh (Siyyid Muḥammad Gulpáyiganí) guided me towards God. Mercy of God be upon him as he showed me the way. He told me that in the house of Maḥmúd Khán-i Kalántar someone is imprisoned who is preferable to any one's essence of life.” Of course, this person was no one else except Ṭáhirih. In her poem, the Princess says she abandoned all thoughts concerning her own safety and walked towards the house of Kalántar. In order to meet Ṭáhirih, she resorted to different actions. She entered the garden of the Kalántar with much apprehension and walked towards a run-down building at the end of the garden and stood there drowning herself in her own thoughts as she sought a way to contact Ṭáhirih. Suddenly Ṭáhirih, from the upper room of the building where she was imprisoned, opened a window and Shams-i Jahán saw her face bright as the moon which had risen in the sky. She could not go near her as there were no steps to the upper room where she was confined

and the access to the room was by a ladder which could not be located around that place. Ṭáhirih asked her to come closer to the building. The princess stepped forward and asked Ṭáhirih who she was; indicating that she had attracted her and removed all her sanity and will power. Shams-i Jahán asked some questions regarding the incidents in Mázándirán referring to the upheavals of Shaykh Ṭabarsí and the Conference of Badasht. Ṭáhirih informed her that what happened there was due to the appearance of the Lord of the Age. Shams-i Jahán had many questions, all of which were answered by Ṭáhirih to her complete satisfaction. After a while some guards showed up and became aware that the sun (Shams means the sun) and the moon were in one place together (Sun is herself and she has referred to Ṭáhirih as the moon). The guards asked her what she was doing there. We assume she provided sufficiently satisfactory answers such that they decided to go away so that she could continue her conversation with Ṭáhirih. After a while Ṭáhirih asked her to leave Kalántar's premises as it posed a great danger to her life. She says that meeting Ṭáhirih as short as it was left an unforgettable impression in her memory; something very profound that she could never forget. She says that she had a lot to say but chose to be brief. At this time, the Lord (The Báb) was in Chihríq. We also note from other sources that Shams-i Jahán was also present in the festivity on the occasion of the wedding of Kalántar's son, a celebration which had been organized by Kalántar's wife, in which we know Ṭáhirih was also present. If there were other meetings with Ṭáhirih, she has not mentioned it and she has made this part of the story short.

4. Princess Goes to Kalántar's House after Martyrdom of Ṭáhirih

The massacre during the summer of 1852 due to the attempt on the life of Náṣiri' d-Dín Sháh as a result of which Bahá'u'lláh was imprisoned in the Síyáh Chál (Black Pit) is well documented. One of the victims of that incident was Ṭáhirih who was led to a garden outside the city gates and was strangled. The following story has been narrated by Nabíl Zarandí concerning Kalántar's wife in relation to the martyrdom of Ṭáhirih:

“One night, whilst Ṭáhirih was staying in my home, I was summoned to her presence and found her fully adorned, dressed in a gown of snow-white silk. Her room was redolent with the choicest perfume. I expressed to her my surprise at so unusual a sight. ‘I am preparing to meet my Beloved,’ she said, ‘and wish to free you from the cares and anxieties of my imprisonment.’ I was much startled at first, and wept at the thought of separation from her. ‘Weep not, she sought to reassure me.’ The time of your lamentation is not yet come. I wish to share with you my last wishes, for the hour when I shall be arrested and condemned to suffer martyrdom is fast approaching. I would request you to allow your son to accompany me to the scene of my death and to ensure that the guards and executioner into whose hands I shall be delivered will not compel me to divest myself of this attire. It is also my wish that my body be thrown into a pit, and that that pit be filled with earth and stones. Three days after my death a woman will come and visit you, to whom you will give this package which I now deliver into your hands”. (The Dawn-Breakers, pp. 622-623)²

The person who came and collected the package was no one other than Shams-i Jahán (Muḥaḍirát, vol. I-II, p. 31-32).³ This shows that a strong bond had been established between Ṭáhirih and Shams-i Jahán. She stated that meeting Ṭáhirih changed her life and the meeting or meetings with her had left profound and imperishable effects on her. Her Faith was confirmed, and she decided to dedicate her entire life to the promotion of the new Faith.

She complains about her brothers who made her life miserable due to her acceptance of the new Faith and were most critical of her association with the Bábís. However, one of her brothers by the name Háshim Mírzá and known by the designation Jináb was supportive of her. (Zuhúru'l-Ḥaqq Vol. vi, p. 413)⁴

5. Princess Shams-i Jahán Travels to Baghdád and Back

During the immediate years following the martyrdom of Ṭáhirih, the Princess had to be careful as the social and political climate continued to put pressure on the Bábí community. It was a period fraught with danger as any contacts with the Bábí community could be misrepresented. However, she kept her contact with the leading figures of the Bábí community for a few years and then decided to travel to Baghdád to meet Mírzá Yaḥyá who was the “Nominal Head” of the Bábí community. An extract from her poems concerning this trip can be summarized as follows:

“I had lost my mind and was driven by a great desire to go to Iraq in order to meet the head of the Bábí Faith.” The Princess made arrangements to travel to Baghdád. As she gradually drew nearer to the city, her anticipation rose. Upon her arrival in Baghdád she sent a letter to Mírzá Yaḥyá stating that she was sure that he knew the secrets of her heart and she had come there to meet him. He wrote back stating that he was not sure whether she was his enemy and even if she was a friend her meeting with him would cause his enemies to become aware of his whereabouts and they would come and harm him. Then she wrote back to him and tried to convince him that she would take every precaution to avoid compromising his safety. Then he sent a word to those near him that they should force her to leave the city at once. When she heard this order, she was greatly astonished, much upset and asked herself what kind of spiritual leader Mírzá Yaḥyá was who could not distinguish a friend from a foe. She regretted falling into what she refers to as a trap. She had planted a seed of hope in her heart and watered it with her eye’s stream. If it were a pure seed, it would have germinated, and it would have grown to become a big tree by now. As she tried to get closer to Mírzá Yaḥyá, gradually all her spiritual aspirations were fading away.

