

GLEANINGS

#6

Introduction

Whenever we are studying the Word of God, that is, the revelations of the Manifestations of God, there are some principles derived from the Writings of Baha'ullah that we might keep in mind. These were cited in the first lesson, repeated in the second lesson, and will remain in this position in case you need reminding:

The first is...

“The understanding of His words and the comprehension of the utterances of the Birds of Heaven are in no wise dependent upon human learning. They depend solely upon purity of heart, chastity of soul, and freedom of spirit.” (Kitab-i-Iqan)

In other words, you don't need an academic degree or the equivalent to understand the Writings of Baha'u'llah.

The second is...

Baha'u'llah's principal argument in this treatise is that “Whether too soon or too late, the evidences of His effulgent glory are now actually manifest. It behooveth you to ascertain “...in every age, the reading of the scriptures and holy books is for no other purpose except to enable the reader to apprehend their meaning and unravel their innermost mysteries. Otherwise reading, without understanding, is of no abiding profit unto man.” (Kitab-i-Iqan)

In other words, you do need to know how to read, and to make the effort to understand what you are reading...because reading without understanding is of no value.

The third is...

“It is evident unto thee that the Birds of Heaven and Doves of Eternity speak a twofold language. One language, the outward language, is devoid of allusions, is unconcealed and unveiled...The other language is veiled and concealed, so that whatever lieth hidden in the heart of the malevolent may be made manifest and their innermost being be disclosed...None apprehendeth the meaning of these utterances except them whose hearts are assured, whose

souls have found favor with God, and whose minds are detached from all else but Him. In such utterances, the literal meaning, as generally understood by the people, is not what hath been intended.” (Kitab-i-Iqan)

In other words, the Manifestations sometimes intend for their words to be understood literally, and in other cases to be understood symbolically. We can do both, as long as we are “**detached from all else but Him**”, that is, not assuming that our prior knowledge will enable us to understand what He is saying. We need to be prepared to learn something new, all the time.

The fourth is this...

“Know assuredly that just as thou firmly believest that the Word of God, exalted be His glory, endureth forever, thou must, likewise, believe with undoubting faith that its meaning can never be exhausted.” (Gleanings LXXXIX)

In other words, the words revealed by the Manifestations, in this case by Baha’u’llah, have many meanings, not just one meaning.

A fifth principle, which will be readily recognized as we read GLEANINGS, is no doubt found in the Writings of Baha’u’llah, but is best known as it is described in a letter written on behalf of the Guardian:

“One might liken Bahá’u’lláh’s teachings to a sphere; there are points poles apart, and in between the thoughts and doctrines that unite them.” (Shoghi Effendi, 5 July 1947, Scholarship, p. 2)

In other words, we need to keep the big picture in mind as we read and think about the Baha’i teachings, rather than looking at every teaching in isolation.

A participant in this course recommended the following:

Immerse yourselves in the ocean of My words, that ye may unravel its secrets, and discover all the pearls of wisdom that lie hid in its depths. (Kitab-i-Aqdas #182)

A similar and complementary verse is this:

Recite ye the verses of God every morn and eventide. Whoso faileth to recite them hath not been faithful to the Covenant of God and His Testament, and whoso turneth away from these

holy verses in this Day is of those who throughout eternity have turned away from God.
(Kitab-i-Aqdas #149)

If you would like to bring up other principles, please email me at peterry19@gmail.com so that I can share them with everyone taking this course.

SIXTH WEEK'S SELECTIONS (LI-LXV)

The principal themes in the twenty four excerpts from the Writings of Baha'u'llah collected here are the culmination of progressive revelation of God in the Person, Book and Revelation of Baha'u'llah and the proofs of His claims (LI-LIV); the blessings upon the places where Baha'u'llah lived, including Tihiran (LV-LVI, LXIII-LXIV), Baghdad (LVII), Edirne and Baghdad (LVIII), 'Akka and the Holy Land (LIX), and Istanbul (LXV); the third major theme are the sufferings of Baha'u'llah and the causes of those sufferings (LX-LXII).

– LI –

O people! I swear by the one true God! This is the Ocean out of which all seas have proceeded, and with which every one of them will ultimately be united. From Him all the Suns have been generated, and unto Him they will all return. Through His potency the Trees of Divine Revelation have yielded their fruits, every one of which hath been sent down in the form of a Prophet, bearing a Message to God's creatures in each of the worlds whose number God, alone, in His all-encompassing Knowledge, can reckon. This He hath accomplished through the agency of but one Letter of His Word, revealed by His Pen—a Pen moved by His directing Finger—His Finger itself sustained by the power of God's Truth.

