

Mathnaví-yi Mubáarak*(The Blessed Mathnaví)*

by Bahá'u'lláh

Translated by Kay Lynn Morton

Summary: When Bahá'u'lláh wrote His *Mathnaví* in 1863, He had already declared Himself to be The Promised One, quietly, to a small group of people, just before leaving Baghdad. Now, in the first seven months of His Divine Mission, in the course of His banishment to Constantinople, Bahá'u'lláh writes of His Arrival in the form of a Persian *mathnaví*, a time-honored form of poetry that is recited before live audiences. The number and scope of metaphors, tropes, and themes in this poem is vast, but at its heart is the unveiling of His true identity and His invitation for people to recognize Him in “This Spring”. He teaches many lessons and gives wise counsel — to mankind in general, and to the Sufi in particular. He stresses that man must open his inner eye (the soul’s eye) to recognize The New Friend Who has come. And man must cleanse his heart and soul, so he may free not just himself but the whole world from egotism. In closing, He expresses the intense loneliness and grief He is feeling now in His remoteness from Baghdad and the perilous situation He is faced with in Constantinople.

NOTE: To fully appreciate the sweetness of this poem, *it must be recited from beginning to end, without stopping to read the footnotes. See **Tips for Reciting the Poem**, p. viii.*

***Preface***

In Spring of 2017, I noticed that Frank Lewis’s provisional translation of *The Blessed Mathnaví* on bahai-library.com was unrhymed. Knowing how musical and lyrical the Persian language is, I wanted to see if this poem could be rendered in English *in rhyming couplets, like the original*. So I began to experiment with a few lines, found it fascinating, and soon became immersed in the vast ocean of resonating words and meanings, of divine light and spirit, that became the most engaging, enlightening, and amazing experience of my life. Now, almost seven years later, as I conclude the project, my heart is filled with gratitude to all those who encouraged and assisted me along the way (see *Acknowledgements*). I sincerely hope this feeble attempt to translate this poem will assist English-speakers to learn about this extraordinary work of art and come to love it and cherish it as much as I do — this wonderfully illuminating and tenderly moving poem — this gem that glistens so beautifully amid the Sacred Writings of Bahá'u'lláh.

— K.L.M.

Introduction

If you had a very important message to give to the world, how would you make it known? You'd probably use the internet and the English language — right? But what if it's 1863, and you are in the Middle East? And there is no electricity in people's homes. Candles and oil lamps are used at night. There are no cars, trains, or planes. People travel long distances in slow-moving caravans and ships at sea. And there are no post offices, telegrams, or copy machines. Also no telephones, radio, T.V., news networks, computers, or internet. And there is no universally spoken language. What language would you use?

Perhaps you could start getting your message out by asking the local newspaper to print it. You are presently in Baghdad, a city that does not yet have a newspaper, but you'll be leaving that city soon, on a caravan, and in a few months you'll be in a city that has recently begun printing a paper. However, the city you are traveling to is Constantinople (today's Istanbul), the Seat of the Caliphate of the Ottoman Empire, and the newspaper there will probably not print your message, since its content will be considered highly controversial and unorthodox. Besides, it will be very difficult for you to communicate with the editors, because you don't speak the Turkish language. You speak only Persian and Arabic, and you will need an interpreter.

Even if the newspaper prints your message, its content will so upset the Islamic religious leaders of the city, that they will, in all likelihood, declare you a heretic and incite an angry mob to come and murder you. They will drag you into the street, yelling wildly and cursing you. And they will strip you naked, spit in your face, beat you, whip you, cut your hands off, cut your feet off, and finally behead you and throw your head and body parts into a ravine on the edge of the city for the wolves to eat.

Yes, dear reader, you will be in a city under strict Islamic rule, without freedom of speech or freedom of religion. And although many people will be happy and excited to receive your wonderful message and grateful to you for delivering it, some of the most powerful men in the region, characterized by their pompous arrogance and their selfish egotism, will want to kill you. They will vehemently denounce and reject the message you bring. And you.

Imagining the above scenario will, I hope, help us all to understand the situation of Bahá'u'lláh at the beginning of His Mission, in April 1863, when the authorities had issued an order for Him to leave Baghdad and travel to Constantinople. He was a political prisoner in the grip of His enemies, but He knew that He was the long-awaited Promised One of All Religions, Whose coming had been foretold in all the Scriptures, and that He was to deliver a fresh outpouring of Divine Guidance that would transform human life on the planet. But how to announce this to the world? Knowing full well His important Station and Mission, and the need to communicate it, He penned a poem in the form of a Persian mathnaví, with His announcement embedded in it. And thus He wrote, for all the world, *The Blessed Mathnaví*.

But why a mathnaví? And what *is* a mathnaví? A classical Persian mathnaví is a lengthy poem that has been recited before live audiences, over and over, again and again, down through the years in the Persian culture. And, like a national anthem, through repetition it has become firmly fixed in all the people's hearts and minds, and is an integral part of their shared national identity. Since the rhythmic, rhyming verses of a Persian mathnaví are memorized so easily, its catchy couplets and memes become part of mainstream thought and vocabulary, and the verses serve as a unifying agent in society. From His Writings, we know that Bahá'u'lláh envisioned the future world with a universally spoken language. Surely He must have foreseen the time when His Mathnaví will have been translated into the one language that everyone speaks and understands. At that time, it will be recited all over the world, and it will unite the hearts of all peoples as it is listened to and loved, repeatedly, generation after generation, for centuries to come.

The mathnaví [pronounced: MASS nah VEE] consists of precisely rhymed and metered couplets, 80-100 couplets minimum, an *aa/bb/cc/dd* rhyme scheme, 22 syllables per couplet, and it has a distinctive opening section. The mathnaví has been traditionally used primarily for historic epic narratives and always conveys profound philosophical truths about human nature and life in general through: the skillful use of metaphors and figurative language; references to symbolic legendary figures; interwoven and echoing themes; illustrative stories, parables, and allegories and other literary devices, including: comical and sometimes very subtle satire; irony; paradoxes; hyperbole; twists and turns; koan-like riddles; and the playful use of multiple meanings of words. The mathnaví is entertaining, educational, thought-provoking, and soul-stirring.

It has been said that mathnavís are in the DNA of Persians. The masterful recital of them is a long-standing oral tradition in Persian culture. Much-loved mathnavís and epic poems — such as Rumi's *Mathnaví Ma'naví* and Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* — as well as poetry in general, flow perpetually through Persia like streams of life-giving water, nourishing the soul of a nation. Two of Persia's finest poets, Hafez and Saadi, who were both from Shiraz, are treated as saint-like figures, as national heroes. They are honored with marble shrines that have been built over raised sarcophaguses lovingly sculptured and engraved in memory of them. These shrines are set in large beautiful formal gardens with wide paved avenues for visitors to stroll amid tall cypresses, turquoise reflecting pools, singing nightingales, and the intoxicating scent of roses in bloom.

And mathnavís are recited everywhere — in coffee houses, on street corners, in parks, homes, picnics and private gatherings, and on television, radio, and YouTube. Each individual recitation is important and listened to most carefully, because each one is unique, as each person's voice gives the mathnaví his or her own particular pitch, tone, intensity, and subtle inflections as it is recited. Mathnavís are traditionally recited mainly in a monotone, so the slightest departure from the monotone is noticed immediately by the attentive listener and will raise the eyebrows, dimple the cheeks, or cause a few teardrops to fall. The mathnaví is a type of performance art, of staged theatre and drama. I strongly urge all Western readers to learn more about the Persian mathnaví in order to appreciate the genius, the majesty, and the potency of Bahá'u'lláh's *Mathnaví*.

Also, knowing some of the historical events in the life of Bahá'u'lláh that took place both before and during the time He wrote *The Blessed Mathnaví* will help in reading and understanding this work and many of the references and allusions that appear in it. Some events are described in the footnotes. Other events the reader should know about are summarized as follows:

Nineteen years before He wrote *The Blessed Mathnaví*, when Bahá'u'lláh was 26 and living in Tehran, in the north-central part of His native country of Persia (Iran), a new religion came into being in Shiraz, a city to the south of Tehran. It spread rather quickly and caused a great stir. Its Founder, a descendant of Prophet Muhammad, had declared that a New Age had begun, and that the Promised One of All Religions would soon come, with a Revelation far greater than His own. He made it abundantly clear that His own Revelation was to prepare people to recognize and accept the Promised One when He appeared, and He frequently referred to the Promised One as "*Him Whom God shall make manifest*".

The country's Islamic leaders were alarmed and angered by the rapid growth of this new religion and by its tenets. It promoted the equality of men and women. And it had no clergy. It prescribed universal education, so that all people can read and understand the Scriptures for themselves. The enraged clergy were threatened by this, labeled it heresy, and wanted to bring it to an end. So they influenced government officials to arrest, imprison, and finally, in 1850, execute before a firing squad this new religion's Founder, known as The Báb [pronounced: BOB], a title meaning: "The Gate." Despite the martyrdom of The Báb, the religion continued to grow. Hatred for it also grew, fueled by the fiery sermons of the Islamic clergy in the mosques, and in a short time, over 20,000 followers of The Báb were killed by means of unspeakably cruel methods of torture, beheadings, and the wholesale slaughter of innocent men, women, and children . . .

Bahá'u'lláh was a dignified nobleman from a distinguished family that traced its ancestry back to Persian kings, Prophet Zoroaster, Abraham, and the House of David. His manners were refined and gentle, His voice mild, and He was known for His warmth, generosity, and upright moral character. He was also recognized for His exceptionally brilliant mind. And He was sympathetic to The Báb's cause, associated with its supporters, and was well respected for His profound understanding of The Báb's writings and teachings. One summer day in 1852, in the midst of the genocidal fever sweeping the country, Bahá'u'lláh was arrested, paraded in a most humiliating manner through the streets, and then incarcerated in a foul-smelling underground dungeon in Tehran, infamously known as the "Siyáh Chál, or the "Black Pit" of Tehran. He was bound in chains to others, and a heavy steel collar was locked into place around His neck, a collar that dug into His skin and scarred Him for life. Years later, He related that, one night in that prison, He beheld a vision of an angel suspended in the air above Him, pointing toward His Head and calling out to all in heaven and earth, saying: "*By God! This is the Best-Beloved of the worlds... [this is] ...the Beauty of God amongst you, and the power of His sovereignty within you, could ye but understand. This is the Mystery of God and His Treasure, the Cause of God and His Glory unto all who are in the kingdoms of Revelation and creation, if ye be of them that perceive*".

Just as the Holy Spirit came to Jesus in the form of a beautiful Dove, to Prophet Muhammad as Gabriel's Voice in the cave, and to Moses as the Voice coming from the Fire in the Burning Bush, the Holy Spirit appeared to Bahá'u'lláh as the Maid of Heaven, announcing and appointing Him to be the Promised One of All Ages, All Religions, and All Nations.

Bahá'u'lláh spent four months in that pitch-black, vermin-infested hole, on the cold, damp floor in chains. He was on the list of prisoners to be executed by firing squad, and was awaiting His turn, when the Russian Consul in Tehran intervened and asked the government officials to spare this nobleman's life, since He had committed no crime. The officials reluctantly agreed to this, but only on condition that He leave Persia and never return. Thus, Bahá'u'lláh was exiled from His homeland. He chose to go to Iraq, but first spent one month recovering from the wounds and infections and the debilitating experience of that imprisonment. In January of 1853, having partly regained His strength, Bahá'u'lláh and His family undertook, under escort and in extremely cold temperatures, a very difficult three-month journey from Tehran to Baghdad by caravan over the Zagros mountains. The caravan and its exhausted band of travelers arrived in Baghdad April 8. Bahá'u'lláh would live in Iraq for ten years.

Although Bahá'u'lláh was placed under house arrest in Baghdad, He was given considerable freedom of movement. In the late afternoons, He would go to the local coffeehouse, where He would engage in conversations with the men. He made more than one trip to the nearby City of Karbala, where He visited the Shrine of Imam Husayn. And He spent some time living among the Kurds in the mountainous Province of Sulaymaniyah, where He gained a reputation for being a kind, gentle-mannered, soft-spoken dervish who had deep knowledge of the Scriptures and of a wide range of topics. He beautifully explained the hidden meanings of the perplexing verses in both The Bible and Quran, and He showed masterful skills in calligraphy and in writing poetry in a variety of styles. In Baghdad, His advice was often sought in matters that were of great concern to individuals. His wisdom, compassion, fairness, and problem-solving ability were unmatched, and He became known as the Wonderful Counselor.

During the ten years that Bahá'u'lláh lived in Iraq, He came to love the people there, and they came to know and love Him. Baghdad began to feel like home to Him. He was naturally quite saddened when, in April of 1863, government officials ordered Him to leave Baghdad and go to Constantinople (today's Istanbul), which was, at the time, the Capital of Turkey and the Seat of the Ottoman Empire. He and His family spent twelve days preparing for the caravan journey. During that time, He announced to a small number of trusted people closest to Him that He was the Promised One, the One whom The Báb had said would appear in the near future. This was The Great Announcement that scholars and all of the religious faithful in the world — Muslims, Christians, and others — had been eagerly anticipating and awaiting. Although made quietly and privately, Bahá'u'lláh's Declaration was an unparalleled and momentous event in human history. The Promised One of All Ages, All Religions, and All Nations had come at last.

The preparations were made for Bahá'u'lláh's departure from Baghdad. The caravan was ready. At noon on the third day of May, 1863, a large number of people gathered around Him to bid Him farewell. Many were seen openly weeping from the thought of being separated from Him. No longer would they be able to hear His voice or see His radiant face, or behold His gracious and loving manners, or ask Him for guidance or to explain the passages in the Quran. As the caravan left, some of them accompanied it on foot and followed it for some time out of the City, wanting to stay close to their Friend, their Beloved One, for as long as they could. We can only guess at the mixed emotions Bahá'u'lláh must have been feeling. Surely, it was heart-breaking to be forced to leave a land and a people He had grown to love. Yet He was excited and eager to carry out His Mission, which had just begun. However, He was facing an unknown destiny now, as He was traveling to Constantinople, heading into the hands of His most powerful enemies.

Bahá'u'lláh arrived in Constantinople on August 16, 1863, and He remained in that City for three and a half months, as a political prisoner under house arrest. Turkey was a country foreign to Him. He did not speak Turkish and needed an interpreter to communicate with His captors, who were hoping that Bahá'u'lláh would give up His claim to be The Promised One, which He refused to do. In Turkey He was surrounded by a culture that was dominated by the cult-like Sufi fraternal orders and the plaintive, melancholy moaning of the pipe, the Persian *ney*. It was a dark and depressing atmosphere. And it was fall. As the nights grew longer, He became aware that His heartless, evil-spirited half brother, Yahyá, out of jealousy and desire for power and leadership, wanted to kill Him. He knew that His life was in grave peril, and His future uncertain. He knew that He could suddenly be murdered, as He awaited further decision-making from all the men who had control over Him — both Persian and Turkish, both Shi'a and Sunni, both government officials and Islamic religious leaders — who were all trying to figure out what to do with Him and His unorthodox heretical claims and ever-growing popularity, and the very real possibility of a new religion coming into the world that would replace Islam and eliminate its powerful clergy.

It was during this dark stressful period in Turkey that Bahá'u'lláh finished writing His *Mathnavi*. Scholars are not completely certain of the date when Bahá'u'lláh commenced writing this poem. Some think that He may have begun it in Baghdad, in the Spring of 1863. (This might not be relevant, but in the first quarter of the poem, the word “spring” and its plural “springs” appear 28 times, and in the last three quarters of the poem, the words “spring” and “springs” are not used at all.) Although it is not known exactly when Bahá'u'lláh began writing the poem, it seems He may have quickly concluded it on, or shortly after, December 1, 1863, because on that day the Ottoman government authorities suddenly ordered Him to leave Constantinople within 24 hours. This may explain the poem's somewhat abrupt and extremely suspenseful ending.

What happened to Bahá'u'lláh after Constantinople? — After He wrote *The Blessed Mathnavi*? And what has become of the Bahá'í Faith? Bahá'u'lláh was banished from Constantinople and sent under armed escort to Adrianople (today's Edirne, Turkey), where He lived under house arrest for four and a half years. In Adrianople, more than one attempt was made to murder Him.

In one case, the poison that was used made Him gravely ill for some time and left Him with a constant hand tremor that lasted the rest of His life, clearly visible from His shaky handwriting. In Adrianople, once again, as had happened in Baghdad, many people came to love Him, word got out about This Wonderful One, people traveled long distances to see Him and to join His followers, and the Bahá'í community grew in number. And because of His growing popularity, His enemies banished Him again. This time, in 1868, He was placed in solitary confinement in the stone-walled ancient prison city of 'Akká, on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean (today's Acre, Israel). Fortunately, by 1877, political conditions changed, and Bahá'u'lláh was allowed to reside outside the city in a peaceful, rural setting. He died in 1892, at age 75, from an illness. In His Will, He appointed His eldest son, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, to carry forward the work of overseeing the development of the Bahá'í community in the world. And when 'Abdu'l-Bahá died, in 1921, His grandson, Shoghi Effendi, in accordance with 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will, took over the role of the appointed head of the Faith. Under Shoghi Effendi's guardianship, and until his death in 1957, the Bahá'í Faith strengthened and grew at a rapid pace throughout the world, and the Bahá'í World Centre was established in Israel on Mount Carmel. By the 1970's, the Bahá'í Faith had become the second most widespread religion in the world, and it was recognized as a Non-Governmental Organization at the United Nations in New York. Today the Bahá'í Community is well-organized and still growing and developing, aided by its elected administrative councils that guide Bahá'ís at the local, national, and international levels. (This is a very brief summary of the growth of the Bahá'í Faith since the death of Bahá'u'lláh. For more information visit bahai.org.)

