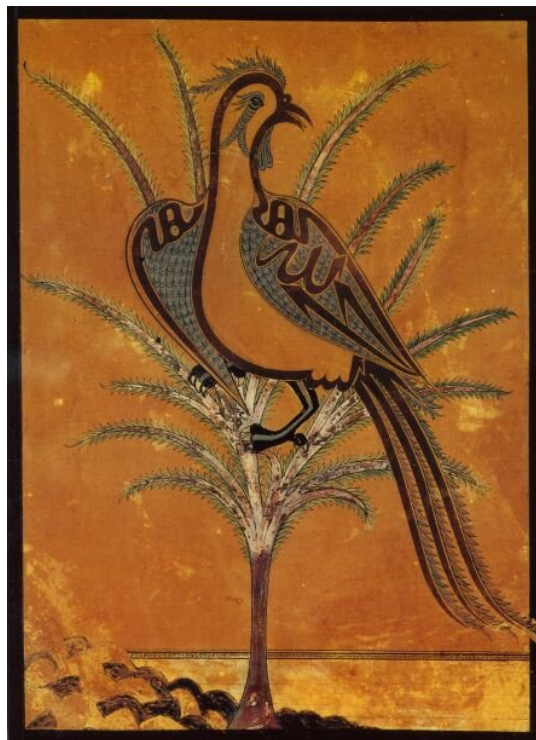


The Seven Cities

Bahá'u'lláh



Compiled by Mr. A.K. Bolhuis
from Bahá'u'lláh – Gems of Divine Mysteries

All emphasis and section breaks added.

O thou who hast soared to the realm of guidance and ascended to the kingdom of virtue! Shouldst thou desire to apprehend these celestial allusions, to witness the mysteries of divine knowledge, and to become acquainted with His all-encompassing Word, then it behoveth thine eminence to inquire into these and other questions pertaining to thine origin and ultimate goal from those whom God hath made to be the Wellspring of his knowledge, the Heaven of His wisdom, and the Ark of His mysteries. For were it not for those effulgent Lights that shine above the horizon of His Essence, the people would know not their left hand from their right, how much less could they scale the heights of the inner realities or probe the depths of their subtleties! We beseech God therefore to immerse us in these surging seas, to grace us with the presence of these life-bearing breezes, and to cause us to abide in these divine and lofty precincts. Perchance we may divest ourselves of all that we have taken from each other and strip ourselves of such borrowed garments as we have stolen from our fellow men, that He may attire us instead with the robe of His mercy and the raiment of his guidance, and admit us into - 17

the city of knowledge

Whosoever entereth this city will comprehend every science before probing into its mysteries and will acquire from the leaves of its trees a knowledge and wisdom encompassing such mysteries of divine lordship as are enshrined within the treasures of creation. Glorified be God, its Creator and Fashioner, above all that He hath brought forth and ordained therein! By God, the Sovereign Protector, the Self-Subsisting, the Almighty! Were I to unveil to thine eyes the gates of this city, which have been fashioned by the right hand of might and power, thou wouldst behold that which none before thee hath ever beheld and wouldst witness that which no other soul hath ever witnessed. Thou wouldst apprehend the most obscure signs and the most abstruse allusions, and wouldst clearly behold the mysteries of the beginning in the point of the end. All matters would be made easy unto thee, fire would be turned into light, knowledge and blessings, and thou wouldst abide in safety within the court of holiness. - 18

Bereft, however, of the essence of the mysteries of His wisdom, which We have imparted unto thee beneath the veils of these blessed and soul-stirring words, thou wouldst fail to attain unto even a sprinkling of the oceans of divine knowledge or the crystal streams of divine power, and wouldst be recorded in the Mother Book, through the Pen of oneness and by the Finger of God, amongst the ignorant. Nor wouldst thou be able to grasp a single word of the Book or a single utterance of the Kindred of God¹⁴ concerning the mysteries of the beginning of the end. - 19