“This is the Ocean out of which all seas have proceeded, and with which every one of them will ultimately be united” and the other symbolic language employed by Baha'u'llah in this passage proclaims His station as the Universal Manifestation of the Baha'i Cycle, which He declared to be at least 500,000 years in duration.

– LII –

Say: O people! Withhold not from yourselves the grace of God and His mercy. Whoso withholdeth himself therefrom is indeed in grievous loss. What, O people! Do ye worship the dust, and turn away from your Lord, the Gracious, the All-Bountiful? Fear ye God, and be not of those who perish. Say: The Book of God hath been sent down in the form of this Youth. Hallowed, therefore, be God, the most excellent of makers! Take ye good heed, O peoples of the world, lest ye flee from His face. Nay, make haste to attain His presence, and be of them that have returned unto Him. Pray to be forgiven, O people, for having failed in your duty towards God, and for having trespassed against His Cause, and be not of the foolish. He it is Who hath created you; He it is Who hath nourished your souls through His Cause, and enabled you to recognize Him Who is the Almighty, the Most Exalted, the All-Knowing. He it is Who hath unveiled to your eyes the treasures of His knowledge, and caused you to ascend unto the heaven of certitude—the certitude of His resistless, His irrefutable, and most exalted Faith. Beware that ye do not deprive yourselves of the grace of God, that ye do not bring to naught your works, and do not repudiate the truth of this most manifest, this lofty, this shining, and glorious Revelation. Judge ye fairly the Cause of God, your Creator, and behold that which hath been sent down from the Throne on high, and meditate thereon with innocent and sanctified hearts. Then will the truth of this Cause appear unto you as manifest as the sun in its noontide glory. Then will ye be of them that have believed in Him.

“Pray to be forgiven, O people, for having failed in your duty towards God, and for having trespassed against His Cause, and be not of the foolish” and the other language in this passage indicates that humanity as a whole has a particularly essential responsibility to recognize Baha’u’llah, and not to “repudiate the truth of this most manifest, this lofty, this shining, and glorious Revelation.”

Say: The first and foremost testimony establishing His truth is His own Self. Next to this testimony is His Revelation. For whoso faileth to recognize either the one or the other He hath established the words He hath revealed as proof of His reality and truth. This is, verily, an evidence of His tender mercy unto men. He hath endowed every soul with the capacity to recognize the signs of God. How could He, otherwise, have fulfilled His testimony unto men,

if ye be of them that ponder His Cause in their hearts. He will never deal unjustly with anyone, neither will He task a soul beyond its power. He, verily, is the Compassionate, the All-Merciful.

Three of the innumerable proofs of Baha'u'llah are cited in this passage – “His own Self”, “His Revelation” and “the words He hath revealed as proof of His reality and truth.” He furthermore asserts that God “hath endowed every soul with the capacity to recognize the signs of God.”

Say: So great is the glory of the Cause of God that even the blind can perceive it, how much more they whose sight is sharp, whose vision is pure. The blind, though unable to perceive the light of the sun, are, nevertheless, capable of experiencing its continual heat. The blind in heart, however, among the people of the Bayán—and to this God is My witness—are impotent, no matter how long the Sun may shine upon them, either to perceive the radiance of its glory, or to appreciate the warmth of its rays.

Baha'u'llah distinguishes in this passage between those who are “blind...unable to perceive the light of the sun” and those who are “blind in heart”. The former can recognize “the glory of the Cause of God” whereas the latter “are impotent, no matter how long the Sun may shine upon them, either to perceive the radiance of its glory, or to appreciate the warmth of its rays.”

Say: O people of the Bayán! We have chosen you out of the world to know and recognize Our Self. We have caused you to draw nigh unto the right side of Paradise—the Spot out of which the undying Fire crieth in manifold accents: “There is none other God besides Me, the All-Powerful, the Most High!” Take heed lest ye allow yourselves to be shut out as by a veil from this Daystar that shineth above the dayspring of the Will of your Lord, the All-Merciful, and whose light hath encompassed both the small and the great. Purge your sight, that ye may perceive its glory with your own eyes, and depend not on the sight of anyone except yourself, for God hath never burdened any soul beyond its power. Thus hath it been sent down unto the Prophets and Messengers of old, and been recorded in all the Scriptures.

Strive, O people, to gain admittance into this vast Immensity for which God ordained neither beginning nor end, in which His voice hath been raised, and over which have been wafted the sweet savors of holiness and glory. Divest not yourselves of the Robe of grandeur, neither suffer your hearts to be deprived of remembering your Lord, nor your ears of hearkening unto the sweet melodies of His wondrous, His sublime, His all-compelling, His clear, and most eloquent voice.