In the end, despite the many ordeals He suffered — including: torture, exile, banishments, imprisonments, opposition from government and religious leaders, continual efforts to defame Him, and attempts to murder Him — Bahá'u'lláh faithfully and determinedly carried out His Mission and left over 100 volumes of Sacred Writings — a priceless wealth of Divine guidance and inspiration — for all humankind, for centuries to come:

In His Writings, all signed and sealed by Him, *Bahá'u'lláh calls for*: social and economic justice worldwide; the elimination of abusive behavior, which includes the abusive treatment of women as inferiors to — or as slaves or possessions of — men, and the cruel and abusive treatment of children and animals; ending all harmful addictions; entering into wedlock and creating united, loving families; occupying one's time engaged in work that benefits humanity; daily prayer and meditation; the elimination of extreme wealth and extreme poverty; one world currency; one language that everyone in the world can speak, in addition to their native tongue; no backbiting or defaming; no lying or cheating; the conscious effort, on everyone's part, to acquire virtues, such as truthfulness and trustworthiness, courtesy, humility and selflessness, faithfulness, loving kindness, patience and generosity; moderation in all things; no religious zealotry, fanaticism, or proselytizing; love and appreciation for all of God's Messengers; universal education and 100% literacy in the world; eliminating racial, ethnic, and national prejudices and discriminatory practices and caste systems; ceasing all contention and conflict, and refraining from all acts of force, oppression, tyranny, and warfare; and the creation of a peaceful world by forming a united

commonwealth of nations in which all governments are headed by councils of mature, devoted, trustworthy men and women who are democratically elected by secret ballot, with no parties or nominations or election campaigns — or poll-taking — and who collectively arrive at decisions in a nonpartisan manner, using a courteous, respectful, truthful, rational method of consultation, always striving for consensus in deciding what is in the best interests of both the individual and society as a whole. The wisdom and justice of all the unifying principles that are set forth in Bahá'u'lláh's Writings have attracted thoughtful people from all over the globe who are alarmed by the present state of affairs in the world, angered by the widespread corruption and injustices that are allowed to exist, deeply concerned about the future of human life, and all life on earth, and who see, in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, the keys to resolving the world's problems.

One of the world's problems, perhaps its greatest problem, is *hubris* — man's ruinous pride — his dark, selfish, destructive egotism in all its forms, including vanity, narcissism, jealousy, boasting, bragging and exaggerating, lying and cheating, posturing, haughtiness and arrogance — all of which may easily lead to: lust for power, hatred, malice, cruelty, lawlessness, rebellion, violence, and tyranny. *Bahá'u'lláh calls attention to this problem in His Mathnaví*. He says that we must free the world of egotism, and reciting His *Mathnaví* will help this to happen:

*Keep on setting hearts on fire from This Pipe's rhythm,
till you burn in the world all signs of egotism.* — Line 298

(Man's egotism will disappear not just by reciting the poem, but also heeding its wise counsel.)

Tips for Reciting The Poem

Recite Bahá'u'lláh's *Mathnaví* from beginning to end, continuously, without stopping to look at the footnotes. This takes about one hour, at a moderate pace. (The midpoint, between Lines 159 and 160, is a good place for a short break, if desired.) Persian mathnavís are recited in mostly a monotone, with all words enunciated clearly and given equal weight, in a most dignified way. You can listen to *The Blessed Mathnaví*, recited in Persian, online. (Search: "YouTube Masnavi Mobarak".) ***Whether one recites it in the traditional Persian way or a more modern style, in order for the words to have the greatest effect, there must always be a distinctive end stop, and pause, at the end of the first line of every couplet.*** This is considered a requirement for reciting a mathnaví. It's very important to keep this in mind, from beginning to end. This mandatory pause, or caesura, guarantees the steady rhythm of the lines and makes the poem memorable.

Translation and Footnotes

On the following 52 pages is a provisional translation of *The Blessed Mathnaví* by Bahá'u'lláh. The numbers 1-318 on the left side of the pages correspond to the 318 lines of the original poem in Persian. The 318 Persian lines, as you will see, are in the form of 318 couplets in English. Numbers and footnotes have been added by the translator.

He is the Most Glorious!

- 1* O The Life of The Throne,
 The Sun of Love
 so kind and true!
- The world and all therein
 can never beget
 a Light like You!
- 2* If only people weren't veiled from seeing Your Face,
 I'd say a word or two about Your Hidden Grace,
- 3 so all the souls become indebted to You,
 so all the hearts fall madly in love with You,
- 4 so You'd see the world intoxicated! —
 hearts in both hands, fully dedicated,
- 5* so that, when You arrive, O Pride of the Time,
 they'll scatter them freely at Your Feet sublime!

*1 - "Throne" is the translation of *arsh*. In Baha'i literature *arsh* sometimes means "Messenger of God" or "Manifestation of God", as is the case here. (See *47.) The word *arsh* can also be translated to mean: "The Empyrean" (heaven; the sky above) or "The Throne of God". *Arsh* implies the highest point in the firmament (the zenith in the vast dome of sky as it appears above one's head). This, in turn, evokes the image of the keystone, or capstone, of an arch, i.e., the wedge-shaped stone at the apex of a masonry arch — the final piece placed during construction, which locks all the stones into position and keeps them all together. Thus, the word *arsh* seems related to the English word "arch". And, by extension, to "monarch". And also the word "archangel", the angel that ranks above all of the other angels in the celestial hierarchy — named Gabriel in the Bible and, in Islam's Hadith, named Israfil — the trumpet-blowing archangel (who is The Messenger of God). "Arch", as a prefix, comes from a Greek root meaning: main/chief/ruler, which relates to another meaning of "The Throne": "the seat of power and authority". (See *260.)

*2 - "Your Face" is not to be taken in the physical sense. It implies "Your Reality" or "Who You are".

*5 - "Pride of the Time" is a title of the Messenger of God in His time (in His lifetime). Examples: In the days of Moses, Moses was The Pride of the Time. In the days of Jesus, Jesus was The Pride of the Time. At the time Bahá'u'lláh wrote His *Mathnaví*, in 1863, Baha'u'llah Himself was The Pride of the Time. "Pride" in this context means: "the foremost or prime person; having qualities widely loved and admired; being the best or "the pick" of a society; a source of great joy." — *Collins Dictionary*

- 6* Arise from The Mount of the Soul, just like the Sun,
so You're clearly seen — from every side — by everyone!
- 7 Parade That Face just like the Moon! — Fill the hearts with awe!
From Your Grace, make green and fresh this lifeless straw . . .
- 8* The drop is seeking life immortal from Your Sea.
Since You're The Greatest King, do grant him immortality.
- 9* The atom's begging for Your Light — O, how he cries.
Fulfill his wishes from Your Love, no how's and why's.
- 10 The seed is — with his opened mouth toward the sky —
waiting for Your Priceless Favors from on High.
- 11 The raindrops of Your Mercy on him do bestow,
O King of heaven above and Lord of earth below . . .
- 12* Burst open this curtain of hundreds of veils in place!
Beautiful! — Now give the world a sight to see! — That Face!



*6 - The meaning of “Arise from The Mount of the Soul” may not be clear to many people, since the term “Mount of the Soul” is not found in the English language. (“The Mount of the Soul” appears also in Lines 210 and 219.) The translator thinks this expression has many layers of meaning, and even a small portion of them would be impossible to explore in this small footnote. But, consider this: Whereas people think of the Revelation of Moses as having arisen (or appeared, or come to light) from The Mount of Sinai (i.e., Mount Sinai, which is a physical/geographical place), Bahá'u'lláh wants us to know that His Revelation has arisen, or appeared, from “The Mount of the Soul” (a spiritual place — His Heart and Soul). He affirms this later in the poem. See Lines 209, 205 and *205.

*8 - The words “King”, “Friend”, and “Beloved”, used in Sufi poetry, and also in Bahá'u'lláh's *Mathnaví*, can refer to *either God or the Messenger of God*. It is not always clear which one of these two are being referenced. This creates an ambiguity that suggests the mystical, mysterious relationship between God and His Messenger — the apparent merging, or conflation, of the two.

*9 - The phrase “no how's and why's” means: “with no questions asked”; “unconditionally”.

*12 - The 🌸 marks the end of what might be considered *the opening section of the poem (Lines 1-12)*, since one of the rules of mathnavi poetry-writing is that a mathnaví must have an opening section that is easily distinguishable from the rest of the poem. (Lines 1-5 may also be considered the opening section.)

- 13 Since about Your Favors there is not a single doubt,
pack for us provisions from Your Grace as we set out.
- 14** Make all The West, now — the place the sun will rise,
and give this globe, now — the joy Your Wine provides.
- 15** Give Light to the heart's light, from The Lights of Núr,
so they will see, from Your Face, The Lights of Túr.
- 16 And draw That Saber! — Your Terrible Sword! —
And kill all these foes of Your Faith, O Lord!
- 17 Raise Your Fire Divine! — Let it blaze like hell!
And nicely burn the bloodthirsty infidel!
- 18 *All of them are bats of night, O Sun of Day.
Raise Your Head and all this darkness burn away.*
- 19 Strain away these dregs of sorrow-tainted pain.
Give Your Light to this dark night's low candle flame.

*14 - In Islam there is a belief that in the time of the end (in “the last days”) the sun will rise in the West. See Line 80/*80.

*14 - “globe” is the translation of the Persian word *sharb*, which means: “A drink”, which can also mean: “A glass”, which, by extension, *in context*, implies: “A wine glass/goblet/globe”. (NOTE: “Wine” is used symbolically in the poem. It refers to the Word of God spoken by the Messenger of God, and it implies the spiritually uplifting, intoxicating, and blissful effect it has upon the human soul.)

*15 - “Núr” [rhymes with: POOR] means: “light”. Núr is the capital of Mazandarán Province in northern Persia (Iran) on the southern coastline of the Caspian Sea. Bahá'u'lláh was born into nobility. His wealthy family had its roots in Núr and the surrounding area. As a young man, He often accompanied His father on horseback throughout the region, helping to care for the poor. After His father died, He continued this work Himself and became known as “Father of the Poor”. Formally, Bahá'u'lláh was known as Mirzá Husayn ‘Ali-yi Núrí, which in English could be rendered: Sir Husayn Ali of Núr (i.e., Sir Husayn Ali of Light). “Núr”, in the expression “The Lights of Núr”, alludes to Bahá'u'lláh (The One from Núr).

*15 - “Túr” [sounds like: TOUR] means: 1. veil; 2. tulle [pronounced: TOOL], which is a soft, gauze-like fabric, like the netting used for bridal veils; 3. Sinai; 4. Mount Sinai. Here, in Line 15, “Túr” refers to Mount Sinai, the mention of which calls to mind the momentous, history-making events that occurred on Mount Sinai in the days of Moses. For “The Lights of Túr” see *106.

NOTE: For various reasons, Baha'i orthography is not rigidly adhered to in this translation. For example, there is no underdot below the letter “T” in the word “Túr”, although the proper diacritic (an accent mark) is used above the “u” in “Túr”. (*It is good to keep in mind that diacritics, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling are of no importance to an audience listening to the poem while it is being recited.*)

- 20* *A world abides in You,
just as You abide in the Soul,

till it appears from Your Command,
“BE!”, and then it is so.*
- 21 O Glory of the Soul! — In Remembrance of Your Face,
I will keep repeating all the features of Your Grace,
- 22* so I will weigh the souls — gauge the wisdom of —
so I will see who buys The Pearl of Your Love.
- 23*** I will start a Fire, so I burn, in the world,
all the curtains of the “holies” in the world.
- 24 The Maid of Inner Meanings — I will unmask.
That Hidden Light — I will unveil at last.
- 25 The Secret of the Mysteries of Everlasting Love —
I will explain, for You’ve come again, to the Soul to love.

*20 - “ ‘Be!’, and then it is so” represents *kun fa-yakúnu* (Quran 6:73). *kun fa-yakúnu* (Be, and it is) appears several times in the Quran. (For example, Quran 36:82.) The imperative word “BE!” (*kun*, which is spelled in Arabic with the letters *káf* [K] and *nún* [N]) represents the creative power of the Word of God — a theme also found in Genesis 1:1-28, John 1:1-3, and elsewhere.

*22 - In this Line, “buys” means: “accepts”, “gets”, or “understands”. The word “Pearl” (*dorr*) suggests “purity, essence, beauty, rarity, pricelessness”. (NOTE: “*Pearls of Wisdom*” means: “*Words of Wisdom*”.)

*23 - “I will start a Fire” is not to be taken literally. These words imply that He will set in motion a divine transformation that involves both loss and the potential for renewal.

*23 - The word “curtains” suggests tabernacles, which are large tents or movable structures used as places for worship or other religious meetings. Tabernacles are also those curtained boxes kept at or near altars in churches, cathedrals, etc. — boxes that hold items used in rituals. The word “curtains” may also imply “The Curtains of the Tabernacle,” a multi-paneled screen located at the entrance of The Holy of Holies. (The Holy of Holies is the inner court or sanctuary of the tabernacle, or temple, believed to have been built by King Solomon somewhere on Temple Mount in Jerusalem in order to serve as a place to keep The Ark of the Covenant, i.e., the box that contained The Tablets of The Ten Commandments revealed by God to Moses on Mount Sinai.) The word “curtains” also implies, by extension, the curtains/screens used in confessional booths in some churches; the curtains that separate the women from the men in mosques; and other curtains, veils, fabric, drapes, screens, etc., that are used to cover, hide and/or separate.

*23 - “holies” refers to the high-ranking religious leaders in the world, often referred to by Bahá'u'lláh as “divines”. The word “holies” in quotation marks refers to those so-called “holies” (“holy men”) who are holy in name only, whose corrupt behavior belies their “holiness”.

- 26* Welcome, O Firebird! Speak the Word! — Explain! —
so no more lame descriptions of life remain!
- 27 Do cleanse those hearts so full of jealousy!
Do guide those minds without the sight to see,
- 28* so, O Kind One, those not knowing of Your Covenant
will, from The Ancient Cup, become intelligent.
- 29 And yet, O Friend of Ours, with Songs of Sacred Love,
take us far from “intelligence” and lack thereof.
- 30** O Seraph of Bahá! O King of the Soul!
Give the dead a key to life to make them whole . . .
- 31 The Primary Tree is from the heart and its branches.
Free it from weather and water and clay — life’s chances —
- 32* so — from “essence and accident” — it’s free,
so — from its brilliance — suns enlightened will be!

*26 - “Firebird” refers to the sacred majestic flaming bird in Slavic folklore and in many countries of the world, including Russia and China. Firebird is God’s Messenger, and he comes from time to time, in the spring, to bring God’s love and guidance. Firebird suffers greatly in this world, then dies or departs in a burst of flames, but returns again and again, in an eternal cycle of death and rebirth. Birds that are similar to Firebird, in other folklore traditions, include: Phoenix and Símorgh. See *37, *72, *120, Line 219, *219, *220, Line 241, and *280.

*28 - This translator wonders if “The Ancient Cup” alludes to the amazing powers of the legendary “Cup of Jamshid” [jam SHEED] found extensively in Persian mythology and literature. Possessed for centuries by rulers of the ancient Persian Empire, it was said to be filled with an elixir of immortality and was used like a crystal ball in foreseeing the future. It was believed that, gazing into this chalice, one could observe the seven heavens of the universe, see the whole world reflected in it, and become aware of deep truths.

*30 - “Seraph” [SERR uff] is the highest angel in heaven who blows the trumpet on Resurrection Day (Judgment Day), which causes the dead to rise from their graves. In Islamic tradition, Seraph corresponds to Israfil [ess raw FEEL], who is mentioned in a hadith as being the archangel nearest to God. In Christian angelology, Seraph corresponds to archangel Raphael and belongs to the highest order of the ninefold celestial hierarchy, associated with light, ardor, and purity (source: Wikipedia). See also *1.

*30 - “Bahá” [buh HA] means: “Glory”; “Light”; “Splendor”. The title “Bahá'u'lláh” [buh HA ol LA] means: “Glory of God”.

*32 - “essence and accident” refers to the age-old debate (“substance and accident”) among philosophers about what is essential vs. what is nonessential for something to exist. In Islam, for example, there is the ongoing debate over whether the Hadith is essential — or nonessential — for the Faith of Islam to exist.

- 33* *This young tree of yours — plant in the soil of the heart.
Then, from the bright lights and shadows, keep it apart.*
- 34* *And from all the wayward winds, protect it well.
And free it from the delusions of the infidel.*
- 35* *Its root — do make it firm in the soil of the soul.
Its branches will pass beyond the sky as they grow!*
- 36* This New Spring You bring anew
 is bursting with new blooms,

 so from Your Resurrection
 the dead spring from their tombs!
- 37* The Sparkle of The Seas of Love
 comes from The Sparkle of You!

 The Wisdom of Eternity's Birds
 comes from The Wisdom of You!
- 38** The Scent of Joseph's Garment — bring it here . . .
 The Burning Bush of Moses — make it appear . . .