One night she cried all night and asked God to have mercy upon her. She believed in the new religion and through the face of Mírzá Yaḥyá

Azal had tried to find the Lord. Now she asked her Lord to assist her and cure her spiritual sickness. She recalled that God had said that if a servant would take one step towards Him, He would take ten steps towards such a person. During that night she did not sleep and asked God for enlightenment. Then she had a few questions and thought while she was in Baghdád it would be useful to approach Jináb-i-Bahá. Therefore, she put down on a piece of paper the questions for which she sought an answer. She was up all night until it became near sunrise. Suddenly, she heard a knock on the door. She responded and found Áqá Ján, Khádimu'lláh, standing by the door. He said to her that Jináb-i Bahá sent him to tell her that He knew she had become disappointed with Mírzá Yaḥyá and lost all hope; whatever communion she had with God He heard them all. Whatever she had written down to ask Him, He knew them all. Áqá Ján told her she should come along to meet Him and there was no need to bring her questions. Bahá'u'lláh would provide the answer to all her questions. She went and met Bahá'u'lláh. She was astounded and bewildered. He provided all the answers before she asked any questions. She thought to herself—If He was not the Lord then how would He know the secrets of her heart? Then she asked God for forgiveness. Jináb-i Bahá told her that she should not discuss her experience with others. After a six month stay in Baghdád, Bahá'u'lláh asked her to leave Baghdád for Iran. She was so overwhelmed that she was not able to describe her feelings when she was saying goodbye.

Concerning this period, the Guardian has written:

“At the same time an influx of Persian Bábís, whose sole object was to attain the presence of Bahá'u'lláh, swelled the stream of visitors that poured through His hospitable doors. Carrying back, on their return to their native country, innumerable testimonies, both oral and written, to His steadily rising power and glory ... a grand-daughter of Fátih-i-'Alí Sháh and fervent admirer of Tábirih, surnamed Varaqatu'r-Ridván all these were numbered among the visitors and fellow-disciples who crossed His threshold, ...” (GPB 130)

A brief clarification is needed here. “Varaqaḥ” is an Arabic word meaning leaf. In the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh it is typically a reference to female believers. The title of “Varaqtu’r Riḍván” means Leaf of Paradise. This title was also given to the second sister of Mullá Ḥusayn of Bushrúyih. Mullá Ḥusayn’s first sister was given the title of Varaqtu’l-Firdus which also means Leaf of Paradise.

Through her poems, Princess Shams-i Jahán continues the rest of her story:

On her way back to Ṭihrán from Baghdád, she met some believers in Karand, a small border town in Iran. In Kirmánsháhán (Kirmánsháh), she met Hájí Siyyid Muḥammad Iṣfáhání (who encouraged and misled Mírzá Yaḥyá Azal in his machinations against Bahá’u’lláh) whose character did not please her. She stated that there was no point conversing with someone whose talk would not illumine one’s heart. She called him the embodiment of Satan and Dajjál. As she continued her journey, in Hamadán, a town in the western region of Iran, she met with the Bábís. Traveling further, she mentioned that in Naráq she met Kamál’ud-Dín Naráqí, the recipient of the Tablet of “All Foods”. She also says that she was impressed by the believers in Jásb before reaching Káshán where she stayed for three months. She mentioned an individual by the name of Ibráhím who had written poems in the praise of Jináb-i Bahá; it seems that Ibráhím-i Káshání must have left quite an impression on her. Then she started the last leg of her journey towards Ṭihrán. In her poem, she expressed a feeling she had as she approached Ṭihrán—specifically she said it was as though she was entering a prison of her own volition. She then writes about her loneliness in Ṭihrán. She was unable to find a single person she could share the secrets of her heart with. Occasionally she received a Tablet from Baghdád that would give her new life and spiritual vigour.

Six years elapsed after her return from Baghdád. Her mind was preoccupied with a desire to go back to Baghdád in order to meet the best Beloved of her heart once again. After some time, she received news

that Jináb-i Bahá and the company of friends were exiled to Istanbul. Shortly after the news of the departure of the Friends from Baghdad, Nabíl-i A‘zam (Mullá Muḥammad-i Zarandí) arrived in Ṭihrán with the New Message. She has specifically referred to her brothers’ opposition and efforts to sever her connection with the Bábí community—a situation which made her feel miserable. As a result, she secluded herself and talked to no one except friendship which she established with the daughter of Siyyid Muḥammad Gulpáyiganí. After some time, she became determined to travel to Adrianople and finally the permission to go for a visit to Adrianople arrived. She had inherited a garden which she sold and used the proceeds to hire a believer to accompany and assist her on this trip.

As she made plans to leave Ṭihrán, winter arrived, and she was cognizant of the fact that it was not a good time to travel. However, her heart overrode her concerns, pressing her to ignore the hardship of winter travel. The fire of longing for the visit motivated her to disregard the dangers and difficulties of travel in winter-time. Finally, she left Ṭihrán and traveled northward arriving in Qazvín. She has described the believers in that city as being polished and radiant like a mirror. She spent a few days there and then traveled to Zanján. She lauds praises on the believers in that city and particularly Siyyid Ashraf who became a famous martyr a few years later. At Zanján, she heard that a group of believers had left for pilgrimage and she tried to catch up to them, but she was unsuccessful. She continued her journey and arrived near the border by the river Aras (Araxes). She mentions that she could see the castle of Chihríq which may be a mistake—the castle of Máh-Kú is near the border river of Aras. From there she traveled to Nakhjaván and then to Yerevan, the Capital of Armenia. She said that she found the environment very interesting as she heard the sound of church bells and the call to prayers from mosques.

From Yerevan she traveled to Georgia reaching Tbilisi and from there traveled westward where she reached the shores of the Black Sea. From there she boarded a ship and traveled by sea, with the boat sailing close

to shore during this journey. After visiting the port city of Batumi in Georgia and then Trabzon (Trebizond) she reached the sea-port of Samsun where she remembered the sea-travel of her Lord from that place towards Istanbul. Eventually she arrived in Istanbul. In her poetry, she says that she had not done anything worthwhile for the Faith in her life and expresses a wish to give her life away as a martyr. She says that a mirror is made of stone, which over the years, combined with persistence would become a mirror – in other words something worthless becomes of value. She states that she does not see herself being less than a stone and expresses the desire to become a mirror. Now that she reached a city in the vicinity of her Lord, she says that she was ready to sacrifice whatever she had, even should she be given a hundred lives in order to attain to the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. Her poetry describing her thoughts and feelings at this time, projects strong emotions.