– LIII –

O Naşır, O My servant! God, the Eternal Truth, beareth Me witness. The Celestial Youth hath, in this Day, raised above the heads of men the glorious Chalice of Immortality, and is standing expectant upon His seat, wondering what eye will recognize His glory, and what arm will, unhesitatingly, be stretched forth to seize the Cup from His snow-white Hand and drain it. Only a few have as yet quaffed from this peerless, this soft-flowing grace of the Ancient King. These occupy the loftiest mansions of Paradise, and are firmly established upon the seats of authority. By the righteousness of God! Neither the mirrors of His glory, nor the revealers of His names, nor any created thing, that hath been or will ever be, can ever excel them, if ye be of them that comprehend this truth.

O Naşır! The excellence of this Day is immensely exalted above the comprehension of men, however extensive their knowledge, however profound their understanding. How much more must it transcend the imaginations of them that have strayed from its light, and been shut out from its glory! Shouldst thou rend asunder the grievous veil that blindeth thy vision, thou wouldst behold such a bounty as naught, from the beginning that hath no beginning till the end that hath no end, can either resemble or equal. What language should He Who is the Mouthpiece of God choose to speak, so that they who are shut out as by a veil from Him can recognize His glory? The righteous, inmates of the Kingdom on high, shall drink deep from

the Wine of Holiness, in My name, the all-glorious. None other besides them will share such benefits.

– LIV –

By the righteousness of God, my Well-Beloved! I have never aspired after worldly leadership. My sole purpose hath been to hand down unto men that which I was bidden to deliver by God, the Gracious, the Incomparable, that it may detach them from all that pertaineth to this world, and cause them to attain such heights as neither the ungodly can conceive, nor the froward imagine.

Notwithstanding the loftiness of His prophetic claims, Baha'u'llah emphatically and consistently denied that He ever “aspired after worldly leadership”. He made this statement also in the Suriy-i-Haykal and other Tablets, and stated in the Kitab-i-Iqan that none of the Manifestations of God have worldly ambitions, that all are utterly submissive to the Will of God. This is contrary to the expectations of many of the followers of the Manifestations, that the Promised One will be the worldly leader of humanity, that He will be a “king”, wielding temporal authority.

– LV –

Call thou to remembrance, O Land of ʾA (ʾIhrán), the former days in which thy Lord had made thee the seat of His throne, and had enveloped thee with the effulgence of His glory. How vast the number of those sanctified beings, those symbols of certitude, who, in their great love for thee, have laid down their lives and sacrificed their all for thy sake! Joy be to thee, and blissfulness to them that inhabit thee. I testify that out of thee, as every discerning heart knoweth, proceedeth the living breath of Him Who is the Desire of the world. In thee the Unseen hath been revealed, and out of thee hath gone forth that which lay hid from the eyes of men. Which one of the multitude of thy sincere lovers shall We remember, whose blood hath been shed within thy gates, and whose dust is now concealed beneath thy soil? The

sweet savors of God have unceasingly been wafted, and shall everlastingly continue to be wafted upon thee. Our Pen is moved to commemorate thee, and to extol the victims of tyranny, those men and women that sleep beneath thy dust.

Baha'u'llah refers to "the victims of tyranny", most likely to the martyrs of Tihiran, those Babi men and women who were murdered after the attempt by a misguided Babi to assassinate the Shah of Iran.

Among them is Our own sister, whom We now call to mind as a token of Our fidelity, and as proof of Our loving-kindness, unto her. How piteous was her plight! In what a state of resignation she returned to her God! We, alone, in Our all-encompassing knowledge, have known it.

One of the victims of the persecution of innocent believers in the Bab and Baha'u'llah was the older sister of Baha'u'llah, named Sarih Khanum: https://bahaiopedia.org/S%C3%A1rih_Kh%C3%A1num

O Land of Ṭā! Thou art still, through the grace of God, a center around which His beloved ones have gathered. Happy are they; happy every refugee that seeketh thy shelter, in his sufferings in the path of God, the Lord of this wondrous Day! Blessed are they that remember the one true God, that magnify His Name, and seek diligently to serve His Cause. It is to these men that the sacred Books of old have referred. On them hath the Commander of the Faithful lavished his praise, saying: *"The blessedness awaiting them excelleth the blessedness we now enjoy."* He, verily, hath spoken the truth, and to this We now testify. The glory of their station, however, is as yet undisclosed. The Hand of Divine power will, assuredly, lift up the veil, and expose to the sight of men that which shall cheer and lighten the eye of the world.

Baha'u'llah states that the Babi martyrs were prophesied by the Imam 'Ali, indicating that specific events in the history of the Faith of the Bab were predicted centuries before they occurred.

Render thanks unto God, the Eternal Truth, exalted be His glory, inasmuch as ye have attained so wondrous a favor, and been adorned with the ornament of His praise. Appreciate the value of these days, and cleave to whatsoever beseemeth this Revelation. He, verily, is the Counselor, the Compassionate, the All-Knowing.