*33 - The expression “bright lights” alludes to celebrities and illuminati (“idols” and “icons” in society). And “shadows” refers to the fans who idolize and worship celebrities and closely follow them around, like their shadows. For an interesting discussion of this, see Frank Lewis's end note 16.

*34 - “delusions” refers to idle fancies, vain imaginings, illusions, falsehoods, wrong ideas, etc.

*35 - *Lines 30-35* address a matter of key, or vital, importance in life, and that is: keeping your personal faith — your soul's knowledge and love of The Truth (of God)— strong and healthy.

*36 - “Resurrection” can be viewed as: “Reappearing”, “Rising up now”, “Coming Again”. It implies the trumpet blast on Resurrection Day (See *30), that announces His arrival (His Return), which causes people to come out of their coma-like state of lethargy and be uplifted and spiritually revived.

*37 - “Eternity's Birds” refers to Phoenix, Firebird, etc. (The Messengers of God). See *26.

*38 - “that garment” — For many years, Jacob, father of Joseph, grieved over his long-lost son, fearing Joseph was dead. Jacob cried rivers of tears and became blind. When a garment of Joseph was brought to Jacob from Egypt and placed on the old man's face, he caught the scent of his beloved son, and Jacob's sight was miraculously restored. See *The Story of Joseph in The Quran* (Chapter 12). See also *53.

*38 - For an interesting discussion about “The Burning Bush of Moses”, see Frank Lewis's end note 18.

- 39* O Beloved! — From Your Face, The Spring has come!
And from This Spring, unnumbered Truths have come!
- 40 Every flower of Him — a book of His Story!
Every heart of Him — a fount of His Glory!
- 41* This Spring won't be followed by fall — ever!
All its flowers will circle Him forever!
- 42* This kind of spring the soul can't understand.
This kind of spring *harrows* the soul of man.
- 43 Those springs bring the burning desire for mates.
These Springs bring The Love of God that He creates.
- 44 Those springs end, because of their mortality.
And These Springs have the title: “Eternity”.

*39 - In Persian poetry, the term “Beloved” can refer to God — or to the Messenger of God. (See*8.)

*41 - The second line of this couplet evokes the powerful image of throngs of Muslim pilgrims circumambulating the Kaaba during a *hajj* [rhymes with “badge”], a pilgrimage to Mecca, the holiest site in Islam. (The *hajj* is the fifth of the fundamental Muslim practices and institutions known as The Five Pillars of Islam.)

*42 - A “harrow” is a farming instrument, similar to a wide rake, that is drawn over plowed land in order to 1) uproot and destroy weeds, 2) cover the sown seeds, and 3) break apart the clods and level the land. As a verb, “harrow” can mean: to afflict, agitate, distress, disturb, torment, and/or vex. We read in the Bible (2 Samuel 12:31 and 1 Chronicles 20:3) that harrows were used to physically torture people. In Yúsuf ‘Ali’s translation of the Quran (“Yúsuf” [yoo SUFF] is “Joseph”), in the famous Sword Verse (Quran 9:5), “harrows” (*kanad*) appears as “beleaguers” — meaning: (it) tortures or torments. But in Shakespeare’s play Hamlet (Act 1, scene 5, lines 13-20), “harrow” is used in connection with fear:

*But that I am forbid to tell the secrets of my prison house, I could a tale unfold
whose lightest word would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood, make
thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres, thy knotted and combined locks
to part, and each particular hair to stand on end like quills upon the fretful porcupine.*

And in Act 1, scene 1, line 44, Horatio, after having seen the apparition of a ghost, says: “It harrows me with fear and wonder.”

- 45* That spring rises in the world from seasons taking place,
 and This Spring — from the Light of His Heart-Capturing Face!
- 46* That spring with many tulips is endowed.
 And This Spring has a lot of *groans* right now!
- 47* This Eternal Spring from The King's Great Light
 has raised His Tent to Heaven's Greatest Height!
- 48 All the world's people have entered His Tent!
 (If you have eyes to see, behold this event!)
- 49* Our King! — When He flings the veil away from His Face,
 This Spring will pitch His Tent up over the stars in space!
- 50** Our Beloved! — When she flings away the niqáb,
 This Spring will get all fired up — without the hijáb!

*45 - Quotation from Lewis's end note 22: "Literally, this spring comes from the light of the face of the heart-stealer, *an epithet of the typical beloved, in Persian poetry, who carries...the hearts away.*"

*46 - The second line of this couplet has been translated: "And this spring has a lot of *groans* right now!" The word "groans" in Persian (*nálehá*) means: "(a lot of) groaning/complaining/lamenting". In The Bible is mention of different situations in which a lot of groaning occurs. Of course we know that, in life, one situation in which a lot of groaning occurs is childbirth. This section of the poem (Lines 46-48) suggests that there is a lot of groaning going on, from the birth of a new religion with all-inclusive new teachings about world unity, causing all the world's people to live in one big tent (figuratively speaking). A lot of adjustments need to be made.

*47 - "Heaven's greatest Height" is a translation of *arsh-e elah* (literally, the "throne of God"). In art and literature, the "throne of God" has been portrayed as being at the highest point (the zenith) of heaven. Hence, "Heaven's greatest Height".

*49 - "over the stars in space" implies: "over the entire universe".

*50 - "niqáb" [nee COB]: an opaque face mask, usually black (with a horizontal opening or perforation to assist in seeing and breathing), worn in public by some Muslim women. These masks are traditionally worn with or as part of a full-length opaque black body-covering garment, such as a *burqa* or *boshiya*.

*50 - "hijáb" [hee JOB]: a veil made from light-weight fabric, in varying sizes and colors, worn in public by some Muslim women as a type of head scarf. A hijab may leave all or part of her face exposed. It usually hides her hair and ears, and may cover her shoulders and, to some extent, below her shoulders. In Iran, if it is a full-length, body-covering veil, it is called a *chador* [chuh DOOR]. (The *chador* is also the black tent used by the nomadic tribespeople who roam through certain regions of Iran. Ironically, the women of those tribes do not wear veils, but brightly colored dresses, and their faces are exposed.)

NOTE: In September 2022, in Iran, large mobs gathered in the streets to protest the Islamic regime's strict rules requiring women to wear veils in public. In nightly demonstrations, women were seen dramatically tearing off their *chadors* (long black body-covering veils) and tossing them into bonfires.

- 51* We will be within This Spring, then, looking at her face.
We will not be in a garden, searching for her face.
- 52* We will, in His Praise, be free from any other one.
We will, in this world, become enlightened from His Sun!
- 53* If a Breeze from This Beautiful Spring wafts over you,
many beautiful Josephs will come into view.
- 54* If a Breeze wafts over from This Fragrance-Garden,
many spiritual Josephs will fill the world then.
- 55 You'll see their bodies become like spirits, and these
will achieve — each moment — all kinds of victories!

*51 - The second line of this couplet seems to allude to the lovesick Majnún [maj NOON] in search of his beloved Laylá (Leylí in Persian), an allegorical tale (that is also mentioned in Bahá'u'lláh's *Four Valleys*) that portrays the soul's deep yearning and constant searching for The Beloved. The popular story of the passionate, unrequited love of Majnún for Laylá, Arabic in origin, is portrayed in a narrative poem written in 1188 by the Persian poet Nizami Ganjavi. Prior to Nizami's work, the legend of these two lovers was told as a series of anecdotes. Nizami collected these anecdotes and organized them into one definitive story. Once Nizami's work became popular, the number and variety of anecdotes increased quite a bit, with many mystics inventing stories about Majnún to illustrate mystical concepts such as selflessness, sacrifice, the madness of lovesickness, etc. Nizami's famous 9,200 lines mathnavi: "Laylá and Majnún" has been translated into many languages. Lord Byron referred to it as the "Romeo and Juliet of the East". (Source for this footnote: Wikipedia)

*52 - "His Praise" could be: "His Remembrance", "His Mention", or "His Prayers", because the Persian word *zekerash* could mean any one of these terms.

*53 - The term "Josephs," in common everyday Persian conversation, refers to people who are physically very beautiful. Joseph was both physically *and* spiritually very beautiful — he was radiantly handsome as well as virtuous, upright, and noble. He was a godlike figure, with godlike qualities, and his importance in Islam should never be dismissed or underestimated: In Islam, Joseph is regarded as a Prophet, and in The Quran the only Chapter that is devoted entirely to one person is Súrah 12, which tells the story of Joseph. For other references to Joseph in the poem, see Line 38, *38, Line 54, Line 235, *235, Line 240, *240, and Line 317.

*54 - In the Persian culture, a "Fragrance-Garden" is a garden that is artfully designed to have an abundance of flowers that, when in bloom, perfume the air with a high concentration of sweet-smelling fragrances. (See also *136.)

- 56 Each moment, This Spring of Holiness, The Well-Beloved
has a hundred utterances — but who are the trusted?
- 57* This Speech is not at all like human tongues.
When will they grasp this, these inhuman ones?
- 58 This Speech is not from voice and tongue and breath.
This Speech is life itself and has no death.
- 59* Lovers! — Thousands of them you'll see, This Spring —
each moment of their lives — sacrificing!
- 60 *This Spring is The Glory of Spirit Sublime!*
This Spring is The Holiness of the Divine!
- 61* If a Breeze wafts to you from This Sheba, you will see
your mortal soul drink from The Cup of Eternity.
- 62* If a Breeze comes to you from the Abode of The Friend,
devote your life to Him — this life is also from The Friend.

*57 - The expression “these inhuman ones” (*ín nákasán*), literally “these nonhumans”, refers to people who are not truly human, who are totally lacking in moral character (in virtues such as kindness, humility, respectfulness, courtesy, honesty, trustworthiness, fairness, generosity, etc.) — those who, as Frank Lewis says in the end notes to his provisional translation, fail “...to observe the standards expected of a just and noble human being”, in other words, people who are narcissistic, haughty, self-aggrandizing, boastful, deceiving, lying, cheating, unforgiving, nasty, spiteful, cruel, heartless, power-grabbing, lawbreaking, destructive, divisive, gaslighting, undermining, controlling, dominating, tyrannical, etc. See also *76.

*59 - In this Line, “Lovers!” evokes one of Táhirih’s poems, the first line of which is: “Lovers! Creation veils His face no more! Lovers, look! He himself is visible!” And “Lovers!” also appears in the first line of one of Rumi’s famous poems (see *Táhirih: A Portrait in Poetry*, p. 127, Kalimat Press, 2005).

Showcasing another poet’s work by copying or imitating the words or style of that poet (which is called *tazmín* [taz MEEN] and *esteqbál* [ESS tek BALL]), is a common feature in classical Persian/Sufi poetry. It honors the fine work of other poets. (See *297.) For the meaning of “lovers” see *181.

*61 - The word “Sheba” [SHEE buh], for many Westerners, may bring to mind the Queen of Sheba (King Solomon’s Beloved). In Persian, however, the term “Sheba” does not refer to the Queen. “Sheba” (*sabá*) is the name of the kingdom in Arabia, where she lived and ruled. It’s her home, her abode. The name of the Queen was “Belghees”, according to the Quran. (Her name is not mentioned in the Bible.) And so, in this Line, “Sheba” means “Kingdom”, “Realm”, “Home”, or “Abode”. (But it could, perhaps, also — by extension — allude to Bahá'u'lláh.)

*62 - The word “Friend” (like the word “King” and the word “Beloved”) in Sufi poetry and in this poem, can refer to God and/or the Messenger of God. (See *8.)

- 63* The Tulip of Oneness in This Spring! — See Him there!
The Hyacinth of Singleness! — See The Friend's hair!
- 64* The Buds of Wisdom — look to the side and see! —
The whole crowd's searching for Him eagerly!
- 65 Its cypress trees — His Stature and His Grace.
Its shoots of grass — the whiskers on His Face.
- 66* Its nightingales — from Reunion with Him —
Its turtle doves — from the Beauty of Him —
- 67* *they're all drunk now, from The Friend, the Adored —
from His Words to them, "Am I not your Lord?"*
- 68* If this gets out — This Nightingale's Melody —
people's souls will be cleansed of jealousy!
- 69 This Utterance made the Ocean of Meaning surge!
The Ship of Existence rocked from This Generous Word!

*63 - The tulip is a symbol of perfect love. The hyacinth has curled petals that look like locks of hair. In Persian literature, in metaphors, the word for "hyacinth" (*som-bol*) means: A curl or ringlet (of hair).

*64 - The phrase "Look to the side" represents a Persian idiom that means: "Look out of the corner of your eye."

*66 - The contents of Lines 66 and 67 have been combined and rearranged, in this translation, for clarity, so that some of the words in Line 66 in the original work, are in Line 67 in translation — and some of the words in Line 67 in the original work, are found in Line 66 in translation.

*67 - "*Am I not your Lord?*" are the words that are spoken, in some fashion, by every Messenger of God on His "First Day," when He declares His Divine Station (and His Cause, or Mission) quietly, to a small number of people (sometimes just one person). He asks if they recognize Him as their Lord (as God's New Messenger), and they reply, in effect, "Yes, we do." This exchange renews and reaffirms God's Ancient Covenant with Man, which is that, God has promised Man that He will never leave him alone, but will continually, from time to time, send Divine Guidance through His Chosen Messengers — and Man has agreed to recognize God's Messengers when they arrive and follow their laws and teachings. That Covenant, made on the "Day of Alast" ["Alast" rhymes with: at LAST] (literally, "Day of the First" or "First Day"), was made between God and the children (the descendants) of Adam, i.e., between God and all mankind (Quran 7:172). For the "Day of Alast," see Lines 148 and 149, and *148 and *149.

*68 - "If this gets out" means "If this becomes known" (widely known among people). The word "this" in this expression refers to "This Nightingale's Melody", which refers to the Words He spoke (in Line 67): "*Am I not your Lord?*"

- 70* *Every anemone that blooms from This Spring will be
telling hundreds of Truths about The Friend's Mystery . . .*
- 71** The Scent of Musk keeps coming from His Hair.
His Grace bestows on you this gift so fair.
- 72* His Hair is like The Salamander — all afire —
circling round The Glowing Face of The Heart's Desire.
- 73* The Holy Nightingale's moaning within.
Remoteness is burning marrow and skin.
- 74 If, from the pain of separation, He draws a sigh,
it will inflame the hearts of all The Favored on High.
- 75* Those not favored don't partake of this sigh.
This Favor, O Habib, do not deny!

*70 - The word "anemone" [uh NEMM uh NEE] means "daughter of the wind", and it refers to a type of brightly colored wildflower of the buttercup family that blooms in early spring throughout the world, both in the wild and in formal gardens. Its petals seem to dance in the wind. The anemone is also called "windflower"; "thimbleweed"; and "smell fox" (from the musky smell of its leaves). (See also *123.)

*71 - "Musk" is the resinous fluid stored in the navel-bag on the underbelly of the male musk deer. The powerful, heavy scent of musk attracts the female deer in mating season. (Musk was highly valued in perfumery until the late 1800's. Today, synthetic musk is used almost exclusively.) See also Line 76, Line 81, *81, and Lines 82, 126, 137, and 216.

*71 - "His Hair" may suggest: "His Revelation". See Lines 126, 195-197, 258, and *195/196/197.

*72 - Regarding the meaning of this line: "His Hair is like The Salamander — all afire —", here are four things to consider: 1) "Salamander" is, in some traditions, another name for Firebird (see Firebird description in *26); 2) One artistic depiction of Firebird, online, shows Firebird all afire, circling round the head of the Loved One, and the Loved One's face is aglow; 3) The rapidly spinning flame of fire that you sometimes see in a hotly burning fire was called a "salamander", because it reminded people of the way a hibernating salamander rushes out of a log, when the log is added to the fire; 4) In classical Persian miniature paintings, the Prophet is often portrayed with flames around His head (and sometimes around His whole body). This fiery, halo-like aureole [OR ee YOLE] represents the aura and glow of holiness that emanates from and surrounds the Messenger of God.

*73 - "marrow and skin" means, here, in effect: "both the inside and outside of Him". (See *131.)

*75 - "Habib" [hab EEB] is a popular masculine name that means "Beloved" or "Friend". However, the term "*O Habib*" is sometimes used in Persian literature when one is addressing God, as is the case here. (See also *8, Line 315, and *315.)

- 76* *Diffuse the Musk Divine from Your Perfume well,
so these inhuman ones will catch the smell!*
- 77 This Spring is Eternal — and not at all
the spring that is always followed by fall.
- 78 From This Spring of Holiness, The Spirit appears.
And from its atmosphere, The Light of Noah appears.
- 79* He seats The People of the Ark aboard the ship,
then gives to everyone a vast array of gifts!
- 80* O Beauty of God! Come out from the mask,
so the Sun will rise in the West at last!
- 81** Unlock the Science of Perfumery!
Unlock the Store of Hidden Mystery!
- 82 So — from Your Musk — the lifeless come alive!
So — from Your Wine — the languishing revive!

*76 - For “Musk”, see *71. (And for “these inhuman ones” see *57.)

*79 - See Frank Lewis's end note 39 for his comments on “The People of the Ark” and Noah's Ark.

*80 - One Islamic hadith says: *The Hour will not be established till the sun rises from the West; and when it rises (from the West) and the people see it, they will all believe.* (from ‘Abú Húrayrá, Amíyáh al-Tafsír) An insightful explanation of this saying was given by ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, which can be found in *God Passes By*, by Shoghi Effendi, on page 253: *From the beginning of time until the present day, the light of Divine Revelation hath risen in the East and shed its radiance upon the West. The illumination thus shed... acquired, in the West, an extraordinary brilliancy. Consider the Faith proclaimed by Jesus. Though it first appeared in the East, yet not until its light had been shed upon the West did the full measure of its potentialities become manifest...* (See the rest of this quote and also Line 14.)

