



a book of poetry by
nashid fareed-ma'at (ashi)

prayers of the mi'raaj (ascension)

a book of poetry by
nashid fareed-ma'at (ashi)

Copyright © 2013

May this e-book be shared for free, never any cost charged for it.

INTRODUCTION

The moon traverses the constellations of the zodiac in
a single night,
so why do you deny the Mi`raj (Ascension)?
That wondrous, unique Pearl (the Prophet) is like a hundred moons
--for when he made one gesture, the moon was split in two.
And the marvel that he displayed in splitting the moon
was in keeping with the weakness of the creatures' perception.
The work and business of the prophets and messengers
is beyond the spheres and the stars.
Transcend the spheres and their revolution!
Then you will see that work and business.

Mawlana Jalaaludin Muhammad al-Balkhi
(also known as Rumi)
from *Mathnavi*

This book speaks to one of the most amazing experiences a human can have: The Night of the *Mi`raaj*, the Night of Ascension. That wondrous night in which the Beloved brought Muhammad, peace be upon him, through the seven heavens and then beyond to the Throne of the Beloved. The fullness of this night journey

cannot be explained in words, a feat the wise don't even attempt. Instead, this book focuses on the space of prayer within this journey: the prayers of various prophets Muhammad encountered on this journey, which culminated in the directive to institute among the Muslim community the practice of five daily prayers.

Prayer is one of the pillars of Islam. In fact, some have suggested it is nearly impossible to understand what Islam is unless one embraces a consistent practice of prayer. Not prayer in the modern context some ascribe to, as superficial displays of worship or petitionary requests to the Beloved. Prayer, in a traditional sense, moves beyond exhibition and desires into a place of surrender: the purest prayer being one in which a person surrenders all one holds one's self to be so that the prayer prays itself through that one. In Islam, the words and postures of the traditional prayer are not something one derives one's self: these were revealed to the community as a practice to embrace. Words and postures honoring the Beloved in ways the Beloved wills to be honored. Although there are words and movements in the prayer, when the essence of the prayer is realized there is a silence and stillness pervading the prayer. In this way, when such essence is realized, does the prayer bring one to the depths of surrender. And for some, to paraphrase a *hadiith* (saying) of Muhammad: prayer becomes the *Mi`raaj* of the faithful.

There is so much more I can include in this introduction, but brevity is speaking to me. I'll only acknowledge that some of the text may seem tedious, given the attention to detail in some sections. I encourage patience with treading through these sections: because for some what may seem like unnecessary details

may speak with necessary precision to others regarding certain material. I also acknowledge that, by some modern standards of writing, certain sections may see long-winded (and for some perhaps overwritten). Again, I encourage patience with these sections for some elements may speak deeper to some than to others -- and rest assured, I did much editing to make the present version sufficiently succinct.

On a technical note, I have written some terms and names in transliterated Arabic. In the text, these are italicized. I have included a glossary at the end for these terms.

Lastly, I encourage readers to take their time with this collection. A measured read of the material is more likely to allow the readers to get a sense of the depth within the writing. As much as the words are useful, I encourage readers to be open to the “words” beyond the words, the language of the heart realizing the love and truth (already) within the heart. If these words don’t point to that, despite how wonderful they may or may not be, they have failed their intention. Yet, if people come to realize this language of the heart without reading a single word of this book, all of creation will still be benefitted. Such realization is more important than the words...

Forgive me for any mistakes present in this version. All mistakes are my own, reflections of my shortcomings. All that is correct is true is the Beloved, so let any and all praise be to the Beloved...

the lover before the beloved
the one surrendering prostrated before
that which it surrenders to
what greater prayer can be fulfilled
all of creation will never be the same again

nashid fareed-ma’at
(July 2013 - Ramadan 1434)

“If the Messenger of Allaah said so, then it is true.”

-- Abu Bakr as-Siddiq

“*Salaah* is the Mi’raaj of the believer.”

-- from a hadith (saying of the Prophet Muhammad)

i will not be content with paradise
if i cannot be with you
but if you deem paradise as a place to dwell
in the journey you design for my return to you
then i am unendingly content with paradise

* * *

i affirm
there is no love but love
there is no truth but truth
there is no awareness but pure absolute awareness
and peace and glory be upon *muhammad*
that he is sent as a messenger
to all of humanity
to remind us to live remembrance of this
through pure, humble, and willing surrender

● ❖ ○

section:
the prologue

And your Lord hath said: Pray unto Me and I
will hear your prayer.

from *Al-Ghafir* (The Forgiver)
Surah 40, Verse 60

Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

it was an age that held many signs of the last of days
and her faith was pushed very much to the edge
a time of increased murder, increased conflict and violence
where many wars were ended without victors
because the iniquity of all involved
exceeded the grace of righteousness
a time of increased natural disasters
destructive earthquakes, droughts, tornados,
hurricanes, tsunamis, and floods
some of a scope which had never been seen before
and many people suffered, struggled to survive, and died
where even the extremes of winters and summers unleashed
conditions that levied death upon the masses
and the gifts of the lands measured in varying contrasts
as some overindulged with reserves that wasted away
as others starved to death without even the taste of crumbs
it was a time when greed and corruption abounded
when leaders were no longer looked upon as caring for the people
and exploitation was deemed acceptable means
to enrich the wealthy at the expense of all others
not even houses of worship offered any refuge
because religion was reduced to superficial rites and social scenes
not sincere and humble quests of the heart
to live and realize the essence of truth and spirit of love
moral decay among humanity was prevalent
selfish desires given sovereignty and priority over wise obedience
open rejection of morality combined with blatant hypocrisy
made societies places lacking trust and safety
even one's own family was no longer a source of protection
or certainty

spouses in strife, children rebelling or being abandoned
divorce increasing to such a point
 that many didn't even seek to marry
and being a neighbor became little more than being a stranger

within all of this, she felt so much dismay
reminded of her grandmother's example, she began to pray
every day and every night, that she would be safe
and her husband and children too
or prayers for things that she felt she needed
or prayers for things that she wanted
or prayers to be away from things that disturbed her
all her prayers revolved around just her
how quickly them became shallow
routines upheld to petition for desires
or hopefully prevent an unfortunate incident
 that might occur if she did not pray
or at least to minimize the negative impact of tragedies
 her prayers could not avert
this began to trouble her soul
because she somehow felt there has to be more
"my prayers cannot be just about me" she said
"but what then should my prayers be about"

immediately
what came to mind
was an image of an old lady, a friend of her mother
who was known to be very spiritual
something within told her to go and see this lady

perhaps she could share some guidance
about the old ways of praying

(some whispers are worth listening to
for they are emanations of the heart
guiding the sincere back into
the embrace of the heart)

so she went
the old lady glad to welcome the seeker into her home
and after small talk over tea and bread
the young woman presented the real cause for her visit
confessing she had begun to pray
but found her prayers too selfish
 too much about me
she asked if the old lady could help her
to pray in a better way

the old lady replied
selfishness
the grand idol of these days
it robs us even of the prayers we make
there is a prayer i can share
if you are open to hearing a prayer of a religion
 different than yours
it is a prayer all of humanity can embrace
you need not be of my religion to pray this prayer
a prayer of praise, humility, unending surrender to the beloved
a prayer of requesting guidance and blessings,
a prayer of repentance

a prayer encouraging us to always live in remembrance of *allaah*
as this leads to peace and truth and refuge (from evil)

the young woman responded
“you said *allaah*, i didn’t know you were a muslim”

“your mother would sometimes pray the same prayer with me
she said she found it to be beautiful and helpful
even if she didn’t disclose to others that she prayed it with me
the fuss people make today over religions can be so nonsensical
but i can show you this prayer if you wish”

the young woman nodded with a smile
if she could see her mother’s soul, she would see it smiling too
an unintended inheritance unknowingly stumbled upon
but the angels could see how this was
a boon of the mother’s prayer

the old lady returned the smile
and grabbed the young woman’s hand
she led the way to the bathroom
explaining that before the prayer is made
one must perform ablution,
a rite of cleansing and purification
the first act being making the intention to prepare for prayer
for in truth, we are nothing but vessels through which
the beloved prays through, if the beloved wills

uttering *bismillaah* (in the name of *allaah*)
the old lady led the way in cleansing

their hands, their mouths, their noses, their faces
their forearms, their necks and the back of their heads,
their ears, their feet and ankles
when this was done,
the old lady spoke in a low voice
the young woman could not hear the words
but they felt like an expression of thanksgiving
then the old lady led the young woman to a quiet room
one prepared for prayer and meditation
there they stood within a moment of silence

the old lady explained
the prayer continues in the tradition of *muhammad*
peace and blessings be upon him
who directed his head in prayer toward the *ka’bah*
the house of worship built by *ibraahiim*
with his son, *ismaa’il*
(may *allaah* be pleased with them)
ibraahiim,
the father of this line of prophets
who walked the path of unwavering faith
who left his family and his homeland
who endured great persecution and hardship
yet never abandoned his worship of *allaah*

facing that house of worship that he built
the two women stood with the intention to pray
with right hand over left hand over her stomach
the old lady told the young woman to follow her actions
that she would say the same words uttered by *muhammad*

perform the same postures he did in prayer
promising to explain everything after they did the prayer
but for now, to just follow along
and let the heart lead into the openness of worship

in the sincerity of genuine prayer
the words, the actions, the traditions
invite and approach the presence of love
that we may be immersed in it

raising her hands to her ears
the old lady declared
allaahu akbar
for *allaah* is great
returning her hands to her stomach
she began to recite aloud
each syllable removing another veil
covering the light of love
drawing the young woman into her heart
subhaanaka allaahuma
wa bihamdika
wa tabaarak asmuka
wa ta alaa jaduka
wa laa ilaaha ghayruk
for glory be to the beloved
all praise belongs to the beloved
your name is blessed (so let us say it)
your majesty exalted to the highest
there is no beloved but the beloved
no love but love, no truth but truth

no awareness but pure absolute awareness
nothing is worthy of worship but you
a'uudhu billaahi minash shaytaanar-rajeem
i seek refuge in *allaah* from the cursed accuser
that only leads astray

bismillaah ar-rahmaan, ar-rahiim
in the name of *allaah*, the beneficent, the merciful...

then it happened
the young woman's heart
touched by a grace she could never find
her being opening to the fullness of the heart
oh yes, the heart
that sacred place which can contain the beloved
in an universe that cannot contain the beloved
although her mind and body continued
to follow the old lady in prayer
her awareness was within the heart
which revealed...



section:
the night upon him

Al-Inshirah (Solace)

Have We not caused thy bosom to dilate,
And eased thee of the burden
Which weighed down thy back;
And exalted thy fame?
But lo! with hardship goeth ease,
Lo! with hardship goeth ease;
So when thou art relieved, still toil
And strive to please thy Lord.

Surah 94, Verses 1 - 8
Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

in the name of the beloved
the beneficent, the merciful
these words are naught but notes of truth
in the song of love
though struggles may seem to prevail
forget not these words of assurance from the beloved:
with every hardship comes ease
with every difficulty comes relief
this is a promise from the beloved
a promise we should not forget in the midst of struggle
a promise always fulfilled
if we do not run from its fulfillment

give up not hope
lest you lose sight of this sacred promise
or miss a portent of its fulfillment
behold:
you are responsible for the blessings you lose
reject
or allow to slip away
because of a careless doubt,
a neglecting sight,
a blinding forgetfulness

let not the blessings of the beloved escape you
for sometimes these precious treasures
come in the tempests of devastating storms
be always attentive for and receptive of blessings

it is beauty indescribable
when the unbound surrender of their own accord
who, in (their) free will, willingly submit to righteousness
such approaches the perfection of perfection
it is only such perfection
which can approach the unveiled presence of the beloved
it is only such perfecting perfection
which is completely annihilated into the love of the beloved
leaving only love

oh, what a sacred opportunity is given to humans
ones the immortal angels still envy
for their complete obedience to the beloved
 is beyond their choice
it is their glorious nature
to obey without compromise the will of the beloved
and thus, must they remain behind veils to the beloved
but we humans
if we sincerely surrender through (our) free will
to prove the beauty of love,
which can be embraced or averted
by choosing the choice of loving surrender
we can be drawn into the bliss
of complete annihilation
into the love of the beloved
where reality is completely effortlessly revealed
without veils or even their memory
and the all-oneness of love *is*
what words can describe
what *is*

oh *muhammad*
peace be upon you
we continue to sing praises
that peace and blessings continue to be upon you
you who have surrendered to the perfection of surrender
a lasting example for humanity
if they are willing to follow

oh *muhammad*
we have not forgotten
that the path of your earthly life,
 as glorious as it became
was not without hardships

no,
we have not forgotten the year of sadness
that time of deep grief
and the years of hardship that preceded it
we remember those days after the first revelation (of the *qur'aan*)
when periods between more revelations seemed too long to you
and you fell into such despair
that you climbed the nearby mountains
to thrust yourself from the heights
to end the despair by ending your earthly life
and we had to send the angel *jibriil* to affirm
that yes,
you are chosen by the beloved
only after that calmed the tempest of despair
did you return home with a semblance of peace
but in those days the despair was not quelled for long

for when another extended season between revelations came
again you headed to the mountain heights
where again we had to send *jibriil* to comfort you
and turn you from suicide

no,
we have not forgotten the year of sadness
that time of deep grief
and the years of hardship that preceded it
when those of your own hometown challenged you yet again
demanding of you a sign, a miracle
to testify to the sovereignty and glory of the beloved
as if the *qur'aan* itself is not miraculous enough
yet, in faithful surrender, you lifted your finger to the moon
and by our grace, the full moon was cleft asunder
split in two in the night sky before their very eyes
a nearby mountain serving as
a clear marker between the two portions
(of the moon)
and after a period of time passed
to show this was no temporary illusion
by our grace, the moon was made one again
yet most of them denied the miracle they asked for
dismissing it as deceiving magic
even when travelers arriving days later said
they too saw the moon split on that very night
most those who asked for the miracle
still denied the truth
still denied the proof placed before their very eyes

