

Qá'im-Maqám Faráhání in the Bahá'í Writings

Vahid Rafati

trans. Adib Masumian

Foreword by the Translator

What follows is my translation of Vahid Rafati's *Qá'im-Maqám Faráhání dar Áthár-i-Bahá'í*, originally published in *Safíniy-i-'Irfán*, *Daftar-i-Hizhdahum* [no. 18], 2015, pp. 268-293. This article constitutes the most comprehensive survey of references to the Qá'im-Maqám in the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá produced to date.

While rendering this article into English, I elected not to retain some of Rafati's technical discussions of certain terms – discussions which occur in both the body of his article, and also in some of his endnotes – as this would have benefited only the Persian-speaking audience of his original article. These enlightening explanations of certain terms, however, naturally informed the way I ultimately translated them. For instance, immediately after quoting a letter from the Qá'im-Maqám in which he uses the word *gúdiḥ*, Rafati explains that this word means “body” in Azerbaijani. Rather than preserving the word in transliteration as *gúdiḥ*, and following it with a translation of Rafati's helpful explanation, I chose to incorporate his explanation into my translation of the word by simply rendering it as

“body.” Much of this commentary by Rafati, therefore, has been preserved in my translation of his article by way of sensible incorporation. Beyond these instances, Rafati offers other explanations that I have relegated to the endnotes to preserve the flow of the main article itself.

In Persian, the Qá’im-Maqám’s name is often written as Mírzá Abu’l-Qásim Qá’im-Maqám Faráhání, or, as is the case with the title of this article, simply Qá’im-Maqám Faráhání. Such renderings appear to indicate that “Qá’im-Maqám,” which was his title, is generally treated as part of his name. For the sake of clarity, I have recast all instances of “Mírzá Abu’l-Qásim Qá’im-Maqám Faráhání” where they occur in the original Persian to “Mírzá Abu’l-Qásim Faráhání, the Qá’im-Maqám.” I have, however, chosen to leave “Qá’im-Maqám Faráhání” as is, since it is clearly an abbreviation of his full name and can thus be read as an epithet which represents it.

The reader should be aware that all translations of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s words in this article – as well as those of Bahá’u’lláh, with the exception of the passage from His *Kalimát-i-Firdawsíyyih* – are mine, and are thus provisional renderings.

I am exceedingly grateful to my parents, Bijan and Farnaz Masumian, for their suggested improvements to the general accuracy of this translation, and also to Naeem Nabiliakbar for helping me to understand the meaning of several words and expressions used by the Qá’im-Maqám in those passages from his letters which Rafati has quoted in his article.

– Adib Masumian

— — — — —

Introduction

In this article, a brief account of Mírzá Abu’l-Qásim Faráhání, the Qá’im-Maqám, will first be given, and a number of primary sources on his writings and the details of his life will be presented. Passages from research and articles on the Qá’im-Maqám that have been included in Bahá’í books and other publications will also be reproduced in a way that follows the discussion of the

aforementioned subjects. In the next section, this article will offer a sample of those Writings from Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá that extol the virtues, celebrate the praise, and enumerate the most excellent qualities of the Qá'im-Maqám, and which the present author has deemed appropriate to share. Lastly, statements from the Qá'im-Maqám himself that have been quoted or cited in the Bahá'í Writings will be presented for the dear reader's perusal.

Mírzá Abu'l-Qásim Faráhání, the Qá'im-Maqám

In the spheres of Iranian literature and politics, Mírzá Abu'l-Qásim Faráhání, the Qá'im-Maqám, ranks among the most august of the men who lived during the Qájár era. Abu'l-Qásim was the son of 'Ísá Faráhání, who also held the title of "Qá'im-Maqám." Abu'l-Qásim was born in 1779, and was killed in the Nigáristán garden of Ṭihrán in 1835. In 1821, while in Tabríz, he became a minister under 'Abbás Mírzá, and in the early autumn of 1822, he was given the title of Qá'im-Maqám. Following the death of Fath-'Alí Sháh, the Qá'im-Maqám prepared the means for Muḥammad Sháh's accession to the throne, and was then appointed his prime minister. In the realm of politics, the Qá'im-Maqám was a worthy and experienced man who was favorably disposed towards reformist ideals. It is for this reason that, with time, he became the object of the envy of those around him, and especially of his political rivals, including Ḥájí Mírzá Áqásí. Eventually, he was brutally put to death at the age of 58 [*sic*],¹ and was then buried in the shrine of Sháh 'Abdu'l-'Azím in the city of Rey.²

Beyond his political pursuits, when it comes to the field of Persian poetry and literature in general – whether composed in verse or in prose – the Qá'im-Maqám is regarded as one of the greatest littérateurs, orators, and writers of the Qájár era. He composed his poetry under the pen name "Thaná'í," and pioneered a style of Persian prose that was simple, unaffected, and novel – a style that was all his own. The concision of his sentences, the elegance and sweetness of his diction, the omission of anything superfluous from his speech, the brevity he observed in his writing, and the special attention he devoted to literary witticisms when setting forth his points – all these are accounted as among the most salient features of the style employed by the Qá'im-Maqám in his prose. His was a

mellifluous kind of prose that has come to occupy a rank of incontestable and abiding significance in the realm of literature. Indeed, the qualities that characterized the Qá'im-Maqám's prose have ultimately influenced the compositional style of the writers who succeeded him.



Mírzá Abu'l-Qásim Faráhání, the Qá'im-Maqám

A compilation of the Qá'im-Maqám's writings has been published under the title *Munsha'át-i-Qá'im-Maqám* ["The Compositions of the Qá'im-Maqám"], and a collection of his poetry has also been published.³ Various treatments of the political life and literary works of the Qá'im-Maqám have been produced to date. Sources for biographical accounts of the Qá'im-Maqám can be found in *Farhang-i-Sukhanvarán* ["An Encyclopedia of Orators"], vol. 1, p. 201. In addition, a biographical account of the Qá'im-Maqám – as well as the most significant sources on the details of his life and his literary works – have been published in *Dá'iratu'l-Ma'árif-i-Tashayyu'* ["The

Encyclopedia of *Shí'ism*"], vol. 12, p. 544. Likewise, articles on the Qá'im-Maqám that have appeared in Iranian publications have been reproduced in the volumes of *Fihrist-i-Maqálat-i-Fársí* ["The Index of Persian Articles"]. *Zindigíy-i-Síyásí va Adabíy-i-Qá'im-Maqám* ["The Political and Literary Lives of the Qá'im-Maqám"], written by Mír-Ḥusayn Yikrangiyán and published in Ṭíhrán by Intishárát-i-'Ílmí in 1955 – as well as *Qá'im-Maqám-Námih* ["A Compendium on the Qá'im-Maqám"], prepared by Muḥammad-Rasúl Daryágasht and published in Ṭíhrán by Intishárát-i-'Ílmí va Farhangí in 1998, and which includes several articles and transcripts of talks from Iranian researchers – are considered the most important available sources for studying the life and writings of the Qá'im-Maqám. One transcript of a talk given by Jahángír Qá'im-Maqámí – entitled *Marájí' va Manábí'-i-Taḥqíq dar báriy-i-Qá'im-Maqám* ["References and Sources for Research on the Qá'im-Maqám"], and published in *Qá'im-Maqám-Námih* (pp. 126-136) – offers sources for the biographical details, the literary pursuits, the personal life, the beliefs, and the administrative and political affairs of the Qá'im-Maqám.

As for Bahá'í works on the subject, an article entitled "The Prince of the City of Statesmanship and Literary Accomplishment" by Dr. Nosratullah Mohammad Hosseini has been published in the nineteenth year of the *Áhang-i-Badí'* ["The New Melody"] periodical, no. 9, November/December 1964, issue no. 213, pp. 305-307, and an article entitled "A Remembrance of Mírzá Abu'l-Qásim Faráhání, the Qá'im-Maqám" by Ezzatollah Ghaemmaghani has also been published in the *Payám-i-Bahá'í* ["The Bahá'í Message"] magazine, no. 263, October 2001, pp. 39-45. Additionally, 'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd Ishráq-Khávarí has provided a brief account of the Qá'im-Maqám's life and writings in *Muḥáḍirát* ["Conversations"], vol. 2, pp. 928-934, and Fáḍíl Mázandarání has also included a concise discussion of the Qá'im-Maqám's life and the members of his family in *Zuhúru'l-Ḥaqq* ["The Manifestation of Truth"], vol. 8, pp. 267-278.