*81 - “Perfumery” is used here as the translation of the word “ladani” [LAD on ee]. What is meant by “the Science of Ladani”? This translator was told (by another translator) that “ladani” means: pertaining to divine or inspired knowledge “which came into you without any effort on your part” and is perhaps related to “respiration.” But this translator wonders if “ladani” is related to “ladan”, which, according to Hayyim's *New Persian English Dictionary*, is the Persian word for “labdanum” [LAB duh numm], a gum resin obtained from two species of Southern European rock rose (cistus). Labdanum's heavy, intoxicating scent resembles that of ambergris (see *218). Labdanum's use in perfumery and medicine was developed from the science of aromatics (olfaction), dating back to ancient Egypt. Incense. Fragrances and scents. Inhaling. Inner knowledge that enters you effortlessly, related to breathing . . .

See also Lines: 38, 54, 71, 76, 82, 103, 126, 136, 137, 214-218, and 258.

*81 - The word “Store” in this Line means “storehouse.”

83* O Kind One! This Abased One in The Land of Unity —
 clothe with the Robe of Glory from Your Generosity!

84 Dress This Mortal in The Vesture of Eternity,
 make Him taste the Honey-sweet Wealth of Utter Poverty,

85 so, bursting through The Veil of Mysteries,
 tearing the mask off Possibilities,

86** selfless and lit up, He will emerge and burn —
 like a star in The Lamp-Glass of “*They who return...*”

*83 - “The Land of Unity” refers to Turkey, where Bahá'u'lláh wrote this poem, under house arrest, in the capital city of Constantinople (Istanbul). For centuries, Turkey (Constantinople, in particular) had been a nexus of trade routes that brought merchants together from many different countries and continents, and for this reason Turkey was called “The Land of Unity”.

*86 - “like a star in The Lamp-Glass” alludes to what is considered by many to be the most beautiful metaphor in the Quran (24:35), called “*The Verse of Light*”:

God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The Parable of His Light is like a niche within which there is a Lamp, the Lamp within Glass, [within] the Glass as if it were a pearly (white) star, lit from [the oil of] a Blessed olive tree, neither of the east, nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon Light. God guides to His Light whom He wills. And God presents Parables for the people, and God is knowing of all things.

*86 - “*They who return...*” refers to the company of close family members and early believers who, out of their love for Bahá'u'lláh, surrounded and protected Him at all times — as much as possible, and as best they could — just as the glass chimney (the lamp-glass) of an old-fashioned oil lamp surrounds and protects the flame of the wick as it burns. But why are they referred to as “*They who return...*”? This is because, each time a Messenger of God comes, the early disciples and believers who are closest to Him bear a striking resemblance to the early believers and closest companions of the previous Messenger, in terms of their personality traits, their spiritual qualities, and their behavioral characteristics. It therefore seems as if the early believers of the previous Messenger have returned. The phrase “*They who return...*” comes from the Writings of The Báb. (See *A Summary of The Persian Bayán*, Wahid 1, Chapter 1, by Edward Granville Browne. See also Line 169.)

- 87* When This Thorn from Your Garden is in full bloom,
 You'll propagate hundreds of gardens soon!
- 88 Enroll each garden in a registry.
 Then teach each leaf about God's Mystery,
- 89 so The Lights of Your Face become so clear,
 that Your Light fills earth and heaven, far and near.
- 90 Blow The Wind of Your Mercy, O Generous One!
 Tear the veils of negligence off this erring one!
- 91* Place in The Shelter of Your Lote-Tree, by and by,
 the spirits of the pure in heart, O King on High.

*87 - The word "thorn" (*khár*) in Persian literature and song lyrics is often used to refer to something or someone lowly or small, or deemed to be of little or no value (worthless). "This Thorn" seems to refer to "This Abased One" in Line 83, i.e., Bahá'u'lláh, Who was an abased political prisoner in Turkey when He wrote this poem. The word "thorn" perhaps also implies: "thorn bush." There are large areas of desert plains in the Middle Eastern Region which abound in scraggly thorn bushes. Some of these grow to be rather large, and look more like trees than bushes. Thorn bushes are highly valued by the inhabitants of those regions and are used for many things, among which is: firewood. The branches of the thorn bush burn steadily, for long hours, without dying out. (Some sources claim that the "Burning Bush" of Moses was a thorn bush.) And we might also note that some species of thorn bushes flower, in season, and become very beautiful (see photos online). Whether Bahá'u'lláh likens Himself to a thorn or a thorn bush is beside the point — when the abased prisoner in Turkey "...is in full bloom..." (Line 87), and becomes a shining Light among all men, glowing "...like a star..." (Line 86), His Light will spread throughout the world (Lines 88 and 89).

*91 - "Lote-Tree" refers to the Messenger of God, and it alludes to "Sadratu'l-Muntahá", which means: "the tree beyond which there is no passing" — translated also as: "the Lote-Tree of The Utmost Farthest Boundary". This is because, in ancient times, in parts of the Middle Eastern Region, the outer limit of a city-state (or kingdom) was marked by a large lote-tree growing there, next to the road that led out of the city. Reaching the sheltering shade of a lote-tree was as far as people could go before leaving the city limits. Similarly, reaching the sheltering shade of the Messenger of God is as far as we humans can go in this world — before leaving this earthly state of existence — in our individual journeys to know God, draw near to Him, and attain His presence. See Lines 110, 192, 193, 270, and their footnotes, and also Quran 53:14 (islamawakened.com).

- 92* From The Garden of Truth, open a gate!
For God's sake, don't make a wall of this gate! —
- 93 so I'll come and explain, with evidence,
the Mystery of Your Benevolence!
- 94 He said: "O God! O God! — No, O Good Man!
Don't explain this to the ignorant man!
- 95* No! — O Tongue of God's Mystery! — Be wise.
Softly, nicely talk — and form loving ties,
- 96* for, if You take them gently by the hand,
they won't fear 'this and that', do understand."

*92 - It is tempting to assume that the word "gate" (used twice) in this Line alludes to The Báb (1819-1850), Who was Bahá'u'lláh's Forerunner, and whose name was Siyyid 'Alí Muhammad Shirazi. But the translator of this poem thinks that "gate" (the Arabic term "*báb*") in this Line simply means: gate/door/passageway.

*95 - "God's Mystery" ("The Mystery of God") refers to Bahá'u'lláh. See translator's Introduction, p. iv, the last paragraph, which describes the vision He had while imprisoned in the Black Pit of Tehran. In His vision, the Maid of Heaven calls Bahá'u'lláh "The Mystery of God".

*96 - The expression "this and that" in this couplet seems to refer to people's need to compare things, especially when confronted with something new and different vs. something familiar from the past. They may be fearful of the new thing, or what may happen because of the new thing's presence in their lives. It may cause them, and their lives, to change. And change is not easy for many people. This new coach vs. that old coach. This year's new teacher vs. that teacher we had last year. This new Messenger of God compared to That One Who came long ago. In several places in the poem, Bahá'u'lláh uses, or implies, the terms "this" and "that" in tandem, to make comparisons and point out distinctions. Some examples are: This Spring and That Spring (Lines 45-46); This Khez and That Khez (Lines 111-114); This Staff and That Staff (Lines 199-204); This Brilliance and That Brilliance (Line 212); This Great One (implied) and That Great One (Lines 237-239), and This Pipe and That Pipe (Lines 291-292).

- 97* Spread your spirit's wings — always flying be!
 In His Atmosphere — always plying be!
- 98 Nearness to God is with the soul — not with steps in time.
 When your soul yearns for Him, you'll step outside of time!
- 99* Then, instantly, you'll fly through space with ease!
 (Not hard, when you're of those down on their knees.)
- 100 And here, I'm making a point to be fair,
 so you'll take from the Water of Life your share,
- 101 so, of His Paradise — you'll be aware,
 so, to His Presence — you'll find a way there,
- 102** so teleporting's true meaning you'll know,
 so flying up into His Realm you'll go!

*97 - The word “plying” means going or traveling regularly, repeatedly, back and forth — through, or in, a certain area, situation, space, or location, such as bussing between cities, ferrying across a river, flying between airports, or rhythmically hand-stitching fabric — in and out — or back and forth — with needle and thread. The verb “ply” is derived from the verb “apply”.

*99 - The expression “when you're of those down on their knees” implies: “when you are one of those who are sincerely faithful — who humble themselves before God, get down on their knees, and *prostrate* themselves in prayer”. (The translator used a little poetic license in this Line to serve the rhyme.)

*102 - The word “teleporting” is a clue that Bahá'u'lláh is speaking to a Sufi. In the 19th Century, among the Sufi fraternal orders there was the belief in what we call, today, “teleportation” (*tey yul-arz*). This was conceived as the instantaneous transfer of the human body from one location to another in the physical world. (Today, we know “teleporting” occurs only in science fiction, movies, videos, etc.) Bahá'u'lláh dismisses the notion that physical teleportation of the body really happens, as Sufis believe, but He says that the soul can fly swiftly through the universe as spirit — in the spiritual realm, or plane, of existence. He explains to the Sufi that true teleportation (space travel) is not of the body, but of the soul, or spirit. See Lines 97-108 and 128-135. For a detailed discussion of *tey yul-arz*, see end note 47 of Frank Lewis's provisional translation on bahai-library.com.

*102 - “flying up into His Realm” to attain “His Presence” (Line 101) suggests an ascent up into Heaven to be in the presence of God. This alludes to Prophet Muhammad's Divine Ascent (Mi'raj) — i.e., His rise up into The Seventh Heaven (the highest region or sphere of heaven), where He attained the presence of God and conversed with Him. This vision is briefly mentioned in the Quran (17:1) and elaborated on in the Hadith. For Bahá'u'lláh's explanation of attaining the presence of God (the theme of Lines 98-102), see the *Kitáb-i-Iqan* and *The Seven Valleys* by Bahá'u'lláh. For Mi'raj see *256 and *268.

- 103 Since you're caught, right now, in the trap of clay,
 how can you smell the heart's garden that way?
- 104 Remove those clothes that bind and constrict you!
 Then cleanse your soul of things that restrict you!
- 105 Make the darkness of your heart illumined from His Sun,
 so, in the land of souls, a ruler you'll become!
- 106** When the darkness leaves, His Light is the dawn for you.
 On your heart, The Lights of His Sinai enlighten you.
- 107 When your night is gone and morning's light is clear,
 and The Breeze of The Glory's Spirit blows near,
- 108 then you — this darkness of ego will end
 with this — The Water of Life from The Friend!

*106 - For "The Lights of His Sinai" see Lines 211 ("His Heart — Mount Sinai") and 263. The word "Light" (singular, plural, or implied) appears nearly 60 times in the poem, making "Light" a major theme beginning in Line 1 with: "*The world and all therein / can never beget / a Light like You!*" (This theme appears frequently in all of Bahá'u'lláh's Writings, including the prayers He revealed.) "Sinai" is a word that also appears many times throughout the poem. For a scholarly treatment of the term "Sinai", see Stephen Lambden's "The Sinaitic Mysteries: Notes on Moses/Sinai Motifs in Bábí and Bahá'í Scripture", in Moojan Momen, ed., *Studies in Honor of the Late Hasan M. Balyuzi* (Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 1988), pp. 65-183. The word "Sinai", of course, brings to mind Mount Sinai and the Fire and Light associated with the momentous events involving Moses that occurred on Mount Sinai (*for the Fire on the Mountaintop and the Light that shone from the Face of Moses, See Exodus 24:17 and 34:29-35*). NOTE: "The Lights of His Sinai" resonates with "The Lights of Túr" in Line 15, since "Túr" means "Sinai". ("Túr" also means: "veil". See *15.)

*106 - For more about Moses, see *201.

- 109* If, from your ego's darkness, you become free,
 you'll quaff the Wine of Life so easily.
- 110** Then come in the shadow of The Khez of the Soul,
 so you'll be delivered from this dark abode.
- 111* That Khez took one drink to have immortal life.
 This Khez gives away hundreds of Founts of Life!
- 112 The Water of Life He gives to everyone.
 His Own Life to The King, The Single One.
- 113 That Khez struggled for months to reach one fount.
 From This Khez — all at once — came hundreds of founts!
- 114 That Khez, back then, went running after a fountain.
 And This Khez has fountains running all around Him!

*109 - The word "Wine" is used symbolically throughout the poem to refer to the Word of God spoken by the Messenger of God. It implies the spiritually uplifting, intoxicating effect of His Word upon the soul.

*110 - "The Khez of the Soul" refers to The Messenger of God, i.e., Bahá'u'lláh. ["Khez", in this poem, is pronounced: KHEZZ; the *kh* sound is a blend of 'k' and 'h' that is similar to the *ch* sound in the Scotch pronunciation of "Loch" in "Loch Ness". See also *111.]

*110 - Coming into "the shadow of The Khez of the Soul", i.e., "the shadow of The Messenger of God", implies, among other things, coming under the enlightening influence of Him. The Persian word for "shadow" (*zell*) can also mean "shelter", "shade", "umbra", or "penumbra". The ancient title given to Persian kings was "Zell'u'lláh" ("The Shadow of God"). See also Lines 91, 131, 133, 192, 193, and 270 and their footnotes.

*111 - "That Khez" (*in contrast to* "The Khez of the Soul" in Line 110) refers to a pre-Islamic prophet figure, who is still very much loved and venerated by Muslims (and Druze), similar to the way Catholics revere saints. This ancient divinely illumined soul is not named in the Quran, but alluded to, in 18:65-82. NOTE: His name is usually spelled "Khezi" or "Khidr" (the translator has modified the spelling of his name in the poem to make it easier for readers to pronounce). Khez is also known as "The Green One" and is sometimes identified with the prophet Elijah. (See Wikipedia.) In one of the many colorful myths about Khez, he makes a long, arduous journey to the Arctic Region (the "Land of Darkness") to find and drink the "Water of Life" from a spring (a fountain) believed to be located there, in order to escape death and live forever (attain immortality).

- 115 O Glory of the Soul! Come back from That Dark Place,
so that a hundred thousand meanings you will chase!
- 116*** Hunting onagers — let that be for Gúr!
Hunt for meanings, now — on the plains of Túr!
- 117** *You captured those lovers' souls on a plain . . .*
Now all those lives have left this earthly plane . . .
- 118 *There's no more chance to tell the nightingale*
about the rose, O King behind the veil . . .
- 119 Fly up a falcon — O Beloved! — from the hand,
so that it comes back with The Meaning of That Land.
- 120* This time, hunt The Símorgh of Inner Mystery.
Open up a treasure — you! — with the keyword “BE”!

*116 - “onagers” [ON uh gurz]: a species of wild asses native to Persia, noted for their superior running speed.

*116 - “Gúr” refers to 5th Century Persian King: Bahrám-i Gúr V [bah ROM ee GOOR — rhymes with: TOUR], who was famous for hunting onagers. (A decorative metal plate with a Bahrám-i Gúr hunting scene is on display at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.) See Wikipedia for more information about this king.

*116 - “Túr” [sounds like: TOUR] here, means: “Sinai”, i.e., the region of Sinai, or the Sinai Peninsula, which includes the Plains of Sinai. See *15.

*117 - “a plain” suggests the Plain of Bedasht (located east northeast of Tehran), where the Conference of Badasht (“Badasht” is the Romanized spelling of Bedasht) took place in summer of 1848. This secretly held Conference, organized by Bahá'u'lláh, was attended by Bábis who wanted to address their concerns regarding The Báb, who was being held in a remote prison in the northwest region of Iran. Within about two years, The Báb was executed by a firing squad, and all the Conference attendees, except Bahá'u'lláh, lost their lives. (Over 20,000 Bábis were ruthlessly killed within a short period of time.) The Conference of Badasht is famous for “The Incident” — Táhirih, the only woman attendee, appeared at one point in the Conference without a veil covering her face, causing chaos and consternation. One man was so upset, he slit his throat. Bahá'u'lláh wisely explained the significance of the event, restoring calm to the group. For a more detailed account of the Conference of Badasht, see *God Passes By*, by Shoghi Effendi. (NOTE: The word “*dasht*” means “plain”; “desert”; “field”; “campaign”.)

*117 - For the word “lovers” see *181.

*120 - “Símorgh” [SEE morg] is the mythical bird in Persian folklore which is, like Phoenix and Firebird, a symbol of The Messenger of God. See *72. See Wikipedia for a marvelous description of Símorgh. (The translator wishes there were more space in these footnotes for descriptions of all these birds!)

- 121 That which You have promised, now do make it happen!
O, from Your Light, enlighten this earth and heaven!
- 122* From Your Ridván, make this world so lush and nice,
that it becomes the envy of Paradise!
- 123* From Your Truths, many anemones will unfold
in the spacious field of This Springtime of the Soul.
- 124 Then tell each flower Nightingale's Secret, as You must,
but Your Heart's Finest Wine share only with those You trust.
- 125 (Since strangers are here, one must guard the heart.
Here, it's hard to tell friend and foe apart.)
- 126* *O Gentle Breeze of the Morning, bring unto us,
from The Friend's Forelocks, That Spiritual Musk . . .*
- 127* *O Cloud of Spiritual Favors, rain on the world,
so this oyster will again yield a Pearl . . .*

*122 - "Ridván" [REZZ von] is the name of the beautiful formal garden that belonged to a wealthy citizen of Baghdad who, when Bahá'u'lláh was banished to Turkey, offered the use of his garden to Bahá'u'lláh and His family and friends, for the twelve days of preparation to leave Baghdad. It was during those days that Bahá'u'lláh declared, for the first time, that He was the Promised One, and this marked the beginning of His Mission. (See Introduction, p. v.) Bahá'ís around the world celebrate this joyous occasion and those twelve days every year, as a holy festival — The Festival of Ridván.