– LVI –

Let nothing grieve thee, O Land of Ṭa (Ṭīhrán), for God hath chosen thee to be the source of the joy of all mankind. He shall, if it be His Will, bless thy throne with one who will rule with justice, who will gather together the flock of God which the wolves have scattered. Such a ruler will, with joy and gladness, turn his face towards, and extend his favors unto, the people of Bahá. He indeed is accounted in the sight of God as a jewel among men. Upon him rest forever the glory of God, and the glory of all that dwell in the kingdom of His revelation.

In this passage Baha'u'llah praises the king who will come to the support of the Baha'is, a theme that Shoghi Effendi elaborated upon in The Promised Day is Come.

Rejoice with great joy, for God hath made thee “*the Dayspring of His light*,” inasmuch as within thee was born the Manifestation of His Glory. Be thou glad for this name that hath been conferred upon thee—a name through which the Daystar of grace hath shed its splendor, through which both earth and heaven have been illumined.

Erelong will the state of affairs within thee be changed, and the reins of power fall into the hands of the people. Verily, thy Lord is the All-Knowing. His authority embraceth all things. Rest thou assured in the gracious favor of thy Lord. The eye of His loving-kindness shall everlastingly be directed towards thee. The day is approaching when thy agitation will have been transmuted into peace and quiet calm. Thus hath it been decreed in the wondrous Book.

This promise is cherished not only by the Baha'is, but by millions of Iranians. It is not fulfilled by the Islamic Republic of Iran, but will be established when the Iranian government becomes a republic which protects the rights of all of its citizens.

– LVII –

When thou art departed out of the court of My presence, O Muḥammad, direct thy steps towards My House (Baghdád House), and visit it on behalf of thy Lord. When thou reachest its door, stand thou before it and say: **Whither is the Ancient Beauty gone, O most great House of God, He through Whom God hath made thee the cynosure of an adoring world, and proclaimed thee to be the sign of His remembrance unto all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth? Oh! for the former days when thou, O House of God, wert made His footstool, the days when in ceaseless strains the melody of the All-Merciful poured forth from thee! What hath become of thy jewel whose glory hath irradiated all creation? Whither are gone the days in which He, the Ancient King, had made thee the throne of His glory, the days in which He had chosen thee alone to be the lamp of salvation between earth and heaven, and caused thee to diffuse, at dawn and at eventide, the sweet fragrance of the All-Glorious?**

An unidentified believer in Baha'u'llah, by the name of Muhammad, is called upon to recite this "Tablet of Visitation" (highlighted) when he visits the House of Baha'u'llah in Baghdad.

Where, O House of God, is the Sun of majesty and power Who had enveloped thee with the brightness of His presence? Where is He, the Dayspring of the tender mercies of thy Lord, the Unconstrained, Who had established His seat within thy walls? What is it, O throne of God, that hath altered thy countenance, and made thy pillars to tremble? What could have closed thy door to the face of them that eagerly seek thee? What hath made thee so desolate? Couldst thou have been told that the Beloved of the world is pursued by the swords of His enemies? The Lord bless thee, and bless thy fidelity unto Him, inasmuch as thou hast remained His companion through all His sorrows and His sufferings.

I testify that thou art the scene of His transcendent glory, His most holy habitation. Out of thee hath gone forth the Breath of the All-Glorious, a Breath that hath breathed over all created things, and filled with joy the breasts of the devout that dwell in the mansions of Paradise. The Concourse on high, and they that inhabit the Cities of the Names of God, weep over thee, and bewail the things that have befallen thee.

Thou art still the symbol of the names and attributes of the Almighty, the Point towards which the eyes of the Lord of earth and heaven are directed. There hath befallen thee what hath befallen the Ark in which God's pledge of security had been made to dwell. Well is it with him that apprehendeth the intent of these words, and recognizeth the purpose of Him Who is the Lord of all creation.

Happy are those that inhale from thee the sweet savors of the Merciful, that acknowledge thine exaltation, that safeguard thy sanctity, that reverence, at all times, thy station. We implore the Almighty to grant that the eyes of those who have turned away from thee, and failed to appreciate thy worth, may be opened, that they may truly recognize thee, and Him Who, through the power of truth, hath raised thee up on high. Blind, indeed, are they about thee, and utterly unaware of thee in this day. Thy Lord is, verily, the Gracious, the Forgiving.

I bear witness that through thee God hath proved the hearts of His servants. Blessed be the man that directeth his steps toward thee, and visiteth thee. Woe to him that denieth thy right, that turneth away from thee, that dishonoreth thy name, and profaneth thy holiness.