only the wrongdoers deny our revelations
only the wicked deny truth
yet still, in your concern for them, oh *muhammad*
it troubled you that they continued to go astray

no,
we have not forgotten the year of sadness
that time of deep grief
and the years of hardship that preceded it
those many days when the people of your own hometown
who already knew of your unyielding trustworthy piety
intensely persecuted you and those who followed you
for living by the revelations we gave you
precious tidings from the beloved
how those who rejected you preferred
wealth over truth
comfort over love
arrogance over correction
ignorance over surrender
but you surrendered to truth
surrendered to love
surrendered to correction
and even surrendered to the deepening of surrender
to be brought into complete harmony
with the inheritance of *ibraahiim*
the inheritance of your (spiritual) father
and the line of the prophets that descended through him
to live the remembrance
to honor the defining article
of the covenant that distinguishes the lineage of *ibraahiim*

that there is no god but *allaah*
no love but love
no truth but truth
no awareness but pure absolute awareness
that the covenant of *ibraahiim*
and those who claim lineage to him
declares that no partners should be ascribed to *allaah*
nothing should be worshiped other than *allaah*
or made more important than *allaah*

within the call of this covenant
we sent you, oh *muhammad*, to warn
as a mercy
as a messenger

but as *iisaa* said
a prophet is rarely honored in one's hometown
the pride of ignorance furthered by (supposed) familiarity
(with the person of the prophet)
often makes those who go astray
less receptive of the prophet
and the messages shared through the prophet
in those early days
many in *makka* did not honor you, *muhammad*
although you were called to serve by the beloved
through the staying hand of your uncle, *abu talib*
who was as a father to you
who was an unyielding protector
through his staying hand
were the murderous hands of the disbelievers restrained

the beloved protects its devoted lovers
sometimes even by means of those
who refuse to surrender to such devotion

but so it was
in the year of sorrow
this pillar of support was taken away by the hand of death
he who protected you, even when he didn't share your faith,
because to him you are family
even upon his deathbed
he withheld from his last breath
the affirmation of the sovereign oneness of the beloved
and in your loyalty to him
you prayed for his forgiveness
until the beloved revealed

it is not for the faithful
to pray for forgiveness of the unfaithful
even if they be close family

and

it is not for you to guide whom you love
but the beloved guides whom it wills,
those who walk the straight path

not only his death did you mourn
and the loss of his protecting hand and paternal nurturing
but you also mourned
the daunting possibility
of his destined place in hell
great burdens upon any human mind
but the heart is inclined to the beloved

the heart's devotion did not waver
unmoved by thoughts of abandoning (your) surrender
you remained a faithful servant to us
yet the cup of this trial of sorrow was not yet full
you also loss your adored wife, *khadiija*
loss upon loss
she who lived the law, the spirit, and essence
of what it is to be an excellent wife

oh *khadiija*

cut from the fabric of beauty's virtuous beauty
the beauty of enduring piety
not even death can take your love away from *muhammad*
he yielded not in revering you as the best among women
but what a blow your death to him was
you who believed him when he doubted himself
the first of revelations revealed to him
how you covered him in his fear
and assured him of his piety
and reminded him that he could read even in his illiteracy
that no angel would come to him but to bring good tidings
because his living was in harmony with receiving such

oh *khadiija*

you were his steadfast companion
when he was told to arise and warn
to honor the beloved
and be made pure
when he was told to shun all that is unclean
a call to duty not sought for the gains of this world

a path demanding patience to keep the deepening ways
of loving surrender to the beloved

and how you did suffer
and lost much of your wealth
enduring days of hunger and decaying health
you accepted his surrender to the beloved
as first and foremost above all things
you supported his surrender with your humble surrender
in an age where spouses sought to be held in high esteem
you embraced the hardship of his service of prophethood
and bore his deepening silence
allowing space in your union with him

for him to be alone with the beloved
the passing earthly pleasures and desires
most humans make important
you sacrificed to remain peacefully with him
never complaining
never being a difficulty for him
never forgetting what first endeared you to him
that you love him for
his honesty, his trustworthiness, his piety and virtue
his serenity, integrity, and abounding sincerity
you love him for
his intelligence and uncompromising morality
for the sake of these you sought to be his wife

only those who possess these qualities
can fully appreciate and honor them
and genuinely seek them in another

oh *khadiija*,
you are loved as a rare treasure
may all saints and sages who accept wives
be graced to have a wife such as you
you set the mold
but what a loss it is to have such a treasure taken away
even those surrendering to the perfecting of perfection
will mourn such a loss
and so *muhammad* did
depressed in deep mourning

oh *muhammad*
suffering the close succession of the deaths
of *abu talib* and *khadiija*, your staunchest supporters
these followed by the increased persecution
of the disbelievers in *makka*
led you to consider *ta'if* as a possible new home
but from there you were run out of town,
pelted by stones by disbelievers
leaving blood upon your sandals and bruises upon your skin
yet when angels were ready to unleash retribution's fury
in justice
you chose mercy,
refraining from calling for their destruction
instead
you prayed that the children of *ta'if*
would one day become devoted followers of *al-islam*
and your prayer was heard
and in due time, fulfilled

but in deep sadness
you returned to your hometown
and the increasing persecution and hardship they afflicted
depressed with a loneliness that mourned
the loss of great supporters
you did not turn from the straight path we placed before you
despite the facade of hardship before you
the appearance of being forsaken and deserted
we abandoned you not
a whisper in the book of life was already written
an unseen promise on the verge of being fulfilled
even if all the earth rejects you, *muhammad*
fear not, all of the heavens accept you
even in your sadness and apparent loss
i bring you unto me



although distress and affliction befall
the faithful yield not in making their prayers
although calls for help and deliverance
are not yet answered
the faithful lose not hope in the beloved
the beloved has a right to test its lovers
and transform them within a cocoon of challenges
and lovers of the beloved have a right to endure such tests
to find within trying tempests the sweet endlessness
of ever-deepening surrender to the beloved

for all hardships endured by the insincere
their difficulties are their reward
so let them run from them if they will
but all hardships endured by those who are sincere
do not go unremembered or unrewarded
so let the sincere face those hardships
with courageous perseverance
and uncompromising morality
no matter how dire or how long a challenge may seem
the helping hand of the beloved is always near its lovers
the beloved never places upon you a burden you cannot bear
but forgetfulness and lack of faith
will allow an imagined speck of dust
to break the strongest strength
to project the illusion of separation
upon the indivisible union
the beloved has with its lovers

and so it was
that *muhammad*
(peace and blessings are upon him)
endured in sincerity and faith
the trials of the year of sadness
yielding not his prayers or devotion
or remembrance or faith or love
spending nights in worship and contemplation
by the sacred house built by *ibraahiim* and *ismaa'il*
that sacred *ka'bah* they built in earlier days
to honor the oneness of *allaah*
and the covenant *allaah* made with *ibraahiim* and his descendants
that they would worship and honor *allaah* in its oneness
allaah alone, no partners
nothing made equal to or more important than *allaah*
this covenant *muhammad* humbled himself to honor
even as others adorned the *ka'bah*
with those they ascribed to be partners to *allaah*
even as others made aspects of creation
more important than that which created creation
even as others persecuted *muhammad* for upholding
ibraahiim's ways
by keeping his worship only for the beloved
only for the beloved

that night promised yet not proclaimed arrived
muhammad laying under the dark of night by the *ka'bah*
resting in a meditative remembrance after praying
when three angels came
always behold when the angels come

they took him away from the two who slept beside him
to that precious well of *zam-zam*, nearby
that spot made to spring forth water by the heel of *jibriil*
after *ibraahiim* left *haajar* and *ismaa'il* in the wilderness
to the care of *allaah*

how the mother went searching desperately for water
that she may quench the thirsty cries of her wailing babe
and the departed father, unseen, praying to *allaah*
to care for the family he left behind
the beloved never allows a trusting soul
to be neglected to abandonment
and sent forth *jibriil* to bring forth water where no water was
and now *muhammad*, another trusting soul,
was brought forth to this very same spot
this very same well
where *jibriil* stood again

jibriil cut *muhammad's* chest open from the neck to the stomach
the heart and insides removed and inner chamber cleansed
washed into purity by the pure waters of the *zam-zam* well
then a golden tray with a golden bowl was brought forth
containing wisdom and faith
not what we humans imagine these to be
or strive in our ignorance to attain
but what the beloved bestows upon the sincere by grace
to only increase in depth
and never wither or fade

with *muhammad's* body made pure
and imbrued with the grace of unyielding wisdom and faith

his heart and insides were restored, his chest sealed up
emanating celestial purity
he was now prepared
to embark on this journey to the heavens

the angels brought forth a white animal
larger than a donkey but smaller than a mule
muhammad had never seen such a creature before
there is no limit to what the beloved creates
no end to the wonder of creation
as *muhammad* mounted the creature
its entire body began to tremble
until *jibriil* spoke
“*buraaq*, be at peace
no one like this prophet has ever rode you before
and after him
no one like him will ever ride you again”

hearing these words,
buraaq settled into a peacefulness
fit to serve

jibriil led the way
with *muhammad* riding upon *buraaq's* back
its name appropriate
for like lightening
this small animal moved with amazing speed
crossing the span of a horizon in a single step

muhammad was immersed
in the timelessness of this timeless moment
being carried forth in the direction in which he made his prayers
amazed and yet not amazed
for he knew beyond the possibility of any doubt
nothing is impossible for the beloved
nothing
the wind upon his face
the stars shedding shades of light upon the night's darkness
his body anew with the purity of grace
in the sights he saw he saw visions
of places where in the future his followers would pray
along with visions of places where other prophets
 made their prayers
and in these sights, he saw himself praying at these very places
for such is the power and oneness of sincere prayer
what a wonderful journey it was
what a wonderful journey it is
to be in the timeless oneness of prayer

and yet this journey was just beginning
as *muhammad* arrived at that holy city in which stands
masjid al-aqsa,
 the farthest place of prostration
a journey which in those days normally took weeks
being completed in a matter of timeless seconds
dismounting *buraaq*, *muhammad* tied the reins of the animal
on the same post prophets from days of old tied their animals to
then he entered the sacred place of prostration
to pray

muhammad entered the holy space
to be greeted by all the prophets
what a glorious meeting it was
or as some say,
 what a glorious reunion
for no prophet is ever a stranger to another prophet
they have already met (and will forever meet)
in total surrender of devoted love to the beloved

with such a gathering
it needed not even be said
as they assembled into lines to make prayer
muhammad standing in the first line
assuming *jibriil* or another prophet would lead the prayer
but instead a hand pushed him forward
to be the lead
he had no need to look back, he knew what he should do
and thus led this glorious assembly in prayer
a humble expression of love and devotion to the beloved
what words can describe the glory of this prayer

if the poet may digress
to just perform a prayer
within the presence of a memory of a prophet
unfolds within such prayer a grace indescribable
so how much more
 when in the actual presence of a prophet
and how much more
 when in the actual presence of all the prophets

and how much more
when they all consent to you leading the prayer
to affirm your prophethood
words fail immensely
to even suggest what such is
and yet it is within this reality
that *muhammad* was called to lead that prayer
when grace fails to describe itself
what can describe grace
words fail immensely
ideas and suggestions fail immensely

with such a prayer completed
there could be nothing but silence
within the realization of such love
even greetings or parting expressions become
completely meaningless
because there is no longer any separation
between the prayer and the one who makes it
and the others who share the prayer
and the one(ness) that receives the prayer

there is a familyhood among all prophets
that is beyond the mind's comprehension to understand
not a single word of any prophet
discounts a single word of any other prophet
across all time
the love that is their prophethood
is indivisible
is oneness

dwelling in the stillness, presence, and remembrance
of (this) oneness
two cups were placed before *muhammad*
one filled with milk, the other filled with wine
and in this silence
it was not even necessary to say to him, "pick one"
without even thinking,
muhammad chose the milk and drank

what a blessing this was revealed to be
for *jibriil* broke the silence to say
"gratitude to the beloved, that you are guided
by the purity you are created to be
you have chosen what is natural
what is good
what is the straight path to the beloved
such is your path
and the inheritance of those who follow you
if you had chosen the wine
your followers would have been destined to go astray"

pay caution to what is presented before you to accept
what may seem just like a cup of milk or glass of wine
may shade not only the hues of your destiny
but those who follow in your footsteps

muhammad was then led to a rock
from which he and *jibriil* began the ascension to the first heaven

a journey already filled with so much and yet just beginning
a journey now to continue within the celestial realms



Do [humans] imagine that they will be left
(at ease) because they say, We believe, and
will not be tested with affliction? Lo! We
tested those who were before you. Thus
Allaah knoweth those who are sincere,
and knoweth those who feign.

from *Al- 'Ankabut* (The Spider)

Surah 29, Verses 2 - 3

Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

section:
the first heaven

Race one with another for forgiveness from
your Lord and a Garden whereof the breadth
is as the breadth of the heavens and the earth,
which is in store for those who believe in
Allaah and [Allaah's] messengers. Such is the bounty
of Allaah, which [Allaah] bestoweth upon whom
[Allaah] will, and Allaah is of Infinite Bounty.

from *Al-Hadid* (The Iron)

Surah 57, Verse 21

Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

And lo! verily I am Forgiving toward [one]
who repenteth and believeth and doeth
good, and afterward walketh aright.