*123 - "anemones" [uh NEMM uh NEEZ] are brightly colored members of the buttercup family that unfold in the warmth of the sun and quiver, as if excited, with each puff of wind. For this reason, they are often referred to as "windflowers". For more about anemones, see *70. (There are videos online of beautiful anemones in bloom.)

*126 - For "Forelocks" ("Hair") and "Musk" see Line 71 and both of its footnotes.

*127 - Some of the ancient natural philosophers held the belief that pearls are formed when a dewdrop, or a drop of water, is placed inside an oyster's shell. Scientific studies have disproved that myth. However, it is interesting to note that pearl-producing mollusks maintain an open relationship with their environment by constantly circulating water (either fresh water or salt water) through their shell in order to support their food supply. Occasionally an irritant will enter the shell and become lodged inside. A sac is formed around the irritant and begins to secrete a glossy substance that coats the particle in order to protect the oyster, and this is how pearls are formed. But aside from scientific facts, Bahá'u'lláh, here, is simply drawing upon an old myth to create a beautiful metaphor.

- 128 Back to Inner Mystery's explanation
and The True Meaning of "Teleportation":
- 129 Then, you! — O drunk from arrogance and might! —
your ego's fire — exchange it for Light! —
- 130 so you'll leave this world in a single breath,
freed from confinement in this cage of death!
- 131** Before you enter the shadow of Him,
you'll have no news from the brain or the skin.
- 132 The foot of your understanding's deep in clay,
with no news of the Lights of His Face that way.
- 133** When you dwell in the shadow of The King of the Soul,
you'll uproot your heart from the world's pomp and show.

*131 - For "the shadow of Him", see *110 and Lines 91, 133, 192, 193, and 270 (and their footnotes).

*131 - If you have no news, i.e., no information, from "the brain or the skin" (from your inner self or the world outside of you), that means you are completely unaware of both inner and outer truths, out of touch with reality. The expression "the brain or the skin" comes from the Persian idiom: *maghz o poost*. The word *maghz* can mean: brain, pith, marrow, pulp, kernel, gist, nucleus, nut, etc. The word *poost* can mean: skin, peel, rind, shell, husk, hull, crust, bark, etc. Thus, the expression *maghz o poost* suggests the idea of "inside or out" or "within or without". See also Line 73 and *73.

*133 - Dwelling "in the shadow of The King of the Soul" implies living under the influence and rule of, The Messenger of God — adhering and clinging, and "sticking to" His Wise Counsel (like His shadow). See Lines 131, 91, 110, 192, 193, and 270 (and their footnotes).

*133 - Regarding "the world's pomp and show", it is worth remembering, here, the story of Bahá'u'lláh seeing a puppet show when He was a child. It was a show about war and intrigues in the court of a king, and the lavish lifestyle of the privileged and the powerful. It depicted their pomp and glory, and feasting and finery, as well as their jealousy and scheming and vying for the top positions in the king's court, in order to prop up the appearance of their grandiosity. After the performance, Bahá'u'lláh saw the puppet master leaving the tent, carrying a box, and asked the man what was in the box. The man answered, in essence: "These elaborate action figures and devices — the king, the princes, and the ministers and their pomp and glory, their might and power — everything you saw — is all now contained within this box." Years later, Bahá'u'lláh wrote about this event: "*Ever since that day, all the trappings of the world have seemed in the eyes of this Youth akin to that same spectacle. They have never been, nor will they ever be, of any weight and consequence, be it to the extent of a grain of mustard seed... Erelong these outward trappings, these visible treasures, these earthly vanities, these arrayed armies, these adorned vestures, these proud and overweening souls, all shall pass into the confines of the grave, as though into that box. In the eyes of those possessed of insight, all this conflict, contention and vainglory hath ever been, and will ever be, like unto the play and pastimes of children.*"

- 134 At the start of time, in dust you have begun.
 At the end of time, you'll fly right past the sun!
- 135 Then, in no time at all, through spirit's worlds you'll go
 — without taking one step! — O mystic-in-the-know!
- 136** This time, a Scent from Soul's Fragrance-Garden in bloom
 wafted here and filled the world with its Perfume.
- 137* Again! — Soul's Musk from That Garden of Giving
 wafted here and took away everything!
- 138 The knowing and unknowing — both are gone!
 The drunken and the sober — all are gone!
- 139 Sobriety — erased! — Eraser, too!
 The drunken sobered up — and vanished, too!
- 140 Names and traditions that thrived in the world
 all left, when my King arrived in the world!

*136 - Just as people in the West sometimes plant “butterfly gardens” that attract butterflies, in the Persian culture there are “fragrance gardens” that are designed to have an abundance of flowers that, when coming into bloom, fill the air with a high concentration of sweet-smelling fragrances that provide a lovely intoxicating experience for those near enough to inhale the heavily perfumed air.

*137 - For “Musk” see *76.

*136/137/138/139 - These Lines suggest a “koan” [rhymes with: GO on]. Koans are used in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Zen practice, by Zen teachers, in order to promote the development of insight, wisdom, humility, and intelligence in their students. A koan is a statement, story, dialogue, or question that seems, at first, nonsensical. Zen teachers will sometimes give their students a puzzling koan, to see if they can figure out its meaning, so they can see how intelligent they are. Koans are often paradoxical, contain ambiguities, and convey profound truths about life. *One well-known koan is:* Two hands clapping make a sound. What is the sound of one hand? ~ ~ *Another puzzling example:* A monk asked Zhaozhou, “What is the meaning of the ancestral teacher’s (i.e., Bodhidharma’s) coming from the West?” Zhaozhou said, “The cypress tree in front of the hall.” (NOTE: Bodhidharma is a 5th or 6th Century A.D. Buddhist monk credited with bringing Chan Buddhism to China. Accounts of him are laced with legendary myth. According to some Chinese sources, Bodhidharma came from the Western Regions, which usually refers to Central Asia but can also include the Indian subcontinent, and he is sometimes described as a Persian Central Asian. See Wikipedia.) ~ ~ *One more example of a koan:* Two monks were arguing about the temple flag waving in the wind. One said, “The flag moves.” The other said, “The wind moves.” They argued back and forth but could not agree. An elder monk spoke up. He said, “Gentlemen! It is not the flag that moves. It is not the wind that moves. It is your mind that moves.” The two monks were dumbstruck.

- 141 God's Names may fly two hundred centuries,
but they won't give a clue to His Mysteries.
- 142 What your eyes did see, and your ears did hear
— O leader! — of all of it, God stayed clear!
- 143* Then, O you with these ears and eyes — but no sight to see —
how will you get the news — of The Beloved's Mystery?
- 144 Open a different eye — and see The New Friend!
Open a different ear — and hear His Voice then!
- 145* *The eye of the foolish nothing but a footstep sees.
The eye of the mystic sees Eternity's Mysteries.*
- 146* *The eye of the mystic sees The Timeless Reign of The King.
The eye of the foolish can't even see The Face of The King.*

*143 - The word "sight" implies: "insight". The one who is being addressed in Line 143 ("O you") — who is the same one that is being addressed in Line 142 ("O leader!") — is being described as one with "...no sight to see" (i.e., with no insight to see). This implies that this leader is blind (spiritually blind) and may recall Matthew 15:14 — "*And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.*"

*145 - The word "ignorant" could be used instead of the word "foolish" in Lines 145 and 146.

*146 - The first line, if it were literally translated, would be: "The eye of the mystic one hundred thousand years way". The Persian word for "way" (*ráh*) also means: "road" or "path" or "pathway" (through time).

- 147 A questioner asked a mystic, one time:
 “O you, who has grasped The Secrets Sublime
- 148* and gets drunk on His Wine, do you recall
 — about The Day of Alast — much at all?”
- 149* “I do recall That Day,” he says, and then replies:
 “God’s First Day it was, and it was no surprise.
- 150 It’s forever in my ear — the sound of Him —
 that beautiful, soul-uplifting voice of Him!”
- 151 Another mystic — wiser and more refined
 (having bored The Pearl of Secrets Divine) —
- 152 then said, “That Day of God — it did not end.
 We’re in That Day — and it will never end.
- 153 Upon God’s Day no night shall ever fall.
 We’re in That Day — and it’s not strange at all.

*148/*149 - The “Day of Alast” [rhymes with: at LAST] is also called: the “Day of Am I Not”. It refers to that primordial day long ago, in time immemorial, when The Lord first said to all of the present and future descendants of Adam and Eve, “*Am I not your Lord?*”, and they responded, “*Yea, verily, we bear witness that You are.*” (See Quran 7:172 and the footnote for Line 67 in this poem.) This conversation occurs, in some way, between every Messenger of God Who comes and those who are the first to recognize Him. The famous Persian poetess, Táhirih, who clearly recognized the divine station of The Báb, from a dream she had, shortly before He declared His Mission in 1844, wrote in a letter to Him:

The effulgence of Thy Face flashed forth, and the rays of Thy visage arose on High!
Then speak the Word, “Am I not your Lord?” and “Thou art, Thou art!” we will all reply!

— translated by E. G. Browne

154* If His Relish of Life goes away one day,
 heaven and earth will collapse right away!

155 That is why That Day that came from His Might
 has come from Him as a day with no night!”

156 Then listen, O dear one, to this puzzle
 and heed The Divine Mystery's Counsel,

157 so from His Wisdom, you'll take Sustenance,
 so you'll give your life for His Countenance,

158 so you'll listen to His every Melody,
 so you'll quaff the Cup of His Generosity,

159 so you'll easily divine
 The Mysteries of Love,
 so you'll taste Eternity's Wine
 from The Rivers of Love.



*154 - “Relish” means: “intense enjoyment” or “intense love” (of, or for, something).
 ☪ - Marks the halfway point in the poem.

- 160 I will NOT avert my face from the swords of the enemy lines —
even if these infidels should kill me two hundred times!
- 161 From birth, my soul drank in Your Wine of Life,
 and in the end — and in Your Name — I'll give my life.
- 162* O Bahá! — Enkindle a raging conflagration!
 Burn away the world of “knowledge and verification”!
- 163* Cleanse the Soul of worldly qualities!
 Crack the Code of Hidden Mysteries!
- 164* From Meaning's deep Ocean, make a wave surge
 and smash the hull of the literal word!
- 165* Pour Your Wine, so freedom from self I'll find! —
 I'll break through veils as Safdar broke through lines!

*162 - “a raging conflagration” does not refer literally to an enormous destructive fire. Rather, it refers figuratively to a divine transformation that involves both loss and the potential for renewal. That loss in this Line, is the loss of “the world of knowledge and verification”, which seems to allude to the Hadith, which is Islam's clerical system of collecting and verifying the thousands of hadiths (anecdotes about Prophet Muhammad and His reported sayings — many of which are hearsay) that are not found in the Quran. There has long been, and there continues to be, much contention among Muslims about the truth and accuracy of some these reported stories. For the meaning of “conflagration” (i.e., fire) see *23.

*163 - The “Code of Hidden Mysteries” implies *metaphorical language* that is used to symbolize, describe, imply, allude to, suggest, or refer to things, persons, or characteristics (which are often spiritual in nature) that are difficult to describe otherwise. This “coded” language, which includes allegories and parables, is frequently found in Holy Scriptures and in religious literature and discourse. Metaphorical language is often mystifying and seems like a code that needs deciphering because, if it is taken literally, it doesn't make sense or agree with scientific or common knowledge. “The Sun of Love so kind and true”, for example. What does “**Sun** of Love” mean? If we think about it, we realize that the sun is the **source** of light and life. So, we can understand the expression to mean: “The (life-giving) **source** of a love (that is) so kind and true”.

*164 - The word “hull” refers to the main body of a ship (an ocean vessel). It can also refer to the outer casing or covering of something inside, such as the hull of a sesame seed. Here, the written (literal) word serves as the hull (vessel or carrier) of the word's meaning, hidden “inside”. See also Line 191.

*165 - “Safdar” [saff DARR; DARR rhymes with the first syllable of “Aaron”] refers to Ali, son-in-law of Prophet Muhammad and First Imam of Shia Islam. Ali, The Commander of the Faithful, was also called “Safdar”, which means “line breaker.” He was called this because he was known for his stunning ability to charge swiftly on horseback, straight into the center of the enemy's front line every time a tribal militia was approaching to kill Prophet Muhammad and His family and companions. Ali would break through the lines with intense speed and strength, and scatter their forces. (Safdar also means: “brave”; “warrior”.)

- 166 O, from Your Name The Tree of Life bears fruit!
And from Your Hand comes The Power of Truth!
- 167* O, this mortal man whose fate is in Your Hand
— upset at this moment, yet calm from Your Plan —
- 168 give Light to This Candle, and He'll give Light
— in many directions! — O King of Might!
- 169* This — The Candle's Flame — is The Lamp You've lit,
and — in The Lamp-Glass — You've protected it,
- 170 and with Oil's help, from Your Generous Hand,
You've raised Him well, from the Wick of Command!
- 171 Then guard Him from the wind of tyranny,
so Your Light will shine from Him, brilliantly!
- 172* *Keep back from His head the hand of the enemy,
O Moon of Command and King of "Verily..."!*

*167 - The term "mortal man" is a translation of the word *jaháni* [jah huh NEE]. According to Hayyim's New Persian English Dictionary, *jaháni* means: "1. (adjective) Worldly. 2. (noun) An inhabitant of the world...A mortal... A creature." NOTE: Although others have translated *jaháni* as "world," this translator understands *jaháni* to mean: "A mortal man". Bahá'u'lláh, it seems, is humbling Himself before God, referring to Himself (in third person) as a mortal man, upset and pleading with His Maker to protect Him from those who want to kill Him.

*169 - For the meaning of "Lamp-Glass", see *86.

*172 - Bahá'u'lláh is in grave peril at this moment, in Lines 166-180, and this highly dramatic section is reminiscent of The Agony of Jesus, praying fervently to God in The Garden of Gethsemane on the eve of His crucifixion, entreating God to "Let this cup pass from me..." (KJV Matthew 26:39). In addition to beseeching God to protect Him, Bahá'u'lláh, in Line 172, seems to be imploring protection from someone whom He calls: the "...Moon of Command and King of 'Verily...'" The translator is not sure who this person is. Perhaps it is Ali, The Commander of the Faithful, i.e., Safdar. And perhaps (?) He is calling upon *the spirit* of Safdar, since Safdar was not alive on earth in 1863. For Safdar see *165.

- 173* Look at this Candle of Yours — afflicted by foes —
 in the midst of a whirlwind — full of woes!
- 174 Since He was enlightened from Your Beauty's Lights,
 in view of His prospects — don't end His Life!
- 175 You've made His Flame so bright — don't snuff it out!
 His consciousness, too — don't make Him black out!
- 176* O! — From Your Love — the atom a sun becomes!
 And O! — From Your Wrath — the lion a sparrow becomes!
- 177 Assailed from every side by winds of tribulation,
 Your Candle's in their midst, O Maker of Creation!

*173 - Bahá'u'lláh suffered a “whirlwind” of tribulations for many years. In one single year, 1863, the year He wrote *The Blessed Mathnaví*, He was banished two times. First, in April, He was ordered to leave Baghdad and go to Constantinople (today's Istanbul, Turkey). At that time in history, Constantinople was the Seat of the Caliphate of the Ottoman Empire. He was held from August 16 to December 1 in that city under house arrest, waiting for the officials to decide what to do with Him. Bahá'u'lláh was expected to ingratiate Himself to the authorities, renounce His claim to be The Promised One, and bargain with them to be set free. He, of course, refused to do that, so, on December 1, was abruptly notified that He must leave the city within 24 hours. In a makeshift caravan, under armed escort, He made the difficult two-week journey, along with His family and close companions, all of whom were inadequately dressed and unprepared for the sub-freezing temperatures, through the mountainous terrain to Adrianople (today's Edirne in northwestern Turkey), where He was to stay under house arrest until further notice. Both banishments — from Baghdad to Constantinople and then from Constantinople to Adrianople — were orchestrated by religious leaders of both Shia and Sunni Islam, as well as government officials of both Persia and the Ottoman Empire, all of whom colluded to move Him further and further away from His native land. Bahá'u'lláh also suffered greatly from the treacherous actions of His jealous half-brother, Mirzá Yahyá, who was, with a few co-conspirators, spreading lies about Bahá'u'lláh to damage His reputation and undermine people's trust in Him. In Adrianople, Yahyá attempted to kill Bahá'u'lláh — more than once. One of the poisonings left Him with a permanent hand tremor for the rest of His life, which can be seen from His shaky handwriting.

*176 - Regarding God's “Wrath”, Wikipedia (under “Matthew 3:7”) offers the following: “Albright and Mann note that it is important not to read the word *wrath* as a synonym for *anger*. Rather, in Jewish and Christian thought, it refers to the necessary meting out of final justice by an all-loving God....”