Immediately after arriving in Istanbul, she went to Khán-i Muşţafá Páshá hostel and there she saw a person by the name Muşţafá (most probably Muşţafá Naráqí). As soon as she saw his face, she recognized him. Then he came close to her and asked her name and she asked the name of a small boy with him. She inquired regarding the whereabouts of other pilgrims and Muşţafá took her to them. There were nine in all – nine pure souls who she referred to as angels. After five days finally permission to travel to Adrianople arrived for the pilgrims. She refers to their departure as having taken her life along with them. She remained back in Istanbul, awaiting the arrival of her permission to travel to Adrianople. While she waited, she saw Sayyáḥ and then Mishkín Qalam and then several other Friends who lived in Istanbul at the time. She waited for sixteen days, after which a message arrived that she had to go to Mecca for pilgrimage first, after which she was given permission to proceed to Adrianople.

She boarded a boat once more and traveled to the sea-port of Gallipoli. She knew that the point of adoration was the place where her Lord was and not the place she was travelling towards. She tried to find an answer for herself why she needed to go to a previous point of adoration

which was obsolete. She could not find an answer and was unable to understand its wisdom but obeyed it without slightest hesitation as her beloved Lord had instructed her to do. In her poetry about this travel, she made a reference to her age at this point which was forty years. This puts the year of her birth around the year 1825. She says she boarded the boat and sailed via Egypt to the port of Jidda. While she passed the vicinity of Sinai, she remembered Moses and Bahá'u'lláh as the speaker on the Mount. To shorten the narrative, we have eliminated the details of this section of the journey until she reached Mecca. She arrived safe in Mecca in the year 1865 and performed the pilgrimage. Reviewing the records, in 1865 we observe that the pilgrimage of Muslims fell in the month of May which supports the argument that the time was towards the end of spring. After performing her pilgrimage according to Muslim rites, she followed her journey in reverse, attaining the presence of Bahá'u'lláh in Adrianople. After her pilgrimage, she traveled back to Iran, retracing her initial trip to Istanbul, arriving in Tabriz.

In Tabriz, her sorrows, excitement of pilgrimage and exhilaration caused her to fall sick and pass away at the early age of nearly forty. Some individuals have mentioned that she was poisoned. Her grave is in Tabriz. (Zuhúru'l-Haqq, Vol. xi, p. 413)

From her poems it is evident that she is well versed in the teachings of the Bayán and the expected Promised One of the Bayán: “He Whom God shall make manifest”. An attempt is now made to translate a few different lines of her poems as a sample:

I have made so much stirring in the world,
By which the people of the Bayán would spill my blood.

And

Should he appear in the year Mustaghath, you and me,
Where will be except at the bottom of a grave?

And

O Fitnih, break thy pen and cut short the argument,
It is not befitting to disclose the mysteries.

And

The Parsi speaking beloved hath come,
He appeared with a tongue full of utterances.

6. Princess Shams-i Jahán's Poems; Tablets Revealed in Her Honour

The Princess was endowed with great love for Bahá'u'lláh and she was very much devoted to the Cause of God. Despite her royal heritage, she maintained contact with prominent Bahá'ís. She composed the story of her life in form of a Mathnavi which not only projects historical events but also reveals her deep understanding of the tenets of her beliefs in the Day of God. Her poems demonstrate a clear understanding of the station of Bahá'u'lláh. One can examine these poems in form of Mathnavi in:

- “Tadhkirih-i Shu'aráyí Qarn-i Avval-i Bahá'í, volume III
- Some parts of her poems may be found in Zuhúru'l-Haqq, volume iv, pp. 195-198.
- A selection of her poems also appears in Zuhúru'l-Haqq Vol. vi, pp. 415-446.

Apart from poems in form of Mathnavi, she has written poems in the form of ghazal. One of the believers that she was in contact with regarding her poems was Nabil Zarandí.

While this paper focuses on the Tablet of Fitnih (Tests and Tribulations), Bahá'u'lláh revealed several other Tablets in her honour. A few lines from the start of some of these Tablets are provisionally translated by the author of this paper and presented below:

"He is the Life-Giving Spirit wafting over lifeless-bodies

No letters from thee have arrived here lately; However, a letter is being sent to thee. Indeed thou art always remembered without requiring a reminder ...” (Asrar’ul—Athar vol. iv, pp. 437-439) ⁶ (Provisional translation by F.S.)

Again

“In the Name of the Merciful God

O Shams! Hearken thou with the ear of spirit the warbling of the Nightingale of love. Haply that thou mayest be enabled to take a step away from the realm of self and passion ...” (Asrar’ul—Athar vol. iv, pp. 437-439) ⁶ (Provisional translation by F.S.)

And

“He is the Almighty, the Self-Subsisting

This is a Revelation uttering the truth which instilleth in hearts the hidden secrets of God, the All-Encompassing, the Almighty, the Most-Powerful. Within it the spirit calleth aloud by a Word which no ears have ever heard Verily, the Concealed Book hath been manifested in this Ancient Temple. Say, O peoples of the world! Tribulations will come to you from every direction ...” (Asrar’ul—Athar vol. iv, pp. 437-439) ⁶ (Provisional translation by F.S.)

Tablet of Fitnih (Test and Tribulations)

Recipient: The Tablet of Fitnih was addressed to Princess Shams-i Jahán who used Fitnih (Test and Tribulations) as her sobriquet in her poetry. It is plausible to think that there is a relationship between her pen name and the theme of the Tablet. It is also possible to consider that the Tablet with such a theme would have been revealed in her honour regardless of any connection with her pen-name.

Time and Place of Its Revelation: We have no definite information regarding the time and place where the Tablet was revealed. From the tone of the Tablet, its theme is consistent with the major theme of the Revelation extending from the final years of Iraq to early years in Adrianople. Ishráq Khávari believes that it was revealed in Baghdád after Bahá'u'lláh's return from Kurdistan. (*Ganj-i Sháyegán*, p. 36)⁷ Fázil Mázandarání believes that it was revealed in Adrianople (*Asrar'ul—Athár*, vol. iv, p. 438). Táherzádeh says: "The Lawh-i-Fitnih (Tablet of the Test) is another of Bahá'u'lláh's Arabic Tablets revealed in Baghdad Some Bahá'í scholars have stated that this Tablet was revealed in Adrianople; they may well be right" (*The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, vol. I., p. 128)⁸

Language: The Tablet is revealed in its entirety in Arabic.