References to Qá'im-Maqám Faráhání in the Bahá'í Writings

Now that the essential points concerning the biographical accounts and sources for the study of the life of the Qá'im-Maqám

have been discussed, those Bahá'í Writings which contain remarks from Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá in praise of the Qá'im-Maqám will be presented below for the dear readers.

In His *Kalimát-i-Firdawsíyyih* ["Words of Paradise"], Bahá'u'lláh states:

O people of God! Beseech ye the True One – glorified be His Name – that He may graciously shield the manifestations of dominion and power from the suggestions of self and desire and shed the radiance of justice and guidance upon them.

His Majesty Muḥammad Sháh, despite the excellence of his rank, committed two heinous deeds. One was the order to banish the Lord of the Realms of Grace and Bounty, the Primal Point [the Báb]; and the other, the murder of the Prince of the City of Statesmanship and Literary Accomplishment [the Qá'im-Maqám].

*The faults of kings, like their favors, can be great.*⁴

With reference to the aforementioned remarks, 'Abdu'l-Bahá has written the following in one of His Tablets to Mírzá Áqáy-i-Qá'im-Maqámí:⁵

Ṭíhrán

To Mírzá Áqáy-i-Qá'im-Maqámí, upon him be the glory of the All-Glorious

He is God

O you who are the scion of the Prince of the City of Statesmanship and Literary Accomplishment, and are descended from the ruler of the realms of reason and understanding! It has been some time since I last conversed and discussed inner secrets with you. Now, without premeditation, I have begun to write this letter, for I was suddenly reminded of that face and temperament of yours, and am apprised of the services you are rendering in the Cause. You are indeed firm in your belief with the utmost

conviction, and serve the Cause with all your might. No ingenious method remains that you have not employed to secure the good-pleasure of God, and no strategy is there that you have not executed to exalt His Word. In truth, you are an illustrious descendant of your august ancestor, and unto the lineage of that supremely righteous man, you are even as a brilliant candle. We are deeply gladdened that that family has laid an unshakable foundation, and built a mighty mansion, the highest room of which reaches the loftiest heavens. At such a sight the soul of that distinguished personage swells with pride in the Abhá Kingdom. What can I say? For through your sincere intentions, your prodigious efforts, your reverence for the truth, and your servitude at the threshold of God, that faithful friend exults with unbridled joy and fervor. Upon you be the glory of the All-Glorious.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá ‘Abbás

8 June 1919^{6, 7}

Similarly, the following has been recorded in another Tablet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

To Dabír-i-Mu’ayyad, upon him be the glory of the All-Glorious

He is God

O renowned Dabír! He Who is the Ever-Living, the Almighty,⁸ has lauded the Prince of the City of Statesmanship and Literary Accomplishment. This title has left behind traces so astonishing as to have enraptured and dumbfounded people of every stripe. That celebrated one of the Concourse on High⁹ now appears resplendent as the shining moon, and is even as the master of this world and of the next. Such a bounty will manifest itself, through his descendants, in a form as beauteous as roses and flowers.

And now, the Pen of the Covenant¹⁰ has addressed you as Dabír-i-Mu’ayyad. It is my hope that you will be even as a

billowing wave of that ocean, and will discover the loftiest summit. Upon you be the glory of the All-Glorious.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá ‘Abbás
14 November 1921^{11, 12}

In another one of His Writings, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has stated the following:

He is God

The musk-laden message which you had written to your kind father was read, word for word, with the utmost joy and delight. I inhaled from the flower-garden of its themes and the rose-bushes of its inner meaning a most pleasant fragrance. It gave the glad-tidings of the triumph of the Cause of God and heralded the exaltation of His Word. It betokened, moreover, your firmness, your steadfastness, and your ardent desire to serve God. Although you have decided not to travel to Paris, I hope that you shall nonetheless attain the station of Idrís, inasmuch as it has been revealed in the Qur’án: “Verily, We uplifted him to a place on high.”¹³ Furthermore, I hope that your travels throughout the villages in the vicinity shall inaugurate a myriad bounties. Blast the trumpet, that that country may acquire new life from that soul-sustaining breath. Thereby shall the fame of this wondrous Cause stir both the East and the West.

You had written concerning the rugs of the Shrine of Bahá’u’lláh. God willing, you will succeed in completing this endeavor. It is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s greatest wish that the kindred of the Prince of the City of Statesmanship and Literary Accomplishment, the late Qá’im-Maqám, may all repose beneath the shade of Him Who is the Ever-Living, the Almighty, and become the means through which the Word of God is exalted and His fragrances diffused. May each one of them become the brilliantly burning candles of every assemblage, and the blossoming hundred-petaled roses of every garden.

I feel the utmost love towards you, and was delighted to receive the portrait of the late Qá'im-Maqám you sent me. That portrait now hangs in my bedroom. Every morning when I wake from my slumber, my eyes fall upon it. Consider, then, how great is my fondness for him, inasmuch as the Ancient Beauty¹⁴ – may my life be a sacrifice for His loved ones – felt unreserved loving-kindness for that outstanding personage, and always spoke highly of him. Upon you be the glory of the All-Glorious.

'Abdu'l-Bahá 'Abbás^{15, 16}

The following has been recorded in yet another Writing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

Delivered by way of Áqá Siyyid Asadu'lláh

Mírzá Ḥabíbu'lláh – a descendant of the Qá'im-Maqám, who abides in Paradise – upon him be the glory of God

O you who yearn for the threshold of that One Beloved! That which you had written, as well as what was latent within your radiant mind, have been seen and understood. The Ancient Beauty harbored abundant favor and immense affection for that family. Most of the time, He had some occasion to mention the Qá'im-Maqám. In so doing, His face would be wreathed in the evidences of cheerfulness, and this indicated conspicuously the favor and tenderness of that Brilliant Star. Now, praised be God, for the fruits of that tenderness are becoming increasingly apparent with every passing day. Some from that family have entered beneath the shade of the blessed Tree; they have found new life from the living waters that stream in the blissful Paradise, and been created anew. The hope I have placed in the abounding grace of God is this – that all the members of that family be inebriated with the cup of the Covenant, and be moved, through the wondrous melody of this divine springtime, to render fervent praise to the Ancient Beauty.

As to the question of your being here in these days, this is a dangerous prospect. God willing, permission to that effect shall be granted at the appropriate time. Upon you be salutations and praise.^{17, 18}

In another one of His Writings, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says:

O servant of Bahá’u’lláh! Your message has arrived, and the letter from Jináb-i-Qá’im-Maqámí was read, from beginning to end, with careful attention. ... Jináb-i-Qá’im-Maqámí must follow the example of his august ancestor. At a time when all the Qá’im-Maqám’s enemies in Persia were assailing him, and when the Sháh himself had inwardly directed his ill will and teeming wrath towards him, he never deplored his situation. On a certain day, the late Mírzá [‘Abbás Núrí] said to him, “Your enemies are determined to the utmost; something must be done.” To this the Qá’im-Maqám responded, “I know well that they are intent upon my murder, and in the end this will undoubtedly come to pass. Indeed, it is certain that I will be slain. You are aware that it is within my power to exact vengeance upon the Sháh, but I am not disloyal. I will continue to arise faithfully until my final breath, and have left such treachery for the disloyal to commit.” Behold the radiant acquiescence and exemplary forbearance he demonstrated! It is my hope that Jináb-i-Qá’im-Maqámí will likewise tread this path ...^{19, 20}

In a Tablet addressed to Jináb-i-Amín (Hájí Mírzá Abu’l-Ḥasan-i-Amín), ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has written the following:

O trusted one²¹ of the Blessed Beauty!²² Your letter dated 12 August 1919 was received, and a brief reply is included herewith.