O thou whom We have outwardly never met, yet whom We inwardly cherish in Our heart! Be fair in thy judgement and present thyself before Him who seeth and knoweth thee, even if thou seest and knowest Him not: Can any soul be found to elucidate these words such convincing arguments, clear testimonies, and unmistakable allusions as to appease the heart of the seeker and relieve the soul of

the listener? Nay, by the One in Whose hand is My soul! Unto none is given to quaff even a dewdrop thereof unless he entereth within this city, a city whose foundations rest upon mountains of crimson-coloured ruby, whose walls are hewn of the chrysolite of divine unity, whose gates are made of the diamonds of immortality, and whose earth sheddeth the fragrance of divine bounty. - 20

Having imparted unto thee, beneath countless veils of concealment, certain hidden mysteries, We now return to Our elucidation of the books of old, that perchance thy feet may not slip and thou mayest receive with complete certitude the portion which We shall bestow upon thee of the billowing oceans of life in the realm of the names and attributes of God. - 21

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It behoveth him who is a wayfarer in the path of God and a wanderer in His way to detach himself from all who are in the heavens and on the earth. He must renounce all save God, that perchance the portals of mercy may be unlocked before his face and the breezes of providence may waft over him. And when he hath inscribed upon his soul that which We have vouchsafed unto him of the quintessence of inner meaning and explanation, he will fathom all the secrets of these allusions, and God shall bestow upon his heart a divine tranquillity and cause him to be of them that are at peace with themselves. In like manner wilt thou comprehend the meaning of all the ambiguous verses that have been sent down concerning the question thou didst ask of this Servant Who abideth upon the seat of abasement, Who walketh upon the earth as an exile with none to befriend, comfort, aid, or assist Him, Who hath placed His whole trust in God, and Who proclaimeth at all times: "Verily we are God's, and to Him shall we return." ²⁴ - 33

Know thou that the passages that We have called "ambiguous" appear as such only in the eyes of them that have failed to soar above the horizon of guidance and to reach the heights of knowledge in the retreats of grace. For otherwise, unto them that have recognized the Repositories of divine Revelation and beheld through His inspiration the mysteries of divine authority, all the verses of God are perspicuous and all His allusions are clear. Such men discern the inner mysteries that have been clothed in the garment of words as clearly as ye perceive the heat of the sun or the wetness of water, nay even more distinctly. Immeasurably exalted is God above our praise of His loved ones, and beyond their praise of Him! - 34

Now that We have reached this most excellent theme and attained such lofty heights by virtue of that which hath flowed from this Pen through the incomparable favours of God, the Exalted, the Most High, it is Our wish to disclose unto thee certain stations in the wayfarer's journey towards his Creator. Perchance all that thine eminence hath desired may be revealed unto thee, that the proof may be made complete and the blessing abundant. - 35

Know thou of a truth that the seeker must, at the beginning of his quest for God, enter the

Garden of Search

In this journey it behoveth the wayfarer to detach himself from all save God and to close his eyes to all that is in the heavens and on the earth. There must not linger in his heart either the hate or the love of any soul, to the extent that they would hinder him from attaining the habitation of the celestial Beauty. He must sanctify his soul from the veils of glory and refrain from boasting of such worldly vanities, outward knowledge, or other gifts as God may have bestowed upon him. He must search after the truth to the utmost of his ability and exertion, that God may guide him in the paths of His favour and the ways of His mercy. For He, verily, is the best of helpers unto His servants. He saith, and He verily speaketh the truth: "Whoso maketh efforts for Us, in Our ways shall We assuredly guide him."²⁵ And furthermore: "Fear God and God will give you knowledge."²⁶ - 36

In this journey the seeker becometh witness to a myriad changes and transformations, confluences and divergences. He beholdeth the wonders of Divinity in the mysteries of creation and discovereth the paths of guidance and the ways of his Lord. Such is the station reached by them that search after God, and such are the heights attained by those who hasten unto Him. - 37