Length: The length of the Tablet is about three pages

Copies of the Tablet: The Tablet was published in *Má'idiy-i-Asmání*, vol. p. 1429 and also in INBA vol. 81 p. 80.10

Translation into English: The author is not aware of any official (authorized) or provisional translations of this Tablet available at present. The author of this paper has made a provisional translation of the Tablet which has been presented at the end of this paper.

Theme: The single and overarching theme of the Tablet is tests, tribulations and difficulties. The Tablet is generally understood to refer to tests in general when we choose one option among several choices. It also discusses specific tests that people are faced with when Manifestations of God appear. To be more specific, Bahá'u'lláh refers to the tests that the people of the Bayán would face at the time of His open and universal declaration regarding His claim to be the Promised One of the Bayán foretold by the Báb: "He Whom God shall make manifest".

Summary of the Tablet: The following key points are raised in the Tablet:

- A specific test will surely come
- It will separate the people from each other
- Reference to “Mustagháth”
- It will encompass the entire creation
- It will make pure souls thunderstruck
- Heavens of knowledge and learning will be cleft asunder
- The throne of glory will be shaken
- The concourse of the Spirit in the eternal sanctity will be sore perplexed
- Resplendent suns will be darkened
- Moons will fall down
- Every noble man will be tested
- Holy fire will be quenched
- Water of truth will solidify
- “They who recognized the Splendour of Sinai will faint away”
- The entire earth will be disturbed
- Separation will occur the same as in the past cycles
- This is a mystery
- They will not be able to scrutinize its source
- “The inner eyes of the Unseen will be dazzled”
- “The steps of them who have known God will slip”
- “Soon all servants will be tested and thrown into the fire”

- “The Holy Spirit will be disturbed during such time”
- “The mystery within the mystery will tremble, so will the lofty Láhút, and then the angels around the Seat of God will be frightened.”
- “By God, all will be tested—the heavens, earth, stars, moons ...”
- “The steps of them who have known God will slip”
- “Soon all servants will be tested and thrown into the fire”

Background Information: The theme of Tests appears frequently in several Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh during the period between the years 1860 to 1868. He talks about the appearance of the Calf (false God) and Birds of Night (Bats who cannot withstand the Sun of Reality; therefore, they appear when darkness surrounds us and when the sun no longer shines). The Calf reminds us of a specific occurrence during the time of Moses. Bahá'u'lláh was definitely aware of the mischief of the insincere individuals and their onslaught. Maybe He was trying to forewarn the Bábí community of the repetition of the same events; this time through the rebellion of Mírzá Yaḥyá and those around him who were his supporters—for further details, refer to the article by Foad Seddigh. (Lights of Irfan, vol. 15, pp. 355-402) ¹¹

Clarification of Specific References

General Comments: As mentioned earlier, the central theme of the Tablet of Fitnih is tests, tribulations and difficulties which will appear at an unspecified time in the future. The Tablet emphasizes various aspects and characteristics of these tribulations. Below, we discuss a few concepts and terminologies which could be of assistance for better understanding of the Tablet. These are briefly stated below:

“Káf and nún”: These terms appear in the following passage from the Tablet: “And it will be a trial such as to make a distinction between káf

and nún.” In the Writings, we come across the combination of these two words. In fact, káf and nún are not words but rather, phonetic scribing of two letters of alphabet in Arabic and Persian very similar to “k” and “n” in English. When káf and nún join together, they become the command word “Kun” meaning “to be” or “to come to existence”. This is the command of God for the world of existence to come into being and therefore it symbolizes Divine action in creation. Noting that creation is also ancient and has no beginning in time, therefore, it may refer to the appearance of the Manifestation of God and a new creation in the spiritual realm. The above phrase which states that between two letters separation will take place and they will be pushed apart might mean that the authority of the manifestation of God who is the representative of God in the realm of creation will be challenged.

The Passage: “... till such time as He will appear once more in the wondrous days promised in the manifestation of His unseen Essence.” In this line, it seems that Bahá’u’lláh refers to His own declaration yet to come. Bahá’u’lláh did not universally and publicly call Himself the Promised One of the Bayán until sometime in Adrianople, though some believers knew very well that He was the Promised One of the Bayán: “Him whom God shall make manifest.” For example, when Mullá Muḥammad-Riḍá-i—Muḥammad—Ábádí read the Ode of the Dove (Qasidih-i Izz-i Varqá’íyyih) he said the author of this Ode is the Promised One of the Bayán (This was around the year 1858). A similar statement was made around the same time by Mullá Aḥmad Azghandí, one of the prominent believers of the Báb. A more subdued declaration took place in the garden of Riḍván according to the statement of the Guardian:

“Of the exact circumstances attending that epoch-making Declaration we, alas, are but scantily informed. The words Bahá’u’lláh actually uttered on that occasion, the manner of His Declaration, the reaction it produced, its impact on Mirzá Yahyá, the identity of those who were privileged to hear Him, are shrouded in an obscurity which future historians will find it difficult to penetrate.” (GPB 152)

The open and universal declaration of Bahá'u'lláh's claim was made around the second year after His arrival in Adrianople when He revealed Surih-i Amr and asked Mírzá Áqá Ján to read it to Mírzá Yahyá Azal and to request an answer from him. About one year after the revelation of this important Tablet, the "Most Great Separation" occurred the date of which is generally taken as 10 March 1866.¹² Believers faced the dilemma of choosing between Bahá'u'lláh or Mírzá Yahyá Azal. In this regard, the Guardian has written the following:

"This supreme crisis Bahá'u'lláh Himself designated as the Ayyám-i-Shidád (Days of Stress), during which "the most grievous veil" was torn asunder, and the "most great separation" was irrevocably effected. It immensely gratified and emboldened its external enemies, both civil and ecclesiastical, played into their hands, and evoked their unconcealed derision. It perplexed and confused the friends and supporters of Bahá'u'lláh, and seriously damaged the prestige of the Faith in the eyes of its western admirers." (GBP 163)

Since at this time we do not have a clear evidence regarding the time of the revelation of this Tablet, this passage may indicate that the Tablet was in fact revealed in Baghdád when Princess Shams-i Jahán was visiting there and the passage might refer to the Declaration at the Garden of Ridván.