*Mírzá Áqá Khán Qá’im-Maqámí is a gem descended from his august ancestor – a gleaming pearl enveloped in the embrace of his majestic shell. He is a man of courage in every respect, and a true servant of the Beloved.*²³

Similarly, in a Tablet addressed to Áqá Mírzá Áqá²⁴ – the son of Áqá Mírzá Buhlúl 'Iráqí [Arákí], who was the grandson of the Qá'im-Maqám – 'Abdu'l-Bahá has written the following:

O scion of that illustrious personage, and O descendant of that peerlessly great one! ... The Blessed Beauty – may my life be a sacrifice for His loved ones – felt the utmost loving-kindness for your august ancestor, and praised him in His Tablets. He spoke constantly of the Qá'im-Maqám's distinguishing characteristics, and would always describe how that celebrated personage was, in the thirteenth century of the Islamic calendar,²⁵ the ruler of the realm of statesmanship and a writer without peer or parallel. The very act of mentioning the Qá'im-Maqám was enough to wreath His face in manifest gladness, and this betokened clearly the profound tenderness He felt towards him. Render thanks unto God, for you have lighted his lamp, have made his descendants the brilliantly burning candles of every assemblage, and have secured for yourself an eternal place in the Most Glorious Paradise ...^{26, 27}

There are likewise numerous instances in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's oral discourses in which He recounted the virtues of the Qá'im-Maqám with great acclaim. Among these is the following, which Mírzá Maḥmúd Zarqání has recorded in his work entitled *Badáyi'u'l-Áthár* ["The Wondrous Traces"]:

... When the subject of Persia was mentioned, 'Abdu'l-Bahá expressed His great loving-kindness for the late Qá'im-Maqám. Among the things He said in his honor was that, if the Qá'im-Maqám were still with us, the whole of Persia would be revived.^{28, 29}

Elsewhere in that same work, the following remarks of 'Abdu'l-Bahá have also been recorded:

... That night, ['Abdu'l-Bahá] described the capability and insight of the Qá'im-Maqám, recounted the grave mistake made by Muḥammad Sháh in ordering his execution, and spoke extensively of the history of Persia. Among the words

He spoke were these: "Had they not killed the Qá'im-Maqám, Persia would never have fallen into ruin, and had they heeded the divine counsels, her ancient glory would not have been cast to the wind." He then stated: "We, of course, do not at all involve ourselves in the political affairs of Persia. Had this Cause, however, appeared in the midst of any one of the peoples or nations of the West, that people would vaunt this bounty over all the world."^{30, 31}

In an oral discourse which He delivered on 22 January 1916, 'Abdu'l-Bahá stated the following concerning the Qá'im-Maqám:

Mírzá Abu'l-Qásim, the Qá'im-Maqám, was the foremost man of Persia and a highly capable individual, so much so that he influenced Fath-'Alí Sháh to appoint Muḥammad Sháh — his great-grandson — as the crown prince, rather than one of his seventy sons. ... Muḥammad Sháh put him to death, and what he did was a terrible thing indeed. Had he not killed the Qá'im-Maqám, Persia would now be superior to the nations of today.^{32, 33}

The Words of the Qá'im-Maqám in the Bahá'í Writings

Beyond the characteristics and virtues of the Qá'im-Maqám that have been mentioned in the Bahá'í Writings, a sample of which has been included in the foregoing pages, a number of the Qá'im-Maqám's own statements have also been quoted and cited, both directly and indirectly, in the Bahá'í Writings. In the lines that follow, the exact words of the Qá'im-Maqám will first be reproduced, and then those Bahá'í Writings which include quotes of those remarks or allusions to them will be presented.

First, we have a letter which the Qá'im-Maqám wrote to his father, Mírzá Buzurg,³⁴ at the instruction of the crown prince,³⁵ and in which the Qá'im-Maqám reprimands the inhabitants of Tabríz.³⁶ Among the Qá'im-Maqám's remarks in this letter are the following:

... If he seeks³⁷ to associate with men of supreme virtue, know that such individuals as Ḥájí Fáḍílí³⁸ and Ḥájí 'Abdu'r-

Razzáq Bayk-i-Kámilí³⁹ reside in that city. They are sedulous men, disinclined to indulge the whims of their appetite, who subscribe to the exercise of reason, the pursuit of a proper livelihood, and the observance of frugality. I take refuge with God!⁴⁰ The body of the *mullá*⁴¹ is the object of God's ridicule. However much you say to them, "Have you been filled?", they respond only with, "Is there yet more?"⁴² They are like beasts of burden that wish only to eat and are loath to run — the devourers of hay and the ravagers of barley ...⁴³

In a Tablet addressed to Áqá 'Alí Najafábádí, 'Abdu'l-Bahá has written the following with reference to the remarks of the Qá'im-Maqám:

Tíhrán

To Áqá 'Alí Najafábádí, upon him be the glory of the All-Glorious

He is God

O you who are firm in the Covenant! You had written that the government has initiated legal proceedings on the pretext of establishing justice, with the stated aim that the outcome of these proceedings shall clearly distinguish the oppressor from the oppressed. Such a course of action would be sensible only if that government were not already apprised of the truth, and this notwithstanding that it is plain as day unto every statesman and minister that the friends of God are the persecuted while the others are the persecutors. There can be no doubt whatever that the true purpose of these proceedings is to discount the importance of the matter, such that it may come to be forgotten entirely, inasmuch as the government is obliged to turn a blind eye to the actions of the oppressors, and to regard these ferocious beasts and ravening animals with favor. They imagine that, if justice were truly to be established, some harm would be caused and a great uproar be raised by these "beasts of burden that wish only to eat and are loath to run" — in the words of the Qá'im-Maqám, "the devourers of hay and the ravagers of barley." Alas for them!

*Gracious God! Time and again has experience shown that such people have naught to their name but flowing robes redolent of the opulent court of Pharaoh, or prayer beads that resemble the cords of a magician from a contemptible tribe. Even as an afflictive nightmare have they descended upon this hapless and despairing people, and imposed themselves as a dreadfully weighty and unfortunate burden upon them. So long as their influence endures, one may as well abandon the thought of cultivating any virtue ...*⁴⁴

Furthermore, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has written the following in a Tablet addressed to Áqá Mírzá Áqáy-i-Qá’im-Maqámí:

He is God

O you who are firm in the Covenant! The letter which you had written to Áqá Siyyid Asadu’lláh has been perused. It was replete with profound meaning and imbued with the utmost sweetness, such that it brought a smile to my face. In the words of the great Qá’im-Maqám, that man who has attained unto the presence of his Lord, “The body of the mullá is the object of God’s ridicule.” Such men have ever been “like beasts of burden that wish only to eat and are loath to run – the devourers of hay and the ravagers of barley”; but may God have mercy on them, for they have now become the bane of sweets. And yet, if they would only content themselves with this indulgence, they would still be worthy of our consideration. Such a prospect appears difficult, however, when one realizes that such men exemplify this verse: “On the Day We will say to Hell, ‘Have you been filled?’ and it will say, ‘Is there yet more?’”⁴⁵ Therefore, you must pledge to give them sweets and rice from time to time to keep them quiet.

I hope that in all your affairs you will be confirmed and successful, and that assistance from the Most Glorious Paradise will be vouchsafed constantly unto you ...^{46, 47}

Additionally, in a Tablet addressed to Mírzá Muḥammad-Báqir Khán Shírází and dated 7 October 1919, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has written the following:

O companion of my travels! ... The great Qá'im-Maqám has said, "The body of the mullá is the object of God's ridicule," and that they, moreover, are "like beasts of burden that wish only to eat and are loath to run – the devourers of hay and the ravagers of barley." These are the words of the Qá'im-Maqám; they have nothing to do with me. You must consider this point carefully ...^{48, 49}

Second, in a letter to Mírzá Buzurg Núrí,⁵⁰ minister to Imám-Virdi Mírzá,⁵¹ the Qá'im-Maqám has written the following:

An old victim of pillage has made this plea for justice: Alas for these Afshárs!⁵² Alas for this people! Alas for that moment!⁵³ And yet, all this is nothing. Alas for the exacting of fines, the edicts of plunder, the Qájár tax-collectors, and the lack of all recourse but to hand over one's possessions! May I find refuge from knives and shears! They ordered two heads, we gave them four; one they pronounced, two did we send ...⁵⁴

The phrase of the Qá'im-Maqám, "the Qájár tax-collectors, and the lack of all recourse but to hand over one's possessions," has been cited and quoted in various forms, both directly and indirectly, in the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. In one of His Tablets to Hájí Áqá Muḥammad 'Aláqihband, He has written the following:

O you who have been enraptured by the fragrances of God! ...

