THE FOUR VALLEYS

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THE FOUR VALLEYS
Translated by Marzieh Gail in consultation with Ali Quli Khan

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"The Seven Valleys and The Four Valleys" by Bahá'u'lláh
Translated by Marzieh Gail in consultation with Ali Quli Khan

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<p74>

He is the Strong, the Well-Beloved!

O light of truth, Hisam-i-Din, the bounteous,

No prince hath the world begot like unto Thee! [1]
[1 Mathnavi of Rumi.]

I am wondering why the tie of love was so abruptly severed, and the firm covenant of friendship broken. Did ever, God forbid, My devotion lessen, or My deep affection fail, that thou hast thus forgot Me and blotted Me from thy thoughts?

What fault of Mine hath made thee cease thy favors?

Is it that We are lowly and thou of high degree? [1]
[1 Sa'di, Muslihu'd-Din of Shiraz (ca. 1184-1291), famed author of the Gulistan and other poetical works.]<p48>

Or is that a single arrow hath driven thee from the battle? [1] Have they not told thee that faithfulness is a duty on those who follow the mystic way, that it is the true guide to His Holy Presence? "But as for those who say, 'Our Lord is God,' and who go straight to Him, the angels shall descend to them...." [2]
[1 Persian proverb describing a man who gives up easily. As used here one connotation is that the Shaykh might have considered his station as a mystic

leader compromised by the fact of his being taught the new truth by Baha'u'llah.]
[2 Qur'an 41:30.]

Likewise He saith, "Go straight on then as thou hast been commanded." [1] Wherefore, this course is incumbent on those who dwell in the presence of God.
[1 Qur'an 11:114; 42:14.]

I do as bidden, and I bring the message,
Whether it give thee counsel or offense. [1]
[1 Sa'di.]

Albeit I have received no answer to My letters and it is contrary to the usage of the wise to express My regard anew, yet this new love hath broken all the old rules and ways.

Tell us not the tale of Layli or of Majnun's woe --
Thy love hath made the world forget the loves of long ago.<p49>

When once thy name was on the tongue, the lovers caught it
And it set the speakers and the hearers dancing to and fro. [1]
[1 Ibid.]

And of divine wisdom and heavenly counsel,

[Rumi says]:

Each moon, O my beloved, for three days I go mad;
Today's the first of these -- 'Tis why thou seest me glad.

We hear that thou hast journeyed to Tabriz and Tiflis to disseminate knowledge, or that some other high purpose hath taken thee to Sanandaj. [1], [2]
[1 Senna, capital of Persian Kurdistan.]
[2 This preamble to The Four Valleys is written in the finest Persian epistolary style. The rules of classical letter writing in Persian require quotations from literary works, and assertions of abiding love for the one addressed, who is chided for having neglected the writer.]

O My eminent friend! Those who progress in mystic wayfaring are of four kinds. I shall describe them in brief, that the grades and qualities of each kind may become plain to thee.

<p50>

THE FIRST VALLEY

If the travelers seek after the goal of the Intended One (maqsud), this station appertaineth to the self -- but that self which is "The Self of God standing within Him with laws." [1]
[1 Hadith.]

On this plane, the self is not rejected but beloved; it is well-pleasing and not to be shunned. Although at the beginning, this plane is the realm of conflict, yet it endeth in attainment to the throne of splendor. As they have

said: "O Abraham of this day, O Friend Abraham of the Spirit! Kill these four birds of prey," [1] that after death the riddle of life may be unraveled.
[1 The Mathnavi. Here Rumi tells a story of four evil birds which, when put to death, changed into four birds of goodness. The allegory refers to subduing evil qualities and replacing them with good.]

This is the plane of the soul who is pleasing unto God. Refer to the verse:
O thou soul who art well assured,
Return to thy Lord, well-pleased, and pleasing unto Him. [1]
[1 Qur'an 89:27-30.]

which endeth:

Enter thou among My servants,
And enter thou My paradise. [1]
[1 Qur'an 89:27-30.]<p51>

This station hath many signs, unnumbered proofs. Hence it is said: "Hereafter We will show them Our signs in the regions of the earth, and in themselves, until it become manifest unto them that it is the truth," [1] and that there is no God save Him.
[1 Qur'an 41:53.]

One must, then, read the book of his own self, rather than some treatise on rhetoric. Wherefore He hath said, "Read thy Book: There needeth none but thyself to make out an account against thee this day." [1]
[1 Qur'an 17:15.]