The Nature of Trial: "Say, this is a trial through which the thrones of glory will be shaken, the inhabitants of the exalted Tabernacle overturned, and the concourse of the Spirit in the eternal sanctity will be sore perplexed." Bahá'u'lláh delayed the universal declaration of His mission for nearly fifteen years. One of the reasons for the delay could possibly be the fact that the general population of the Bábí community particularly its leaders at the time were not ready yet for such an announcement. In particular the jealousy and monstrous behavior of Mírzá Yahyá was a great concern to Bahá'u'lláh, as the Guardian has written:

“... the monstrous behavior of Mírzá Yahyá,” which “brought in its wake a period of travail which left its mark on the fortunes of the Faith for no less than half a century. . . . It had been brewing ever since the early days of Bahá’u’lláh’s sojourn in Baghdad, was temporarily suppressed by the creative forces which, under His as yet unproclaimed leadership, reanimated a disintegrating community, and finally broke out, in all its violence, in the years immediately preceding the proclamation of His Message.” (GPB 163)

Therefore, Bahá’u’lláh chose to nurture those who showed some capacity. As soon as He left Baghdád, He sent such teachers as Nabíl-i A’ẓam (Mullá Muḥammad-i Zarandí), Ismu’lláhu’l-Muníb and Aḥmad Yazdí to Iran to inform the people of the Bayán, with utmost wisdom, of the news of the appearance of “He Whom God shall make manifest” with specific instructions to avoid arguments with trouble makers and to disclose His station only to those who showed spiritual capacity. The main concern of Bahá’u’lláh at this phase of the announcement of His station was to maintain the unity and integrity in the Bábí community until such time when a large number of believers had already accepted His message and then making a public and universal declaration. Ultimately, a significant majority of the Bábí community accepted His station as the Promised One of the Bayán. However, Mírzá Yahyá Azal and some learned in the Bayán remained defiant and stood up in revolt. Mírzá Yahyá’s machinations caused the greatest sufferings and damage to Faith which were far greater than the martyrdom of the Báb as has been described by the Gurdian. It seems that the above passage refers to such challenges.

The year of Mustagháth: Mustagháth is an Arabic word; more specifically it is one of the names and attributes of God that means: “He Whose aid is invoked by all men.” The reference to Mustagháth has also appeared in the Bayán that became a stumbling block and test for some Bábís in the years following the martyrdom of the Báb. At times it has appeared as: “The year of Mustagháth” in the Bayán referring to

the time of the appearance of the Promised One of the Bayán. Some individuals and particularly those who followed Mírzá Yahyá Azal argued that the numerical value of “Mustagháth”, on the basis of Abjad system of numerology, was 2001 and therefore they promoted the idea that the Promised One should appear in the year 2001 after the appearance of the Báb. They clung to this argument while disregarded other references to the time of the appearance of the Promised One which indicated that it would be imminent such as the Year Nine or Nineteen. Even the Báb promised to one of the Letters of the Living that he would live long enough to see the Promised One during his life—time. Furthermore, it should be noted that the Báb did not state that the promised one would appear in the year of Mustagháth, rather the year of His coming would not exceed the year of Mustagháth. Even if it would be interpreted that way, it is only an upper limit and would not contradict His appearance in the Year Nine, Nineteen, etc. The Báb also made it clear that the time of the appearance of the Promised One of the Bayán was entirely in the hands of God. The following quote from the Bayan should suffice (Váhid six, chapter 3; VI:3):

“Concerning the appearance of Him Whom God shall manifest, God knoweth in what limit of years He will manifest Him; but His advent is to be expected from the beginning of the Revelation until the number of Váhid (19) for in each year the announcement of the Faith may occur at any moment.” (Provisional Translation by FS)

The following explanation in the Dawn-Breakers sheds more light on the subject:

“He (the Bab) bestowed on him the name Dayyán and revealed in his honour the Lawh-i-Hurúfat (literally means letters) in which He made the following statement: “Had the Point of the Bayán no other testimony with which to establish His truth, this were sufficient—that He revealed a Tablet such as this, a Tablet such as no amount of learning could produce.”

The people of the Bayán, who utterly misconceived the purpose underlying that Tablet, thought it to be a mere exposition of the science of Jafr. When, at a later time, in the early years of Bahá'u'lláh's incarceration in the prison city of Akká, Jináb-i-Muballigh made, from Shiráz, his request that He unravel the mysteries of that Tablet, there was revealed from His pen an explanation which they who misconceived the words of the Báb might do well to ponder. Bahá'u'lláh adduced from the statements of the Báb irrefutable evidence proving that the appearance of the Man-Yuzhiruhu'llah must needs occur no less than nineteen years after the Declaration of the Báb. The mystery of the Mustagháth had long baffled the most searching minds among the people of the Bayán and had proved an unsurmountable obstacle to their recognition of the promised One. The Báb had Himself in that Tablet unravelled that mystery; no one, however, was able to understand the explanation which He had given. It was left to Bahá'u'lláh to unveil it to the eyes of all men.” (The Dawn-Breakers p. 304, Chap 17)

For further reading on this subject refer to the endnote number 13.

Now, that we have considered briefly the background information regarding the “The year of Mustagháth”, we may examine the statement of Bahá'u'lláh in the above passage in which He refers to such combination of words. Firstly, by mentioning “Mustagháth” in this Tablet, we could possibly conclude that He wanted to connect reference to Mustagháth with the coming of test and tribulations. Secondly, we may infer that He is trying to disassociate it from the notion of being a reference to a specific year and to emphasise another meaning for it—a meaning which interprets the term as the year that God would respond to those who asked for assistance. This could refer to the open and universal declaration of Bahá'u'lláh in Adrianople—a time when Bahá'u'lláh came to the assistance of the Bábí Community who had suffered at the hands of some of its learned and those who supported Mírzá Yahyá Azal.

Tear asunder mysteries: “Say, this is such a trial that would dismay people, astound minds, tear mysteries asunder, and then would make pure souls to be thunderstruck.” The Báb has made extensive use of the word “mystery” in His Writings. It seems finally, after the public declaration Bahá’u’lláh’s claim, the mystery spoken by the Báb would become known to the people of the Bayán and they will be thunderstruck.