In these days, that Turkish tax-collector – namely, Ibn-i-Abhar – has also arrived. In these past few days, he has made demands on several occasions. In truth, this tax-collector has put up a difficult resistance. The great Qá'im-Maqám complained of "the Qájár tax-collectors, and the lack of all recourse but to hand over one's possessions," but he knew nothing of the Turkish tax-collectors and them that make indisputably well-founded demands! For the time being, he has granted me a brief period to accede to his demands; let us see what will happen next! I have, of course, made all these remarks in jest to gladden you ...^{55, 56}

‘Abdu’l-Bahá has likewise written the following in one of His other Tablets:

Mashhad

Delivered by way of Mírzá Aḥmad

To Áqá Siyyid Áqáy-i-Ḥakím, upon him be the glory of the All-Glorious

O you who are firm in the Covenant! Your letter was received. You requested a prayer supplicating forgiveness for your great father. Indeed, you have coveted a new Tablet from me! Strange as this is, I will obey your command nonetheless. What choice do I have? In former times, men spoke of “the Qájár tax-collectors, and the lack of all recourse but to hand over one’s possessions,” and we now speak of the compelling ruler and the subduing commander! I have, therefore, begun to write this Tablet, that it may bring joy and gladness to that pure heart of yours.

*Day and night, tearfully and restlessly, this servant supplicates the All-Merciful every morn and eve to cheer the friends of *Khurásán*, to crown their endeavors with success, and to enable them to drink their fill from the chalice of limitless grace, bounty, and gladness. This is my highest aspiration and my greatest hope, and in its fulfillment lie my joy, my delight, and my triumph.*

Convey on my behalf, with abounding ardor, the most wondrous and most glorious greetings unto Jináb-i-Karbilá í Hasan.^{57, 58}

In yet another one of His Tablets, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has written the following:

Delivered by way of Jináb-i-Amín, upon him be the glory of the All-Glorious

Hamadán

To Ḥakím Hárún, upon him be the glory of the All-Glorious

He is God

O refined and illustrious personage! I had written a Tablet to you just two days ago, but I have now received a letter from Jináb-i-Amín in which He has requested a new Writing. What can be done? It resembles the well-known adage: "the Qájár tax-collectors, and the lack of all recourse but to hand over one's possessions." I say this in jest, of course, inasmuch as every request from Jináb-i-Amín is born of his sincere devotion to the Cause of resplendent light. Thus, I must consent to his request, though that which I write be brief in length. Upon you be the glory of the All-Glorious.

'Abdu'l-Bahá 'Abbás

Haifa

8 December 1919^{59, 60}

In another one of His Writings, 'Abdu'l-Bahá has stated the following:

Káshán

To the father of Áqá Mihdí, Áqá Ghulám-'Alí, upon him be the glory of the All-Glorious

O you who are firm in the covenant! It has been some time since I last wrote to you. God forbid that this has saddened you, for I have not forgotten you. You are ever enveloped in my embrace, but the storm has raged with such unremitting turbulence that it has prevented me from writing or conversing with you. At present, that noble son of yours, Áqá Mihdí, is with me, and he bears truthful testimony to my words. Indeed, at this very moment, a sweet smile adorns his face as he surely thinks to himself:

Advanced in age though my father may be, yet still does he brim with ability; potent is he to mount and descend, whether on land or in the sea. At one time, he goes to Káshán; at another, he visits Jawshaqán.⁶¹ At one

moment, he goes to Qamṣar,⁶² where armed with the mace of cogent argument and the sword of conclusive proof, he rushes valiantly into the battlefields of debate. At still another time, he travels to Ṭihrán, and at yet another, he journeys to Qum. He is like unto the stars that revolve in the heavens.

Thus, one would need more ink to add to the exploits already recounted here! Yet all this is neither here nor there.

The mother of Áqá Mihdí is simple-hearted; she is a noble woman, ever ready to serve in any way. She, therefore, deserves greetings and salutations, and is worthy of favors and kindness.

O Ghulám-‘Alí! What am I to do with this tax-collector, who resembles Naw-Rúz ‘Alí?⁶³ I have no debt, and yet am I indebted. I am under no obligation to pay, and yet must I pay tribute. One is reminded of the well-known saying: “the Qájár tax-collectors, and the lack of all recourse but to hand over one’s possessions.” At any rate, somehow or another, I have set aside all my other affairs for the moment, and am now giving you my attention – but it was no trouble for me to do this. Áqá Mihdí has related the following to me with the utmost sweetness:

There are others who have recently been guided aright, and my father is interceding on their behalf. They wish for a special Tablet to be sent to them, and my father has remarked that if I fail to communicate this to you, he will scold me and make quick work of me. Reply, then, to his request, and deliver me from this rebuke and censure!

Left with no other choice, I have taken to writing this letter, and seek the favors of God. I hope that you are well; indeed, my hope is that you are happy and content, and that your mind is keen. May you be the cause of joy and gladness unto all the friends in the vicinity, and the means through which they are kept alert and vigilant. Show tenderness unto the

mother of Áqá Mihdí, and strive constantly to cheer her heart, that she may not feel despondent in her separation from her son, and instead give thanks unto the One True God that the apple of her eye renders constant service to the threshold of the Star of the East and the West. Convey unto all the friends the abundant greetings of this kind servant of all humanity.⁶⁴

In another Writing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the following is recorded:

He is God

O you who raise the cry of the Covenant! Even as a Turkish colonel or an Azerbaijani soldier, waiting to be repaid the debt he is owed, Jináb-i-Hájí is here. I, like a poor borrower in arrears, am at a loss, and wonder to myself how I might possibly satisfy this debt – of which every túmán accrues a monthly thousandfold interest – for with every passing month, the Hájí adds extra “interest” to the Tablets he seeks from me. Owing to my demanding preoccupations, he had granted me a respite from this debt for a time, and this was most sensible of him. Now, however, even as a creditor unsettled by the indigence of the debtor, he has arrived without warning, wishing all of a sudden to collect five documents, and refusing to leave until he obtains them. The difference between the Hájí and an Azerbaijani soldier is that the latter lies in wait behind the door, whereas the former comes into the room and demands that his debt be paid. At any rate, among the documents to which he referred in writing is one that bears your name.⁶⁵ We had no choice but to pay this enormous debt – a debt to which compound interest, exorbitant to the point of usury, is attached.

Jináb-i-Hájí has inquired about your duty, and that duty is this: that under all conditions, you sacrifice yourself for the Cause of God – that in your vicinity, you spread the divine fragrances, and make firm the hearts in the Covenant of God. This is the fruit of existence, as well as the station of Áqá Mírzá Maḥmúd – and it would be difficult for me to write

his name without also writing “Mírzá,” as he would accuse me of blasphemy for so doing.

Leave them to their vain imaginings, and let them wander in their heedlessness. Say: “In the name of God is its course and its anchorage.”⁶⁶ Unfurl the sail, and set the ship on its course upon the sea of servitude to Bahá. This, in truth, is “a praise-worthy station”;⁶⁷ it is “an all-encompassing shadow,”⁶⁸ “a gift which is given,”⁶⁹ and “a place to which to be led.”^{70, 71, 72}

In yet another Writing of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the following is written:

He is God

To Áqá Muḥammad-Háshim, upon him be the glory of the All-Glorious

He is God

Áqá Muḥammad-Háshim! Even as a creditor who incessantly solicits the money he is owed, Áqá Mihdí is ever present and well apprised, and he implores me to write him this letter. Although my preoccupations are endless, I seek refuge from this tax-collector who hails from Káshán, and not Azerbaijan – for the Azerbaijanis will say a harsh word or two in Turkish and then grant me a respite, whereas this tax-collector makes his requests more mildly. And yet, his entreaties are constant, and leave me with no opportunity to respond. At times he voices his desire openly, while at others he conveys it with a glance. At one moment he will state it explicitly, and at the next he will communicate it with subtlety.