from *Ta Ha**

Surah 20, Verse 82

Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall
(Ta and Ha are letters in Arabic)

oh *muhammad*
peace and blessings are upon you
that this journey brings you
to the gate of the first heaven

now i see
what the gates to the place of prostration
seek to imitate

jibriil as the guide
escorted *muhammad* to this immaculate gate
and said
“let the gates be open”
the angels serving as gatekeepers responded
“who is it”
jibriil replied
“it is *jibriil*”
the gatekeepers responded
“is there anyone with you”
jibriil replied
“here is *muhammad*,
also known in the heavens as *ahmad*”
the gatekeepers responded
“has he been called,
has revelation been sent to him,
has his mission been released upon earth”
jibriil replied,
“yes,
yes,
and yes”

the gatekeepers responded
“oh, he is welcomed
what a wonderful visit is his”
and with that
the gates to the first heaven were opened

upon seeing the gatekeepers
muhammad greeted them saying
“*as-salaamu alaykum*”
(peace be upon you)
and they responded
“*as-salaamu alaykum wa rahmatullaah*”
(peace and mercy from the beloved be upon you)
for such is how the angels greet all the prophets
and all humans who will enter the gates of paradise
a blessing they express to the blessed
which returns as a blessing to them

it is a grace to be able to bless the blessed
it is a grace that they receive such blessing

withhold not your blessings from the blessed
for the beloved listens
and while those who do wrong are observed
those who love the beloved are heard
therefore, pay your respects to the blessed
and stand in praise of the beloved

within the first heaven
so many wonders there are

more than words can tell
more than minds can comprehend
words and minds fail
when relaying the wonders of the heavens
so why bother seeking to describe
with words that fail to minds that cannot comprehend

in all its vastness
the first heaven makes all the earth
seem like a small stone on a small ring lost in a desert
so consider what the earth seems like to the first heaven
how small, how small
yet all the vastness of the first heaven
was shown to *muhammad*
making his humility even more humble
for there is no end to the wonders of the beloved’s creations
a wonder such as
an angel who has *habiib* among its names
who appears in a form similar to humans
and, from the waist up, is a burning fire
and, from the waist down, is a freezing snow
yet where the fire and snow meet there is peace
for the fire melts not the snow
and the snow extinguishes not the fire
although their natures appear to be opposing
and contradictory
it is by the grace of the beloved
that they share harmony in meeting and coexisting
within this angelic body

nothing is beyond harmonious unity
if the beloved wills it so
in fact,
only in the beloved is unity
all else is pitiful imitation
 that cannot reach the mark
and this angel,
in its unyielding surrender to the beloved,
its enduring perseverance to not turn away from the beloved,
experiences this grace of unity
that its fire and snow,
 which would otherwise destroy each other in conflict,
 peacefully coexist
habiib's very existence is a sacred prayer
expounding the grace of unity
among other wonders

oh, hear how *habiib* prays
with tears of fire and ice flowing from its eyes
“oh my beloved,
as you have joined in me
that which would otherwise be in conflict
that which would otherwise be separate from each other
that which would otherwise destroy each other
as you have brought opposing elements
into harmonious agreement
within me
place such peaceful unity in the hearts of the faithful
 within the being of their lives
 if you so will

in your grace,
let not that which separates them from you
remove them from (your) love
i cry that the sins they commit in (their) weakness
and forgetfulness (of you)
not separate them from (your) abounding love
forgive them, my lord
have mercy upon them, my lord
for just as you allow my fire and snow
to peacefully be in this impossible union
so too allow those devoted ones who sin
to be in peaceful union with you
 although it is impossible for sin
 and its defiling stains
 to be oneness with your love
oh merciful lord,
allow this impossibility to be
for if they are with (your) love
they will also be with each other
 in peace and surrender
it is only you who are union
it is only you who gathers and unites
let the intentions of this prayer be
only if it be your will”

and *muhammad*,
hearing the loving sweetness of this prayer
thought immediately of those among his nation
from the past, present, and future
who are benefitted by *habiib*'s prayer

habib's selfless petition
and moved thus, *muhammad* went and offered
the depth of his peace to *habib*
and *habib*, in return, offered
the depth of its peace to *muhammad*
the silence of their offering being more powerful than their words
for in (their) silence they could both be heard simultaneously

those whose hearts are clear to hear,
let them hear this sacred silence

another wonder there was in the first heaven
seeing a man sitting
with people to his right and people to his left
when he looked to his right, he laughed with joy
when he looked to his left, he cried with despair
and yet there seemed to be something
that kept him looking to his right and looking to his left

muhammad asked *jibriil*
"who is this man"
jibriil replied
"he is your father, the prophet *aadam*
may *allaah* be pleased with him
will you not greet him and pay him respects"

muhammad approached *aadam*, greeting him
"*as-salaamu alaykum*"
(peace be upon you)
and *aadam* responded

"*as-salaamu alaykum wa rahmatullaah*
(peace and mercy from the beloved be upon you)
welcome, oh pious prophet,
oh beautiful and pious son,
you are welcomed"

and without a single word it was conveyed
as angels gathered around *muhammad*'s heart to witness
the people's relation to *aadam*
his heart speaking directly into the heart of *muhammad*
to declare
the people to my right are souls of my offspring
who will enter the gates of *jannah* (paradise)
to reside in precious gardens underneath which rivers flow
for they lived surrender to the beloved
adhering in obedience the commands and will of our lord
even when they didn't feel like doing so
and when they erred, their errors being unintended
they sought repentance of the beloved
and, when able,
sought to re-establish peaceful relations with those they wronged
by making amends to manifest truth
for without amends and truth's manifestation,
wrongs continue to disturb peace
but once granted the peace of forgiveness,
which comes only from the beloved,
these offspring of mine
not only refrained from committing the same sins
they dwelled in harmony
with the grace of the beloved's forgiveness

deepening their virtuous surrender
and even more,
they worshiped the beloved
making nothing more important than or equal to our lord
they lived the spirit of what is holy
within the guiding protection of holy laws
they honored their inherited duty to uphold
the covenant of love the beloved made with me
they fulfilled their duties to their families
they cared for those enduring misfortune
of the goodness given to them,
 they shared and spread goodness
they supported the servants, prophets,
 and messengers of the beloved
they remembered their beloved often,
 some of them always
they kept their worship pure
and shunned all evil and hypocrisy
and more, and more
such is the robe of righteousness they wore upon their earthly lives
so a magnificent reward awaits them
when i look at them i cannot help but laugh
and look at them i must, for they are my offspring
my concern for them is never-ending
i will look after them until the day of judging

the holy are those
who surrender
to allow the beloved

to set them apart
from those who are not set apart

but to my left are souls of my offspring
who will enter the gates of *jahannam* (hell)
where their skins will be burned with indescribable torment
then they will be clothed with skins again
to suffer this indescribable burning again
and there will only be scorching fire to drink
 to quench their burning thirst
and in their hunger they will devour torrid fire
 to have flames in their bellies
their baths will be boiling molten liquid
that washes away the dirt of suffering with more suffering
accompanied by other tortures that will not be restrained
for the exceeding majority of these, my children
there will be no escape from *jahannam*
for they were given ample opportunities
before the gates of repentance were closed
to worship the beloved and honor its prophets
yet they refused
those who made the pleasures of the earth
 their pursuit of fleeting dreams
 their own selfishness, desires, and greed
 more important than or a partner to the beloved
those who refused to surrender in obedience
to that which is truly beneficial
who even if they embraced righteousness

only did so for the sake of promised rewards
 not genuine efforts to be genuinely pious
 not for love and devotion to the beloved
those, who if they embraced righteousness,
only sought to escape the consequences of (their) evil
without transforming to no longer be beholden to wickedness
therefore, the essence of evil remains with them
draped in hypocrisy and moral weakness
who even after being forgiven
 returned to the abode of sin
they who surrendered their lives to their wandering minds
not to the heart, which forever leads to the beloved
they wasted the opportunity of life
and ignored the heart, and ignored the beloved
bear testimony, my children
that every life is lived in worship
even if they did not prostrate before statues
they made their ways astray idols more important than the beloved
so the beloved hardened their minds
and veiled the rays of the heart
leaving them to roam blindly in ignorance and disobedience
they who removed themselves from the mercy of divine guidance
they who removed themselves from the grace of forgiveness
they who removed themselves from the path to *jannah* (paradise)
thus, the fires of *jahannam* (hell) are their promised home
where they will suffer a horrible suffering
 a suffering indescribable
when i look at them i cannot help but cry
and look at them i must, for they are my offspring

my concern for them is never-ending
i will look after them until the day of judging

let me not neglect to mention
amongst the flames of *jahannam*
there is a flame that is not a flame
 that burns more painfully:
regret
it will be a mercy
if the torturous fires of *jahannam* distract them
from the burning of regret
for in the final hour
it will be revealed why they are placed in hell
not as a punishment imposed by the beloved
rather a fate they foolishly carved out for themselves
the regret of knowing
they were born destined to reach paradise
and given sufficient means and opportunities
to surrender
to live the destiny placed before them by the beloved
a destiny leading to bliss
but instead they chose their own way
and any way but the way of the beloved
leads to *jahannam* (hell)

let the wise not choose their own way
let the wise willingly surrender their way to the beloved

muhammad was moved deeply by *aadam*'s heart confession
he looked to *aadam*'s right and smiled

for the promise of *jannah* (paradise) is real
he looked to *aadam*'s left
a tear of great sadness fell from his eye
for he knew
from every thousand humans
at least nine hundred and ninety-nine
will end up on *aadam*'s left
their final resting place being the fires of *jahannam*

muhammad looked to *aadam*'s right again
and could feel the nearness of the bliss of paradise
the glory of a happy journey's end
he looked to *aadam*'s left again
and was tormented by the presence of hell
a single moment's sight of such can scar you for eternity

oh, if we come to know what *muhammad* realized
in this timeless moment
we would all laugh little and weep much
but even with such little laughter
and constant weeping
muhammad pledged to serve his *ummah*
to have more than one of every thousand of his followers
find a place on *aadam*'s right
for although this earthly life may seem long
especially in times of challenging hardships
it is only a passing second in the unending day of timelessness
should a passing second be given precedence
over the fate of an unending day

oh, lovers of the beloved
live the passing second of this earthly life
for the sake of that unending day

then *aadam* spoke,
on that day
when the wrath of love calls forth the final hour
which no trumpet need announce
yet the trumpets will blow anyway
each of these will seek an intercessor
those on my right who need no intercessor
those on my left who i cannot intercede for
they will all run to me
knowing i am their father
and, therefore, have a duty to them
to those on my right i will say
how can the imperfect place itself before the perfect
in hopes of gaining the perfect favor of perfection
although i wear the grace of your righteous deeds upon my robe
as a proud father does
i cannot intercede for you
although my form was shaped by the hands of the beloved
and breathed into by its breath
although i was taught the names of all things by the beloved
and given the honor
of having all the angels bow before me
to respect what the beloved created in me
although these blessings and more were afforded to me
i cannot intercede for you

because even in knowing the certainty of forgiveness
the beloved bestowed upon me
even being certain of this
i remember my own foolish disobedience
how i ate from the tree i was forbidden to eat from
a single sin which became a seed to unending cycles of sin
and within such remembrance
is a great fear for great is the coming judgement
how can i, within my own fear,
intercede for you
i am unfit, i am ashamed for my own sin
because one sin is enough to end up in hell forever
my only saving grace is the forgiveness of my beloved
which i humble myself to in awe of my lord

oh, my children who seek a place on my right
take not solace in performing less sins than others
one sin is a great abomination
for it stains the perfection of the beloved's creation
often more than human minds realize
so be perfect and sin not
one sin is enough to lead to an eternity in *jahannam* (hell)
seek and surrender to the perfection of sinless righteousness
unending, unyielding surrender brings you there

the original commandment given by the beloved still applies
eat not of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil
the purpose of our creation lays not with knowledge
but with love
the fullness of love

and surrender and obedience to the beloved
within such love there is no sin
and, therefore, no need to know what is good and what is evil
within such love, the heart is sufficient
not the unsatisfied rambling motions of the mind
that distinguish and imagine unnecessary opposites
for every good thought, a corresponding evil
for every truth, an associated lie and false notion
for every friend, an enemy
even transforming the children of *aadam*,
who were born to share the oneness of loving the beloved,
transforming these children
to become open enemies to one another

the mind
with its knowledge of good and evil
and the supposed knowledge it imagines from this
original knowledge
has created from the sinless path
multitudes of straying paths of sin
oh, my children
shed all knowledge and eat not from that tree
return to the surrender to love
that guided me before i ate its corrupting fruit
and sufficed to guide my existence in the glorious garden
that was my home
fall not for the lies of *shaytaan*
the fruits *shaytaan* encourages you to eat
will not make you immortal
nor even make you strong within this decaying mortality

be not allured by such fruits
which appear pleasing and desirable
although they may seem to open your eyes
they close the heart to sinlessness
the gift of eternal beneficence lays with sinlessness
which if lost
will only make you cover yourself in shame

it is by eating corrupting fruit
that you deny yourself eternal paradise
and place yourself in mortal bondage
which only leads to the fires of *jahannam*
forgiveness is the only saving grace from such
a grace bestowed by the beloved
sincerely plead to your lord for forgiveness
and strive in obedience to receive it
and once given, never forsake it
never do anything to lose it

forgiveness is the mercy of mercy
forgiveness is an immeasurable mercy
dishonor it not
for the beloved is the forgiving, the merciful
test not the forgiveness of the beloved
i say again
the beloved is the forgiving, the merciful
test not the forgiveness of the beloved

and *aadam* continued,
on that day

when the wrath of love calls forth the final hour
which no trumpet need announce
yet the trumpets will blow anyway
each of these will seek an intercessor
those on my right who need no intercessor
those on my left who i cannot intercede for
they all will run to me
knowing i am their father
and, therefore, have a duty to them
to those on my left i will say
how can the imperfect place itself before the perfect
in hopes of gaining the perfect favor of perfection
although i wear the stains of your wicked deeds upon my robe
as a disappointed father does
i cannot intercede for you
how can i intercede for you now
when you did not intercede for yourself
in the midst of your earthly life
should we count the days you remained in sin
even after i and other prophets
conveyed to you the message of the beloved
to live in surrender to your lord
to honor and serve in obedience the will of your lord
that you may have your place in the kingdom of paradise
have i not whispered as your conscience in your mind
encouraging you to do what is right when you did right
have i not whispered as your conscience in your mind
discouraging you from doing wrong when you did wrong
have i not whispered as your conscience in your mind