- 178 If You want to, You make water turn into fire!
 And if You don't want fire, it will at once expire!
- 179 The devil becomes angelic — if You demand!
 And O! —
 How Light will bloom from Fire at Your Command!
- 180 If You want to, make the wind like oil this night!
 Make This Flame a blaze! — And also be a Light!
- 181* O Glory of God! When Your Fire blazed away,
 the lives of lovers burned like a stack of hay.
- 182 One single spark of Fire on the hearts You hit.
 One hundred thousand bushes on Sinai You lit.
- 183* Then, from every heart, Burning Bushes appeared!
 O! — Moses should have run headlong down from here,
- 184 as He had seen The True Fire of God in The Soul,
 and it had delivered Him from Egyptian control.

*181 - The term “lover” in this poem — and throughout Bahá'í literature — refers to one who loves God and God's Messengers, who is a faithful soul. This usage is very different from the way the term “lover” is commonly used in the English-speaking countries of the world. In the West, the definition of “lover” is generally understood to mean: a partner in a sexual or romantic relationship outside of marriage. “They think she has a secret lover” is an example of this usage. The word “lover” is used in a very different way in Bahá'í literature. The “lovers of Bahá'u'lláh” were those who loved Him in a purely spiritual sense, not in a physical or romantic way. His lovers were, and are, the followers, the devotees, and the enthusiasts of Bahá'u'lláh, who love Him sincerely and deeply, with heart and soul, and live their lives in accordance with His laws and teachings. In the Bahá'í Writings, lovers are sometimes mentioned as “the beloved of God.” They are also sometimes referred to as “the servants and maidservants of God.” (The word “lover” — in its singular, plural, and possessive forms — appears in Lines 117, 181, 223, 225, 240, 252, 253, 259, 260, and 264.)

*183 - The name “Moses” appears more times than the name of any other person in this poem. See *201.

- 185* O Ishmael! — At The Altar of Love,
sacrifice your life in The Path of Love!
- 186* With no head and no life, to The Home of The Friend come!
Here, in This Land, you'll be accepted by everyone!
- 187** This is The Valley of Love! The Spirit of God, come!
With The Cross, from The Path — and even with no path, come!
- 188 The “firmament” and “body’s ascent” — let go of these,
O King of the Soul’s and the Body’s Ecstasies!
- 189 Nightingale of Spirit — You, in The Garden of Spirit —
You will be coming again — You, The Host of the Spirit!
- 190* *O Falcon of the Spirit! —
Come freely to This Station!*
- Come back here, to The King’s Wrist —
Your Home, Your Destination!*

*185 - Ishmael, the son of Abraham, is referred to in Islam as *Zabíh'u'lláh* (“Sacrifice of God”). NOTE: The Bible’s dramatic story of God ordering Abraham to sacrifice his son (and Abraham, in obedience, binding his son at an altar and nearly killing him) differs from the version of that story that appears in the Quran. In the Quran, it is Abraham’s son Ishmael, and not his son Isaac, who was bound at the altar. There has been long-held scholarly dispute over the identity of this son of Abraham. Bahá'u'lláh, in this Line, seems to indicate that it was Ishmael.

*186 and *187 - These Lines pay tribute to the words and style of Rumi (See *291) in his famous work known as *Mathnavi-yi Ma'navi*:

*Come! Come! Whoever, whatever you may be, come! Heathen, idolatrous, or fire worshipper, come!
Even if you deny your oaths a hundred times, come! Our door is the door of hope, come!
Come as you are!*

*187 - The “Spirit of God” (*Rúh'u'lláh*) is a title of Jesus that is used by Muslims.

*190 - “Wrist” — or “Fist”? In falconry, in some places, the Middle East for example, the bird perches on the wrist (or forearm). In other places, such as the United Kingdom, the bird perches on the fist. Whether wrist or fist, the place to perch — or come home to, or station yourself — is the key thing here. NOTE: Often, in Persian poetry, the word “bird” (or a bird) implies: “spirit”.

- 191* Then You, O Noah! — Break out of the body's ark!
Plunge into The Sea of Lights — and leave the dark!
- 192* Drown this ego of Yours and don't want self-protection!
View life from the pocket of God and change Your perception!
- 193 Want protection from The King — and not the ark.
So, come in the King's shelter and rest Your heart.
- 194** And You, O Moses! — To The Soul's Sinai come!
Remove Your sandals and mantle — naked come! —
- 195* so, from The Fire's Mysteries, You'll become aware
that That Fire comes unceasingly from The Friend's Hair!
- 196* His Hair is burning away the life of love You knew —
unbelief — and faith — and all else love assembled for You.
- 197*** His Hair is swaying over all Párán!
And just one strand will bend the neck of the strong!

*191 - “The Sea of Lights” (*bahr-i núrání*) may allude to an encyclopedia compiled by Persian Shia scholar Mohammad-Baqer Majlesi (1627-99), one of the most powerful and influential Shia *ulema* (erudite Islamic scholars) of all time. (See Wikipedia.) His writing was very popular, since he wrote in an easily understandable style, summarizing the essential doctrines of Islam for the common people. His most important work is *Bihar al-Anwar (The Seas of Lights)*, written in 100 volumes over 36 years.

*192 - the “pocket” of God implies: the “shelter” (or “shadow”) of God. See Lines 193, 133, and *133.

*194 - For “Soul's Sinai” see *205.

*194 - “Your sandals and mantle...” suggests: “Your social standing, or status, and the honorary title(s), role(s), and/or responsibilities that You have in the world”. See also Lines 104 and 206.

*195/*196/*197 - “His Hair” suggests “His Revelation”. Bahá'u'lláh writes (*Baha'i Prayers*, p. 263):

*I beseech Thee, O my God, by Thy hair that moveth across Thy face,
even as Thy most exalted pen moveth across the pages of Thy Tablets...*

This passage reminds us of the wispy, hairlike pen strokes on the pages of “Revelation handwriting”. He also writes, in His work that's titled: *Tablets of the Hair*:

*My hair is My Phoenix. Therefore hath it set itself upon the blazing fire of My Face... (See *72.)*

*197 - Párán [paw RON] refers to the Sinai Region in the northern half of the Arabian Peninsula's west coast, which includes Mecca and the Kaaba (the most sacred spot in Islam). Párán has seen the footsteps of Abraham, Ishmael, Moses, David, Jesus, and Prophet Muhammad, and is considered to be the “Heart of Islam”. (The word “Párán” means: “Beauty”; “Glory”. See Line 213.)

*197 - “the strong” means: “the heroes”; “the fighters”; “the mighty”; “the warriors”. See also Line 99.

- 198* Enough of The Fire's Secrets, O Dove Divine!
Don't bring The Pearls of the Spirit before the blind!
- 199 This Staff in The Hand of Truth — God's Saber —
is cutting through lines like sheets of paper!
- 200* That Staff came out of a large orchard tree.
And This Staff from God's Cause has come to be.
- 201* That Staff came out of some water and clay.
This Staff — from The Fire of the Heart today.
- 202 This Staff is a Fire, and Its Flames are burning away
the veils of lying and cheating and going astray!
- 203* This Staff is The Wind that in Húd's nation blew,
distinguishing the deniers from the true.
- 204 That Staff appeared as an ark, in Noah's time.
In Jesus' day, That Staff was Spirit Sublime.

*198 - Cf. KJV of The Bible, Matthew 7:6 "...neither cast ye your pearls before swine..."

*200 - "That Staff" suggests the rod, or staff, of Moses — the symbol of His Divine power and authority.

*201 - "water and clay" brings to mind the clay tablets of The Ten Commandments revealed by Moses — the foundation of human civilization for thousands of years. The paramount importance of Moses can be seen from the number of times His name appears in Sacred Text. In the Bible, the third most mentioned name is Moses (803 times), with David being the second most mentioned (974 times), and Jesus the most mentioned (1,310). In the Quran, the person most frequently mentioned is Moses (136 times), and the life of Moses is narrated and recounted more than that of any other prophet. And in Bahá'u'lláh's *Mathnaví*, Moses is the most mentioned name — it appears nine times: in Lines 38, 183, 194, 205, 208, 209 (twice), 229, and 316. The frequent mention of Moses in all of these works testifies to the greatness of Moses in human history.

*203 - Húd [rhymes with FOOD] is an ancient Arabian prophet, mentioned in The Quran, who lived around 2400 B.C., and is believed to be a descendant of Noah. He is also known as: Eber, Heber, and "Father of the Hebrew language." Húd is in Quran's Chapter 11 (the Surah of Húd), and Húd is also mentioned in Bahá'u'lláh's *Book of Certitude (Kitáb-i Íqan)*. Here, in Line 203, "Húd's nation" refers to the ancient civilization known as "Ád" [ODD], which some historians think may have been situated in the windswept hills between present-day Oman and Yemen. According to The Quran, Prophet Húd was rejected and mocked by the wealthy, arrogant, idol-worshipping people of Ád, and when they refused to heed His warnings, a violent windstorm that lasted 8 days and 7 nights buried the city in sand, killing all of its inhabitants except Húd and his followers, because under Húd's unerring divine leadership, they left the city in time to escape the storm. (Quran 69:6-8)

- 205** O Moses! — It was Your Soul's Fire ablaze,
so You must seek The Sinai of the Soul always!
- 206* Your sandals? — No! — Your life and beliefs let go!
Let those things fly like the wind from Your Soul!
- 207* Fly, O Bird of the Soul, from these mortal places
to The Immortal Banquet of Flower Faces!
- 208 *From His Lote-Tree — appeared the Fire of Moses.
From His Breath — came a hundred Spirits of Jesus.*
- 209 *That Fire of Moses — on Sinai appeared.
This Fire of Moses — from The Soul appeared.*

*205 - Regarding the expression “The Sinai of the Soul” (similar to “The Mount of the Soul” in Line 6): Bahá'u'lláh correlates “Mount Sinai” with the word “Heart” (in upcoming Line 211), and therefore, this expression may mean, among other things, “The Heart of the Soul”, i.e., the core, or the essence, or the fire of the soul. (See Lines 184, 194, 195, and 209. Also, on the internet, see: “Lambden - The Sinaitic Mysteries - Writings of Bahá'u'lláh...”) Another way to view this expression, “The Sinai of the Soul”, is to think of “Sinai” as referring to a region (“The Sinai”), and thus: “The Region of the Soul”. Or, to think of “Sinai” as “Holy Ground”, and thus: “The Holy Ground of the Soul”. We see many layers of possible meanings here.

*205 - The word “Soul” — which appears twice in this Line and twice again on this page, in Lines 206 and 209 — is an English translation of the Persian word *ján* [pronounced like the man's name: JOHN]. When used as a noun, the word *ján* can mean (at least) four things: “life”, “spirit”, “soul”, and “heart”. And the meanings often seem intermingled with each other. When used as an adjective, *ján* means “dear”, i.e., “beloved”. For example, *mámmán ján* means “mother dear”. (NOTE: When it is used informally, as in the example just given, it is pronounced: JOON.) The word *ján* is an important word in Persian culture and is spoken frequently. In this poem, *ján* appears more than 50 times.

*206 - The word “life” (a translation of the word *ján*), here, seems to imply “lifestyle” or “way of life”.

*207 - “Flower Faces” suggests beautiful spirits.

- 210* In the heart of The Mount of the Soul
are many distinctions — and these

are just as clear to the eye as
the difference between fruit and leaves:
- 211** His Chest — The Sinai; His Fire — God's Light;
His Heart — Mount Sinai; His Palm — Brilliant White!
- 212 This is not That Brilliance that has come from The Cause of God.
This is That Very Brilliance that creates The Cause of God!
- 213* Now! This Age, This Time! — The Párán of Love has arrived,
as Our Friend has cast the veil from the Face aside!
- 214 The scent of the Spirit — it comes to the nose.
I know not from where — it constantly flows . . .
- 215* This much I know . . . that from Her hair somehow . . .
wafts a scent that makes the soul surrender now . . .
- 216* How sweet the release of The Musk Divine!
Our Soul with Her Remembrance intertwined . . .

*210 - For “The Mount of the Soul” see Line 6 and *6.

*211 - For “His Heart — Mount Sinai” see *106 and *205.

*211 - “His Palm” means: “the palm of His Hand”. For the bright white light of the hand of Moses, see Quran 20:22-23, and 28:33. (The Quran's story regarding the white hand of Moses differs from the story in the Bible. See Exodus 4:6-7.)

*213 - “Párán” [paw RON] means: “Beauty”; “Glory”. (See *197 for another meaning of “Párán”.)

*215 - The word “surrender” in this Line is based on the Persian word *nesár* [neh SARR]. According to Sulayman Hayyim's *New Persian-English Dictionary*, *nesár* is a word of Arabic origin that is used in the Persian language. It is a noun that means: “*Money scattered about in a marriage or feast. An offering or sacrifice. Powdered sugar, bits of almonds, etc. which a confectioner sprinkles on certain candies...*” Sometimes, in Western societies, we see wedding guests throw rice at the bride and groom as they step out of the church after the ceremony — whereas, in some parts of the Middle East they shower the bride with coins, which scatter all around her. This is an offering for the bride. The idea of the soul making an offering or a sacrifice, i.e., *the idea of surrendering, or sacrificing*, is conveyed in this Line. NOTE: The concept of *nesár* (a sacrifice; an offering for the bride), is also featured in Line 5 of the poem, with the image of all of the world's people joyfully tossing, or throwing, and scattering (surrendering) their hearts at the feet of The Beloved.

*216 - “intertwined”, here, implies: “intimate confidants”.

- 217* O Spiritual Morning Breeze, gently blow . . .
 from Merciful Sheba, come soft and slow . . .
- 218** till, drunken from the scent of Your Ambergris,
 Our souls fly up — from Earth to Eternity,
- 219* as Royal Phoenix rose up into space
 from The Mount of the Soul to the placeless place
- 220* and, in one stroke of wing, departed earth
 with That King's Promise of another birth.
- 221* This Time, from God's Throne, She has come again!
 Her Melodies are countless — there's no end to them!
- 222 From Her Flower-Face, winter's like springtime!
 And from Her Ruby Lips, night's like daytime!

*217 - "O Spiritual Morning Breeze..." recalls the words of King Solomon, as portrayed in Persian literature, when Solomon, in his deep longing to be reunited with his Beloved Queen of Sheba after her memorable visit with him, asks the wind to bring the scent of her to him from the Kingdom of Sheba (*Saba*), that distant kingdom where she lived. (Also for "Sheba" see *61.) NOTE: In classical Persian literature, King Solomon (*Súlaymán*) speaks to the wind and trees and birds and other animals. NOTE: Bahá'u'lláh speaks to the wind (or the breeze) also in Lines 126, 258, and 312-313.

*218 - Ambergris [French pronunciation — with a silent "s": AM burr GREE] is a strong-smelling waxy substance that comes from the gut of the sperm whale. It is washed up on beaches, collected, and used in perfumery. Its heavy scent is rich and intoxicating.

*218 - The word "Eternity" has been used for the rhyme, instead of the Persian word "*alast*" in this Line. (For the meaning of "Alast" see Line 148 and *148.)

*219 - For "The Mount of the Soul" see Line 6 and *6. For "Royal Phoenix" see *26 and *220.

*220 - "That King" refers to the "Royal Phoenix" in Line 219, which symbolizes The Messenger of God.

*221 - "She"??? Suddenly a woman with a melodious singing voice appears! She represents the returning Phoenix — the Messenger of God, come again into the world with great power and authority. In Lines 221-228, in a conventional *Sufi trope*, Bahá'u'lláh portrays The Messenger of God (The Beloved) as One Who has the qualities of a stunningly beautiful, seductive woman with long, jet-black hair, ruby red lips, and fluttering long black eyelashes, so powerfully attractive that she captivates the hearts and minds of men and brings them to their knees! This representation of the Messenger of God as a "Femme Fatale" may take most Westerners by surprise, and it may take some time to get used to it. (Just remember this: It's just a metaphor. It's a Sufi thing. It symbolizes the Divine Beauty and Power of God's Messenger.)

- 223* The lovers' work, from Her Hair, is long, indeed!
All the loved ones, from Her absence, are in need!
- 224** The hero's neck is lassoed by Her Hair.
God's Warrior buckles under Her Stare.
- 225** From Her Lips, the souls of lovers lose their breath,
and for Her Union, souls of kings will search till death.
- 226 Her Beauty illumines The Eye of The King
(if you would look carefully at this thing).
- 227 If not in this world — The Eye of The Knowing —
how would The Fountains of Light keep flowing?
- 228 From His Flower, many Gardens came into being,
and from His Face, bloomed many Flowers of Meaning.

*223 - "The lovers' work, from Her Hair, is long, indeed..." (For the meaning of "Hair" see *195.) Her Hair is long, *i.e.*, *Her Revelation is long* ("*Her Melodies are countless...*", see Line 221), and therefore, *the work of lovers is very long and arduous*. (For the meaning of "lovers" see *181.) There is much work to do! What work? — The difficult work of: swiftly recording with pen and ink, then making corrections and legible copies of, proofreading, hand copying (copy machines had not been invented yet), translating, and secretly sending and delivering by couriers — sometimes on foot, for long distances — copies of the written utterances and tablets and prayers revealed by Bahá'u'lláh. (The couriers, if they were caught with copies of the writings of Bahá'u'lláh, were put to death!) Also, there was the responsibility of carefully and secretly storing the original records, to protect them from being stolen, damaged, lost or destroyed. There is so much work to be done when a Messenger of God comes!