At any rate, by some means or other, he has induced me to write this letter. Consider, then, how dear you are to Áqá Mihdí, and how delectable your remembrance is to the palate of this servant, that in spite of my many other responsibilities, I have taken to writing this letter that is sweet as sugar. You must strive, then, and bend every effort to serve the friends day and night. In your service to the

bondslaves of the Blessed Beauty – may my life be a sacrifice for them – you must be the lowliest of servants, that in so doing you may become the pride of all the kings and rulers of the earth.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá ‘Abbás⁷³

In another Writing of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the following is recorded:

Nayríz

To the sister-in-law of Áqá Siyyid Mihdí, Amatu’lláh Bagum, and her daughter, ‘Aṭa’iyyih – upon them both be the glory of the All-Glorious

God is the All-Glorious

O handmaid of God! Night has fallen, and it is now dark. With a thin pen, this servant has taken to writing this letter for your sake. What recourse have I? Áqá Siyyid Mihdí makes repeated entreaties, and his power surpasses that of the Turkish tax-collectors. What can I do?⁷⁴

‘Abdu’l-Bahá ‘Abbás⁷⁵

Third, in a letter to Mírzá Buzurg Núrí, the Qá'im-Maqám has written the following:

What good fortune is this! – that after the passage of some time, your letter, which included your amicable complaints and encouraging counsels, has arrived, and added to my belief in the endurance of our covenant of friendship.

At every moment when your musk-laden pen remembers us

It rivals the reward bestowed by freeing two-hundred slaves⁷⁶

You had complained of my not having replied to your encouraging correspondence with sincere letters of my own. Have you still yet to realize that every one of your remarks is

the very truth, and a question that needs no answer? Should you choose not to write a letter to your ardent servant, and withhold from your hopeful devotees the sprinklings of your pearl-streaming pen, it would offend and provoke them to great complaint. The same cannot be said of me; the less trouble I go to, the better. It behooves the fair-faced to flaunt their beauty, while the hideous deserve only to be hid away ...⁷⁷

With reference to the above text, in which the Qá'im-Maqám states that, "every one of your remarks is the very truth, and a question that needs no answer," Bahá'u'lláh has written the following in one of His Tablets:

He is God, exalted be He

Though, in the words of a speaker from former times, the letters this servant hath sent to thee are ostensibly questions that need no answer and are replete with wrongful words – inasmuch as numerous Tablets have heretofore been sent to thee, and thou hast evidently yet to peruse even one of them – yet methinks some expedient reason doth exist for which thou hast withheld thy response. This notwithstanding, we are content with what God hath ordained for us, and in Him do we place our trust. He, in truth, is the best of helpers and the most excellent of guardians. At any rate, this prisoner hath taken up thy time, and will thus conclude His utterance by reminding thee that We have ever been contented with even a single piece of news from thee, but that the messenger who relateth this news hath now been kept out, and the bounty of hearing it unable to reach Us.

God grant that thou art, at all times, persisting in perpetual joy and gladness, and art protected – within the shelter of the safekeeping of the All-Merciful – from such harm as the world and its peoples can inflict. We remember constantly thy mother, as well as the other members of thy household.^{78,}

Likewise, in a Tablet to Jináb-i-Muṣṭafá Effendí, Bahá'u'lláh has written the following:

Praise be to God, Who hath caused the fruits of utterance to be sent down from the firmament of inner meaning. ... For some time now, the liars and slanderers of this area have taken to broaching certain subjects, inasmuch as the people here are unaware of this most lofty Path. Whatever remark is made by an ignorant one, that remark have these people straightway accepted, and in this behavior they continue to persist. The enemies of this Cause are many; whatsoever these Persians say with regard thereto is accounted as the truth, and considered questions that need no answer. This notwithstanding that all are aware that, apart from a mere few, most Persians are given to the utmost cruelty, oppression, trickery, and deceit ...^{80, 81}

In another Tablet dated June 1880 and revealed for Jináb-i-Ṭabíb, Bahá'u'lláh has written as follows:

A praise which is exalted above the tongues of all creation beseemeth the most holy court of the Desired One, Who hath made the Primal Word⁸² to be the Fountainhead of the waters of life unto the peoples of the earth. ... The Most Great Branch⁸³ – may My life, Mine essence, and My very being be a sacrifice for the dust which his noble footsteps have trodden – left for Beirut some time ago. I will defer My response to the letter thou didst send until such time as He hath returned. Furthermore, that which thou hadst said in thy reply was the very truth, and a question that needeth no answer ...^{84, 85}

In a Tablet dated October 1885 and addressed to Mírzá Maqṣúd, Bahá'u'lláh has written the following:

Praise and thanksgiving befit the King of Names, Who hath bestowed mystic pearls from the ocean of truth. ... It hath been said that this world was created through the letters B and E. Unto them that cherish the truth, this “B” representeth the remembrance of the friends, and the “E” signifieth the

gift of limitless love.⁸⁶ That which thou hadst written was the very truth, and a question that needeth no answer ...^{87, 88}

In a Tablet addressed to Ibn-i-Aşdaq, Bahá'u'lláh has written as follows:

Concerning that which thou hadst written with regard to the work of teaching the Faith, as well as the consideration given to certain surrounding areas by some of the friends for that purpose – this is the very truth, and a question that needeth no answer, for not long ago this very matter was mentioned repeatedly by the Tongue of Grandeur.⁸⁹ Likewise, this servant wrote, as bidden, to some of the friends, admonishing the firm and steadfast souls to concentrate their teaching efforts on certain surrounding areas ...^{90, 91}

Fourth, in a letter to an unknown addressee, the Qá'im-Maqám writes:

You had inquired as to how I am faring. What is it you ask of a soul stricken with separation, whose body is here but whose beloved is in 'Iráq?⁹² Think not that I can be patient without you. I swear by God that without you, my dearly beloved, Tabríz afflicts me with fever; indeed, the land of Azerbaijan consumes me with flames of fire, for bereft of you, my beloved, I am weary of life and living.

“O youth!” said a beloved to their lover

“Many a city have you seen in your travels

Then which of those cities is the best?”

“That city,” said the lover, “where the ravisher of hearts resides.”⁹³

Truly, remoteness from friends, and the distance between the body and the one who gives it life, are not things to trifle with. “What we stand for is hardly a plaything.”⁹⁴ These are the days of separation; they are nights not followed by dawns. The pangs of remoteness are palpable, and the

strength to endure them is sapped. The pain of privation is present, and the way to its balm is barred.

Deliver me, O Lord, through Your consummate grace
From the abysmal depths of this fearsome place!

So much the better for me to seek from all-glorious God a cure for this affliction – that through His grace, the ways of separation may be annulled, and I might have the good fortune of seeing you again.

That is all; farewell!⁹⁵

The phrase “Tabríz afflicts me with fever; indeed, the land of Azerbaijan consumes me with fire” mentioned in the above text also appears, in poetic form, in one of the Qá'im-Maqám's *ghazals*.⁹⁶ The following has been written on this subject in *Ma'ákhidh-i-Ash'ár*, vol. 5, pp. 80–81:

In his handwritten notes, Muḥammad-‘Alí Faydí has observed that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would typically recite this couplet from the Qá'im-Maqám to commemorate the day of the Martyrdom of the Báb:

Tabríz afflicts me with fever; with the blood of sorrow
do my lips overflow
How intense are the flames of fire from Azerbaijan
which consume my soul!

The above couplet is part of a poem, reproduced below, that the Qá'im-Maqám wrote to complain of the government officials of Tabríz:

A frenzied heart I've got and hidden therein such pain and
strife
That were I to conceal or reveal it I'd surely fear for my life
Tabríz afflicts me with fever; my lips spill complaints that could fill
a scroll

How intense are the flames of fire from Azerbaijan which
consume my soul!