The story is told of a mystic knower, who went on a journey with a learned grammarian as his companion. They came to the shore of the Sea of Grandeur. The knower straightway flung himself into the waves, but the grammarian stood lost in his reasonings, which were as words that are written on water. The knower called out to him, "Why dost thou not follow?" The grammarian answered, "O Brother, I dare not advance. I must needs go back again." Then the knower cried, "Forget what thou didst read in the books of Sibavayh and Qawlavayh, of Ibn-i-Hajib and Ibn-i-Malik, [1] and cross the water."
[1 Famed writers on grammar and rhetoric.] <p52>

The death of self is needed here, not rhetoric:
Be nothing, then, and walk upon the waves. [1]
[1 The Mathnavi.]

Likewise is it written, "And be ye not like those who forget God, and whom He hath therefore caused to forget their own selves. These are the wicked doers." [1]
[1 Qur'an 59:19.]

THE SECOND VALLEY

If the wayfarer's goal be the dwelling of the Praiseworthy One (Mahmud), [1] this is the station of primal reason which is known as the Prophet and the Most Great Pillar. [2] Here reason signifieth the divine, universal mind, whose

sovereignty enlighteneth all created things -- nor doth it refer to every feeble brain; for it is as the wise Sana'i hath written:
[1 An attribute of God and one of the titles of Muhammad.]
[2 Maqam-i-Mahmud -- Praiseworthy Station -- is the rank of Prophets endowed with constancy.]

How can feeble reason encompass the Qur'an,
Or the spider snare a phoenix in his web?
Wouldst thou that the mind should not entrap thee?
Teach it the science of the love of God!<p53>

On this plane, the traveler meeteth with many a trial and reverse. Now is he lifted up to heaven, now is he cast into the depths. As it hath been said: "Now Thou drawest me to the summit of glory, again Thou castest me into the lowest abyss." The mystery treasured in this plane is divulged in the following holy verse from the Surih of THE CAVE: [1]
[1 Qur'an 18:16. This is a reference to the station of complete faith. The companions of the Cave are identified with early Christian martyrs.]

"And thou mightest have seen the sun when it arose, pass on the right of their cave, and when it set, leave them on the left, while they were in its spacious chamber. This is one of the signs of God. Guided indeed is he whom God guideth; but for him whom He misleadeth, thou shalt by no means find a patron."

If a man could know what lieth hid in this one verse, it would suffice him. Wherefore, in praise of such as these, He hath said: "Men whom neither merchandise nor traffic beguile from the remembrance of God...."[1]
[1 Qur'an 24:37.]

This station conferreth the true standard of knowledge, and freeth man from tests. In this realm, to search after knowledge is irrelevant, for He hath said concerning the guidance of travelers on this plane, "Fear God, and God <p54> will instruct thee." [1] And again: "Knowledge is a light which God casteth into the heart of whomsoever He willeth." [2]
[1 Qur'an 2:282.]
[2 Hadith.]

Wherefore, a man should make ready his heart that it be worthy of the descent of heavenly grace, and that the bounteous Cup-Bearer may give him to drink of the wine of bestowal from the merciful vessel. "For the like of this let the travailers travail!" [1]
[1 Qur'an 37:59.]

And now do I say, "Verily we are from God, and to Him shall we return." [1]
[1 Qur'an 2:151.]

THE THIRD VALLEY

If the loving seekers wish to live within the precincts of the Attracting One (Majdhub), [1] no soul may dwell on this Kingly Throne save the beauty of love. This realm is not to be pictured in words.

[1 That attribute of God which draws all creatures to Him.]

Love shunneth this world and that world too,
In him are lunacies seventy-and-two. The minstrel of love harpeth this lay:
Servitude enslaveth, kingship doth betray. [1]
[1 The Mathnavi.]<p55>

This plane requireth pure affection and the bright stream of fellowship. In telling of these companions of the Cave He saith: "They speak not till He hath spoken; and they do His bidding."[1]
[1 Qur'an 21:27.]

On this plane, neither the reign of reason is sufficient nor the authority of self. Hence, one of the Prophets of God hath asked: "O my Lord, how shall we reach unto Thee?" And the answer came, "Leave thyself behind, and then approach Me."

These are a people who deem the lowest place to be one with the throne of glory, and to them beauty's bower differeth not from the field of a battle fought in the cause of the Beloved.

The denizens of this plane speak no words -- but they gallop their chargers. They see but the inner reality of the Beloved. To them all words of sense are meaningless, and senseless words are full of meaning. They cannot tell one limb from another, one part from another. To them the mirage is the real river; to them going away is returning. Wherefore hath it been said:

The story of Thy beauty reached the hermit's dell;<p56>
Crazed, he sought the Tavern where the wine they buy and sell.
The love of Thee hath leveled down the fort of patience,
The pain of Thee hath firmly barred the gate of hope as well. [1]
[1 Sa'di.]

In this realm, instruction is assuredly of no avail.