When once the seeker hath ascended unto this station, he will enter the

City of Love and Rapture,

whereupon the winds of love will blow and the breezes of the spirit will waft. In this station the seeker is so overcome by the ecstasies of yearning and the fragrances of longing that he discerneth not his left from his right, nor doth he distinguish land from sea or desert from mountain. At every moment he burneth with the fire of longing and is consumed by the onslaught of separation in this world. He speedeth through the Paran of love and traverseth the Horeb of rapture. Now he laugheth, now he weepeth sore; now he reposeth in peace, now he trembleth in fear. Nothing can alarm him, naught can thwart his purpose, and no law can restrain him. He standeth ready to obey whatsoever His Lord should please to decree as to his beginning and his end. With every breath he layeth down his life and offereth up his soul. He bareth his breast to meet the darts of the enemy and raiseth his head to greet the sword of destiny; nay rather, he kisseth the hand of his would-be murderer and surrendereth his all. He yieldeth up spirit, soul, and body in the path of his Lord, and yet he doeth so by the leave of his Beloved and not of his own whim and desire. Thou findest him chill in the fire and dry in the sea, abiding in every land and treading every path. Whosoever toucheth him in this state will perceive the heat of his love. He walketh the heights of detachment and traverseth the vale of renunciation. His eyes are ever expectant to witness the wonders of God's mercy and eager to behold the splendours of His beauty. Blessed indeed are they that have

attained unto such a station, for this is the station of the ardent lovers and the enraptured souls. - 38

And when this stage of the journey is completed and the wayfarer hath soared beyond this lofty station, he entereth the

City of Divine Unity,

and the garden of oneness, and the court of detachment. In this plane the seeker casteth away all signs, allusions, veils, and words, and beholdeth all things with an eye illumined by the effulgent lights which God Himself hath shed upon him. In his journey he seeth all differences return to a single word and all allusions culminate in a single point. Unto this beareth witness he who sailed upon the ark of fire and followed the inmost path to the pinnacle of glory in the realm of immortality:

"Knowledge is one point, which the foolish have multiplied."²⁷ This is the station that hath been alluded to in the tradition: "I am He, Himself, and He is I, Myself, except that I am that I am, and He is that He is."²⁸ - 39

In this station, were He Who is the Embodiment of the End to say: "Verily, I am the Point of the Beginning", He would indeed be speaking the truth. And were He to say: "I am other than Him", this would be equally true. Likewise, were He to proclaim: "Verily, I am the Lord of heaven and earth", or "the King of kings", or "the Lord of the realm above", or Muhammad, or 'Alí, or their descendants, or aught else, He would indeed be proclaiming the truth of God. He, verily, ruleth over all created things and standeth supreme above all besides Him. Hast thou not heard what hath been said aforetime: "Muhammad is our first, Muhammad our last, Muhammad our all"? And elsewhere: "They all proceed from the same Light"? - 40

In this station the truth of the unity of God and of the signs of His sanctity is established. Thou shalt indeed see them all rising above the bosom of God's might and embraced in the arms of His mercy; nor can any distinction be made between His bosom and His arms. To speak of change or transformation in this plane would be sheer blasphemy and utter impiety, for this is the station wherein the light of divine unity shineth forth, and the truth of His oneness is expressed, and the splendours of the everlasting Morn are reflected in lofty and faithful mirrors. By God! Were I to reveal the full measure of that which He hath ordained for this station, the souls of men would depart from their bodies, the inner realities of all things would be shaken in their foundations, they that dwell within the realms of creation would be dumbfounded, and those who move in the lands of allusion would fade into utter nothingness. - 41

Hast thou not heard: "No change is there in God's creation"?²⁹ Hast thou not read: "No change canst thou find in God's mode of dealing"?³⁰ Hast thou not borne witness to the truth: "No difference wilt thou see in the creation of the God of Mercy"?³¹ Yea, by My Lord! They that dwell within this Ocean, they that ride upon this Ark, witness no change in the creation of God and behold no differences upon