encouraging your refusal to do wrong when you refused
to do wrong
and
discouraging your refusal to do right when you refused to do right
you cannot claim complete ignorance in your ignorance
only that you ignored my whispers, if not more
and the beloved guides whom it wills
onto the straight unerring path
and the beloved guides astray whom it wills
and the beloved knows best
and the beloved knows why
even if not apparent to us blinded humans
but know,
the beloved is pure, perfect justice
the beloved is not a favorer of persons or personalities
by the same standard is all of humanity measured
as to who is guided to and within the straight path
and who is guided astray

but from my place in the heavens
i whispered as your conscience in your mind
to yield obedience to the beloved
and to be disobedient to the calls of *shaytaan*
which only lead astray
for i have not forgotten the shameful example i left
when i disobeyed the beloved and ate from the forbidden tree
and i can take no excuse in saying
i followed the tempting example of my wife
no, my sin is my sin
hawwa's (eve's) sin is her own

i cannot be judged for her sin, nor she for mine
i cannot take refuge in her sin
as justification for the sin i committed
i am responsible for each commandment given to me
and owe my obedience to my lord
regardless of the acts of others,
even my spouse
this too i have whispered in your mind as your conscience
a duty i owed you because of the example of my sin
but even when you sinned,
i implored you to follow my example to its completion
my disobedience did not end in sin
i pleaded to the beloved for forgiveness within my guilt
which was granted as mercy from the most merciful merciful
although the wages of sin
cost me my place in the timeless garden
and the inheritance of death
in forgiving me, the beloved granted me guidance
that i may sin no more
for the covenant of forgiveness is not complete in granting mercy
it calls for sinners to make amends and manifest truth
such was the life i lived after being granted forgiveness
that i may honor the grace of the beloved removing my sin
and return to the path of the sinless
a path that leads to the gates of *jannah* (paradise)
a place wherein no evil can be allowed to enter
for the decay of earth shows what happens
when evil is allowed to be
evil has brought forth the destruction of the earth
a wondrous and beautiful creation of the beloved

what other abode should the wicked have
 other than *jahannam* (hell)
given that wickedness exudes unending destruction
and why should unending destruction be allowed to continue
once the term of its tolerance is fulfilled

oh, my children
you have been warned of the hour
when only the one justice remains
and all imitations and false distortions of justice cease
when the beloved, who is the only judge,
is seen clearer than the sun on a clear sunny day
an hour when every soul will have audience with the beloved
and no explanations or excuses will have weigh over
 what was done
an hour when the deeds and bodies of those who did evil
will testify against them
and so too will the angels who keep the accounts of life
that hour when it will be revealed
that most people will go to *jahannam* (hell) not for wronging
 the beloved
but for the evils they inflicted upon other portents of creation
 especially their fellow humans
and for those few who go to *jahannam* not for wronging others
most of them will go to *jahannam* for wronging themselves
and for those rarer few who go to *jahannam* not for wronging
 themselves or others
they will see the completely unleashed fury of the beloved
for the sins they committed,
 which are better not mentioned

there will be nothing in that hour that can compensate for evil
or delay or reduce forthcoming judgement
nothing in that final hour
can purchase the sway of forgiveness
for after countless moments of it not being too late
in that hour, it will finally be too late

oh, my children
in that hour you will see in a way that cannot be denied
 nor hidden or confused
that even if you were predestined to go to *jahannam* (hell)
the beloved placed at your feet
 the straight road to *jannah* (paradise)
a call to do good, even if you were evil
even if your road to paradise passed through hell
for in that hour, when all hearts are weighed and examined
if there be but a mustard seed of goodness found upon your heart
even if you are cast into hellfire to pay for a life of wickedness
the beloved will send angels to retrieve you from *jahannam* (hell)
after serving a term there to be purified
but what amounts to a seed of goodness
not good deeds performed for the sake of reward
 or to avert unwanted outcomes
genuine surrender surrenders willingly
 for the sake of surrender alone
such pure seeds, once touching the heart,
are never blown away
not even by the strongest tempest of the most wicked evil

even if your life is totally succumbed to evil
and your mind hardened to seek only the ways astray
strive for just one moment
to live one moment of uncompromised surrender to the beloved
to love for love's sake alone
to honor truth for truth's sake alone
to be aware for the sake of pure absolute awareness alone
and in that moment
serve in pure obedience the beloved
that you may receive a mustard seed of grace
that will survive the burning flames of *jahannam*
that perchance, if you cannot avoid hell
you can be retrieved from there

this promise lives in the heart, not the mind
fulfill it now while the opportunity is yours
the mercy of the beloved always precedes its anger
you were created to love
and honor truth
and pass the pastime of earthly life with peace
 of pure absolute awareness
receive the inheritance of paradise
this is of the covenant the beloved made with me
which includes all my children, all my relations
from the first to the last of generations
exempting none
although an imperfect father i was
my duty to you i performed
for not a single descendant of mine did i let live

without whispering as your conscience
to live life as love for the beloved

and there were tears in the eyes of *muhammad*
and tears in the eyes of *aadam*
for they both knew he had said enough
the love of *aadam* lives on in his care for his children
will we return this love with gratitude
that marks our righteous deeds upon his robe
or will we return this love with neglect
that stains his robe with our wicked deeds
bearing witness to his continuing duty in the first heaven
will we make a seat for ourselves upon *aadam's* right or left
will our sight bring to *aadam's* face laughs or cries
will our lives fulfill or dishonor *aadam's* covenant
 with the beloved

aadam said to *muhammad*
tell your followers to not forget the last day
remember the final hour often
let it be an advisor to all that you do and do not do

what i have convey
i impart not to cast coming doom and damnation
but rather as prayers of encouragement
that even those destined to *jahannam* (hell)
may grasp the fragrance of repentance
before the wind of time blows it beyond reach
mercy is a staying force
but our presence before it can pass away

and it brings me unconsolable sadness
to see my children pave their own ways to *jahannam* (hell)
choose the way of the beloved
 which leads to *jannah* (paradise)
a destination none will regret
even if they must enter it alone,
 leaving behind everyone they knew in the world

in *jannah* (paradise),
you will find out who your true friends
and loved ones are
in *jahannam* (hell),
there will only be enemies
even if for a lifetime
you mistook them to be a friend or loved one

and *aadam* continued on to say to *muhammad*
tell your followers to not forget to be forgiving
but do not confuse this with forgiving others
forgiveness lays only with the beloved
yet
in having a forgiving attitude toward the wrongs of others
you demonstrate appreciation for
the forgiveness the beloved bestows upon you
and surely, in living with a forgiving attitude
you refrain from judging others
a role that must be left only to the beloved
for the beloved is the knower, the wise

and as is the nature of prophets to do when they come together
aadam and *muhammad* took a moment to share a departing prayer
and in their praying
muhammad prayed for the forgiveness and well-being of *aadam*
and in their praying
aadam prayed for the forgiveness and well-being of *muhammad*
and *aadam* encouraged *muhammad*
to serve with unending faith
his mission as a prophet and messenger of the beloved
a faith and determination that remain unmoved
by the rejection and persecution of the disbelievers
for there are still children coming
who will find their way to a place on *aadam*'s right

all people and all nations will prostrate before my beloved
even if their first and only bow
is made at the gates to *jahannam* (hell)
how much better will it be
if your earthly life is filled with prostrations
that lead to the gates of *jannah* (paradise)
how much better will it be
if your earthly life is a prostration
that is brought to the gates of *jannah*
be among those who are brought near
 and held dear to the beloved
be humble, that your humility
may be guided by the guidance of the beloved
such guiding commands are a mercy to the faithful
even if they seem hard

when their prayers were done
aadam and *muhammad* shared parting expressions
muhammad carrying within him the unending memory
of what *aadam* shared
he looked once more to *aadam*'s right and laughed
he looked once more to *aadam*'s left and cried
vowing within to fulfill his duty to his *ummah*
to unerringly serve his followers
that they may arrive at *aadam*'s right

aadam took a moment to adore once more
the piety and beauty of his cherished son
watching as *jibriil* led *muhammad* away
to see what remained to be seen of the first heaven
before ascending the heights
to continue this wondrous journey
to approach the gates of the second heaven



And, O my people! Ask forgiveness of your
Lord, then turn unto [Allaah] repentant; [Allaah]
will cause the sky to rain abundance on you
and will add unto you strength to your
strength. Turn not away, guilty!

from *Hud**

Surah 11, Verse 52

Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall
(Hud is a prophet in Islam)

Then hymn the praises of thy Lord, and seek
forgiveness of [Allaah]. Lo! [Allaah] is ever
ready to show mercy.

from *Al-Nasr* (The Succor)

Surah 110, Verse 3

Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

section:
the second heaven

And that those who have been given
knowledge may know that it is the truth from
thy Lord, so that they may believe therein
and their hearts may submit humbly unto
[Allaah]. Lo! Allaah verily is guiding those
who believe unto a right path.

from *Al-Hajj* (The Pilgrimage)
Surah 22, Verse 54

Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

We made a covenant of old with the Children
of Israel and We sent unto them messengers.
As often as a messenger came unto them
with that which their souls desired not (they
became rebellious). Some (of them) they
denied and some they slew.

from *Al-Maa'idah* (The Table Spread)
Surah 5, Verse 70

Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

[Allaah] it is Who sent down peace of reassurance
into the hearts of the believers that they might
add faith unto their faith. Allaah's are the hosts
of the heavens and the earth, and Allaah is ever
Knower, Wise.

from *Al-Fath* (The Victory)
Surah 48, Verse 4

Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

oh *muhammad*
peace and blessings are upon you
that this journey brings you
to the gate of the second heaven

now i see
what the gates to the place of prostration
seek to imitate

jibriil as the guide
escorted *muhammad* to this immaculate gate
and said
“let the gates be open”
the angels serving as gatekeepers responded
“who is it”
jibriil replied
“it is *jibriil*”
the gatekeepers responded
“is there anyone with you”
jibriil replied
“here is *muhammad*,
also known in the heavens as *ahmad*”
the gatekeepers responded
“has he been called,
has revelation been sent to him,
has his mission been released upon earth”
jibriil replied,
“yes,
yes,
and yes”

the gatekeepers responded
“oh, he is welcomed
what a wonderful visit is his”
and with that
the gates to the second heaven were opened

upon seeing the gatekeepers
muhammad greeted them saying
“*as-salaamu alaykum*”
(peace be upon you)
and they responded
“*as-salaamu alaykum wa rahmatullaah*”
(peace and mercy from the beloved be upon you)
for such is how the angels greet all the prophets
and all humans who will enter the gates of paradise
a blessing they express to the blessed
which returns as a blessing to them

it is a grace to be able to bless the blessed
it is a grace that they receive such blessing

who will peer above and below the rain clouds
to realize
there is none like the beloved
in its unifying uniqueness
there is never a single moment
when the beloved is not worthy of
being glorified and being praised

within the second heaven
so many wonders there are
more than words can tell
more than minds can comprehend
words and minds fail
when relaying the wonders of the heavens
so why bother seeking to describe
with words that fail to minds that cannot comprehend

in all its vastness
the second heaven makes the entire first heaven
seem like a small ring lost in a desert
and the first heaven makes all the earth
seem like a small stone on a small ring lost in a desert
so consider what the earth seems like to the second heaven
how small, how small
yet all the vastness of the second heaven
was shown to *muhammad*
making his humility even more humble
for there is no end to the wonders of the beloved's creations
a wonder such as
an angel who has *qaasim* among its names
an angel with seventy thousand heads
and on each head are seventy thousand faces
and on each face are seventy thousand mouths
and in each mouth are seventy thousand tongues
each speaking its own language
 none bearing resemblance to any other (language)
the duty of this magnificent angel
is to distribute in daily provisions

the endless provision of the beloved to all of creation
and what a grace it is if *qaasim* bestows to you
with your portion a portion to be given to another
if this is so
qaasim is only sharing with you
the beauty of its beautiful duty
that you may share in the glory
of distributing the lord's provision
that the needs of all may be met
the righteous as well as the wicked

oh, we humans forget
that the beloved is the source and owner of all
in the selfishness of our imagined ownership
we hoard and deny other beings their daily provisions
confusing our duty as a serving steward
to be that of a perceived owner
disturbing the stream of the beloved's provision
with the damn of greed

oh, we humans ignore
the countless tongues *qaasim* speaks from on high
imploring us to not deny or steal another's provision
surely among these countless tongues
there is at least one language we understand
that encourages us to be part of, not a barrier to,
the beloved's provision of daily sustenance
to all beings
(even those who disobey and dishonor the beloved)

it is a grace
that *qaasim* has not restricted fulfillment of its duty
to only angels
when we humans serve in this duty,
we beckon greater blessings
if in remembrance we serve the beloved
by serving the needs of others

there is no lack of sufficiency in creation
no need goes unfulfilled
unless we interfere with the service of *qaasim*
and due to the vastness of its responsibility
qaasim is not charged with overcoming our interference
yet those who interfere, be warned,

be warned

those who find themselves in need
pray to the beloved in humble petition and repentance
for if your sins block not the flow of daily provision
qaasim will witness your prayer
and redirect the path of your provisions
if the beloved wills