Why from the heads of Arvanaq a hundred taunts and taints
should I withstand

When as my food and drink I've only a bit of its water and
land?

The unkind ones of Mihrán-Rúd have effaced my soul and
bloodied my heart

For of the hilly terrain of Líqván a tract of farmland's my
paltry part

So oft must I importune my men who govern Sahlán and
Isfahlán

That you'd think I ask them to tend to the lands of Káshán and
Işfahán!

From the king's bountiful means the hamlet of Ni'mat-Ábád
I've asked

For the hundred tokens of Sháníján's deadly wrath have
rendered me aghast

The foe-felling fighters of Tabríz who discharge their arms and
fire their guns

Have made every street to flood from all sides with my
countless petitioning ones

Every host's in my hands — every fiery spark which upward
exalts

All steel's as fragile and fine as silk in the face of their assaults

Should the regal edict be given me to spring from earth to
heaven

God knows I'm set ill at ease by its reaches that number seven

As for that churlish colonel who war with me he fain would
proclaim

Shame and disgrace would be mine for so much as uttering his
name!⁹⁷

The following footnote, which is included in an anthology of the Qá'im-Maqám's poems, discusses the names of the villages and towns mentioned in the above *ghazal*:

Arvanaq and Mihrán-Rúd refer to two districts of Tabríz. Líqván, Sahlán, Isfahlán, Ni'mat-Ábád, and Shániján are villages that once belonged to the Qá'im-Maqám, but were seized by the government after he was executed.⁹⁸

NOTES

- ¹ **Translator's note:** This appears to be a typographical error; if the Qá'im-Maqám was born in or around 1779 and executed in 1835, he would have been about 55 or 56 at the time of his death.
- ² **Translator's note:** Now incorporated into the greater Tīhrán metropolitan area.
- ³ **Author's note:** *Munsha'át-i-Qá'im-Maqám* is among the works that was published in Tīhrán, through the efforts of Jahángír Qá'im-Maqámí, by Intishárát-i-Ibn-i-Síná in 1958. Likewise, *Díván-i-Ash'ár-i-Qá'im-Maqám* ["The Collected Poems of the Qá'im-Maqám"] was published in Tīhrán as a supplement to the tenth year of the *Armaghán* ["Gift"] magazine, and in 2001, it was published in Tīhrán, in full, by Intishárát-i-Avistá Faráhání. This book features an extensive introduction that discusses the writings, views, and details of the Qá'im-Maqám's life.
- ⁴ **Author's note:** *Kalimát-i-Firdawsíyyih* has been published in *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed After the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, pp. 57–80, and the excerpt quoted here can be found on p. 65 of that collection. In *Námih-háy-i-Parákandiy-i-Qá'im-Maqám Faráhání* ["The Scattered Letters of Qá'im-Maqám Faráhání"], p. 376, Jahángír Qá'im-Maqámí has written the following concerning "Buzurg Núrí (Mírzá)":

Buzurg Núrí (Mírzá)

His birth name was 'Abbás, and he hailed from the village of Tákur. He was the father of Áqá Mírzá Ḥusayn-'Alí, better known as Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Bahá'í religion. Concerning Buzurg Núrí, the author

of *Ashrafu't-Tavárikh* ["The Noblest of Histories"] has written, "He was the possessor of all pens."

Mírzá Buzurg served for a time as minister to Imám-Virdí Mírzá, chief sentry to Fath-'Alí Sháh, and governor of Qazvín, and likely also served as minister to some of Fath-'Alí Sháh's other sons. At any rate, he had a friendly relationship with the Qá'im-Maqám, and this can be inferred from several letters which the Qá'im-Maqám wrote to Mírzá Buzurg. It is apparently for this reason that Áqá Mírzá Ḥusayn-'Alí, or Bahá'u'lláh, refers to the Qá'im-Maqám in His *Tajalliyát* [*recte: Kalimát-i-Firdawsíyyih*] as "The Prince of the City of Statesmanship and Literary Accomplishment."

- ⁵ **Translator's note:** The great-grandson of the Qá'im-Maqám and an eminent Bahá'í. The present translator has recently finished translating a biographical account of Mírzá Áqá *Khán* Qá'im-Maqámí, which he hopes to make available in due course.
- ⁶ **Author's note:** Abu'l-Qásim, the Qá'im-Maqám, had a son by the name of Mírzá Muḥammad, who was the father of Mírzá Buhlúl Qá'im-Maqámí, who in turn was the father of Mírzá Áqá *Khán* Qá'im-Maqámí, the addressee of this Tablet. Mírzá Áqá *Khán* was the father of Manúhír *Khán* Qá'im-Maqámí, a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Iran who, along with the other members of that body, was abducted on 21 August 1980. The fate of these individuals remains unknown to this day.

A biographical account of Mírzá Áqáy-i-Qá'im-Maqámí (Mírzá Áqá *Khán*), which includes the many services he rendered throughout his lifetime, has been written by Ḥasan Núshábádí and published in *Áhang-i-Badí* ["The New Melody"], year 28, nos. 9 & 10, November 1973–January 1974, pp. 18–39. A facsimile of the original, handwritten Tablet that begins, "O you who are the scion of the Prince of the City of Statesmanship and Literary Accomplishment..., " and has been reproduced in this article, appears on p. 23 of the aforementioned article by Núshábádí in *Áhang-i-Badí*. Other Tablets that 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote to Mírzá Áqáy-i-Qá'im-Maqámí have been published in *Ma'ákhidh-i-Ash'ár dar Áthár-i-Bahá'í* ["The Sources of Poetry Quoted in the Bahá'í Writings"], vol. 2, p. 43, and *ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 197–8; the corresponding facsimiles of the original, handwritten versions of these Tablets appear on p. 27 and p. 31, respectively, of the aforementioned article by Núshábádí. See also another Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed to Qá'im-Maqámí published in *Makátib-i-'Abdu'l-Bahá* ["The Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá"], vol. 8, p. 64.

[**Translator's note:** Provisional English translations of all four Tablets enumerated here by Rafati appear in an appendix to a complete rendering of Núshábádí's article, which the present translator has recently completed and hopes to make readily available in due course.]

In one of His Tablets to Áqá Siyyid Muḥammad-Riḍá, the son of Jinab-i-Síná, 'Abdu'l-Bahá states the following concerning Mírzá Áqá Khán Qá'im-Maqámí:

O candle of that honored Síná! Your letter has arrived ... Praise God, Áqá Mírzá Áqá Khán, that kind friend, stands ever ready to serve. All his endeavors are crowned with success and are watched over by the Almighty. The Ancient Beauty, may my life be a sacrifice for His loved ones, felt a special tenderness for the late Qá'im-Maqám. Now, God be praised, the tokens of that fondness and favor are clearly manifest, in that the lineage of that great personage has produced so exalted a soul...

The text of the above Tablet has been published in the Iranian National Bahá'í Archives series (INBA), vol. 84, pp. 399-401.

⁷ **Translator's note:** Provisional translation of this Tablet by Adib Masumian.

⁸ **Translator's note:** Both of these titles refer to Bahá'u'lláh.

⁹ **Translator's note:** "The gathering of the Prophets and holy souls in the next world or spiritual realm" (BBD, p. 216).

¹⁰ **Translator's note:** A reference by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Himself, insofar as He is known to Bahá'ís as "the Center of the Covenant."

¹¹ **Author's note:** "Dabír-i-Mu'ayyad" is a reference to Mírzá Muḥsin Khán Na'ímí. The Tablet for him reproduced here has been published in INBA, vol. 88, p. 320.

¹² **Translator's note:** Provisional translation of this Tablet by Adib Masumian.

¹³ **Translator's note:** Qur'án 19:57.

¹⁴ **Translator's note:** A reference to Bahá'u'lláh.

¹⁵ **Author's note:** Idrís is mentioned in the Qur'án as one who was renowned for his eternal life, novel literary prowess, and knowledge of sciences and divine wisdoms. The following description of him has been revealed in Qur'án 19:56-57: "And mention in the Book, Idrís; indeed, he was a man of truth and a prophet, and We raised him to a high station." For more information on Idrís, refer to *Dánish-Námiy-i-Qur'án* ["Encyclopedia of the Qur'án"], vol. 1, p. 182.