His earth. And if God's creation be not prone to change and alteration, how then could they who are the Manifestations of His own Being be subject to it? Immeasurably exalted is God above all that we may conceive of the Revealers of His Cause, and immensely glorified is He beyond all that they may mention in His regard! - 42

Great God! This sea had laid up lustrous pearls in store;
The wind hath raised a wave that casteth them ashore.
So put away thy robe and drown thyself therein,
And cease to boast of skill: it serveth thee no more! - 43

If thou be of the inmates of this city within the ocean of divine unity, thou wilt view all the Prophets and Messengers of God as one soul and one body, as one light and one spirit, in such wise that the first among them would be last and the last would be first. For they have all arisen to proclaim His Cause and have established the laws of divine wisdom. They are, one and all, the Manifestations of His Self, the Repositories of His might, the Treasuries of His Revelation, the Dawning-Places of His splendour and the Daysprings of His light. Through them are manifested the signs of sanctity in the realities of all things and the tokens of oneness in the essences of all beings. Through them are revealed the elements of glorification in the heavenly realities and the exponents of praise in the eternal essences. From them hath all creation proceeded and unto them shall return all that hath been mentioned. And since in their inmost Beings they are the same Luminaries and the self-same Mysteries, thou shouldst view their outward conditions in the same light, that thou mayest recognize them all as one Being, nay, find them united in their words, speech, and utterance. - 44

Wert thou to consider in this station the last of them to be the first, or conversely, thou wouldst indeed be speaking the truth, as hath been ordained by Him Who is the Wellspring of Divinity and the Source of Lordship: "Say: Call upon God or call upon the All-Merciful: by whichsoever name ye will, invoke him, for He hath most excellent names."³² For they are all the Manifestations of the name of God, the Dawning-Places of His attributes, the Repositories of His might, and the Focal Points of His sovereignty, whilst God - magnified be His might and glory - is in His Essence sanctified above all names and exalted beyond even the loftiest attributes. Consider likewise the evidences of divine omnipotence both in their Souls and in their human Temples, that thine heart may be assured and that thou mayest be of them that speed through the realms of His nearness. - 45

Know thou, moreover, that in this most hallowed and resplendent city thou shalt find the wayfarer to be lowly before all men and humble before all things. For naught doth he behold save that he perceiveth God therein. He beholdeth the effulgent glories of God in the lights of His Revelation that have encompassed the Sinai of creation. In this station the wayfarer must not claim the seat of honour in any gathering or walk before others in the desire to vaunt and exalt himself. Rather must he regard himself as standing at all times in the presence of his Lord. He must not

wish for anyone that which he doth not wish for himself, nor speak that which he would not bear to hear spoken by another, nor yet desire for any soul that which he would not have desired for himself. It befitteth him, rather, to walk upon the earth with undeviating steps in the kingdom of His new creation. - 84

Know, however, that the seeker, at the outset of his journey, witnesseth change and transformation, as hath already been mentioned. This is undoubtedly the truth, as hath been revealed concerning those days: "On the day when the earth shall be changed into another earth."⁵⁵ These are indeed days the like of which no mortal eye hath ever seen. Blessed is he that attaineth thereunto and realizeth their full worth. "We had sent Moses with Our signs, saying unto him: 'Bring forth thy people from darkness into light and remind them of the days of God.'"⁵⁶ And these are in truth the days of God, could ye but know it. - 85

In this station, all changing and varying realities are manifest before thee. Whosoever denieth this truth hath verily turned aside from the Cause of God, rebelled against His rule, and gainsaid His sovereignty. For it is indeed within the power of Him Who changeth the earth into another earth to transform all that dwell and move thereon. Wherefore marvel not at how He turneth darkness into light, light into darkness, ignorance into knowledge, error into guidance, death into life, and life into death. It is in this station that the law of transformation taketh effect. Ponder thereon, if thou be of them that tread this path, that all thou didst ask of this lowly One may be made plain unto thee and that thou mayest abide within the tabernacle of this guidance. For He doeth whatsoever He willeth and ordaineth whatsoever He pleaseth. Nor shall He be asked of His doings, whilst all men will be asked of their every deed.⁵⁷ - 86