(and know, the beloved is just
and will only deny daily provisions
for the sake of a greater purpose
such as growth through testing or purification)

but oh, you humans in need
forget not in your need
that prayer is sacred

reduce it not to a bartering exchange
you can petition for what you need
but in humility, do so without expectation
the beloved already knows what you need
without you stating such
if you are not inclined to the beauty of patience
then embrace the beauty of humble petitioning prayers
a beauty that delights the beloved
a beauty that transforms
the one who offers such prayers in sincerity
whether such prayers be answered or not
for the beloved knows best
the beloved knows best
the beloved knows best

and *muhammad*, witnessing the loving service of this angel
its daily service being an unending prayer
muhammad thought immediately of those among his nation
from the past, present, and future
who are benefitted by *qaasim*'s living prayer
and realizing the immensity of it
the countless beings of creation who are due their daily bread
muhammad had greater appreciation for the calls of the beloved
upon his *ummah* to be charitable, generous, and sharing
that no one with the reach of his *ummah* be left in need
and moved thus, *muhammad* went and offered
the depth of his peace to *qaasim*
and *qaasim*, in return, offered
the depth of its peace to *muhammad*
in the thousands of thousands of thousands of tongues it spoke

an instantaneous chorus of *salawaat* upon *muhammad*
then *qaasim* became quiet to honor their silence
the silence of their offering being more powerful than their words
for in (their) silence they could both be heard simultaneously

those whose hearts are clear to hear,
let them hear this sacred silence

another wonder there was in the second heaven
two men who resembled each other
both with a humble glow about them
which even within its restraint
made one feel love

muhammad asked *jibriil*
“who are these men”
jibriil replied
“they are from the family of *imraan*
one is your brother, the prophet *yahyaa*
may *allaah* be pleased with him
the other is your brother, the prophet *iisaa*
may *allaah* be pleased with him
will you not greet them and pay them respects”

muhammad approached *yahyaa* and *iisaa*, greeting them
“*as-salaamu alaykum*”
(peace be upon you)
and they responded with one voice
“*as-salaamu alaykum wa rahmatullaah*
(peace and mercy from the beloved be upon you)

welcome, oh pious prophet,
oh beautiful and pious brother,
you are welcomed”

and without a single word it was conveyed
as angels gathered around *muhammad's* heart to witness
the magnificent blessing upon these sons of the family of *imraan*
cousins of a most intimate nature
for not only blood relation
and shared experience make them close
but also the call to and manifestation of prophethood
that makes their family among the best of all families
a family deeply rooted in surrender to the beloved

zakariyyaa, may *allaah* be pleased with you,
the beloved has remembered
to never forget
your prophetic service and your prayer
how you echoed the call of your lord to the children of *israaa'iil*
“turn (again) to me and i will return to you”
the same call made in the voice and lives
of other prophets and messengers
who were sent before or after
the lord's anger served due justice
before departing from or returning to mercy

oh *zakariyyaa*
another prophet sent to a people whose hearts were hardened
because, like their foreparents, they listened not
and even when they appeared to heed the calls

they wavered
from genuinely serving and honoring the beloved
yet the beloved had moved from anger to return to mercy
thus, another tender calling by a chosen servant
for not by power or by might
but by spirit
is the call made to return to divine law
to heed the guidance delivered through past and present prophets
that the city of peace may again be the city of truth
wherein the elderly may again feel safe enough
to sit leisurely in the streets
with the doors to their homes left open and unguarded
and children left to run freely, immersed in playfulness
because the righteousness of the people serves as their caretaker
a call of return
that the seed may prosper
and the fields be filled with harvests
and drops from the heavens descend to be
an inheritance to repentant nations
yet the people failed to surrender in complete obedience
displays of reverence mixed within their transgressions
seeking from other things that which only the beloved provides
therefore, the nations wandered like sheep without a shepherd

yet be it for the family of *imraan*
and other families cast from the same mold
(surrender, love, and service of the beloved)
the anger deserved by sinning nations
is tempered by the beloved's mercy to a single family
for *zakariyyaa* became a prisoner of hope

praying for the restoration of the nations
yet the people did not heed the fullness of his call
continuing to live lives astray
within the hearing of his voice
despite being ignored
in his love of the beloved
and his care for the people
zakariyyaa asked for an inheritor in his old age
not one to inherit earthly wealth,
for such is destined the fate of ashes
but rather the inheritance holy servants pass on
in the transmission of love, truth, surrender, and faithful service
from humble heart to open heart
that the beloved may continue to be served
in ways the beloved deserves to be served
and the good sheep have a capable and caring shepherd

this is lasting wealth
if humans but remember

oh *zakariyyaa*
and your beloved wife, *al-yashbi*
who were troubled not that in your old age
the beloved had not given you a child
yet still, you,
beloved husband and wife,
did not refrain from competing with each other in doing good
for such was your individual and collective love
of the beloved and each other
your holy union remains a joy to the beloved

who is always faithful and righteous
toward its loving servants
never forgetting them,
often taking pleasure in delivering them surprising boons

what a surprise it was
when angels appeared before *zakariyyaa*
to bring good tidings of a son
to be his inheritor
and *zakariyyaa*
even in his abounding faith
doubted the news
wondering how could he have a son
when his bones had become feeble
and his hair grey due to old age
and with an aging wife who had been barren all these years
how then shall they have a son
the angels replied, saying
so!
for the beloved that is easy
the beloved and its provision have no limits
the beloved gives to whom it wills
whatever it wills
howsoever it wills
only the beloved can restrain its giving

and *zakariyyaa*
even in his abounding faith
still doubted the news
and asked for a sign to confirm

this message from the beloved
the sign given was
that *zakariyyaa* was to be without voice for three days
although untouched by illness
yet in his joy
even without voice
he beckoned the people
to pray and worship their lord
at the break of day
and fall of night
even if you have no voice
even if you have no words
praise and honor your beloved

and so *zakariyyaa*
welcomed the given tidings
humbled his being to receive
the foretelling of a son to be named *yahyaa*
a name not given before
with a distinction not given before
for such was the will of the beloved
that the blessed mother and wife,
herself consecrated to the beloved,
birth a child set apart to be a prophet
a compassion from the beloved's presence
pure and devout
guarded against evil
firm in obedience (to the beloved)
serving in duty his righteous parents
free of arrogance and rebellion

bestowed with wisdom as a child
and as an adult
noble and chaste
holding firmly to the divine law
and the teachings of the prophets and messengers
living in the endless depth of surrender to the beloved
and when his mission was unleashed
he confirmed a holy word (of the beloved)
a call to repent, make amends, and manifest truth
to seek forgiveness
a call to return to and uphold the divine law
for the kingdom of paradise is near
nearer to you than the closest horizon
nearer to you than your next footstep
nearer to you than your next heartbeat
for the kingdom of the heavens is near
along with its coming judgment
oh, the depth of peace be upon *yahyaa*
on the day he was born
on the day he died
and on the day he is raised to life (again)!

oh yahyaa
you who are a promise fulfilled to your pious father
quicken the devotion of the people again
show them how to make their surrender to us alive
depart the cities and villages if you must
and call to our children from the wilderness of the desert
where among the oases they imagine
and mirages they entrap themselves within

you greet them to baptize them in living waters
and through the example of (your) love
encourage them to make straight
their approaches to us

for those who sit at your feet as willing disciples
for those who return to the world as students
living the lessons you declare
what is low (humble) shall be raised up
and what is high (arrogant) shall be leveled
what is rough shall be made smooth
and barren land made fit for cultivation
for within the (spiritual) master's love
is our glory
and from your pious mouth,
they hear our words
but soften not your tongue
nor add or delete a single syllable
make known what we reveal through you
you are protected from humanity
even if you lose your head, the heavens await you
for the duty placed on you is placed upon you to fulfill

uphold and confirm the scripture
let it not be broken into fragments they pick and choose
honoring that which they like
ignoring that which they dislike
no, obedience is one (path)
and religion is to follow
to follow our will as it is

to turn away in just a single way is disobedience
and many are the ways that turn away from us
which if they do, it harms not us
it is only a harm they bring upon themselves

remind them, oh *yahyaa*
to not reduce sacred rites to a show of religion
surrender to the guidance of the sacred law
and the teachings delivered through the prophets and messengers
nothing is gained in rebuilding a temple of stone
if those who went astray build not temples of sincerity
 within their repentant hearts
for obedience is a bridge
religion is a bridge
but what the bridge leads to cannot be reached
until the bridge is crossed

and tell the people
there is no salvation in claiming *ibraahiim* as your father
we can raise new obedient children out of stones
to replace the wicked ones who will be destroyed
there is no salvation in claiming a prophet as your leader
if you do not sincerely follow
what all the prophets and messengers teach
the time of judgment is near
and trees without good fruit will be cut down
to be cast into a raging fire
so repent, and surrender to forgiveness
give forth fruit made good by obedient living
the divine law and teachings of the prophets and messengers

are one undivided mercy
this guidance given is a mercy
after yet another period of deserved anger

although the mercy of the beloved always precedes its anger
the anger of the beloved is not always followed by mercy

and *yahyaa* could see the tears welling in *muhammad's* eyes
so *yahyaa* said
let me share a prayer for you and your *ummah*
for i was humble enough to accept the glory
of sharing a message that serves as a bridge
from the station of obedience to the holy law and holy guidance
to the station of surrendering to the spirit of the holy law
 and the spirit of holy guidance
therein is a depth that mere obedience alone does not reach
yet it cannot be reached without first being obedient
what baptism into obedience washes away (sins, impurities)
makes a straight way to be immersed into the baptism of spirit
(the holiness of spirituality)

who will pass through the veils to see what is beyond them
who will pass through the abode of pure obedience
to see what the holy fire of spirit is
the word beyond words, the depth beyond all depths
for beyond all veils there is only the love of the beloved

and *yahyaa* continued his prayer
oh, my cherished beloved
let us not be led astray after you have guided us

let us not depart in any way from the divine law
and the amendments you mercifully grant us
let us strive to live the best of the best you guide us with
let us not make any distinctions
among the many prophets and messengers you send
for they all speak with one voice (truth)
for they all serve you (love)
and it is to you we are called to surrender to
to you we must return
this is the call of religion
the invitation to spirituality

we rest in the pure absolute awareness of knowing
that those who surrender
and are obedient
and serve with good works
upon them you bestow unending love
give us (your) unending love
let us dwell in the truth of (your) unending love
for what is greater than the unending love of the beloved

and *muhammad* could feel *iisaa*'s hand upon his shoulder
before he touched him
an affirming embrace
how appropriate
that *yahyaa*'s prayer led to *iisaa*'s touch
this was not the first time

in the absence of pride and arrogance
neither *yahyaa* or *iisaa* make any distinction between themselves

just as each step upon the royal road remains royal
regardless of its proximity to the destination
whether it be a step made upon a bridge or firm land

and without a single word it continued to be conveyed
as the angels gathered around *muhammad*'s heart witnessed
the continuing magnificent blessing upon the family of *imraan*
what a wondrous blessing
muhammad looked into *iisaa*'s face and could see his mother
maryam, may *allaah* be pleased with you,
you precious maidservant of the beloved
who, in being chosen by the beloved,
was bestowed the purity of all that is pure

oh *maryam*, you are the best among women
a blessing to your mother, *hannah*
who was graced by the favor of the beloved
immersed in happiness with child in womb
she vowed the coming babe to the beloved
an offering set apart
to honor the beloved with a life of devoted service
this vow was heard and received
another testament of the piety of the family of *imraan*

yet when the babe was born a girl
the mother became concerned
for their society would not allow
a female to serve the beloved in the same way a male could
thereupon was a taste of bitterness,

that perhaps the child, while in the womb,
rebelled against the vow
(by changing its gender)
therefore, the mother named the babe *maryam*
for there was bitterness in the sea of that birth

but *allaah* knows all and *allaah* knows best
and that received in bitterness
was made sweeter than all sweetness
a woman so pure that within a single lifetime
maryam redefined generations of what her name meant
for whom the beloved makes pure
even their apparent impurities are sanctified
(such as having a child out of wedlock)
and whom the beloved protects
even what appears to afflict them
only proves to benefit

few things greater are there in this dreamed world
than purification and protection granted by the beloved
would that all who surrender in faith
receive the gracing grace
to be made pure by and protected by the beloved

oh *maryam*,
the prayer of your mother was heard and fulfilled
a child born into a righteous family
continuing its righteous lineage
a child offered as a servant to the beloved
received into such glorious service

free from the bondage of worldly work
and human exploitation
free to realize freedom
in unyielding surrender to the beloved
who hears the prayers of righteous families
families who imprint the inheritance
of leaning toward righteousness
upon their offspring

even angels argued over who would have the duty,
the blessing
of serving as guardians and caretakers for *maryam*
and how, when her father died before she was born
still a paternal figure was provided for her
in the prophet *zakariyyaa*
how these and others means served as expressions
of the protection of the beloved
keeping her safe, keeping her virtuous,
keeping her pure
for she did not relent in bowing down
in prostrating obedience to the beloved
her life of surrender serving its part
in fulfilling her mother's vow and prayer

how in the place of prostration, in her own room
zakariyyaa would often find young *maryam*
covered with the fragrance of devotion
in that room, he would find her provided for
in winter, she would have the fruits of summer
and in summer, she would have the fruits of winter

zakariyyaa, in amazement, always found her with food
he would ask, from whence this provision
maryam, in gracious appreciative humility,
would reply
it is from *allaah*
who provides to whom it pleases
without limit, without measure,
without end,
if *allaah* so wills