Falling the sun, moon and stars: “Say, this is a trial from which resplendent suns will be darkened, the moons of the realm above will fall down, and then the stars of knowledge in the heavens of the decree of God will fall.” Darkening of the sun and falling of the moon and stars of knowledge have particular meanings. Their physical occurrence cannot be entertained as such interpretation is not consonant with physical observation and rational thought. Bahá’u’lláh has interpreted a variety of meanings for such references. For example, the sun, moon and stars may be taken as the learned that lose their position of authority when a new manifestation of God appears. In this way, for example, such learned leaders of religion are like a sun which darkens. Bahá’u’lláh says:

“And now, concerning His words — “The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give light, and the stars shall fall from heaven.” By the terms “sun” and “moon,” mentioned in the writings of the Prophets of God, is not meant solely the sun and moon of the visible universe. Nay rather, manifold are the meanings they have intended for these terms. In every instance they have attached to them a particular significance. In another sense, by these terms is intended the divines of the former Dispensation, who live in the days of the subsequent Revelations, and who hold the reins of religion in their grasp. If these divines be illumined by the light of the latter Revelation, they will be acceptable unto God, and will shine with a light everlasting. Otherwise, they will be declared as darkened, even though to outward seeming they be leaders of men, inasmuch as belief and unbelief, guidance and error, felicity and misery, light and darkness, are all dependent upon the sanction of Him Who is the Day-star of Truth. Whosoever among the divines of every age receiveth,

in the Day of Reckoning, the testimony of faith from the Source of true knowledge, he verily becometh the recipient of learning, of divine favour, and of the light of true understanding. Otherwise, he is branded as guilty of folly, denial, blasphemy, and oppression.” (KI 32-37)

Every noble man will be tested: “This is a trial by which every noble man will be tested, followed by all pure servants of God, the angels who are nigh unto God, and then the dwellers of the Supreme Concourse.” In this passage Bahá’u’lláh declares that devoted believers are not spared from tests. The term angels refer to pure souls and devoted servants of God, neither of which are exempt from tests.

Láhút: “By God, the Holy Spirit will be disturbed during such time, the light of fellowship will be dimmed, the mystery within the mystery will tremble, so will the lofty Láhút, and then the angels around the Seat of God will be frightened.” Láhút is one of the worlds of God. Before we discuss its meaning and significance, we should emphasize that the worlds of God are infinite. Bahá’u’lláh says: “As to thy question concerning the worlds of God. Know thou of a truth that the worlds of God are countless in their number, and infinite in their range. None can reckon or comprehend them except God, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.” (GWB 151) and (TB 187)

In the Seven Valleys, Bahá’u’lláh acknowledges that the worlds of God are infinite. However, He is explicitly reciting how some refer to them and He names a few of them:

“Infer, then, from this the differences among the worlds. Though the worlds of God be infinite, yet some refer to them as four: the world of time, which hath both a beginning and an end; the world of duration, which hath a beginning but whose end is not apparent; the world of primordial reality, whose beginning is not to be seen but which is known to have an end; and the world of eternity, of which neither the beginning nor the end is visible. Although there are many differing statements as to these points, to recount them in detail would result in weariness.

Thus, some have said that the world of primordial reality hath neither beginning nor end, and have equated the world of eternity with the invisible, inaccessible, and unknowable Essence. Others have called these the worlds of the Heavenly Court, of the Celestial Dominion, of the Divine Kingdom, and of Mortal Existence.” (Call of the Divine Beloved – Seven Valleys, pp. 34-35)¹⁴

Bahá'u'lláh specifically in the Tablet of “All Foods” has made references to five worlds which are: Násút, Malakút, Jabarút, Láhút and Háhút. Further details are presented in the endnotes.¹⁵

Moon and stars will be tested: “By God, all will be tested—the heavens, earth, stars, moons...” It is obvious that earth, stars and moon belong to the material realm and cannot exercise choices in their existence. As a result, tests have no meaning for them. This is similar to the Qur’anic verse: “The sun and the moon are made to give account.”(Ar’rahman 55:5). Because, the sun and moon cannot give account at the “Time of the End” like humans would, it appears that there must be another meaning for the above statements. Should we refer to the explanation of Bahá'u'lláh in the Kitáb-i Iqán, we would readily understand that they refer to the special people in the firmament of the Bayán. At a specific time, such individuals are tested. We refer the reader to the explanation regarding falling of sun, moon and stars which was given earlier.

Luqmán admonished his son: “O my son! Verily, God will bring everything to light, though it were but the weight of a grain of mustard-seed, and hidden in a rock or in the heavens or in the earth; for God is the Subtle, informed of all.” Luqmán is a wise man or a sage known for his wisdom with many words of wisdom attributed to him. In the Qur’án there is a surih by this name. The above verse from the Qur’án quoted in the Tablet is in this surih; Luqmán: 31:16. It simply points to the insight and power of God.

Friend: "... and this is the mystery of that which had been revealed to the First Friend from the realm of the revelation of God, the Exalted, the All-Knowing, the All-Known." Friend or "Friend of God" in the first instance is the title of Prophet Muḥammad. According to Islamic sources, this title was given to Him by God on the night He ascended to Heaven in order to reach the presence of God. On the other hand, Bahá'u'lláh has called the Báb "My Beloved". The words "Lover" and "Beloved" or "Ḥabíb and Maḥbúb" have been used by Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb to refer to each other; However, in the case of the Báb's reference to the object of His "love" is in the form of allusions only.

Time of Severe Tests or "Ayyám-i Shidád": This refers to a time which started with the uprising and the open revolt of Mírzá Yahyá in Adrianople and the rejection by some eminent Bábís of the claims of Bahá'u'lláh. It continued until His passing and in the early years of the activities of the Covenant-Breakers after the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh. Refer to the explanation given for one of the passages given above. It has been mentioned in the Tablet that it might not have any end.

Most Great Announcement: "Verily, should I mention this Most Great Announcement, its strong trials and tests from this time until eternity, by God, its mention could not be exhausted and its description could not be completed, even if thousands of oceans of ink were utilised for its writing." The "Most Great Announcement" is a prophecy in the Qur'án. It appears in surih An'Naba 78:2. All Islamic scholars missed its significance and interpreted it in a way other than its true meaning. Both the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh have referred to themselves as the "Most Great Announcement."