O My brother! In this stage, which marketh the beginning of the journey, thou shalt behold divers stations and differing signs, even as was mentioned in connection with the City of Search. All these hold true in their respective planes. It behoveth thine eminence in this station to consider each created thing in its own place, neither abasing nor exalting its true rank. For instance, if thou wert to reduce the unseen world to the realm of creation, this would be an act of sheer blasphemy, and the converse would likewise be the essence of impiety. Wert thou, however, to describe the unseen world and the realm of creation within their own stations, this would be the undoubted truth. In other words, wert thou to witness any transformation in the realm of the divine unity, no greater sin could be conceived in all creation, but wert thou to consider transformation in its own place and understand it accordingly, no harm could befall thee. - 87

By My Lord! Notwithstanding all that We have revealed unto thee of the mysteries of utterance and the degrees of exposition, methinks I have spoken not a single letter of the ocean of God's hidden knowledge and the essence of His inscrutable wisdom. God willing, this We shall ere long accomplish in its appointed

time. He verily, remembereth all things in their own place, and we, in truth, all yield praise unto Him. - 88

Know thou, moreover, that the bird that taketh flight in the atmosphere of the realm on high will never be able to soar unto the heaven of transcendent holiness, nor taste of the fruits which God hath brought forth therein, nor quaff from the streams which He hath caused to flow in its midst. And were it to partake but a drop thereof, it would perish forthwith. Even as thou dost witness in these days with regard to those who profess allegiance unto Us, and yet perform such deeds, utter such words, and advance such claims as they have. Methinks they lie as dead within their own veils. - 89

Comprehend, in like manner, every station, sign, and allusion, that thou mayest perceive all things in their own place and consider all matters in their proper light. For in this station, the City of Divine Unity, are to be found those who have entered within the ark of divine guidance and journeyed through the heights of divine unity. Thou shalt behold the lights of beauty upon their faces and the mysteries of glory in their human temples. Thou shalt perceive the musk-laden fragrance of their words and behold the signs of His sovereignty in all their ways and doings. Nor wilt thou be veiled by the deeds of them that have failed to quaff from the crystal springs or to attain unto the cities of holiness, and who follow their selfish desires and spread disorder in the land, all the while believing themselves to be guided aright. It is indeed of them that it hath been said: "These are the abject and foolish, who follow every clamorous impostor and who bend with every changing wind."⁵⁸ The stages of this journey, station, and abode are clear and manifest to thee and require no further explanation. - 90

Know then that all thou hast heard and witnessed that Daystar of Truth, the Primal Point, ascribe to Himself from the designations of former times is only on account of the weakness of men and the scheme of the world of creation. Otherwise, all names and attributes revolve round His Essence and circle about the threshold of His sanctuary. For He it is Who traineth all names, revealeth all attributes, conferreth life upon all beings, proclaimeth the divine verses, and arrayeth the heavenly signs. Nay, shouldst thou gaze with thine inner eye, thou wouldst find that all save Him fade into utter nothingness and are as a thing forgotten in His holy presence. "God was alone; there was none else besides Him. He remaineth now what He hath ever been." Since it hath been established that God - hallowed and glorified be He! - was alone and there was none besides Him, how can the law of change and transformation apply here? Shouldst thou reflect upon that which We have disclosed unto thee, the daystar of guidance would shine resplendent before thee in this everlasting morn, and thou wouldst be numbered therein with the pious. - 91

Know, moreover, that all that We have mentioned concerning these journeys is intended for none but the elect amongst the righteous. And shouldst thou spur on the charger of the spirit and traverse the meads of heaven, thou wouldst complete all these journeys and discover every mystery in less than the twinkling of an eye. - 92

O My brother! If thou be a champion of this arena, speed within the lands of certitude, that thy soul may be delivered in this day from the bondage of misbelief, and that thou mayest perceive the sweet savours that waft from this garden. Verily, the perfume-laden breezes that carry the fragrance of this city blow over all regions. Forfeit not thy portion thereof and be not of the heedless. How well hath it been said:
- 93