Grieve not, O House of God, if the veil of thy sanctity be rent asunder by the infidels. God hath, in the world of creation, adorned thee with the jewel of His remembrance. Such an ornament no man can, at any time, profane. Towards thee the eyes of thy Lord shall, under all conditions, remain directed. He, verily, will incline His ear to the prayer of every one that visiteth thee, who will circle around thee, and calleth upon Him in thy name. He, in truth, is the Forgiving, the All-Merciful.

I beseech Thee, O my God, by this House that hath suffered such change in its separation from Thee, that bewaileth its remoteness from Thy presence, and lamenteth Thy tribulation, to forgive me, and my parents, and my kindred, and such of my brethren as have believed in Thee. Grant that all my needs be satisfied, through Thy bounty, O Thou Who art the King of Names. Thou art the most Bountiful of the bountiful, the Lord of all worlds.

– LVIII –

Call thou to mind that which hath been revealed unto Mihdí, Our servant, in the first year of Our banishment to the Land of Mystery (Adrianople). Unto him have We predicted that which must befall Our House (Baghdád House), in the days to come, lest he grieve over the acts of robbery and violence already perpetrated against it. Verily, the Lord, thy God, knoweth all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth.

To him We have written: This is not the first humiliation inflicted upon My House. In days gone by the hand of the oppressor hath heaped indignities upon it. Verily, it shall be so abased in the days to come as to cause tears to flow from every discerning eye. Thus have We unfolded to thee things hidden beyond the veil, inscrutable to all save God, the Almighty, the All-Praised. In the fullness of time, the Lord shall, by the power of truth, exalt it in the eyes of all men. He shall cause it to become the Standard of His Kingdom, the Shrine round which will circle the concourse of the faithful. Thus hath spoken the Lord, thy God, ere the day of lamentation arriveth. This revelation have We given thee in Our holy Tablet, lest thou sorrow for what hath befallen Our House through the assaults of the enemy. All praise be to God, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

Baha'u'llah indicated that His house in Baghdad would be treated with contempt and dishonor, and that has been its history.

– LIX –

Every unbiased observer will readily admit that, ever since the dawn of His Revelation, this wronged One hath invited all mankind to turn their faces towards the Dayspring of Glory, and hath forbidden corruption, hatred, oppression, and wickedness. And yet, behold what the hand of the oppressor hath wrought! No pen dare describe his tyranny. Though the purpose of Him Who is the Eternal Truth hath been to confer everlasting life upon all men, and ensure their security and peace, yet witness how they have arisen to shed the blood of His loved ones, and have pronounced on Him the sentence of death.

The instigators of this oppression are those very persons who, though so foolish, are reputed the wisest of the wise. Such is their blindness that, with unfeigned severity, they have cast into this fortified and afflictive Prison Him, for the servants of Whose Threshold the world hath been created. The Almighty, however, in spite of them and those that have repudiated the truth of this “Great Announcement,” hath transformed this Prison House into the Most Exalted Paradise, the Heaven of Heavens.

Baha’u’llah here refers to the transformation of the Prison in ‘Akka in which Baha’u’llah and His followers were confined “into the Most Exalted Paradise, the Heaven of Heavens.” His consistent message is that wherever on earth the Manifestation of God is, there is the presence of God.

We did not refuse such material benefits as could relieve Us from Our afflictions. Every one of Our companions, however, will bear Us witness that Our holy court is sanctified from, and far above, such material benefits. We have nevertheless accepted, while confined in this Prison, those things of which the infidels have striven to deprive Us. If a man be found willing to rear, in Our name, an edifice of pure gold or silver, or a house begemmed with stones of inestimable value, such a wish will no doubt be granted. He, verily, doeth what He willeth, and ordaineth that which He pleaseth. Leave hath, moreover, been given to whosoever may desire to raise, throughout the length and breadth of this land, noble and imposing structures, and dedicate the rich and sacred territories adjoining the Jordan and its vicinity to the worship and service of the one true God, magnified be His glory, that the prophecies recorded by the Pen of the Most High in the sacred Scriptures may be fulfilled, and that which God, the Lord

of all worlds, hath purposed in this most exalted, this most holy, this mighty, and wondrous Revelation may be made manifest.

We have, of old, uttered these words: Spread thy skirt, O Jerusalem! Ponder this in your hearts, O people of Bahá, and render thanks unto your Lord, the Expounder, the Most Manifest.

Were the mysteries, that are known to none except God, to be unraveled, the whole of mankind would witness the evidences of perfect and consummate justice. With a certitude that none can question, all men would cleave to His commandments, and would scrupulously observe them. We, verily, have decreed in Our Book a goodly and bountiful reward to whosoever will turn away from wickedness and lead a chaste and godly life. He, in truth, is the Great Giver, the All-Bountiful.