The lover's teacher is the Loved One's beauty,
His face their lesson and their only book.
Learning of wonderment, of longing love their duty,
Not on learned chapters and dull themes they look.
The chain that binds them is His musky hair,
The Cyclic Scheme, [1] to them, is but to Him a stair. [2]
[1 The Cyclic Theory of Abu-'Ali Sina (Avicenna -- 980-1037) as expressed by him in the quatrain: Every semblance, every shape that perisheth today In the treasure-house of Time is safely stored away. When the world revolveth to its former place, Out of the Invisible He draweth forth its face. See also Some Answered Questions, p. 326.]
[2 The Mathnavi.

Here followeth a supplication to God, the Exalted, the Glorified: <p57>

O Lord! O Thou Whose bounty granteth wishes!
I stand before Thee, all save Thee forgetting.

Grant that the mote of knowledge in my spirit
Escape desire and the lowly clay;
Grant that Thine ancient gift, this drop of wisdom,
Merge with Thy mighty sea. [1]
[1 Ibid.]

Thus do I say: There is no power or might save in God, the Protector, the Self-Subsistent. [1]
[1 From Qur'an 18:37.

THE FOURTH VALLEY

If the mystic knowers be of those who have reached to the beauty of the Beloved One (Mahbub), this station is the apex of consciousness and the secret of divine guidance.

This is the center of the mystery: "He doth what He willeth, ordaineth what He pleaseth." [1]
[1 Qur'an 2:254; 5:1, etc.]

Were all the denizens of earth and heaven to unravel this shining allusion, this darksome riddle, until the Day when the Trumpet soundeth,<p58> yet would they fail to comprehend even a letter thereof, for this is the station of God's immutable decree, His foreordained mystery. Hence, when searchers inquired of this, He made reply, "This is a bottomless sea which none shall ever fathom." [1] And they asked again, and He answered, "It is the blackest of nights through which none can find his way."
[1 Statement attributed to Ali.]

Whoso knoweth this secret will assuredly hide it, and were he to reveal but its faintest trace they would nail him to the cross. Yet, by the Living God, were there any true seeker, I would divulge it to him; for they have said: "Love is a light that never dwelleth in a heart possessed by fear."

Verily, the wayfarer who journeyeth unto God, unto the Crimson Pillar in the snow-white path, will never reach unto his heavenly goal unless he abandoneth all that men possess: "And if he feareth not God, God will make him to fear all things; whereas all things fear him who feareth God." [1]
[1 This quotation is in Arabic.]

Speak in the Persian tongue, though the
Arab please thee more;
A lover hath many a tongue at his command. [1]
[1 The Mathnavi.]<p59>

How sweet is this couplet which revealeth such a truth:

See, our hearts come open like shells, when
He raineth grace like pearls,
And our lives are ready targets, when agony's arrows He hurls.

And were it not contrary to the Law of the Book, I would verily bequeath a part

of My possessions to the one who would put Me to death, and I would name him My heir; yea, I would bestow upon him a portion, would render him thanks, would seek to refresh Mine eyes with the touch of his hand. But what can I do? I have no possessions, no power, and this is what God hath ordained. [1]
[1 This was revealed before the Declaration of Baha'u'llah. The lines following refer to the imminence of
His Manifestation.]

Methinks at this moment, I catch the fragrance of His garment [1] blowing from the Egypt of Baha; [2] verily He seemeth near at hand, though men may think Him far away. [3] My soul doth smell the perfume shed by the <p60> Beloved One; My sense is filled with the fragrance of My dear Companion.
[1 Literally, the garment of Ha, which is the letter "H" and here represents Baha.]
[2 This reference is to the story of Joseph in the Qur'an and the Bible.]
[3 This refers to those who did not expect the imminent advent of Him Whom God Shall Manifest.]

The duty of long years of love obey
And tell the tale of happy days gone by,
That land and sky may laugh aloud today,
And it may gladden mind and heart and eye. [1]
[1 The Mathnavi.]

This is the realm of full awareness, of utter self-effacement. Even love is no pathway to this region, and longing hath no dwelling here; wherefore is it said, "Love is a veil betwixt the lover and the beloved." Here love becometh an obstruction and a barrier, and all else save Him is but a curtain. The wise Sana'i hath written:

Never the covetous heart shall come to the stealer of hearts,
Never the shrouded soul unite with beauty's rose.

For this is the realm of Absolute Command and is free of all the attributes of earth.

The exalted dwellers in this mansion do wield divine authority in the court of rapture, with utter gladness, and they do bear a kingly <p61> sceptre. On the high seats of justice, they issue their commands, and they send down gifts according to each man's deserving. Those who drink of this cup abide in the high bowers of splendor above the Throne of the Ancient of Days, and they sit in the Empyrean of Might within the Lofty Pavilion: "Naught shall they know of sun or piercing cold." [1]
[1 Qur'an 76:13.]