His fragrant breaths diffused in Eastern lands could well
To sick ones in the West restore their sense of smell!⁵⁹ - 94

After this heavenly journey and mystical ascent the wayfarer will enter within
the

Garden of Wonderment

Were I to disclose unto thee the reality of this station, thou wouldst lament and bewail the plight of this Servant Who remaineth in the hands of these infidels, Who hath grown perplexed at his plight, and is lost in bewilderment in this fathomless ocean. They conspire each day to put Me to death, and seek at every hour to banish Me from this land, even as they banished Me from another land. Yet this Servant standeth ready before them, awaiting whatsoever the Almighty hath ordained and decreed for Us. Nor do I fear any soul, encompassed as We may be by such trials and tribulations as are inflicted by the wicked and the malicious and surrounded at this hour by a myriad woes and sorrows. "Noah's flood is but the measure of the tears I have shed, and Abraham's fire an ebullition of My soul. Jacob's grief is but a reflection of My sorrows, and Job's afflictions a fraction of My calamity."⁶⁰ - 95

Were I to recount unto thine eminence the dire adversities that have befallen Me, thou wouldst be so grieved as to forsake the mention of all things and to forget thyself and all that the Lord hath created on earth. But as this is not Our wish, I have concealed the revelation of the divine decree in the heart of Bahá and veiled it from the eyes of all that move in the realm of creation, that it may lay hid within the tabernacle of the Unseen until such time as God will have revealed its secret. "Naught in the heavens or on the earth can escape His knowledge, and He, verily, perceiveth all things."⁶¹ - 96

As We have digressed from Our theme, let Us leave aside these allusions and return to Our discussion of this city. Verily, whoso entereth therein shall be saved, and whoso turneth aside therefrom will assuredly perish. - 97

O thou who art mentioned in these Tablets! Know thou that he who embarketh upon this journey will marvel at the signs of the power of God and the wondrous evidences of His handiwork. Bewilderment will seize him from every side,

even as hath been attested by that Essence of immortality from the Concourse on high: "Increase My wonder and amazement at Thee, O God!"⁶² Well hath it been said:
- 98

I knew not what amazement was
Until I made Thy love my cause.
O how amazing would it be
If I were not amazed by Thee!⁶³ - 99

In this valley the wayfarers stray and perish ere they attain their final abode. Gracious God! So immense is this valley, so vast this city in the kingdom of creation, that it seemeth to have neither beginning nor end. How great the blessedness of him who completeth his journey therein and who traverseth, through the assistance of God, the hallowed soil of this heavenly city, a city in which the favoured ones of God and the pure in heart are overcome with wonder and awe. And We say: "Praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds." - 100

And should the servant ascend to even loftier heights, quit this mortal world of dust, and seek to ascend unto the celestial abode, he will then pass from this city into the

City of Absolute Nothingness,

that is, of dying to self and living in God. In this station, this most exalted habitation, this journey of utter self-effacement, the wayfarer forgetteth his soul, spirit, body, and very being, immerseth himself in the sea of nothingness, and liveth on earth as one unworthy of mention. Nor will one find any sign of his existence, for he hath vanished from the realm of the visible and attained unto the heights of self-abnegation. - 101

Were We to recount the mysteries of this city, the dominions of the hearts of men would be laid to waste in the intensity of their longing for this mighty station. For this is the station wherein the effulgent glories of the Beloved are revealed to the sincere lover and the resplendent lights of the Friend are cast upon the severed heart that is devoted to Him. - 102

How can a true lover continue to exist when once the effulgent glories of the Beloved are revealed? How can the shadow endure when once the sun hath shone forth? How can a devoted heart have any being before the existence of the Object of its devotion? Nay, by the One in Whose hand is my soul! In this station, the seeker's complete surrender and utter effacement before his Creator will be such that, were he to search the East and the West, and traverse land, sea, mountain and plain, he would find no trace of his own self or of any other soul. - 103