Baha'u'llah promises that He has “decreed in Our Book a goodly and bountiful reward to whosoever will turn away from wickedness and lead a chaste and godly life.” It is imperative that He does not given this promise to those who “recognize” or “believe in” Him, but to those who “turn away from wickedness and lead a chaste and godly life.” It is actions that count, not beliefs or words.

– LX –

My captivity can bring on Me no shame. Nay, by My life, it conferreth on Me glory. That which can make Me ashamed is the conduct of such of My followers as profess to love Me, yet in fact follow the Evil One. They, indeed, are of the lost.

When the time set for this Revelation was fulfilled, and He Who is the Daystar of the world appeared in ‘Iráq, He bade His followers observe that which would sanctify them from all earthly defilements. Some preferred to follow the desires of a corrupt inclination, while others walked in the way of righteousness and truth, and were rightly guided.

Say: He is not to be numbered with the people of Bahá who followeth his mundane desires, or fixeth his heart on things of the earth. He is My true follower who, if he come to a valley of pure gold, will pass straight through it aloof as a cloud, and will neither turn back, nor pause. Such a man is, assuredly, of Me. From his garment the Concourse on high can inhale the fragrance of sanctity.... And if he met the fairest and most comely of women, he would not feel his heart seduced by the least shadow of desire for her beauty. Such a one, indeed, is the creation of spotless chastity. Thus instructeth you the Pen of the Ancient of Days, as bidden by your Lord, the Almighty, the All-Bountiful.

*As in the previous selection, this one indicates that it is the actions of His followers that count. He insists upon both “**spotless chastity**” and worldly wealth, which He describes as “**a valley of pure gold**”.*

– LXI –

The world is in travail, and its agitation waxeth day by day. Its face is turned towards waywardness and unbelief. Such shall be its plight, that to disclose it now would not be meet and seemly. Its perversity will long continue. And when the appointed hour is come, there shall suddenly appear that which shall cause the limbs of mankind to quake. Then, and only then, will the Divine Standard be unfurled, and the Nightingale of Paradise warble its melody.

*Baha'u'llah made many statements to the effect that humanity would not turn away from error and embrace His Cause until a “**calamity**” would occur that would “**cause the limbs of mankind to quake.**” The Guardian may well have chosen to translate and include passages with this message in Gleanings because the English-speaking Baha'is had come to believe, erroneously, that the immediate fate of humanity was glorious and that the establishment of the Kingdom on Earth would be happening any day, and without great suffering. That is a false understanding of the Baha'i teachings.*

– LXII –

Recall thou to mind My sorrows, My cares and anxieties, My woes and trials, the state of My captivity, the tears that I have shed, the bitterness of Mine anguish, and now My imprisonment in this far-off land. God, O Muṣṭafá, beareth Me witness. Couldst thou be told what hath befallen the Ancient Beauty, thou wouldst flee into the wilderness, and weep with a great weeping. In thy grief, thou wouldst smite thyself on the head, and cry out as one stung by the sting of the adder. Be thou grateful to God, that We have refused to divulge unto thee the secrets of those unsearchable decrees that have been sent down unto Us from the heaven of the Will of thy Lord, the Most Powerful, the Almighty.

By the righteousness of God! Every morning I arose from My bed, I discovered the hosts of countless afflictions massed behind My door; and every night when I lay down, lo! My heart was torn with agony at what it had suffered from the fiendish cruelty of its foes. With every piece of bread the Ancient Beauty breaketh is coupled the assault of a fresh affliction, and with every drop He drinketh is mixed the bitterness of the most woeful of trials. He is preceded in every step He taketh by an army of unforeseen calamities, while in His rear follow legions of agonizing sorrows.

Such is My plight, wert thou to ponder it in thine heart. Let not, however, thy soul grieve over that which God hath rained down upon Us. Merge thy will in His pleasure, for We have, at no time, desired anything whatsoever except His Will, and have welcomed each one of His irrevocable decrees. Let thine heart be patient, and be thou not dismayed. Follow not in the way of them that are sorely agitated.

Baha'u'llah's intention in revealing His great sufferings for the Cause of God was not to discourage His followers...but rather to assure them that He has "at no time, desired anything except His Will" and that, in His footsteps, the believers should "be patient...not dismayed. Follow not in the way of them that are sorely agitated." These verses are reminiscent of the call of Jesus to His disciples to "carry your cross."