[**Translator's note:** Idrís is likely the same person as the Biblical figure Enoch. In His *Lawḥ-i-Basítu'l-Ḥaqqíqih* ("Tablet of the Uncompounded

Reality”), Bahá’u’lláh states the following concerning Idrís: “The first person who devoted himself to philosophy was Idrís. Thus was he named. Some called him also Hermes. In every tongue he hath a special name. He it is who hath set forth in every branch of philosophy thorough and convincing statements. After him Bálinus derived his knowledge and sciences from the Hermetic Tablets and most of the philosophers who followed him made their philosophical and scientific discoveries from his words and statements...” (TBAKA, p. 148, note 3).]

The matter of sending the portrait of the Qá’im-Maqám appears to refer to a request made by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, which He mentions in a Tablet addressed to Áqá Mírzá Áqáy-i-Qá’im-Maqámí and dated 16 June 1921:

O you who are firm in the covenant! Your letter dated 29 March 1921 was received ... If you can, send a pen-and-ink portrait of that luminous personage – your illustrious forefather, the Qá’im-Maqám. Should this not be possible, then send whatever excellent image of him you are able to procure, that I may hang it at the sacred threshold. Although a portrait of him already exists here, its color has faded with the passage of time. Should the image you intend to send be colored – and if, moreover, the vividness of that color be enduring, and the image itself been drawn with pen and ink – this would certainly be preferable ...

The text of the above Tablet has been published in *Sharḥ-i-Shahádat-i-Jináb-i-Mírzá Ya‘qúb-i-Muttaḥidih* [“An Account of the Martyrdom of Mírzá Ya‘qúb Muttaḥidih”], pp. 61–63. It is evident from the Tablet quoted above that the addressee of this Tablet, which alludes to the “musk-laden message,” is Mírzá Áqáy-i-Qá’im-Maqámí.

¹⁶ **Translator’s note:** Provisional translation of this Tablet by Adib Masumian.

¹⁷ **Author’s note:** The identity of “Mírzá Ḥabíbu’lláh” and the way in which he is related to the Qá’im-Maqám are not entirely clear to me. It is likely, however, that this name refers to Ḥabíbu’lláh *Khán Iḥtishám Nizám*, the nephew of Mírzá Áqá *Khán Qá’im-Maqámí*.

¹⁸ **Translator’s note:** Provisional translation of this Tablet by Adib Masumian.

¹⁹ **Author’s note:** This Tablet – which was revealed for Áqá Siyyid Asadu’lláh, who was residing in Port Sa’id at the time – has been published in *Makátib-i-Ḥaḍrat-i-‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 224–225. “The late Mírzá” is a reference to Mírzá Buzurg Núrí, the father of Bahá’u’lláh.

²⁰ **Translator’s note:** Provisional translation of this Tablet by Adib Masumian.

²¹ **Translator’s note:** “Trusted one” literally being “Amín.”

- ²² **Translator's note:** A reference to Bahá'u'lláh.
- ²³ **Translator's note:** Provisional translation of this Tablet by Adib Masumian.
- ²⁴ **Translator's note:** A reference to Mírzá Áqá Khán Qá'im-Maqámí.
- ²⁵ **Translator's note:** A period corresponding to 1785–1883 of the Gregorian calendar.
- ²⁶ **Author's note:** A passage from this Tablet has been published in *Khúshih-há'í az Kharman-i-Adab va Hunar* ["Clusters from the Harvest of Literature and Art"] (Landegg: Anjuman-i-Adab va Hunar, 1990), vol. 1, p. 77.
- ²⁷ **Translator's note:** Provisional translation of this Tablet by Adib Masumian.
- ²⁸ **Author's note:** *Badáyí'u'l-Áthár*, vol. 2, p. 299.
- ²⁹ **Translator's note:** Provisional translation of this Tablet by Adib Masumian.
- ³⁰ **Author's note:** *Ibid.*, p. 102.
- ³¹ **Translator's note:** Provisional translation of this Tablet by Adib Masumian.
- ³² **Author's note:** *Rahíq-i-Makhtúm*, vol. 2, p. 636.

[**Translator's note:** This passage can also be found on p. 392 of the more readily available 2007 edition of this volume published by Bahá'í-Verlag.]

- ³³ **Translator's note:** Provisional translation of this Tablet by Adib Masumian.
- ³⁴ **Translator's note:** Not to be confused with Mírzá Buzurg Núrí, the father of Bahá'u'lláh. The father of the Qá'im-Maqám, whose name was Mírzá 'Ísá Faráhání, also happened to be known as Mírzá Buzurg, and held the title of Qá'im-Maqám before it was passed on to his son.
- ³⁵ **Translator's note:** This would have been 'Abbás Mírzá. For more information on him, refer to H. Busse, "'ABBÁS MĪRZĀ QAJAR," *Encyclopedia Iranica*; available online here: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/abbas-mirza-qajar>
- ³⁶ **Translator's note:** The present translator is grateful to Vahid Rafati and Siyamak Zabihi-Moghaddam for helping him to clearly understand the meaning of this sentence.
- ³⁷ **Translator's note:** Rafati goes on to note that, in *Munsha'át-i-Qá'im-Maqám* (Tīhrán: Araštú), pp. 110–111, this reads "If you seek..."
- ³⁸ **Translator's note:** Rafati goes on to note that, in a footnote included in *Munsha'át-i-Qá'im-Maqám* (Tīhrán: Araštú), p. 110, the following

explanation is given: “‘Hájí’ here is a reference to Hájí Mullá Riḍáy-i-Hamadání.”

- ³⁹ **Translator’s note:** Rafati goes on to note that, in *Munsha’át-i-Qá’im-Maqám* (Ṭíhrán: Araṣṭú), pp. 110-111, this reads “‘Abdu’r-Razzáq Bayk-i-Adíb-i-Kámilí.”
- ⁴⁰ **Translator’s note:** The original phrase in the typescript provided by Rafati reads *al-‘ibádu bi’lláh* (“the servants unto God”), but he goes on to note that this is likely a typographical error that should actually read *al-‘íyáḍhu bi’lláh* (“Refuge is with God”).
- ⁴¹ **Translator’s note:** Rafati goes on to note that, in *Munsha’át-i-Qá’im-Maqám* (Ṭíhrán: Araṣṭú), pp. 110-111, this reads “The saddlebow of the *mullá*...”
- ⁴² **Translator’s note:** Both quotes are indirect references to Qur’án 50:30.
- ⁴³ **Author’s note:** *Munsha’át-i-Qá’im-Maqám*, pp. 74-75.
- ⁴⁴ **Translator’s note:** Provisional translation of this Tablet by Adib Masumian.
- ⁴⁵ **Translator’s note:** Qur’án 50:30.
- ⁴⁶ **Author’s note:** The complete text of this Tablet has been published in *Muntakhabátí az Makátib-i-Haḍrat-i-‘Abdu’l-Bahá* [“Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá”], vol. 6, p. 366.
- ⁴⁷ **Translator’s note:** Provisional translation of this Tablet by Adib Masumian.
- ⁴⁸ **Author’s note:** This Tablet, which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wrote to Mírzá Muḥammad-Báqir Khán Shírází, has been published in INBA, vol. 84, pp. 371-376.
- ⁴⁹ **Translator’s note:** Provisional translation of this Tablet by Adib Masumian.
- ⁵⁰ **Translator’s note:** Another name for Mírzá ‘Abbás Núrí, the father of Bahá’u’lláh.
- ⁵¹ **Translator’s note:** The twelfth son of Faṭḥ-‘Alí Sháh.
- ⁵² **Translator’s note:** A Turkic people who ruled Persia immediately before the Qájárs.
- ⁵³ **Translator’s note:** The word *dam* used here in the original text could also be read as the Arabic word for blood.
- ⁵⁴ **Author’s note:** *Munsha’át-i-Qá’im-Maqám*, pp. 117-118. Bahá’u’lláh’s father is the addressee of this letter.
- ⁵⁵ **Author’s note:** An extensive biographical account of Ibn-i-Abhar is given in *Mu’assisíy-i-Ayádíy-i-Amru’lláh* [“The Institution of the Hands of the Cause of God”], pp. 402-449.