Gracious God! But for fear of the Nimrod of tyranny and for the protection of the Abraham of justice, I would reveal unto thee that which, wert thou to abandon

self and desire, would enable thee to dispense with aught else and to draw nigh unto this city. Be patient, however, until such time as God will have proclaimed His Cause. He, verily, rewardeth beyond measure them that endure with patience.⁶⁴ Inhale then the sweet savours of the spirit from the garment of hidden meanings, and say: "O ye that are immersed in the ocean of selflessness! Hasten to enter the City of Immortality, if ye seek to ascend its heights." And We exclaim: "Verily we are God's, and to Him shall we return."⁶⁵ - 104

From this most august and exalted station, and from this most sublime and glorious plane, the seeker entereth the

City of Immortality,

therein to abide forever. In this station he beholdeth himself established upon the throne of independence and the seat of exaltation. Then will he comprehend the meaning of that which hath been revealed of old concerning the day "whereon God shall enrich all through His abundance".⁶⁶ Well is it with them that have attained unto this station and drunk their fill from this snow-white chalice before this Crimson Pillar. - 105

Having, in this journey, immersed himself in the ocean of immortality, rid his heart from attachment to aught save Him, and attained unto the loftiest heights of everlasting life, the seeker will see no annihilation either for himself or for any other soul. He will quaff from the cup of immortality, tread in its land, soar in its atmosphere, consort with them that are its embodiments, partake of the imperishable and incorruptible fruits of the tree of eternity, and be forever accounted, in the lofty heights of immortality, amongst the denizens of the everlasting realm. - 106

All that existeth in this city shall indeed endure and will never perish. Shouldst thou, by the leave of God, enter this sublime and exalted garden, thou wouldst find its sun in its noontide glory, never to set, never to be eclipsed. The same holdeth true of its moon, its firmament, its stars, trees, and oceans, and of all that pertaineth thereunto or existeth therein. By Him besides Whom there is none other God! Were I to recount, from this day unto the end that hath no end, its wondrous attributes, the love that My heart cherisheth for this hallowed and everlasting city would never be exhausted. I shall, however, bring My theme to a close, since time is short and the inquirer impatient, and since these secrets are not to be openly divulged save by the leave of God, the Almighty, the All-Compelling. - 107

Erelong shall the faithful behold, in the day of the latter Resurrection, Him Whom God shall make manifest descending with this city from the heaven of the Unseen, together with a company of His exalted and favoured angels. Great, therefore, is the blessedness of him that attaineth unto His presence and beholdeth His countenance. We all, verily, cherish this hope, and exclaim: "Praise be unto Him, for verily He is the Eternal Truth, and unto Him do we return!" - 108

Know, moreover, that should one who hath attained unto these stations and embarked upon these journeys fall prey to pride and vainglory, he would at that very moment come to naught and return to the first step without realizing it. Indeed, they that seek and yearn after Him in these journeys are known by this sign, that they humbly defer to those who have believed in God and in His verses, that they are lowly before those who have drawn nigh unto Him and unto the Manifestations of His Beauty, and that they bow in submission to them that are firmly established upon the lofty heights of the Cause of God and before its majesty. - 109

For were they to reach the ultimate object of their quest for God and their attainment unto Him, they would have but reached that abode which hath been raised up within their own hearts. How then could they ever hope to ascend unto such realms as have not been ordained for them or created for their station? Nay, though they journey from everlasting to everlasting, they will never attain unto Him Who is the midmost Heart of existence and the Axis of the entire creation, He on Whose right hand flow the seas of grandeur, on Whose left stream the rivers of might, and Whose court none can ever hope to reach, how much less His very abode! For He dwelleth in the ark of fire, speedeth, in the sphere of fire, through the ocean of fire, and moveth within the atmosphere of fire. How can he who hath been fashioned of contrary elements ever enter or even approach this fire? Were he to do so, he would be instantly consumed. - 110