(think not this did not influence *zakariyyaa*
in his prayer for an inheritor)

oh, if we could paint the paths
of the beloved's provision with foresight
we would cease to be surprised
by that which beneficently surprises
with faith, we would remove the word impossible
from all lives immersed in the service of love
the provision and grace of the beloved
is not even limited to all apparent possibilities
yet *maryam* was surprised and found doubting
when, in seclusion, an angel appeared before her
in the form of a perfect man
seeking to protect her chastity
she called on the name of the beloved
to provide her refuge in divine protection
but there is no need to protect
that which the beloved already protects
(a reminder for the faithful)

no harm was there in this angel
sent to deliver a message
that she was to give birth to a holy son
one who would remain pure and sinless
one who would be a messenger of love and service
to all the world

maryam,
within the doubting logic of this world's possibilities,
asked how could she have a child
when no man has touched her
the angel replied saying
so!
for the beloved that is easy
the beloved creates what it wills
what the beloved decrees
it only says "be" and it is
and the beloved ordains that you will birth a son
who will be breathed into you, a miraculous conception
one sent to be a revelation to humanity
an enduring mercy

and so it was
that a daughter of *imraan*
received into the womb pure, born pure,
raised pure, and kept pure
gave birth as a pure virgin
to a prophet who never strayed from the sinless path
iisaa, sent to serve the children of *israaa'il*
that they may remember that the beloved saves

yet the light of his service overflowed to be
a merciful revelation for all of humanity
an invitation to journey across the bridge
of divine law and religion
to reach the fertile land of spirit (spirituality)

religion is to follow
to follow the will of the beloved
if you realize not that will directly
(as very few humans do)
then follow the example of those who have
the prophets and messengers
 and the divine law revealed through them
 and the teachings they share
 and the example of the lives they live
for if you follow the path of their footsteps
such will turn you in the direction
that leads directly to the beloved
this is the bridge of religion
and bridges are constructed to cross
spaces in which the land you seek to reach
does not meet where you are
a precious land we humans separate ourselves from
through disobedience, through ignorance, through selfishness
but by grace, the beloved provides bridges for us to cross
if we heed the call calling (us)
and bridges are narrow, with defined (ethical) restraints
to keep us from walking off the bridge and falling astray
but bridges are not places to build a home
let your home be built on fertile land

especially if the bridge you are upon
leads to good, fertile land

any bridge built by the beloved and its servants
always leads to good, fertile land

religion is to follow
and spirituality is to surrender
and in the depths of surrender,
the faithful mature to surrender even their surrender
where the effort that brought one across the bridge
is surrendered into the effortlessness of arriving
on good, fertile, and holy land
once upon such land
the journeyless journey is not limited
to moving across the surface
but can include
immersing into the depths of good soil
where good seeds can take root
to give forth good trees and good fruit
that the lover may come to be
oneness with the beloved
yet not by the effort of the lover
all the lover can do is remove the impure barriers
it placed or allowed to be placed upon one's self
preventing such oneness

it is only by the grace of the beloved
that the lover can be dissolved
into sacred oneness with the beloved

this is the call of love
the call to love
the good news of love

oh *iisaa*, supported by the holy spirit(uality)
does not your life affirm
that within the depth of surrender
all the divine law and scriptures are fulfilled
where, in the depth of surrender,
the will of the lover is only the will of the beloved
where even the possibility of separateness
is dissolved in sacred union
this is the anointing of love
 the anointing of love loving love
this is the only choiceless choice
 which lays beyond all choosing

although the heart and spirit are willing
the mind and body are weak
because the fullness of love manifests
within and beyond the limits of the mind and its bodies
the fullness of love emanates beyond and yet alights within
all-pervading
its measurelessness is within and beyond
 the measures of this universe's measures (merit)
the fullness of love exceeds the reach of all knowledge
yet can be fully contained within a mustard seed of faith
this is why the beloved has little concern for our minds
(which hold to knowledge)

but instead looks to the heart
(which is the abode of faith)

divide not (the) truth revealed through the beloved's prophets
separate not religion from spirituality
nor vice versa
yet for those still journeying the journeyless journey
obey even the smallest mark of the (divine) law
while surrendering deeper into faith
that within your moving temple
you fulfill the call
to love the beloved with all your heart and mind
and body and soul and strength and your all
within the oneness of love
deal with all you find in the presence of your temple
as a lover treats itself
allowing the love of the beloved to guide your every interaction
even if others wrong you, remain in love
the beloved protects and purifies its faithful lovers
even through persecution, hardship, loss, and death
the beloved protects and purifies its faithful lovers

such is of the revelation *iisaa* was sent to unveil
such is of the mercy the son of *maryam* is
it is only for such fulfillment that *iisaa* was sent to serve
healing the sick
giving sight to the blind
raising the dead

and even breathing life into clay fashioned after a bird
all these deeds performed
by the will of the beloved
miracles rendered to reveal (again) the invitation
to follow religion to the surrender of spirituality
yet not a letter of the law did he come to change or abolish
nor a word from the scriptures of past prophets and messengers
not the slightest dot of an “i”
for even through the dot of an “i” of the law and scriptures
can one be brought across the bridge of religion
to the good, fertile land of spirituality

the vastness of love
does not extend beyond the restrained road of religion
but instead infinitely expands within
the depths of religion
thus, is the sinless immersion into spirituality
fulfilled within the narrow, straight path (of religion)

iisaa,
upholder of the law and scriptures
messenger of the good news revealed through him
came to fulfill the law and the scriptures
that the faithful may be reminded and encouraged
to fulfill, in their own lives,
the law, the scriptures, and good news
to dwell in the depth of spirituality
the endless depth of love
wherein, through grace, after we have been set apart
we may be dissolved into oneness with the beloved

hear and answer this call within the heart
even if its echoes reach the mind
because the mind, with its movements,
can cross the expanse of terrain
but lacks the stillness to go deep beyond the surface
of what it can observe
but the heart,
the stillness of the heart is faith
wherein the heart pulls one into one’s being and deeper
to that placeless place within the heart’s chamber
where the beloved dwells within each being
closer to you than your own heartbeat
closer to you than your own heart’s vibration

the universe cannot contain the beloved
but the heart of a faithful lover contains the beloved
filled by its overflowing fullness

and *iisaa* could see the tears falling from *muhammad’s* eyes
so *iisaa* said
let me share a prayer for you and your *ummah*
a prayer i shared while on earth
when people assumed my mother had sinned
i, a babe in her arms,
perceived as proof of her violating her chastity
and bringing the dishonor of sin
upon her righteous family
given instruction by the beloved
she spoke not a word to her accusers
but instead pointed to me

and by the will of the beloved
i spoke these words from the cradle:
i am indeed a servant of allaah
who gives me revelation and makes me a prophet
who blesses me wherever i may be
and places upon me the duty of prayer and charity
as long as i live
i remain dutiful to my mother
for the beloved has not made me arrogant,
ungrateful, or overbearing
so peace be upon me on the day i was born
on the day i die
and on the day i am raised again
this is a statement of truth, dispute it if you will

and without saying a word
the hearts of these prophets opened fully to one another
revealing deeper meanings contained within the prayer
i am indeed a servant of allaah
there is not a single babe born upon the earth
who speaks not this unspoken whisper after exiting the womb
it is imprinted on our first breath
our first sight
our first memory
a testimony we make
that we will not be able to deny on the day of resurrection
the day of accounting
but oh, us humans
how most of us follow the example of *maryam*'s accusers
we are forgetful of the prevailing purpose of our births

we sin and disobey and judge others
and seek to bring others, including our children,
into the fold of (our) ignorance
even accusing the sinless when we know not

oh, us humans
we teach children, born ready to follow religion,
ways that turn them astray
by our living examples,
we corrupt what we teach them to follow,
what we display to them to follow
and twist their innate inclinations to surrender
away from the straight path
such that few are raised to reach the land of spirituality
we often do so thinking we are caring for
and loving our children
yet this most fundamental truth we often neglect and forget
that every babe born is a servant of the beloved
good families, such as the family of *imraan*,
interfere not with such service
but instead support it
and others, well...
they should follow the example of the family of *imraan*

who gives me revelation and makes me a prophet
we are all given revelation
for in the first unspoken whisper we breathe
is all we need to reach the station the prophets teach:
i am indeed a servant of the beloved
if we never forget our first revelation,

sincerely live this revelation,
we fulfill all the scriptures and divine law
but humans have become apt to forget
and most of us, in our forgetfulness and ignorance,
increase this forgetfulness in our children
as we increase our forgetfulness in ourselves
(the falsely identified self of the ego)
thus, we abandon the sinless path of love
even if remaining on the bridge of religion but never crossing it
therefore, the beloved sends us the mercy of prophets
to remind us of the revelation given to us
that we may reach the station the prophets teach
and live as loving servants of the beloved
this is the beginning of life
all else is but death imitating
that which it cannot attain
life

we need not be prophets to receive and live this revelation
we only need to humble ourselves
to become like obedient babes (again)
for in the human pursuit of religion
and the constructions of the mind we impose upon it
this fundamental truth is veiled
by things we humans call learned and wise
but this fundamental truth is obvious to little children
who remain free from all adult ways
a revelation given to us by the beloved
a revelation that, which if forgotten, can be remembered

and embraced again
through repentance

*who blesses me wherever i may be
and places upon me the duty of prayer and charity
as long as i live*

oh, the endless blessings that are given to us
when we live our first revelation
but to whom much is given, much is expected
for we all are sent to serve the beloved
among our duties is that of prayer
that we may honor and remember and worship the beloved
among our duties is that of charity
caring for others, meeting their needs
for without the opportunity to serve,
how can a servant serve
although we are sent here to serve the beloved
the beloved has no needs that we can serve
but it is a blessing that we share this world with other servants
that we may serve each other
to fulfill our call to serve the beloved
these precious duties, among others
are ours for the length of our earthly lives
even if our bodies are stricken and weak
we can always pray and care for others
if we are willing

*i remain dutiful to my mother
and my father, and my grandparents
and all who act as parents to me*

that i may honor the gift of family
for every lineage imparts an imprint
leaning toward righteousness or iniquity
where there is righteousness,
one honors one's predecessors by continuing in righteousness
where there is iniquity,
one honors one's predecessors by turning to righteousness
that the beloved may break the imprint of evil
(through your life)
and release the hold of such imprint on present generations
and not touch future ones with the imprint of evil
for every human has a duty to uphold our first revelation
to be a servant of the beloved
no family is created to birth and raise children
contrary to this fundamental truth
so where our parents and families fulfill this truth
let us join in their service
and where our parents and families violate this truth
let us make our lives a correcting point in the family line
so that we impart upon our present and future generations
a leaning toward righteousness
like the blessed family of *imraan*

*for the beloved has not made me arrogant,
ungrateful, or overbearing*
if we live to fulfill our first revelation
the duty of being
a servant of the beloved
how can we, in any call of genuine servitude,

embody the qualities of being
arrogant, ungrateful, or overbearing

*so peace be upon me on the day i was born
on the day i die
and on the day i am raised again*

let us all lives that allow us to make this declaration
for if we fulfill our duty as servants of the beloved
all the seven heavens will proclaim such when hearing our name
and not just reign peace upon the day of birth,
the day of death, and the day of resurrection
but reign peace upon all the days
that come before, between, and after these days
the peace of peace that is found in surrender to the beloved
al-islam

and let me live the life of the righteous and the pious
and let me die the death of the righteous and the pious
(if the beloved will not ascend me to the celestial heights)
and let me have the rest of the righteous and the pious in the grave
and let me be raised with the resurrection of the righteous
and the pious
to enjoy the hereafter of the righteous and the pious
for with the fulfillment of these
is the peace of peace of (the most supreme) peace

this is a statement of truth, dispute it if you will
let your every prayer be a statement of truth
despite whatever else that prayer may address
and be wise with the prayers you make
if they are not made from the humility of servitude, beware

but if received or expressed from such servitude
dispute not with your prayers or the prayers of others
even if the mind is not contented
rest peacefully in faith with your sincere and humble prayer
for beyond the words of such prayer
is the subtle language of the heart
the beloved looks to this language
more so than the fleeting words of mouths

and *iisaa* could see more tears falling from *muhammad's* eyes
and the eyes of *yahyaa* too
for all their hearts were fully opened by an opening
and yet not content
so *iisaa* said
let me share another prayer for you and your *ummah*
a prayer i shared while on earth
while in a gathering among my disciples, students, and others
reminding the people
to not make their prayers a show performed
to be seen by the eyes of other humans
 or felt by one's own ego
to not make their prayers an extended rambling of excessive words
as if many words will make their prayers heard by the beloved
the beloved already knows what you need
before you need it
the beloved already knows what you will ask for
before you even think to ask
the beloved is all-knowing
so let your prayers be selfless and precise
such as this prayer:

our parent
who art in the heavens and beyond
hallowed be thy name,
 hallowed be thy most beautiful, wondrous,
 and glorious names
thy kingdom come, thy will be done
on earth as it is in the heavens and in paradise
give us this day our daily bread
forgive us our transgressions
as we are forgiving toward those whose transgressions afflict us
and lead us not into temptation, rather deliver us from all evil
for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory
for thou art the kingdom, the power, and the glory
for ever and ever, on ever
oneness

and without saying a word
the hearts of these prophets opened to one another
revealing deeper meanings contained within the prayer
our parent
who art in the heavens and beyond
for the beloved is the most caring of parents
even to its disobedient children
never abandoning us, although we abandon it
and the precious commands it gives us
 for our benefit
the beloved offers its guidance to all
and often restrains the full service of justice
for the mercy of a parent doesn't punish one's child for every sin

the parent even forgets some sins
that we may have the chance to repent
and amend our actions to the road of righteousness
the beloved even delays some punishments
to afford us the opportunity to seek forgiveness
to encourage us to seek forgiveness
but even the punishments served in this world are a mercy
to correct and remind us
to turn from an everlasting punishment in the hereafter
for the wage of every single sin is death
yet how many of us sin and are granted time before death claims us
a merciful span to repent and seek forgiveness
that we may be restored to life and the path to paradise

although we children fail our parent over and over again
in love, the beloved continues to extend to us
the mercy of a caring parent
its presence always with us wherever we are
although we veil our recognition of the beloved with ignorance
its presence always with us wherever we are
but the fullness of the beloved is reserved
beyond the veils of the heavens,
where only the will of the beloved is done
for anything contrary to such
cannot bear proximity to the beloved
it will be instantly destroyed
but the fullness of the fullness of the beloved,
rests on its throne beyond the seventh heaven
where only the perfected of perfect surrender are called to approach
those rare few

but even if we are never brought before the fullness of the beloved
in this lifetime
we are never alone
the beloved's guidance is always at hand
merely quiet the mind (through restraint)
and look to the heart
and you will see
our protecting friend that is present even in our aloneness