His Concern: "I swear by God and by Him who hath manifested this Ancient Beauty in His Essence for His Essence and through His Essence! Shouldst He remove the veils which cover that which is hidden from the eyes of all men, the supports of the Throne of God would tremble, those who carry the Throne would become disturbed,

and their beings would become disintegrated.” “This Ancient Beauty” is no other person than Bahá’u’lláh Himself. This passage seems to support what was said before that His universal and open declaration would cause the supports of the religion of God in the Bábí community to tremble and bring about a much feared revolt and disturbance and would cause the Bábí community to disintegrate. Through His timely announcement of His station, He was able to safeguard the unity of the Bábí community and guide the ark of God to safety, protecting it from the gale-storms engulfing it.

Conclusion and Acknowledgements

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NOTES

- 1 Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. iv, written by Asadu'lláh Fáḍil Mázandarání, edited by Moojan Momen, published by Baha'i Verlag, Germany-Hofheim, 168 BE, 2011.
- 2 The Dawn-Breakers, Nabil's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahá'í Revelation, Translated and Edited by Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois, 1970.
- 3 Muḥaḍirát, vol. I-II, written by 'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd Ishraq Khavari, published (reprinted) by Baha'i Verlag, Germany-Hofheim, 150 BE, 1994.
- 4 Zuhúru'l-Haqq Vol. vi, written by Asadu'lláh Fáḍil Mázandarání – personal copy and also available in digital print in the following web site: <https://www.h-net.org/~bahai/arabic/vol3/tzh6/tzh6.htm>
- 5 Tadhkirih-i Shu'arayi Qarn-i Avval-i Bahá'í, volume III, compiled by Dkukayi Bayḍayi
- 6 Asráru'l Áthár vol. iv, written by Asadu'lláh Fáḍil Mázandarání, published by Mu'assisih Milli Matbu't Amri, Tíhrán, 129 BE
- 7 Ganj-i Sháyegán, written by 'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd Ishraq Khavari, published by Mu'assisih Milli Matbu't Amri, Tíhrán, 124 Badi
- 8 The Revelation of Baha'u'llah vol. I, Adib Taherzadeh, George Ronald Publisher, Oxford, 1974.
- 9 Má'idiy-i-Asmání, vol. 4, written by 'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd Ishraq Khavari, published by Mu'assisih Milli Matbu't Amri, Tíhrán, 124 Badi
- 10 Iranian Bahá'í National Archives (INBA) vol. 81, p. 80.
- 11 Tablet of Patience: Declaration of Baha'u'llah and Selected Topics by Foad Seddigh in: Lights of Irfan, vol. 15, pp. 355-402.
- 12 La'álí-i Maknúnih (Sharḥ-i-Lawḥ-i-Mubárák-i Aḥmad-i-Fársí) (Hidden Pearl- A Commentary on the Persian Tablet of Ahmad) Written by Foad Seddigh, published by Mir'at, New Delhi, 2017—Refer to pp. 319-321.
- 13 Refer to pages 187 to 191, in particular page 191 in:
Logos and Civilization: Spirit, History, and Order in the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, written by Dr. Nader Saiedi, Bethesda: University Press of Maryland, 2000.
Also refer to pages 601 to 605 in:
Making the Crooked Straight, written by Udo Schaefer, Nicola Towfigh, and Ulrich Gollmer, published by George Ronald Publisher, 2000.

- 14 The Call of the Divine Beloved, Bahá'í World Centre, Haifa, 2018.
- 15 Adib Taherzadeh writes in The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, vol. I, pp. 58-59:

Likewise, the spiritual worlds of God mentioned in this Tablet (Tablet of Kullu't-Ta'am or Tablet of All Food) are of different degrees:

Háhút: The world of Háhút is described by Bahá'u'lláh as the Heaven of Oneness, the realm of the Divine Being, the imperishable Essence, a realm so exalted that even the Manifestations of God are unable to understand it. Bahá'u'lláh has written in one of His Tablets: "From time immemorial, He, the Divine Being, hath been veiled in the ineffable sanctity of His exalted Self, and will everlastingly continue to be wrapt in the impenetrable mystery of His unknowable Essence... Ten thousand Prophets, each a Moses, are thunderstruck upon the Sinai of their search at God's forbidding voice, 'Thou shalt never behold Me!'; whilst a myriad Messengers, each as great as Jesus, stand dismayed upon their heavenly thrones by the interdiction 'Mine Essence thou shalt never apprehend'!"

Láhút: The next is the world of Láhút which is the plane of Divinity, the Heavenly Court. In the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh it appears that the realm of Láhút is perhaps the world of God in relation to His Manifestations and Chosen Ones. Immersed in the ocean of His Presence, they claim no station for Themselves on this plane and are as utter nothingness in relation to Him. In this realm no one is identified with God and the designation 'He alone, and no one else beside Him, is God' becomes manifest here.

Jabarút: Yet another spiritual world which Bahá'u'lláh describes in this Tablet is that of Jabarút, the All-Highest Dominion. The station of those who abide therein is closely identified with God, insofar as they manifest all the attributes of God, speak with His voice and are united with Him. This world appears to be the realm in which God's Chosen Ones, in relation to created things, are invested with His authority.

In the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh there are many statements concerning the dual station of the Manifestations of God and His Chosen Ones. In relation to God, these Holy Souls appear as utter nothingness, but in relation to the world of creation They are endowed with all the attributes of God and are closely identified with Him.....

Malakút: Another plane in the spiritual worlds of God is that of Malakút, the Kingdom of God, often referred to by the Prophets of the past. In the Tablet of Kullu't-Ta'am, Bahá'u'lláh has described it as the Heaven of Justice.

Násút: Apart from these four spiritual worlds, Bahá'u'lláh also refers in this Tablet to the realm of Násút — this mortal world — which He describes as the Heaven of Bounty. In many of His Tablets He has confirmed that both the human world and Divine Revelation have come into being through the bounty of God alone, and that if His bounty were to be replaced for one moment by the operation of His justice, the whole of creation would cease to exist.