O thou whose face is turned towards Me! As soon as thine eyes behold from afar My native city (Ṭihrán), stand thou and say: I am come to thee out of the Prison, O Land of Ṭa, with tidings from God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. I announce unto thee, O mother of the world and fountain of light unto all its peoples, the tender mercies of thy Lord, and greet thee in the name of Him Who is the Eternal Truth, the Knower of things unseen. I testify that within thee He Who is the Hidden Name was revealed, and the Unseen Treasure uncovered. Through thee the secret of all things, be they of the past or of the future, hath been unfolded. O Land of Ṭa! He Who is the Lord of Names remembereth thee in His glorious station. Thou wert the Dayspring of the Cause of God, the fountain of His Revelation, the manifestation of His Most Great Name—a Name that hath caused the hearts and souls of men to tremble. How vast the number of those men and women, those victims of tyranny, that have, within thy walls, laid down their lives in the path of God, and been buried beneath thy dust with such cruelty as to cause every honored servant of God to bemoan their plight.

Bahá'u'llah calls upon the follower who has made pilgrimage to the Prison of 'Akka in which Baha'u'llah was imprisoned, to recite this "Tablet of Visitation" upon his return to Tihiran.

– LXIV –

It is Our wish to remember the Abode of supreme blissfulness (Ṭihrán), the holy and shining city—the city wherein the fragrance of the Well-Beloved hath been shed, wherein His signs have been diffused, wherein the evidences of His glory have been revealed, wherein His standards have been raised, wherein His tabernacle hath been pitched, wherein each of His wise decrees hath been unfolded.

It is the city in which the sweet savors of reunion have breathed, which have caused the sincere lovers of God to draw nigh unto Him, and to gain access to the Habitation of holiness and beauty. Happy is the wayfarer that directeth his steps towards this city, that gaineth admittance into it, and quaffeth the wine of reunion, through the outpouring grace of his Lord, the Gracious, the All-Praised.

Baha'u'llah may have called upon another believer to recite the following "Tablet of Visitation" to Tihiran when he returns from pilgrimage to 'Akka.

I am come to thee, O land of the heart's desire, with tidings from God, and announce to thee His gracious favor and mercy, and greet and magnify thee in His name. He, in truth, is of immense bounteousness and goodness. Blessed be the man that turneth his face towards thee, that perceiveth from thee the fragrance of God's Presence, the Lord of all worlds. His glory be on thee, and the brightness of His light envelop thee, inasmuch as God hath made thee a paradise unto His servants, and proclaimed thee to be the blest and sacred land of which He, Himself, hath made mention in the Books which His Prophets and Messengers have revealed.

Through thee, O land of resplendent glory, the ensign, "There is none other God but Him," hath been unfurled, and the standard, "Verily I am the Truth, the Knower of things unseen," been hoisted. It behooveth every one that visiteth thee to glory in thee and in them that inhabit thee, that have branched from My Tree, who are the leaves thereof, who are the signs of My glory, who follow Me and are My lovers, and who, with the most mighty determination, have turned their faces in the direction of My glorious station.

– LXV –

Call Thou to remembrance Thine arrival in the City (Constantinople), how the Ministers of the Sultán thought Thee to be unacquainted with their laws and regulations, and believed Thee to be one of the ignorant. Say: Yes, by My Lord! I am ignorant of all things except what

God hath, through His bountiful favor, been pleased to teach Me. To this We assuredly testify, and unhesitatingly confess it.

*Baha'u'llah affirms His innate knowledge, that He is devoid of human learning and that He knows only “**what God hath, through His bountiful favor, been pleased to teach Me.**” This is exceedingly difficult for humanity to understand in our day, inasmuch as human education is so highly valued, that those with the most advanced academic degrees are regarded as the most knowledgeable and wise, and those without such degrees are regarded as ignorant. However, Baha'u'llah not only speaks of His own innate knowledge, which is “**what God hath, through His bountiful favor, been pleased to teach Me**” but also of the capacity of the uneducated masses of humanity to attain to a measure of this knowledge taught by God, as explained by ‘Abdu’l-Baha in His talks and writings regarding the limitations of the human standards of knowledge and the reliability of such knowledge as is bestowed upon believers by the Holy Spirit, which can be recognized because of its harmony with whatsoever is revealed by the Manifestations of God.*

Say: If the laws and regulations to which ye cleave be of your own making, We will, in no wise, follow them. Thus have I been instructed by Him Who is the All-Wise, the All-Informed. Such hath been My way in the past, and such will it remain in the future, through the power of God and His might. This, indeed, is the true and right way. If they be ordained by God, bring forth, then, your proofs, if ye be of them that speak the truth. Say: We have written down in a Book which leaveth not unrecorded the work of any man, however insignificant, all that they have imputed to Thee, and all that they have done unto Thee.