may we all humble our free will
to be embraced by
the love of our parent

hallowed be thy name,
hallowed be thy most beautiful, wondrous,
and glorious names
and the beloved's are the most beautiful and wondrous
and glorious names
whether we call you *allaah*
the essence which cannot be defined or described
a perfect name that transcends perfect understanding
for the beloved is beyond all understanding
or if we call you *yhwh (yahweh)*
a name you revealed to the children of *israaa'iiil*
that being of being *ehyeh asher ehyeh*
("i am that i am")
no name can completely name you

and yet more names you share with us
to reflect but a vast portion of your endless qualities
precious gifts to those who praise
ar-rahmaan ar-rahiim
the beneficent compassionate merciful
for who can separate your beneficence, compassion, and mercy
as-salaam
for you are peace
and only those who surrender to you are brought into
the peace that surpasses all understanding
al-mu'min
for only you illuminate and protect faith within our hearts
oh, may we remove the veils that cover our hearts
to be touched by
an-nuur
the light that alights all
so we may come to know you
by you realizing yourself through us
for you are
al-khaaliq
the creative force that never stops creating
even if the very next moment is created from nothing
you
al-haqq
the truth
you
ash-shahiid
the witness who witnesses all
you
al-jabbaar

for nothing happens outside your will
if you do not will it or allow it, it cannot be
and if you will it, nothing can stop it from being
and if you will it not to be, nothing can bring it to be

oh, my beloved you are
al-walii
the protecting friend
you are
al-kariim
the generous
al-wahhaab
the bestower of all
al-hakiim
you are the wise
al-waduud
the loving who should be loved
dhuul-jalaali wal-ikraam
the lord of majesty and bounty
al-barr
for all that is good comes only from you
al-haadii
the guide who leads to the right path
where we are taught by
ar-rashiid
the righteous teacher
for who can teach what you teach
the prophets and messengers only deliver your lessons
and praise and honor be
that you are

as-sabuur

the most patient one
who is so most patient with us
even when we have exhausted all reasons for patience
your enduring patience fulfills its destined term of patience

let us remember these and your other wonderful names
as they paint the canvas of life to color the entire universe
let us sing and chant your most beautiful names
let us live to honor your most glorious names
and make a sacred place for them
within our prayers
within our living

thy kingdom come, thy will be done

on earth as it is in the heavens and in paradise

the kingdom of the beloved is
and it is only to honor the gift the beloved gave to us
in our free will
that we are allowed to play a role
in manifesting or preventing
the fulfillment of this kingdom on earth

in the heavens and in paradise
nothing can be outside of perfect alignment
with the will of the beloved
where there, the angels can only serve in obedience
the possibility of disobedience does not exist there
(let alone the foolish acting out of such disobedience)
where in the heavens, even those sinners who are brought there

willingly suffer the punishment afflicted upon them
there they cannot even imagine not suffering for their sins
and only cry out for the pain of suffering, not in rejecting it
where in paradise, no sin nor sinners
nor those with an imprint of sin
(even as innocent victims of sin)
can enter or approach the holy gates
and such is only the beginning of how
the will of the beloved is served
in the heavens and in paradise

but on earth
for the sake of the gift of our free will
the earth is veiled with many veils that veil the beloved
for without such veils,

we could not choose any other than the beloved's will
a test of love to see if we will
honor this free gift of the free will
to use what is granted to us only for the beloved
to express our love of the beloved
this can only be done through surrender

we can, if we will, bring the earth
into alignment with the heavens and paradise
through surrendering our will and our lives
to the beloved
for if we do, the bounties of the heavens and paradise
will be shared with us even upon this earth
bounties not measured in earthly means
because earthly things decay and pass away

in a (earthly) world that is nothing more
 than a comfort of illusion and deceiving vanities
but to speak of the treasures of the heavens
and the indescribable bliss of paradise
to have a taste of this love and truth upon earth
it lays not in acting out on our free will,
but only the restraining surrender of our will to the beloved

surrender can only be complete
partial surrender is only an illusion pretending
(to be surrender)
if we make but a single choice on our own
we have chosen our own way
instead of allowing the will of the beloved
to make all choices for us
it is not passivity, but a stillness the beloved moves

pray to be a living surrender to the beloved
and surrender to be such a surrender
then see how the kingdom of the beloved
comes
(to you to become you)
it will not come any other way

give us this day our daily bread
all provision comes from the beloved
despite how it may appear to reach us
only fools think they attain anything by their own efforts
or the efforts of other beings
the wise offer their effort to the beloved

that the beloved may provide (its) provision
 through their selfless (egoless) service
to serve in humble gratitude
to serve as righteous examples to others
to serve as vessels of the beloved's beneficence
although the wise offer such effort
they know the provision of daily bread given
is not tied to any effort
but instead it is a merciful grace

fulfill the duties of your responsibilities
as a way to honor your beloved
but do not reduce such to an exchange for daily bread
you cannot earn the grace that bestows such providence
and let the request of each day be limited to that day
for the wise seek not the provisions of yesterday
 nor ask in advance for tomorrow
each day is sufficient to receive the needs of its own day
each present moment is sufficient to receive the needs
 of the moment

the beloved,
knowing your needs before you realize them
will not withhold from you what you need
 for each day, each moment the beloved creates
but (your) doubts can be a barrier to receiving such provision
so worry not,
for the beloved is the best of providers

even evil parents provide for their children
how much more then the perfect parent who is righteousness
 endowed with an endless bounty

although you need not ask,
let your prayerful requests be beautiful
a way to honor the beloved
let not your prayerful requests be incomplete
for the sculpted dust of this fading world,
even if held in the esteem of being valuable,
equates not to the bread of the heart,
 which does not pass away
oh, the bread of the heart
such as the gift of serving others
which transforms selfish mortals
into vessels of selfless eternity
bread such as the light of divine revelation
(as reflected in holy words
delivered through prophets, messengers, saints,
and more)
which guides to the treasures of the heavens
 and the indescribable bliss of paradise
just as you feed the body and mind,
which are weak and must be restrained from evil
feed the heart,
 which hears the song of the beloved from within
its humble yet abounding strength
flowing in harmony with beneficence
is inclined to love
and points one to the beloved

that we may face the beloved
and be moved toward the beloved
by the beloved
(itself)

just as food and shelter and other earthly things
are placed daily within our reach
let us also reach for opportunities to serve
and time to contemplate the beloved's revelations
that in each day we may be fed
in the fullness of being a servant of the beloved

*forgive us our transgressions
as we are forgiving toward those whose transgressions afflict us*
for only the beloved do we wrong when we sin,
and only the beloved can forgive us
for all belongs only to the beloved
even our selves
simply because portions of this all are entrusted to us
does not equate to (our) ownership
what we are allowed to possess,
 even within sin and disobedience
is a merciful mercy
so why make our pursuit and receipt of this mercy
to be causes to sin and disobey
do we, in the presence of a wise and rich sovereign,
ignore the sovereign to adore its royal jewels
when it is the sovereign that makes the jewelry royal
when the sovereign has so much more to offer us
if we but carry ourselves in a way befitting of royalty

those of us who go astray
who have ever strayed from the sinless path,
even if just once,
never let us cease in praying for forgiveness
even if we pray to be forgiven for sins we unknowingly commit
even if we now walk perfectly upon the sinless path
for forgiveness is a mercy given in each moment
and we should never cease in asking for this abounding mercy

in what we pray to receive

let us not be hypocrites to what we seek
as we pray to be forgiven
let us never hold ourselves to be wronged
for we are not the beloved,
 only the beloved can be wronged
yes, the wrongs of others can affect and afflict us
but just as we ask forgiveness for our sins
and to be guided to the path that avoids committing other sins
let us be forgiving toward all
including those whose wrongs afflict and affect us
for if the beloved had so willed,
their wrongs would not have reached us
and if the beloved allows such to occur
let us honor our beloved by acting in harmony with (its) grace

it is not for us to forgive
but to be forgiving toward others
our duty is acceptance of the threads of fate
as willed or allowed by the weaving hand of the beloved

that we hold no other in debt to us
 for a wrong they have performed
that we harbor no ill will for wrongs they commit
that we not let the wrongs of others become idols
 that distract us from living worship of the beloved
whether we are offered amends or not
whether we accept amends or not
let not the wrongs of others interfere the slightest
with us remembering our beloved
and living such remembrance
let not the wrongs of others interfere the slightest
with us realizing the harmony of peace,
 which can only be reached through surrender
let such remembrance and harmonious peace
be the means by which we interact with others
even those whose wrongs affect and afflict us

let us not withhold the smallest measure
of being forgiving toward others
even as we stand firm against
 and protect ourselves from evil
let us never withhold being forgiving toward others
whether they be the cruelest stranger
 or those most close to us
be forgiving
even if we have been forgiving toward another before
who committed wrongs that afflict us again and again and again
let us be forgiving toward that one yet again and again and again
even if this be the seventieth times seventieth times seventieth time

know:

it is the beloved who allows us to be so afflicted
so let not such wrongs distract us in the least of ways
from being in complete harmony with the beloved
and in the depth of such complete harmony
is an impenetrable protection from the harms of all wrongs
that even if we suffer wrongs we are not afflicted by them
to be forgiving
leads to the depth of such complete harmony
within the vast forgiveness of the beloved

if we saw all the beloved is forgiving toward,
in its massive wholeness
we would not be troubled the slightest
by being forgiving toward all whose wrongs afflict us

make not the wrongs of others more important
than honoring the beloved
than surrendering to the will of the beloved
and accepting what that will allows
for few sins are more transgressing than
withholding being forgiving toward others
so judge not,
it is only the beloved who is to judge
and the beloved judges as it wills

be forgiving toward others from the heart
even if you must restrain or ignore the mind
and its unending memories of being afflicted
and its unending wants for retribution

deal with others without the stains of sins' impressions
living in flow with love and truth and mercy
is more valuable than imagining the self-importance
of being wronged

and lead us not into temptation, rather deliver us from all evil
for the beloved guides whom it wills
upon the straight path that leads to the beloved
and the promise of its endless glorious bounties
and the beloved leads astray and allows to go astray
whomsoever it wills
for the beloved knows who is sincere and humble and serving
and is not fooled by the whitewashed walls of tombs
that appear to be beautiful on the outside
but inside hide the decay of evil and sin and death
the beloved knows who wears facades of righteousness
with sweet-smelling fragrances to conceal hypocrisy

question not
why the beloved leads some astray
instead
surrender and pray that you be guided (by the beloved)
for the guidance of the beloved is a precious pearl
that should not be placed at the feet of unruly dogs
and sullied pigs
that will only trample upon
and tear to pieces what is sacred

question not
why the beloved creates evil and temptation
and allows these to exist
for sometimes the beloved uses even these,
even evil and temptation
to reveal its glory to those otherwise blind to its glory
instead
ask of thy caring parent to never be led to temptation
for even human perfection can yield to imperfection
if we forget the beloved
and its merciful guidance
also ask of thy caring parent to be delivered from all evil
the evil we place within ourselves
the evil we place ourselves within
or allow others to place us within
because we turn away from the beloved
plead to the beloved to guide you to beneficence
and let the living surrender of your life sincerely match this plea
for although the hand of the beloved moves us
we are given the choice of which direction we face
and every direction other than the one facing the beloved
leads only to temptation and evil
which only leads to sin and the endless cycles of sin
and the fate of sin that will be served in that final hour
unless we are restored to life

oh, you who surrender to and love the beloved
none can harm you if you are rightly guided
only the beloved rightly guides

not even the most perfect pious creature can rightly guide
one's self
only the beloved guides to the abode of peace
which can only be reached through surrender
although the hand of the beloved moves us through life
we are responsible for which direction we turn to face
and the acts we commit
as a consequence of what we face

be careful of what you turn to face
or allow your face to be turned to
the wise forever seek to face the beloved
and pray
to not be left to themselves (their ego)
for even the blink of an eye
if you face the beloved
what is before you will draw your actions
(or draw from you actions that aspire)
to righteousness, piety, truth, and love
fragrances that mature
into the musk of pure absolute awareness
but if you face anything other than the beloved
well, the fate of this world gone astray
testifies to the actions such sight will draw

if the beloved is your helper,
what can overcome you
and if the beloved withdraws its help,
how can you succeed
let not how things appear in this world confuse you

put all your trust and hope in the beloved alone
and the narrow road of facing only the beloved
every other road and direction is wide of the mark

the beloved has allowed
that which influences and supports people
to turn astray and sin
to have a place in this world
but woe to those through whom such come
a warning to those who influence and support others
to turn from the direction of facing the beloved
to turn astray and sin

better to lose the whole world and save your soul
by not turning your face from the beloved
better to lose your earthly life facing the beloved
than to live a life turning away (from the beloved)
and if you resolutely and sincerely
keep your face to the beloved
do you think this caring parent will lead you to temptation or evil
even if the beloved tests you for a fixed time,
to give the opportunity to purify your being from impurities
such a test will not be beyond your ability to bear and pass
if you remain devoted
with your face never turned away from the beloved

never turn away from the beloved
and you will be free from the bondage
of all temptation and evil

even if you find yourself placed within
the murky swamps of evil and its temptation