⁵⁶ **Translator's note:** Provisional translation of this Tablet by Adib Masumian.

⁵⁷ **Author's note:** The turns of phrase used in this Tablet are reminiscent of a couplet (no. 577) from the sixth book of Rúmí's *Mathnaví*:

When one's in the clutches of a bloodthirsty lion

What recourse has he but to resign and submit?

⁵⁸ **Translator's note:** Provisional translation of this Tablet by Adib Masumian.

⁵⁹ **Author's note:** "Jináb-i-Amín" refers to Hájí Mírzá Abu'l-Ḥasan Amín Ardikání.

⁶⁰ **Translator's note:** Provisional translation of this Tablet by Adib Masumian.

⁶¹ **Translator's note:** A village in Káshán County.

⁶² **Translator's note:** A town in Káshán County.

⁶³ **Translator's note:** In an email to the present translator dated 9 January 2019, Vahid Rafati suggested that Naw-Rúz 'Alí was probably a Bahá'í who had made pilgrimage to the Holy Land from Azerbaijan.

⁶⁴ **Translator's note:** Provisional translation of this Tablet by Adib Masumian.

⁶⁵ **Translator's note:** Alternatively, "one that is in your name."

⁶⁶ **Translator's note:** Qur'án 11:41.

⁶⁷ **Translator's note:** Qur'án 17:79.

⁶⁸ **Translator's note:** Qur'án 56:30.

⁶⁹ **Translator's note:** Qur'án 11:99.

⁷⁰ **Translator's note:** Qur'án 11:98.

⁷¹ **Author's note:** INBA, vol. 88, pp. 241–2.

⁷² **Translator's note:** Provisional translation of this Tablet by Adib Masumian.

⁷³ **Translator's note:** Provisional translation of this Tablet by Adib Masumian.

⁷⁴ **Author's note:** Muḥtasham Káshání states:

What relationship does the indigent have to the creditor?

What business do the poet and the Turkish tax-collector have with one another?

Avoid that Turk, Yúq Bílmez; for despite one's indigence,

And no matter the excuses one makes before him, he'll demand his money all the same

[**Translator's note:** The full text of the poem is available online here: <https://ganjoor.net/mohtasham/divan-moh/ghete-moh/sh49/>]

- ⁷⁵ **Translator's note:** Provisional translation of this Tablet by Adib Masumian.
- ⁷⁶ **Translator's note:** Ḥáfiz, *ghazal* no. 190: <https://ganjoor.net/hafez/ghazal/sh190/>
- ⁷⁷ **Author's note:** *Munsha'át-i-Qá'im-Maqám*, pp. 126–127. For a discussion of the phrase “your musk-laden pen,” refer to *Ma'ákhidh-i-Ash'ár*, vol. 4, pp. 258–260.
- ⁷⁸ **Author's note:** “A speaker from former times” is a reference to the Qá'im-Maqám.
- ⁷⁹ **Translator's note:** Provisional translation of this Tablet by Adib Masumian.
- ⁸⁰ **Author's note:** *A'ájim* is a reference to Persians. The contents of this Tablet seem to allude to falsehoods and calumnies leveled against the Bahá'í Faith that had been printed in the Arabic publications of Levantine countries. Without hesitation, and dispensing with careful reflection, the authors of these statements accepted and regarded as correct the suspicion and slander that Persian writers had previously directed at the Bahá'í Faith.
- ⁸¹ **Translator's note:** Provisional translation of this Tablet by Adib Masumian.
- ⁸² **Translator's note:** A reference to the Manifestation of God.
- ⁸³ **Translator's note:** One of the titles of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.
- ⁸⁴ **Author's note:** For a discussion of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's journey to Beirut, refer to *Yádnámiy-i-Miṣbáḥ-i-Munír* [“A Festschrift for Miṣbáḥ-i-Munír”], p. 151.
- ⁸⁵ **Translator's note:** Provisional translation of this Tablet by Adib Masumian.
- ⁸⁶ **Translator's note:** A more technical translation would read, “...this *káf* representeth *káf-i-dhikr-i-dústán* [“the K of the remembrance of the friends”], and the *nún* signifieth *nún-i-nímat-i-maḥabbat-i-bí-páyán* [“the N of the gift of limitless love”]. The Arabic equivalent of “be” is *kun*, which consists of the letters *káf* and *nún*. The fact that the words “be” and *kun* both consist of two letters means they are perfect counterparts — a fact which Shoghi Effendi used to his advantage when translating phrases where this cosmological metaphor occurs (from the Long Obligatory Prayer, for instance: “I testify...that He Who hath been

manifested is the Hidden Mystery, the Treasured Symbol, through Whom the letters B [*al-káf*] and E [*al-nún*]...have been joined and knit together.”) In reading the transliterations of the phrases represented by *káf* (*dhikr-i-dústán*) and *nún* (*nímat-i-mahabbat-i-bí-páyán*), we see that the first word of each includes their respective letters. While Bahá'u'lláh's intent, then, is abundantly clear in the original Persian text of this passage, it is inevitably lost in translation.

⁸⁷ **Author's note:** Bahá'u'lláh's reference to the creation of the world through the letters *káf* and *nún* is an allusion to the phrase *kun fa yakún* ["Be, and it is"], which occurs repeatedly in the Qur'án, and through which God brought all creation into existence. For instance, see Qur'án 36:82 and 3:47. Refer also to relevant explanations of *káf* and *nún* in several places throughout *Badáyi'-i-Ma'ání va Tafsír* ["The Wonders of Meanings and Commentary"] (Darmstadt: 'Aṣr-i-Jadíd, 2012), including pp. 146–147.

⁸⁸ **Translator's note:** Provisional translation of this Tablet by Adib Masumian.

⁸⁹ **Translator's note:** A self-referential epithet used by Bahá'u'lláh to denote His station as the mouthpiece of God.

⁹⁰ **Author's note:** *Payk-i-Rástán* ["Messenger of the True Ones"], p. 122.

⁹¹ **Translator's note:** Provisional translation of this Tablet by Adib Masumian.

⁹² **Translator's note:** In the historical parlance of Middle Eastern geography, there are actually two 'Iráqs: "the Arab 'Iráq" (*iráq-i-'arab*) and "the Persian 'Iráq" (*iráq-i-'ajam*). The former refers to present-day 'Iráq, while the latter was "the name given in medieval times to the largely mountainous, western portion of modern Persia" (C.E. Bosworth, 'ERĀQ-E 'AJAM(Ī), *Encyclopedia Iranica*; available online here: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/eraq-e-ajami>). With the passage of time, "the Persian 'Iráq" came to be synonymous with a much more specific district of present-day Iran that includes the city of Sulṭán-Ábád, now called Arák. Given that the Qá'im-Maqám was born in Arák, it is quite possible that this was the meaning he intended – as he may have been writing to someone there to whom he still had ties – but it would be impossible to say this definitively without knowing the identity of the addressee.

⁹³ **Translator's note:** From the *Mathnaví* of Rúmí: <https://ganjoor.net/moulavi/masnavi/daftar3/sh182/>

⁹⁴ **Translator's note:** This sentence, written in Arabic, is likely a paraphrase of a hemistich from a poem by Abú Nuwás – a poet from the Abbasid era – which uses *bihi* ("for him") rather than *biná* ("for us"), as

the Qá'im-Maqám does here. I am grateful to Ruwa Pokorny for offering her valuable insight on how best to render this sentence into English.

⁹⁵ **Author's note:** Munsha'át-i-Qá'im-Maqám, pp. 8-9.

⁹⁶ **Translator's note:** A style of lyric poem that invariably deals with some kind of love.

⁹⁷ **Author's note:** Díván-i-Qá'im-Maqám, p. 148.

⁹⁸ **Author's note:** *Ma'ákhidh-i-Ash'ár*, pp. 80-81.