Know, moreover, that should the cord of assistance binding this mighty Pivot to the dwellers of earth and heaven be severed, they would all assuredly perish. Great God! How can the lowly dust ever reach unto Him Who is the Lord of lords? Immeasurably exalted is God above that which they conceive in their hearts, and immensely glorified is He beyond that which they attribute to Him. - 111

Yea, the seeker reacheth a station wherein that which hath been ordained for him knoweth no bounds. The fire of love so blazeth in his heart that it seizeth the reins of constraint from his grasp. At every moment his love for his Lord increaseth and draweth him nearer unto his Creator, in such wise that if his Lord be in the east of nearness, and he dwell in the west of remoteness and possess all that earth and heaven contain of rubies and gold, he would forsake it all and rush forth to the land of the Desired One. And shouldst thou find him to be otherwise, know assuredly that such a man is a lying impostor. We, verily, all belong unto Him Whom God shall make manifest in the latter Resurrection, and through Him shall we be raised again to life. - 112

In these days, inasmuch as We have lifted not the veils that conceal the countenance of the Cause of God, nor disclosed unto men the fruits of these stations which We have been forbidden to describe, thou beholdest them drunk with heedlessness. Otherwise, were the glory of this station to be revealed unto men to an extent smaller than a needle's eye, thou wouldst witness them gathering before the

threshold of divine mercy and hastening from all sides to the court of nearness in the realms of divine glory. We have concealed it, however, as mentioned before, that those who believe may be distinguished from them that deny, and that those who turn unto God may be discerned from them that turn aside. I verily proclaim: "There is no power nor strength except in God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting." - 113

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From this station the wayfarer ascendeth unto a

City that hath no name or description,

and whereof one heareth neither sound nor mention. Therein flow the oceans of eternity, whilst this city itself revolveth round the seat of eternity. Therein the sun of the Unseen shineth resplendent above the horizon of the Unseen, a sun that hath its own heavens and its own moons, which partake of its light and which rise from and set upon the ocean of the Unseen. Nor can I ever hope to impart even a dewdrop of that which hath been decreed therein, as none is acquainted with its mysteries save God, its Creator and Fashioner, and His Manifestations. - 114

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Know, moreover, that when We undertook to reveal these words and committed some of them to writing, it was Our intention to elucidate for thine eminence, in the sweet accents of the blessed and the well-favoured of God, all that We had previously mentioned of the words of the Prophets and the sayings of the Messengers. Time, however, was lacking, and the traveller who came from thy presence was in great haste and eager to return. Thus have We cut short Our discourse and contented Ourselves with this much, without completing the description of these stages in a seemly and befitting manner. Indeed, We have omitted the description of major cities and mighty journeys. Such was the haste of the courier that We even forsook the mention of the two exalted journeys of Resignation and Contentment. - 115

Yet, should thine eminence reflect upon these brief statements, thou wouldst assuredly acquire every knowledge, attain, unto the Object of all learning, and exclaim: "Sufficient are these words unto all creation both visible and invisible!" - 116

Even so, should the fire of love burn within thy soul, thou wouldst ask: "Is there yet any more?"⁶⁷ And We say: "Praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds!" - 117

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Notes:

14 The Imáms of Shí'ih Islám.

24 Qur'án 2:156.

25 Qur'án 29:69.

26 Qur'án 2:282.

27 From Hadíth.

28 *ibid*.

29 Qur'án 30:30.

30 Qur'án 48:23.

31 Qur'án 67:3.

32 Qur'án 17:110.

55 Qur'án 14:48.

56 Qur'án 14:5.

57 cf. Qur'án 21:23.

58 From a saying of Imám 'Alí.

59 From the *Díván* of Ibn-i-Fárid.

60 *ibid*.

61 cf. Qur'án 10:61; 34:3.

62 From a Hadíth.

63 From the *Díván* of Ibn-i-Fárid.

64 cf. Qur'án 39:10.

65 Qur'án 2:156.

66 Qur'án 4:130.

67 cf. Qur'án 50:30.