Tablet of Fitnih From Bahá'u'lláh

A Provisional Translation by
Foad Seddigh

Await thou, O everlasting Fitnih, the trials of God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting! Verily, it will surely come to you in truth, indeed you are witnessing the start of its coming to you. And it will be a trial such as to make a distinction between káf and nún and one that would differentiate all peoples from now till such time as He will appear once more in the wondrous days promised in the manifestation of His unseen Essence and the reality of Its perpetual existence in the year of Mustagháth. This matter is verily nothing but the truth and will surely come to pass.

Verily, this is a kind of trial which encompasseth the entire creation whether in the seen or unseen realms. Say, this is such a trial that would dismay people, astound minds, tear mysteries asunder, and then would make pure souls to be thunderstruck. Say, this is a trial in which the heavens of knowledge and learning will become cleft asunder, the fields of might and power will be split apart and the mountains of glory will become crushed to dust. Say, this is a trial through which the thrones of glory will be shaken, the inhabitants of the exalted Tabernacle overturned, and the concourse of the Spirit in the eternal sanctity will be sore perplexed.

Say, this is a trial from which resplendent suns will be darkened, the moons of the realm above will fall down, and then the stars of knowledge in the heavens of the decree of God will fall. Say, this is a trial by which God will test every atom, all the inhabitants of earth and the heavens, and then the entire universe. This is a trial by which every noble man will be tested, followed by all pure servants of God, the angels who are nigh unto God, and then the dwellers of the Supreme Concourse. Say, this is a trial by which will be tested all those who claim to be cherishing love and belief in God, the Omniscient, the

Exalted, the Beloved, and in this the Glorious, the Exalted, the Best-Beloved Beauty.

Say, it is a trial through which the holy fire will be quenched, the water of truth will solidify, trees of light will be stirred and they who recognized the Splendour of Sinai will faint away. Say, this is a trial which will encompass every submissive man who hath known God, every mature and wise man, every organizer and man of knowledge, every trusted angel and every Prophet who hath been sent. Say, this is a trial through which the entire earth will be disturbed, all peoples will be tested and some will be differentiated from others—even to a more severe extent than the difference between earth and heaven.

Exalted be God! Who would make such irrevocable trials to appear by the agency of which separation will take place as it did during the time of all the Prophets and Messengers and before them during such ages which the knowledge of the learned encompass not. The separation will occur as it did during other times. This is a mystery which is well preserved in the treasure houses of holiness; no one knoweth this except those who are given sharp vision that is hidden by God from the eyes of men; this is derived from a vision such that should the peoples of the realms of truth and the inhabitants of exalted stations gain its knowledge, they would cry out in their own selves, tremble in their being and would not be able to scrutinize its source.

I swear by God that verily, through this trial the inner eyes of the Unseen will be dazzled, the eyes of holy and spiritual beings will be struck by lightning, and then the lights of the lordly moons in the heaven of revelation will be dimmed. Say, by God! In this trial, the steps of them who have known God will slip—those who have known God by God and those who are beholding the mysteries of revelation and creation with keen eyes at all times. Say, this is the kind of trial from which the cover of those who are well wrapped will be torn apart, thereby exposing all preserved mysteries. Say, by God! Soon all servants will be tested and thrown into the fire, even those to whom

never occurred, even to the slightest extent—as small as an atom—the possibility of worshipping anyone other than God.

Say, by God, in this trial the realities of those who have never been heedless of God and His Cause will be tested in less than the twinkling of an eye—these are the people who were remembering God—noting such consideration then it would be obvious that those who did not recognize this Cause in which all exalted manifestations are dumbfounded to an extent that an ant knoweth the fire must be tested more severely; such people are considered as the essence of waywardness before God.

By the One True God, in this trial the steps of all those who have known God, from the inhabitants of the Supreme Concourse, would slip before their soul would become aware, their inner hearts could understand or would be able to differentiate the essence of their knowledge with highest gems of mindfulness. After they realize that which they have missed, then they would cry out within their inner hearts, shout within their essence of being, and then would weep, wail and moan; even should the inhabitants of heavens and the earth from the realm of spirit and eternity accompany them they would like to abandon them so that they would not be veiled from this Exalted Beauty.

By God, the Holy Spirit will be disturbed during such time, the light of fellowship will be dimmed, the mystery within the mystery will tremble, so will the lofty Láhút, and then the angels around the Seat of God will be frightened. By God, in this trial, moving winds will be tested while they blow, flowing waters will be tested while being drunk, and fire will be tested while angrily blazing. By God, all will be tested—the heavens, earth, stars, moons—and then so will the seas with their boats, waves, splashes, and what is placed in them by the wonders of the creation of God, the Omniscient, the All-Subsisting be tested.

I swear by God, all things will be tested with all things towards all things through the essence of things; the atoms of the air are not

excluded, and this is the mystery of that which had been revealed to the First Friend from the realm of the revelation of God, the Exalted, the All-Knowing, the All-Known. And it is this verse according to which Luqmán admonished his son: “O my son! Verily, God will bring everything to light, though it were but the weight of a grain of mustard-seed, and hidden in a rock or in the heavens or in the earth; for God is the Subtle, informed of all.” as God witnesseth every single act they will be doing. I swear by God! Should ye look upon the lamp which sheddeth light every night before you, ye would behold that it is tested the moment it is enkindled, then would the moth that circulateth around it be tested, and so also would the light shed from it that encompasseth its surroundings be tested.

I swear by God that the trials would test, touchstones would find impurities, sieves would sift, and every single hair would be split into a thousand parts and each piece would be tested. All such occurrences would result from this Great Trial which would appear from the direction of the All-Encompassing, the Ancient of Days. Its winds have already started to blow softly, it will certainly come to pass during the Time of Severe Tests; it will encompass all cities, and everyone in such places will cry for help.

I swear by God and by Him who hath manifested this Ancient Beauty in His Essence for His Essence and through His Essence! Shouldst He remove the veils which cover that which is hidden from the eyes of all men, the supports of the Throne of God would tremble, those who carry the Throne would become disturbed, and their beings would become disintegrated. Verily, should I mention this Most Great Announcement, its strong trials and tests from this time until eternity, by God, its mention could not be exhausted and its description could not be completed, even if thousands of oceans of ink were utilised for its writing.