*224 - The translator wonders if "God's Warrior" refers to Timur [TEE moor], who is also known as Tamerlane (1336-1405). Through a series of strategically planned massacres conducted by his hordes of armies, city after city, Timur led military campaigns across Western, South, and Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Southern Russia, and after also conquering Egypt, Syria, the developing Ottoman Empire, and part of India, Timur emerged — undefeated — as the most powerful ruler in the Muslim world (1370-1405). Timur referred to himself as the "Sword of Islam" and the "Warrior of Islam". (NOTE: The translator is merely speculating here.)

*224 and *225 - These lines illustrate, in a metaphorical way, the captivating, conquering, entrancing, and intoxicating beauty of the Messenger of God. (See also *221.) One glance from This Beauty, and you're under Her spell. She'll humble you, bring you to your knees, uplift you, and make you devote your whole life to her! Although Sufi poetry was written almost exclusively by men, and for men, yet the female spirit and power in the world was often acknowledged. The poet Rumi wrote: "*Woman is the Light of God.*"

*225 - "From Her Lips" implies: "From Her Spoken Words."

- 229 The Fire of Moses — find it as Light in His Place.
The Soul of Jesus — find it as Spirit from His Face.
- 230 If He emerges from behind the veil one night,
He will illumine a hundred worlds like sunlight!
- 231 *Night is nothing but His Ink Black Hair curling through space . . .*
Morning comes not, but from the Light of That Beauty's Face . . .
- 232 All of The Kings in The City of Love
offered their lives for The Sake of His Love.
- 233 From His Beauty, The Beauty of God has come to shine,
and from His Lips, the hearts will savor Spirit's Wine.
- 234* All of the world is fastened to His Hair,
and for His Sake, great pain the hearts will bear.

*234 - The first line of this couplet, “All of the world is fastened to His Hair...” alludes to the dream that Bahá'u'lláh's father, the Vazír, had when Bahá'u'lláh was about five years old. In the dream,

Bahá'u'lláh appeared.. swimming in a vast, limitless ocean, and His body shone upon the waters with a radiance that illumined the sea. Around His head, which could distinctly be seen above the waters, there radiated, in all directions, His long, jet-black locks, floating in great profusion above the waves. As he dreamed, a multitude of fishes gathered around...each holding fast to the extremity of one hair. Fascinated by the effulgence of His face, they followed Him in whatever direction He swam. Great as was their number, and however firmly they clung to His locks, not one single hair seems to have been detached from His head, nor did the least injury affect His person. Free and unrestrained, He moved above the waters and they all followed Him.

A well-respected dream interpreter told the Vazír that the vast ocean represented the world of being; that his son, single-handed and alone, would achieve supreme ascendancy over it; and the fishes signified all the peoples of the world who would follow his radiant light.

— Source: *Nabíl's Narrative*, translated by Shoghí Effendí, in the volume titled *The Dawnbreakers*

NOTE: Bahá'u'lláh's father, the Vazír, held a high position in the government of Persia, as a minister under the King. When the Vazír died, Bahá'u'lláh was given the opportunity to take the place of His father, as a high official in the land, but He declined to accept the offer, knowing that His future service to the world would make itself manifest in a different realm.

- 235* When Zulaikha saw That Beautiful Man,
 she cut her heart — instead of her hand!
- 236 One breath from His Spirit — when it appeared,
 thousands of Spirits of Jesus appeared!
- 237 That's not a sign of His Power and Might —
 it's Light from That Great One Who gives you Life.
- 238 If just one trait of His Beauty you see,
 thousands of Oceans of Meaning you'll see.
- 239 That trait is just one ray, come this way from The Sun.
 What, then, O man of faith, the traits of That Great One?
- 240* When the lover's eye saw where His Beauty came from,
 she cut her heart — from both this world and the world to come.
- 241* *The Rising of The Seas of Love*
 is from The Rising of Him . . .
- The Zenith of The Phoenix of Love*
 is from The Zenith of Him . . .

*235 - Who is Zulaikha? [zoo LAY khuh — see *110 for pronunciation of *kh*] (There are a few different spellings of her name.) The Story of Joseph [yoo SUFF] and Zulaikha is a well-known legendary tale in Muslim culture. One part of The Story goes like this: When Joseph was sold into slavery, a high Egyptian official, Potiphar, bought him and made him steward of his household (See Genesis 39:1-6). Potiphar's wife Zulaikha fell in love with Joseph, and her friends mocked her for being infatuated with a Hebrew slave. To prove how easy it is to fall in love with Joseph, Zulaikha invited them to her home and served them oranges. As the women were peeling the oranges, Joseph entered the room. And when the women looked up and beheld his radiant beauty, they lost control of their paring knives and cut their hands. (See Quran 12:30-31.) This story is not in The Bible. It is a medieval Islamic version of the Story of Prophet Joseph and Potiphar's wife, Zulaikha. *In the most famous Sufi mystic interpretation of this story*, in the 1483 A.D. poetry of Jami, *Zulaikha's intense attraction to, and fervent pursuit of, Joseph represents the soul's deep yearning to be connected, or united, with God*. The inspiration to write this version of The Story, Jami said, came *from love*. (See Wikipedia for the complete story.)

*240 - For the proper meaning of the word "lover" see *181.

*241 - The word "Rising" is a rough translation of *mowj*, which means: wave; waving; surge; *surgin*. And the word "Zenith" represents the word *owj*, which means: 1. Apogee; zenith; in astrology, ascendant. 2. Highest point, highest degree, *summit*.

- 242* Since your eye, from His Orb, gets its light from Him,
 it's a crime, if it gazes at other than Him.
- 243 Since your soul's eye gets its Light from the Light of Him,
 it's a shame, if it's fixed on others, and not on Him.
- 244 The Sun of Truth makes your inner sight clear,
 so you see nothing but His Beauty here.
- 245 (I've told This Secret softly, O fine one,
 I've bored This Pearl in secret, O kind one,
- 246 so evil eyes won't fall upon His Face,
 so strangers won't find the way to His Place.)

*242 - The word “orb” usually means: “a celestial or spherical body”. The Moon, for example, is an orb. It orbits around the Earth. But used poetically, “orb” can mean “eye” or “eyeball” (see in *42 the quoted lines from Shakespeare). In Line 242, “Orb” is the translation of the Persian word *cheshm*, which means: “eye” (also: “opening” or “hole” — as in, for example, the eye of a needle). And, by extension, *cheshm* or *cheshmeh*, means: “spring” or “fountain”. So, in Line 242, **“His Orb” refers to The Sun**, which can be thought of as: a fount of light (a source, or spring, of light); an “Eye in the Sky”.

- 247* Not just with your eyes, but with all your senses mark this,
so you're free of ties to all these people of darkness.
- 248 When your ear has heard The Song of His Mystery,
it has heard from His Instrument His Mystery.
- 249 When God's Handiwork has become perfectly clear,
focus your eyes on Him — and not on people here.
- 250 If you regard the world with His Eye,
thousands of kingdoms of spirit you'll spy!
- 251 *The eye of Him sees nothing but His Face . . .*
The bird of Him flies nowhere but His Place . . .
- 252* Lovers' lives burned away from union with Him.
And from His separation, hearts burned within.
- 253* Thus, the lover burns — this mindless, love-struck one —
whether from separation or union, O son!

*247 - The word “mark” in this Line means: “note, “notice”, or “know”.

*252 and *253 - For “separation” and “union” (or “reunion”), see Lines 270 and 271. NOTE: The Persian word for “union” (*vasl*) can also mean “reunion”, *since a reunion is a type of union*. Thus, in most cases, in this translation, “reunion” and “union” can mean the same thing.

- 254* Then know The Love of God as Your True Friend and be
— from all the shackles of this world — completely free.
- 255 For such a Love, you'll give your life willingly —
you'll throw your heart and soul into Eternity!
- 256* To grasp This Mystery, pay attention,
so you'll fly up in divine ascension,
- 257* so your date palm offers spiritual fruit —
fruits of Holiness, illumined with Truth.
- 258* *O Breeze! — From His Curls of Hair, the Perfume bring.
O Cloud! — From His Grace, rain gentle rains of spring,*
- 259* *so the meadow of His lovers' hearts will be
blooming with tulips of love most beautifully.*

*254 - “The Love of God” is a translation of *eshgh-i hagh*, which is a term that could also be translated as: “The Love of Truth”, since *hagh* means “truth”. (Although the term *eshgh-i hagh* literally means: “The Love of Truth”, it is understood to mean: “The Love of God”, so it can be translated either way.)

*256 - The term “divine ascension” brings to mind Prophet Muhammad’s Ascent to Heaven, which Muslims refer to as: *Mi‘raj* [meh RAWJ; “RAWJ” rhymes with “DODGE”]. The word *mi‘raj* means: ladder; stairs; rising. See *268 for more description.

*257 - The human being has often been compared to a tree. The human being and the tree are similar to each other, since both of them grow and develop over their lifetime, and the lives of both can be fruitful, can offer protection and shelter, and can benefit the world of humanity in many other ways. Here, the Poet likens the life of a person to that of a date palm tree. This image of the fruitful human being is seen often in the Baha’i Writings. For example, in Bahá'u'lláh's *Hidden Words*, in Persian # 80 it is written:

O My Servants!

Ye are the trees of My garden; ye must give forth goodly and wondrous fruits, that ye yourselves and others may profit therefrom. Thus it is incumbent on every one to engage in crafts and professions, for therein lies the secret of wealth, O men of understanding! For results depend upon means, and the grace of God shall be all-sufficient unto you. Trees that yield no fruit have been and will ever be for the fire.

*258 - “His Curls of Hair” may allude to His Revelation. See Lines 195-197 and *195/196/197.

*259 - For the proper understanding of the term “lovers” see *181.

- 260** This — the heart of the lover — is The Throne of God,
since it was cleansed from all ties but The Love of God.
- 261* When, from His Love, God's House was made in good repair,
God's House and God, inside, became a hidden pair!
- 262 God's House, you know, is not of stone and mason's art.
God's House, O lad, is nothing but the human heart!
- 263** When your heart is cleansed by The Light of Him,
it becomes His Home — The Sinai of Him.
- 264 When the lover's House of God was completely clean,
The Splendor of God came to shine unceasingly!
- 265 *Again, Love has returned! — The veil of intellect burned! —
A heap of knowledge and science and accolades — burned!*

*260 - For the proper meaning of the word "lover" see *181.

*260 - "The Throne of God" here, suggests: "the (elevated) seat or chair, or platform or *Prepared Place*, where God stations Himself, abides, and rules — where you can find, approach, and converse with Him." Cf. "Throne" in Line 1 (see *1).

*261 - If you think of God as being "at home" inside His House (the human heart), and if you think of these two things, the human heart and God inside it, as *hidden inside the human body*, you might think of God and the human heart as "*a hidden pair*". You might also be reminded of a set of Russian nesting dolls (Matryoshka dolls), which are decoratively painted, somewhat egg-shaped, wooden dolls in graduated sizes that fit, or nest, inside one another — the smallest doll hidden inside of a slightly larger-sized doll, which, in turn, nests inside of another, slightly larger doll, etc. In this poem, there are several "hidden pairs" — a hidden pair being: two things, one inside the other, that are hidden inside something else. (The translator has noticed at least nine "hidden pairs" throughout the poem.)

*263 - For "The Sinai of Him" see *205 and Line 211.

*263 - For "The Lights of His Sinai" see Line 106 and *106.

- 266 When no one's in the house but Him, O son,
you'll know His Orders head-to-toe — each one!
- 267 Then you'll know as His: your eye and ear and hand.
Then He will see, and He will take command!
- 268* *The soul of the mystic is his mosque afar . . .*
The nadir of the soul is where ascensions are . . .
- 269 And now, a fresh new remedy must be given!
This Counsel — you must take to heart, so listen:
- 270** “Separation” and “Reunion” — Let go of each one! —
so that you'll reach your true height in His shadow, O son!
- 271* In “separation”, you burn from yearning!
And from “reunion”, your fever's burning!
- 272 Enter The Court of Immortality
and see only God in Reality.

*268 - “mosque afar” alludes to Masjid Al-Aqsa (the mosque that is farthest, or furthest, i.e., the mosque that is much further from the Mosque of Mecca than the Mosque of Medina is). The Masjid Al-Aqsa is located in Jerusalem on the Temple Mount, where, according to Islamic traditions, Prophet Muhammad experienced His Divine Ascent (Mi'raj) around the year 621 A.D. (See *256.) Prophet Muhammad, in His Ascension, rose up, step by step, through the different spheres, to Heaven, i.e., to the *zenith* [ZEE nith] (the highest point) of Heaven (also called the “Seventh Heaven”). This is where, according to tradition, He conversed with God. Line 268 tells us that the wise mystic knows that, *paradoxically, deep down inside his soul — at the nadir [NAY durr] (the lowest point) of his soul — is where he ascends (rises up) to Heaven and converses with God.* (Nadir, in Persian, is: *adná* [ad NAW].) Thus, *deep down inside the mystic's soul is, in effect, his “mosque afar” — his Masjid Al-Aqsa, i.e., his “Place of Ascension”.* The translator has used a mountain of poetic license for: “The nadir of the soul is where ascensions are...”. A more literal translation might be: “It is the nadir of the store (i.e., the repository) of God's Mysteries.” (This was a difficult line to translate. It relates to Line 286.)

*270 - “...you'll reach your true height in His shadow...” implies that you will reach, or attain, your highest potential and most mature and well-developed self *in the shadow of The Messenger of God*, i.e., in your nearness to Him, being close to Him, loving Him, and abiding by His Teachings. See *91, *110, and Lines 133, 266-67, and 288.

*270 and *271 - For “Separation” and “Reunion” see Lines 252-253, *274 and *275, and also *279.

- 273* If the hadith “There was God...” you took in,
 also the code “There was naught besides Him...”,
- 274* then make every effort to bring to an end
 the “separation and reunion” of The Friend.
- 275* When, from The Soul’s Mysteries, you’re sure that it’s true
 — that there is nothing but God, between God and you —
- 276* then — from the water of the soul — clear the debris,
 so The Splendor of The Sanctified you’ll see,
- 277 so union into union then you’ll see,
 so, in your heart, His Beauty’s Light you’ll see.
- 278 There’s nothing opposing this union’s creation,
 nor is it ever followed by separation!

*273 - Hadiths are anecdotal stories that contain sayings of Prophet Muhammad not found in the Quran, but which have been verified, evaluated, and approved as valid guidance for all Muslims (although there are ongoing disputes concerning their accuracy, as is mentioned in *32). There are thousands of hadiths, and the entire collection of them is called “The Hadith”. In Islam, it is common practice to refer to a single hadith by quoting only the first few words of it. These truncated quotes are sometimes referred to as “codes”. It seems that the two codes in Line 273 refer to: 1) the singleness and 2) the omnipresence, of God, respectively.

*274/*275 - In Line 274, Bahá'u'lláh is encouraging the young Sufi to make every effort to get rid of this illusion of the “separation and reunion” of The Friend. (See Lines 270 and 271, and Lines 279 and 280.) There can be no such thing as “separation from God”, because Bahá'u'lláh explains in Line 275 that: “*there is nothing but God between God and you...*”. He is speaking here of the omnipresence of God. This theme appears elsewhere in His Writings — for example, on p. 185 in *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*:

God hath revealed, that “We are closer to man than his life-vein.” [quote from Quran 50:16]

and:

Meditate on what the poet hath written: “Wonder not, if my Best-Beloved be closer to me than mine own self; wonder at this, that I, despite such nearness, should still be so far from Him.”

*276 - The “water of the soul” (*áb-i ján*) suggests: the “pool”, “cistern”, or “reservoir” of the soul and therefore what can be thought of as the “mirror” of the soul, which will reflect the Splendor, Glory, Beauty, and Light of God (*if all the rubbish and debris are cleared away*).

- 279* Your “union and separation” is duality!
Listen to Father’s Word, O son — it’s blasphemy!
- 280* Fly far from these two! — Like Homa, make progress!
Soar up to the heights of The King of Oneness!
- 281 But your foot may slip, I’m afraid to say,
and ego’s bad thoughts may get in your way,
- 282 so I will need to explain this union
and uproot from your heart the temptation
- 283 to fall from these words into vanity,
boasting, posturing, malice, and anarchy.

*279 - The terms “duality” and “dualism”, in general, refer to the belief in two separate (usually opposed) concepts, such as Good and Evil, or Life and Death. Here, the duality is “separation and reunion”. This is the Sufi belief that the self is, at all times, in one of two states: either 1) far apart from God, yearning to be united (or reunited) with Him, or 2) united (or reunited) with God. Bahá'u'lláh dismisses this belief and calls it blasphemous. He calls it this because, first, He explains in Line 275 that God is omnipresent in the universe (“...*nothing but God is between God and you...*”). Therefore, God is always near you, never separated from you, and “*separation from God is an illusion*”. And second, regarding “union” with God (i.e., becoming one with God, fused or joined with God, or becoming “partners with God”), one should consider the following: the idea of a human being becoming united with God, or in partnership with God, as God’s equal, is absurd, since we understand from the Scriptures that God is alone and above all that is, with no peer or likeness. In Lines 284-288, Bahá'u'lláh explains what “union with God” really means. (See also *274/*275.)