Herein the high heavens are in no conflict with the lowly earth, nor do they seek to excel it, for this is the land of mercy, not the realm of distinction. Albeit at every moment these souls appear in a new office, yet their condition is ever the same. Wherefore of this realm it is written, "No work withholdeth Him from another." [1] And of another state it is said: "Every day doth some

new work employ Him." [2] This is the food whose savor changeth not, whose color altereth not. If thou eatest thereof, thou shalt verily chant this verse: "I turn my face to Him Who hath created the Heavens and the earth ... I am not one of those who add gods to God." [3] "And thus did we show Abraham the Kingdom of the Heavens and of the Earth, that He might be established <p62> in knowledge." [4] Wherefore, put thy hand into thy bosom, then stretch it forth with power, and behold, thou shalt find it a light unto all the world. [5]
[1 This quotation is from one of the commentators on Qur'an 55:29. Cf. the dictionary Lisanu'l-'Arab.]
[2 Qur'an 55:29.]
[3 Qur'an 6:79.]
[4 Qur'an 6:75.]
[5 Cf. Qur'an 7:105 etc., and Hadith.]

How crystal this cool water that the Cup-Bearer bringeth! How bright this pure wine in the hands of the Beloved! How delicate this draught from the Heavenly Cup! May it do them good, whoso drink thereof, and taste of its sweetness and attain to its knowledge.

It is not fitting that I tell thee more,
For the stream's bed cannot hold the sea. [1]
[1 The Mathnavi.]

For the mystery of this utterance is hid within the storehouse of the Great Infallibility [1] and laid up in the treasuries of power. It is sanctified above the jewels of explanation; it is beyond what the most subtle of tongues can tell.
[1 Ismat-i-Kubra, the invariable attribute of the Divine Manifestation.]

Astonishment here is highly prized, and utter poverty essential. Wherefore hath it been said, "Poverty is My pride." [1] And again: "God hath a people beneath the dome of glory, whom <p63> He hideth in the clothing of radiant poverty." [2] These are they who see with His eyes, hear with His ears, as it is written in the well-known tradition.
[1 Muhammad.]
[2 Hadith.]

Concerning this realm, there is many a tradition and many a verse, of broad or special relevancy, but two of these will suffice to serve as a light for men of mind and heart.

The first is His statement: "O My Servant! Obey Me and I shall make thee like unto Myself. I say 'Be,' and it is, and thou shalt say 'Be,' and it shall be."

And the second: "O Son of Adam! Seek fellowship with none until thou hast found Me, and whenever thou shalt long for Me, thou shalt find Me close to thee."

Whatever high proofs and wondrous allusions are recounted herein, concern but a single Letter, a single Point. "Such hath been the way of God ... and no change canst thou find in the way of God." [1]
[1 Qur'an 33:62; 48:23.]

I began this epistle some time ago, in thy remembrance, and since thy letter had not reached me then, I began with some words of reproach. Now, thy new missive hath dispelled that feeling and causeth Me to write thee. To <p64> speak of My love for thine Eminence is needless. "God is a sufficient witness!" [1] For his Eminence Shaykh Muhammad -- May God the Exalted bless him! -- I shall confine Myself to the two following verses which I request be delivered to him:
[1 Qur'an 4:164.]

I seek thy nearness, dearer than sweet Heaven;
I see thy visage, fairer than Paradise bowers. [1]
[1 Sa'di.]

When I entrusted this message of love to My pen, it refused the burden and it swooned away. Then coming to itself, it spoke and said, "Glory be to Thee! To Thee do I turn in penitence, and I am the first of them that believe ." [1]
Praise be to God, the lord of the worlds!
[1 Qur'an 7:140.]

Let us tell, some other day
This parting hurt and woe;
Let us write, some other way,
Love's secrets -- better so. <p65>

Leave blood and noise and all of these,
And say no more of Shams-i-Tabriz.[1]
[1 Shams-i-Tabriz, the Sufi who exerted a powerful influence on Jalalu'd-Din Rumi, diverting his attention from science to Mysticism. A great part of Rumi's works are dedicated to him. These lines are from the Mathnavi.]

Peace be upon thee, and upon those who circle around thee and attain thy meeting.

What I had written ere this hath been eaten by the flies, so sweet was the ink. As Sa'di saith: "I shall forbear from writing any longer, for my sweet words have drawn the flies about me."

And now the hand can write no more, and pleadeth that this is enough. Wherefore do I say, "Far be the glory of thy Lord, the Lord of all greatness, from what they affirm of Him." [1]
[1 Qur'an 37:180.]

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