This passage is quite astonishing if it is not interpreted in light of Baha'u'llah's assurance that He has always been obedient to the Shah of Iran, and that His followers must also be obedient to civil government and not just to Him, as the most recent and exalted Manifestation of God. His intent seems to be that He will not follow or endorse whatever is man-made, and that “Such hath been My way in the past, and such will it remain in the future”. This does not imply disobedience, but adherence in His heart, in His mind. The Baha'i is called upon to believe faithfully in whatsoever Baha'u'llah has revealed, and not be swayed by whatever is of human fabrication. He is unwavering

in His obedience to one authority, which is God. Consequently, His obedience to government is dictated by His obedience to God, for God has decreed, in this Dispensation and in every previous Dispensation, as a fundamental principle of His worship, His religion, that no man or woman shall be the cause of unhappiness for any other human being, and disobedience to government is the cause of much unhappiness, for the rebel and for all those impacted by the consequences of his rebellion.

Say: It behooveth you, O Ministers of State, to keep the precepts of God, and to forsake your own laws and regulations, and to be of them who are guided aright. Better is this for you than all ye possess, did ye but know it. If ye transgress the commandment of God, not one jot or one tittle of all your works shall be acceptable in His sight. Ye shall, ere long, discover the consequences of that which ye shall have done in this vain life, and shall be repaid for them. This, verily, is the truth, the undoubted truth.

Baha'u'llah here explains God's intentions for those who govern, which are the same as for those who are governed, beginning with "It behooveth you" and concluding with "This, verily, is the truth, the undoubted truth". The consequences of transgression of "the commandment of God" are very severe – "not one jot or one tittle of all your works shall be acceptable in His sight."

How great the number of those who, in bygone ages, have committed the things ye have committed, and who, though superior to you in rank, have, in the end, returned unto dust, and been consigned to their inevitable doom! Would that ye might ponder the Cause of God in your hearts! Ye shall follow in their wake, and shall be made to enter a habitation wherein none shall be found to befriend or help you. Ye shall, of a truth, be asked of your doings, shall be called to account for your failure in duty with regard to the Cause of God, and for having disdainfully rejected His loved ones who, with manifest sincerity, have come unto you.

Baha'u'llah continues in this paragraph to describe the consequences of disobeying the "commandment of God".

It is ye who have taken counsel together regarding them, ye that have preferred to follow the promptings of your own desires, and forsaken the commandment of God, the Help in Peril, the Almighty.

Say: What! Cleave ye to your own devices, and cast behind your backs the precepts of God? Ye, indeed, have wronged your own selves and others. Would that ye could perceive it! Say: If your rules and principles be founded on justice, why is it, then, that ye follow those which accord with your corrupt inclinations and reject such as conflict with your desires? By what right claim ye, then, to judge fairly between men? Are your rules and principles such as to justify your persecution of Him Who, at your bidding, hath presented Himself before you, your rejection of Him, and your infliction on Him every day of grievous injury? Hath He ever, though it be for one short moment, disobeyed you? All the inhabitants of 'Iráq, and beyond them every discerning observer, will bear witness to the truth of My words.

The current nation of 'Iraq did not exist at the time Baha'u'llah wrote these words, and consequently His intention must have been to refer by "the inhabitants of 'Iraq" to the people of Iran, as in other Tablets He did so in reference to Himself. But Baha'u'llah does not limit His testimony to those who have had direct experience of Him, but rather He states "beyond them every discerning observer".

Be fair in your judgment, O ye Ministers of State! What is it that We have committed that could justify Our banishment? What is the offense that hath warranted Our expulsion? It is We Who have sought you, and yet, behold how ye refused to receive Us! By God! This is a sore injustice that ye have perpetrated—an injustice with which no earthly injustice can measure. To this the Almighty is Himself a witness....

The banishment to which Baha'u'llah refers is from Baghdad, where He was close to Iran, to 'Akka, which He designates as the most remote Prison.

Know ye that the world and its vanities and its embellishments shall pass away. Nothing will endure except God's Kingdom which pertaineth to none but Him, the Sovereign Lord of all,

the Help in Peril, the All-Glorious, the Almighty. The days of your life shall roll away, and all the things with which ye are occupied and of which ye boast yourselves shall perish, and ye shall, most certainly, be summoned by a company of His angels to appear at the spot where the limbs of the entire creation shall be made to tremble, and the flesh of every oppressor to creep. Ye shall be asked of the things your hands have wrought in this, your vain life, and shall be repaid for your doings. This is the day that shall inevitably come upon you, the hour that none can put back. To this the Tongue of Him that speaketh the truth and is the Knower of all things hath testified.

This “day that shall inevitably come upon you, the hour that none can put back” is prophesied in the Tanakh (Jewish Bible, Old Testament), in the Gospels (New Testament) and in the Qur'an. A description of this “day” is found in the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 25:

31When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: 32And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: 33And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. 34Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: 36Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. 37Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? 38When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? 39Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? 40And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. 41Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: 42For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: 43I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. 44Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? 45Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. 46And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.