*280 - Homa (Arabic: Huma), also called “Bird of Paradise”, is a mythical bird with its origins in Persian folklore, fables, and legends and is a common motif in Sufi poetry. Brightly colored, from crest to tail, it is long-necked, like the Japanese crane, and has a long, glorious train of tail feathers that trail behind it. Legends vary, but they all have one thing in common: Homa remains in flight always — continually in the air, never coming down to earth. Similar to Phoenix and the Chinese Fenghuang, Homa is found in Turkish and Sindhi literature. Homa symbolizes unreachable heights, never dies, and is auspicious — a “Good Luck Bird” that brings good fortune. Interestingly, the Persian word *hom*, from the word *homa*, refers to “a stylized tree pattern originating in Mesopotamia as a symbol of the ‘Tree of Life’ and used especially in Persian textiles” (*Merriam Webster Dictionary*). Also, “Homa” is a popular female name in Persian, and the word “Homa” is a meaningful word in both Hinduism and Zoroastrianism. This is just the tip of the “Homa” iceberg! The word “Homa” is also used in Nigeria and in the Chicksaw Nation in Oklahoma. [NOTE: *Oklahoma!*] And Homa appears elsewhere. There is simply not enough space here to cover all the various ways this word is used throughout the world!

- 284 Know that this union is His Light in you,
shining with splendor and clearly in view.
- 285 His Light is His Trust that's been placed in you.
Make effort, so it becomes bright in you!
- 286 Then find "union with Him" within yourself, O friend,
so that you'll never see "separation" again!
- 287 Also, your soul is a store of God's Treasure.
But, from negligence, you run after pleasure.
- 288 *Until, in you, are clearly seen the attributes of God,
you'll know yourself as lost and in separation from God . . .*
- 289 He has conferred upon you a generous measure
of His Names and attributes and customs to treasure.
- 290* He, from His Kindness, has opened the doors for you.
O wise one, do not close these doors, as did the Jew.

*290 - Doors are symbols of opportunities. If we stay in the same room or place for a long time and never leave it, things become stale. We stare at the same place or the same walls over and over, again and again, and become numbed by them. If a door opens for us to leave that place, we then have the opportunity to experience new things in a stimulating and refreshing new space, adding to our life experiences and our knowledge of the world, and this increases our wisdom. When a Messenger of God comes, He opens the door for us to enter into the Light of a New Day and benefit from the New Revelation He brings for all of humanity. When Prophet Muhammad opened the door for the Jews to accept His Revelation, they rejected Him, claiming that "God's hand is chained." (Quran 5:64). Bahá'u'lláh, in the *Kitáb-i-Íqán*, says: "*How false is that which the Jews have imagined! How can the hand of Him Who is the King in Truth [God], Who caused the countenance of Moses to be made manifest, and conferred upon Him the robe of Prophethood...be chained and fettered? How can He [God] be conceived as powerless to raise up yet another Messenger after Moses? Behold the absurdity of their saying...*" Muslims, He says, are saying the same thing in This Day: "*Observe how...[for] over a thousand years they have been reciting this verse and unwittingly pronouncing their censure against the Jews, utterly unaware that they, themselves, openly and privily, are voicing the sentiments and belief of the Jewish people! Thou art surely aware of their idle contention, that all Revelation is ended, that the portals of Divine Mercy are closed, that from the daysprings of eternal holiness no sun shall rise again...*" So, like the Jews who rejected Muhammad, many Muslims reject Bahá'u'lláh, because they claim that Muhammad is "The Seal of the Prophets", i.e., the last of the prophets. Baha'is agree with this — Muhammad is truly the last prophet to come. With the coming of The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, The Age of Prophethood (the Adamic Cycle) came to an end, and a New Age began — the Age of Fulfillment. The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh are not prophets. They are the Promised Ones Who have come in fulfillment of the prophecies of the prophets of former times.

- 291*** Since you've heard That Pipe's Lament from love,
now recognize This One, also from love.
- 292** Since you've heard the sound of This Pipe, The Piper see.
Otherwise, you won't have news of The King's Mystery.
- 293* The Piper saw some strangers plotting to assail,
and that is why He chose This Pipe to be His Veil.
- 294 Then, you! — Remove your veil at once, so He
— The Piper in the world — is all you see!
- 295* Like Safdar, rend asunder the veils — all of them! —
so you'll see the Splendor of the All-Bountiful then!

*291 - "That Pipe" alludes to Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Rumi, the world-famous 13th Century Sufi poet, known as "Mevlana" and also "Rumi". Influential in the founding of the Sufi Mevlevi fraternal order that is famous for its "whirling dervishes", Rumi is best known for his outstanding *mathnavi* (or *masnavi*): "*Mathnaví-yi Ma'naví*" (Spiritual Couplets), commonly called "The Quran in Persian". This remarkable work is comprised of 25,000 lines (50,000 in English translation), is published in six volumes, and would take around 72 hours to be recited nonstop. Its major theme is the Sufi's yearning to be united with "The Beloved" (which represents God). In the opening lines of his *Mathnaví*, Rumi portrays himself as a *ney* [NAY], which is a *specific kind of wind instrument made in Persia — a pipe (flute) made from a hollow cane reed*. Since the whining, crying, sighing and moaning of *Rumi's lament* in the opening verses of his *Mathnaví* (see *299) resemble the high-pitched wailing and the low, sad moaning sound of the *ney*, Rumi was called: (the) "*ney*" ("The Pipe" or "The Reed"). See Line 296, *296, and *299.

*291 - Although "That Pipe" alludes to Rumi, as mentioned above, it may actually be referring to Rumi's *Mathnaví*. Therefore, the first line of this couplet may be seen as: "*Since you've heard That Mathnaví's lament from love...*".

*291 and *292 - It is tempting to compare Rumi's *Mathnaví* to Bahá'u'lláh's *Mathnaví*. Their difference in length is quite obvious. But there are more important differences: 1) Rumi, the lover, is lamenting his separation from The Beloved. In contrast, *Bahá'u'lláh, Who is The Beloved*, is lamenting being shut out as by a veil from the lover, because the lover lacks "the sight to see" (insight) and the purity of heart and soul needed to recognize Bahá'u'lláh as The Beloved. 2) Rumi does not speak with the voice of Divine Authority. Bahá'u'lláh does. 3) Rumi's poem is based on The Word of God (The Quran). Bahá'u'lláh's poem *is* The Word of God. 4) Rumi's *Mathnaví* offers a Persian version of The Quran. Bahá'u'lláh's *Mathnaví* offers the good news that He is The Promised One foretold in the Scriptures of all the world's religions.

*292 - "This Pipe" (in contrast with "That Pipe" in Line 291) alludes to "This *Mathnaví*". Therefore, the first line of this couplet suggests: "*Since you've heard the sound of This Mathnaví, its Author see...*"

*293 - As in Line 292 and *292 above, "This Pipe" refers to "This *Mathnaví*" (Bahá'u'lláh's *Mathnaví*).

*295 - For "Safdar" see *165.

- 296* So like The Pipe, you cry in “separation,”
hoping your piper comes in for “reunion,”
- 297* *as The Piper of the Soul comes in crowing,
and the hearts of lovers are overflowing!*
- 298 Keep on setting hearts on fire from This Pipe’s rhythm,
till you burn, in the world, all signs of egotism.
- 299** Man’s a hollow reed, when ego’s burned away —
like *manee*: when *meem* is gone, what’s left is *ney*!

*296 - “The Pipe” refers to the poet Rumi. (See Line 291, *291, and *299.)

*297 - The surprising, almost stunning, appearance of the word “crowing” suddenly brings to mind — and compares The Piper to — a rooster waking up the world at dawn. This is a beautiful salute to the imagery in Táhirih’s poem “Start Shouting”: *At daybreak nightingales don’t sing. The cock / struts out and birds of Glory start praising*. The marvelous striking image of a cock crowing at dawn is a radical and refreshing departure from the tired old trope, common in Sufi poetry, of the nightingale singing all through the night of his love for the rose (as Banani points out, in *Táhirih: A Portrait in Poetry*, pp.115-116). See *59.

*299 - Line 299 involves an amazing “triple analogy”:

1) When the selfish narcissistic ego is removed (“burned away”) from Man (“Man” is gender neutral here — it means: “the human being”), Man becomes selfless and is like a *ney* [NAY] (see *291), i.e., a pipe, a flute, a hollow reed — a beautiful musical instrument;

2) When the pith (the inner pulp) is removed (burned away) from the cane reed, it becomes a *ney*, i.e., a pipe, a flute, a hollow reed — a beautiful musical instrument;

3) When the Persian letter M, which is *meem* [MEEM], is removed, or “burned away”, from the Persian word *manee* [man EE], which refers to the selfish, self-centered ego — and which, in Persian, is written with three consonants: M N Y — what remains are the letters N and Y (no vowels, as vowels are absent from Persian script), which are the two consonants that spell *ney*, i.e., a pipe, a flute, a hollow reed — a beautiful musical instrument.

*299 - The *ney* (the pipe, or flute) plays an important role in Sufi culture. *Neys* are made from cane reeds that are cut from their beds (their earthly attachment). In fashioning the *ney*, the pipe-maker slowly burns away the pith of the reed using a special method involving fire (older method) or heat (modern method). The hollowed-out reed is then, with holes and mouthpiece added, crafted into the finished pipe. The *ney* is the signature instrument of Sufi music. Its low moaning sound evokes the mournful tone of the opening lines of Rumi’s famous *Mathnavi-yi Ma’navi* (see *291 and *296), in which the poet compares himself to a *ney*, as he bemoans his separation from his Beloved (translated by Nicholson):

- 1) *Listen to this reed, how it complains: it is telling a tale of separations,*
- 2) *saying, “Ever since I was parted from the reed-bed, man and woman have moaned in (unison with) my lament.*
- 3) *I want a bosom torn by severance, that I may unfold (to such a one) the pain of love-desire.”*
- 4) *Every one who is left far from his source wishes back the time when he was united with it.*

- 300* When your sight is clear from the Light of His Sun,
The Piper is all you'll see, O learned one!
- 301* Then listen to The Piper's Mysteries
and take, from this bouquet, the scent of these:
- 302* A spark of Fire from His Love lit a blaze,
and all His kingly existence burned away.
- 303 When His Beauty cast the veil from the Face aside,
the curtain of The Glory of Kings opened wide.
- 304 When That Beauty's eyelash struck like a dart,
it pierced the chest of The King's noble heart.
- 305* At once! His kingly crown was snatched and thrown down,
and He became a slave — in chains — underground,
- 306 like prey — that's fallen into the hunter's hand . . .
or straw — caught in the wind and blown off the land . . .

*300 - "sight" here means: "insight".

*301 - "bouquet" [boo KAY (British pronunciation)] 1. a bunch of flowers that are picked and often tied together, presented as a gift or carried on formal occasions, such as the bunch of flowers carried by the bride at a wedding ceremony; a nosegay 2. A characteristic smell of something, such as a wine or liqueur. (Interesting note: The word *boo*, in Persian, means: "smell".)

*302-306 - In these five couplets, Bahá'u'lláh alludes to some of the traumatic, life-changing events that he experienced in Persia, during the years prior to the end of 1852, when He was exiled. During those years, when Bahá'u'lláh was in His early twenties, He declined an offer made to Him to hold a high office in the government, and He gave up the lifestyle of the wealthy upper class. He chose instead, in 1844, to champion the Cause of The Báb and assist in its growth and development. Six years later, in 1850, The Báb was executed before a firing squad and, in the two years following that heart-breaking event, over 20,000 supporters of The Báb — men, women, and children — were tortured and killed in the most brutal, horrific ways, and Bahá'u'lláh was arrested, tortured, chained, incarcerated, and exiled from His homeland.

*305 - "His kingly crown" refers to the *táj* (a tall, pointed, dignified cap) that Bahá'u'lláh wore in public, that signified His noble lineage. (The word "táj", Arabic in origin, means: "crown." The *táj* and the turban are distinctive headdresses worn by Muslim men in Persia and India.) Genealogical charts show that Bahá'u'lláh was a descendant of some of Persia's kings, of the Prophet Zoroaster, and of Abraham, through the House of David, mentioned in The Bible.

- 307** If only a messenger could be sent
to Iraq, to explain this bereavement.
- 308* From remoteness, hearts burn with no relief;
kings' chests are pierced by the arrow of grief.
- 309** Between Us and You — O City of the Soul —
are a hundred thousand Qáfs capped in snow.
- 310* There is no messenger, save for a sigh,
unless the wind goes there and tells them why
- 311* the hand is far short of the dates on the tree . . .
the eye, from remoteness, has cried a sea . . .

*307 - "Iraq" is pronounced: [ee ROCK].

*307 - Bahá'u'lláh lived in Iraq for ten years (1853-1863). Although under house arrest, He had freedom to move about in society, and He became well-known, well-loved, and well-respected for His wisdom, warmth, and kind and generous nature. But in April 1863, He was ordered to leave Iraq and go to Turkey. This broke the hearts of those who had come to love Him. As He departed the City of Baghdad, many people openly wept over losing their Wonderful Counselor and Friend. Lines 307 and 308 reflect the deep sense of loss and remoteness that Bahá'u'lláh was feeling, far away in Turkey, and the pangs of grief being felt by the men and women in Baghdad who were sorely missing Him.

*308 - The term "kings" refers to the men in Iraq who were spiritual kings (noble men) who were missing Bahá'u'lláh after His departure.

*309 - Bahá'u'lláh names Baghdad [bag DODD; the Arabic pronunciation]: "O City of the Soul". This City was once referred to as "*Dar es Salaam*", meaning: the "Abode of Peace". Founded in "the cradle of civilization" over 5,000 years ago, Baghdad was once the greatest city on earth. In 762 A.D., it became known as "The Round City", famous for its circular urban design and its radiating avenues, gates, and waterways. (See citiesofpeace.org.)

*309 - Regarding "Qafs" [GOFFS or KOFFS]: The word "Qaf" is the name of a mythological mountain whose summit is so high, that its mountain range encompasses the whole world! (It is featured in Attar's famous work: *Conference of the Birds*.) Hyperbole aside, this Line suggests the Taurus Mountain Range that lies between Constantinople (Istanbul) and Baghdad. In order to serve the rhyme, the translator, using poetic license, added the phrase "all capped in snow", which is not in the original text of the poem.

*310 - Regarding the personification of "the wind": This recalls the legendary story, in Persian literature, of King Solomon telling the wind *to bring to Him, from the Kingdom of Sheba (Saba), the scent of the Queen*, because he was missing her dearly. In Line 312, Bahá'u'lláh puts a twist on this old story, as He tells the wind (the zephyr, a gentle breeze), *to bring from Him, in Turkey, to His loved ones in Baghdad, the scent (the sense / the knowledge / the news) of His present condition*.

*311 - The expression "...the hand is far short of the dates on the tree..." implies that *one is far short of* (is a long way from) *reaching a goal* (something desired). (And "the eye" refers to "the eye of the soul.")

- 312* O Zephyr! — At once! — From The Beloved of God,
kindly make your way to The Abode of Baghdad!
- 313 Then say to Her:
“O City of God!
Where is Your pride?
Why have you remained here
with The Friend gone from Your side?
- 314* Your Friend is detained — Your Beloved Bahá! —
Like Husayn on the Plain of Karbala!
- 315** One Husayn — and a hundred thousand Yazids!
One Habib — and all these demonic enemies!
- 316 Like Moses — in the midst of Egyptians!
Or Jesus — in the midst of the Romans!
- 317 And just like Joseph — fallen into a well,
that well that has no end and no way to leave —
- 318** Your Nightingale is afflicted — in a cell!
Closed also, in this cell — His airway to breathe!” 🕊

*312 - “Baghdad” (see *309) is pronounced: [bag DODD]. A “zephyr” is a “gentle breeze”. See *310.

*314 - Nearing the City of Karbala, “...on the Plain of Karbala...”, Imam Husayn, who was traveling with members of his family and his close companions, was ambushed and brutally and savagely slaughtered by the army of the cruel, power-hungry Caliph Yazíd [yaz EED]. (See the accounts online of the tragic and horrifying story of The Martyrdom of Imam Husayn.)

*315 - For “Yazíds” see *314.

*315 - “Habib” [hab EEB], as it is used here, means: “Friend” or “Beloved”. See *75.

*318 - The word “nightingale” (*bol-bol*) is often used in classical Persian poetry to mean: “poet”.

*318 - “His airway to breathe” suggests *His windpipe* and the whole passageway by which air reaches the lungs. This includes the mouth, nose, pharynx (throat), larynx (voice box), and trachea (windpipe). If this Line is taken literally, it would mean that He cannot breathe (not true of His situation at the time). But if Line 318 is understood metaphorically, or figuratively, it’s simply telling us that He cannot speak freely. *He cannot communicate the Divine Revelation He needs to deliver to the world.* These final Lines of Bahá'u'lláh's *Mathnavi*, in contrast to the hopeful anticipation in the opening Lines of the poem, present the harsh reality: Humanity's Truest and Most Beloved Friend is now a prisoner in a foreign land, captive in the hands of enemies who want to isolate, confine, and silence Him.

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— Kay Lynn Morton
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About the Translator

Born and raised in New England, Kay has been an active member of the Bahá'í Faith for over 50 years. In 1971, she married a Bahá'í from Iran and subsequently lived in Shiraz for three years (1971-74). She has studied English Literature and Writing at the University of Massachusetts and George Mason University, attended poetry workshops, and recited her poetry in public venues. Blessed with three children and six grandchildren, Kay presently resides in Northern Virginia.