*for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory
for thou art the kingdom, the power, and the glory
for ever and ever, on ever*

oneness
the kingdom of the heavens and the kingdom of paradise
belong only to the beloved
the power to reach these, to receive these
rests only with the beloved
the glory these behold
not only belong only to the beloved
but is the beloved itself,

for the beloved is all there is
within time, encompassing all time, and beyond all time
and the unending stillness of the timeless
and
since the beloved is all there is
all that is is the beloved

why seek what is lesser
than the glorious fullness of the beloved
and the kingdoms of the heavens and paradise

behold the unveiled beauty of this glorious fullness
everlastingly within and beyond all time
the mind cannot comprehend this oneness of reality
this same mind which has divided the sinless path
placed at our births

into endless possible paths of disobedience
let the mind be restrained and quiet
and listen to the silence of the heart
and you will see
only in disobedience and sin is division imagined
even if this division dances the illusion of union

in obedience and love and truth
there is only the awareness of oneness
there is only the beloved
and its pure absolute oneness

and *iisaa* could see more tears falling from *muhammad's* eyes
and the eyes of *yahyaa*
and even from his eyes too
for all their hearts were fully opened by an opening
and although full were not yet content
 only the fullness of love
 will suffice for the fullness of love

so *iisaa* said
let me share one more prayer for you and your *ummah*
a prayer i shared on earth
while in a gathering among my disciples, students, and others
although others were present
this prayer was for my disciples
for it beholds seeds of supreme blessedness

oh, those who sacrifice their lives to be good soil
in which the soul may plant roots of happy trees
that are nurtured by love and truth

to give forth good pure fruit
receive these seeds into you
and water them with constant remembrance and prayer
for many are invited but few are chosen
and the fullness of this prayer is for those
who surrender to the depths of losing their lives
that the beloved may then choose them
a path that penetrates hardships, persecution, and suffering
to reveal that nothing can conquer
the happiness of loving the beloved
so i prayed

*blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens,
 the kingdom of paradise*

*blessed are those who mourn,
for they are comforted
blessed are the meek,
for they inherit the earth
blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness
for they are filled
blessed are the merciful,
for they are shown mercy
blessed are the pure in heart,
for they see the beloved
blessed are those who live peace,
for they are called,
 for they are children of the beloved*

*blessed are those who are persecuted
because of righteousness
who suffer for the sake of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens,
the kingdom of paradise*

and without saying a word
the hearts of these prophets immersed into union with one another
revealing deeper meanings contained within the prayer
for indeed, this prayer is a prayer of the prophets

*blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens,
the kingdom of paradise*

the path of those fully devoted to the beloved
is a path of spiritual poverty
such an one cannot carry anything that is one's own
leaving all one is solely for the beloved
to be without anything in the deepest sense of what this means
leaving all to the beloved
although such servants may seem to speak many words
not a single word they speak is theirs
although they may seem to perform many deeds
not a single act is their own
they discover the wealth of becoming nothing
possessing nothing,
even if the entire universe is placed in their hands
for it is this nothingness the beloved humbly demands
before it infuses unending abundance in those it chooses
to claim the fully surrendered one as its own

and in being fully surrendered is the bliss of love
thus, what such an one speaks and does
is only the unfiltered will of the beloved
even if the beloved plays
within the peculiarities of one's unique personality
even if the beloved adorns the life of such an one
with worldly wealth and astounding powers

these surrendered ones have nothing
the all and nothing they have comes only from the beloved
a complete and total reliance that is only realized
by surrendering to the poverty of spirit
to a poverty immersed in the deepening depths of spirit(uality)
for these poor ones
the unending wealth of the heavens and paradise
open to them

*blessed are those who mourn,
for they are comforted*

for they realize the sadness of mercy
most experiencing the grace of mercy rarely see beyond it
rarely do they see the pain and sadness of the beloved
the patient bearing of the ongoing wickedness and harm
which will culminate in the final hour
when mercy will be restrained by anger
that the destiny of justice may be fulfilled

how many countless lives have strayed
from the path to paradise laid at their first breath
and how much does it pain the beloved

to have so many turn away from it
 when its love (for them) is incalculable
to share in the mourning of the beloved
to mourn with the beloved
is part of realizing oneness with the beloved
and in realizing oneness
is a comfort that cannot be disturbed
a comfort that already is, it's just veiled by the mourning
but no veil lasts forever,
and what it conceals is already here
so be as happy in your mourning as you are in your
 unveiled comfort
serve in mourning just as you would in undisturbed comfort
because for those who surrender,
 oneness with the beloved is already here

be like the beloved
bear the pains of this world
without being disturbed by them

*blessed are the meek,
for they inherit the earth*
which was created to be a place of provision
 for the patient and the humble
strong qualities in our original composition
before we humans learned to imagine to be otherwise
it is only by our pursuit of destructive qualities
that we place barriers to the beloved providing
 such provision to all
and just as provision is provided and received

through patience and humility
it is only in patience and humility
that the beloved allows humans to misuse the earth
but the purpose of the earth is fulfilled
for those who surrender to live
the patience and humility of the beloved
despite the mass of humanity going astray
the patient and humble are provided for
the possession of the earth's purpose is theirs
for in righteousness,
receiving of provision
is the song of surrender to and worship of the beloved
even if the beloved must rain down manna from the heavens
and cause springs to sprout in arid deserts
or bring fruits through the walls of sealed chambers
to fulfill this sacred song

the meek have their possession of the earth and its purpose
by means decided by the beloved
but if you seek your own means,
then it's your choice to negotiate with the evil of the masses
for your provision, among other things

the meek will not be forgotten
in the age when *iisaa* returns to the earth
to reign the rule of righteousness in the last of days
and neither will the meek be forgotten
when (all) time fulfills its term
and the restoration of all goodness dawns eternal bliss

*blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness
for they are filled*

how can a hunger be sated unless you are first hungry
how can a thirst be quenched unless you are first thirsty
but even before the hunger and the thirst
is the awareness that realizes these
and at the origin and fulfillment of manifestation and essence
is the awareness of awareness

 which is oneness with the beloved
without the beloved,

even the most hungry and thirsty body
 cannot realize hunger or thirst

although hunger and thirst come and go
to be satisfied to then yearn again

the awareness that is aware is everlasting
delve into this and be forever filled

measure conditions by that which measures
instead of by the shifting measures of conditions

and if your hunger and thirst are for righteousness
such hunger and thirst are filled by that which points to
the awareness of awareness

you are already filled

by the sustenance of the awareness of awareness
which is oneness with the beloved

realize this oneness

allow this oneness to reveal itself to you

which is the bread and water of the life of life

*blessed are the merciful,
for they are shown mercy*

and in this age of abounding wickedness
the prevailing face of the beloved is mercy
so be merciful to see the mercy
of being shown who and what you truly are
for we are all naught more than drops of water
 in the ocean of the beloved

but it is the merciful who,
through the mercy of being merciful,
realize no drop is separate from the entire ocean
this is most prevalent
in being the prevailing face of the ocean
a merciful revelation of oneness with the beloved
and mercy begets mercy which begets mercy

 which begets unending mercy
such as the kingdom of paradise
which leads to...

*blessed are the pure in heart,
for they see the beloved*

mercy, among other virtues,
removes the veils that cover the heart
the heart is always pure,
but we often pollute and veil the space around it
and, therefore, realize not the heart

within the hearts of all, even the most wicked,
is the beloved
but if we veil the heart

and call our veiled heart the heart
we may never see what it contains
and even more
we may not even see the presence of the heart
only our imagination of it
if our heartspace is polluted by countless veils

very few will see the beloved outside of themselves
whether in the hearts of others
the deeds of others
outer manifestations
or even the fullness of the beloved upon its throne
but we all can realize,
if our heartspaces be cleansed and purified,
the beloved within our own heart
the purity needed for such realization cannot be compromised
realize the preciousness of such
if bestowed upon you, let it not be polluted
for with such purity you can see the beloved

and if you see the beloved
you will forever be transformed
to be beyond the reach
of ever turning away from the beloved
ever again

oh beloved,
let not my heartspace be filled with veils that cover the heart
including the most dangerous veils

of egotism and disobedience woven into
religious and spiritual cloths (facades)
veils more dangerous than blatant wickedness and hypocrisy
because at least wickedness and hypocrisy
admit (to themselves) their faults

oh beloved,
let not my heartspace be touched by evil diseases
or hardened against obedience to you and remembrance of you
for if these are in the presence of the heart
the heart,
for its own protection,
will seal itself and not open
and if it does not open,
how can i see the light you emit from within it
which leads me to you,
that i may see you
to then know, by my own affirming sight,
that you and i are one(ness)
(or one in oneness)
as glorious as it is to see you on your throne
how glorious it is to see you in the (my) heart

the opportunity to see you here lives now
if my heartspace and whole being are purified
that the purity of the heart may open
you to me
if i am open to you

*blessed are those who live peace,
for they are called,
for they are children of the beloved*
and peace cannot be made,
only realized and lived through surrender to the beloved
then all the barriers we imagine and hold up against our parent
drop
and we realize we are nothing more than
children of the beloved

those of us who sincerely realize
we are children of the beloved
are called to serve the beloved
living in the love of oneness
but to live such oneness
in a world caught up in the bondage
of delusion and imagined division
may draw some to act out against us
for such is the nature of division
so...

*blessed are those who are persecuted
because of righteousness
who suffer for the sake of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens,
the kingdom of paradise*
in realizing oneness, be willing to bear the persecution
of those who are caught up in the delusion of division
be willing to suffer for the cause of serving the beloved

because, remember:
if it happens, it is only because
the beloved wills it or allows it
and sometimes the beloved uses hardship and evil
to be means through which to spur our growth and purification
to be means through which to display its glory
and the ultimate victory of truth and love over all else

if you have realized the comfort of oneness
even if you mourn in suffering hardship and evil
you will be happy within it
for such happiness
is not separate from the indescribable happiness
of dwelling within the kingdom of the heavens
and the kingdom of paradise
these timeless stations, once attained, permeate all time
they are with you always,
even in the midst of great suffering and persecution
because
the beloved is with you always
until and beyond the end of all time

even in the midst of great suffering and persecution
let these realizations not be diminished from their greatness
do not exchange remembrance of what is greater
for what is less
simply because of suffering and persecution

and *iisaa's* heart opened up more to expound without words
adding more to this prayer

*blessed are you when people insult you
persecute you
commit and falsely say all kinds of evil against you
because of your master
because you serve, obey, and honor your master
rejoice and be glad
because great is your reward in the heavens and in paradise
for in the same way the prophets who came before you were
persecuted
no student is greater than one's teacher
and even the masters only point their disciples to
ar-rasheed
the righteous teacher, the beloved
who suffers with patient mercy the disobedience of humans
should then the students think that they will not suffer*

this is no path for those who seek to escape the suffering
of the world
for where disobedience is, suffering and evil come
but even a lifetime full of unending suffering
will be remembered as insignificant
for those brought to the kingdom of paradise
so within a world with suffering and evil
the question becomes
for what will you suffer

the righteous teacher, in its mercy,
sees to it that none of its students
endure more suffering than they can bear
and uses such suffering but to purify and perfect them

(purify and perfect me, my beloved)
only a passing struggle
to be moved beyond the reach
of all struggles

oh, students of the beloved
those who love the beloved
make not suffering nor your avoidance of it
more important than the beloved
and in serving the beloved
*be the salt of the earth
be the light of the world
be the fulfillment of all the law and all the prophets*
let the flavor of (your) righteousness and piety be tasted by all
let (your) pure light shine upon all
let (your) embodiment of the guidance
of the prophets and messengers flourish
that these may show to others, through you,
the straight path to the beloved
let others be encouraged
to surrender to and praise and honor the beloved
for no prophet is sent to bring peace
which can only be realized through surrender (to the beloved)
instead prophets are sent with the sword of oneness
to cut away the delusion of division
to penetrate all veils to oneness with the beloved
but this sword doesn't cut with separateness
what it cuts it unifies through love with oneness
sometimes dropping away the barriers to love

other times raising what righteousness brings low
to the heights of love

and on and on and on the flow of *iisaa*'s heart
outpoured in silent prayer
and so too did *yahyaa*'s heart outpour
and so too did *muhammad*'s heart
until a fullness overtook the opening of their hearts
and they could bear the fullness of love no more
for the time of opening the gates to paradise
had not yet come

there they stood together as three pious brothers
yahyaa, a mercy sent to the family of *imraan*
which overflows to the children of *ibraahiim*
iisaa, a mercy sent to the children of *israaa*'*il*
which overflows to all of humanity
and *muhammad*, a mercy sent to all humanity
which overflows to all of creation
yet in the oneness of their brotherhood
the love of each overflows in the overflow of each prophet
and within each overflow is an unspeakable intimacy
for *iisaa* is nearest to *yahyaa* in the line of prophets
and *muhammad* is nearest to *iisaa* in this same line
so between *yahyaa*, *iisaa*, and *muhammad*
there is no other prophetic presence but theirs
an intimacy that goes deeper
than the closeness of their chronological order
in the line of prophets

and as is the nature of prophets to do when they come together
yahyaa and *iisaa* and *muhammad* took a moment to share
a departing prayer
and in their praying
muhammad prayed for the forgiveness and well-being
of *yahyaa* and *iisaa*
and in their praying
yahyaa and *iisaa* prayed for the forgiveness and well-being
of *muhammad*
and they encouraged *muhammad*
to serve with unending faith
his mission as a prophet and messenger of the beloved
to instill among his *ummah*
the importance of building and sustaining
righteous and pious families
who imprint upon the next generations
a leaning toward righteousness and piety
and to even impart such leaning from teacher to student,
master to disciple
so that children, students, and disciples
receive among their inheritance
the grace of having their faces turned toward the beloved
by the service of their caretakers
that they receive among such inheritance
the treasures of not being turned away from the beloved
by their caretakers
so that children, students, and disciples
may cross the bridge of religion
to reach the deeply rich and fertile land of spirituality
a land with plenty space

wherein dwells
unending prayers, unending guidance, unending beneficence,
unending love

when their prayers were done
yahyaa and *iisaa* and *muhammad* shared parting expressions
muhammad carrying within him the unending memory
of what *yahyaa* and *iisaa* shared
the inheritance of righteous lineage upon him
the depth of their prayers in his heart
the touch of the holy spirit(uality) and (empowered) word
muhammad vowed within to fulfill his duty to his *ummah*
by imparting these treasures upon them
through his living example, his teaching, and his love

yahyaa and *iisaa* took a moment to adore once more
the piety and beauty of their cherished brother
watching as *jibriil* led *muhammad* away
to see what remained to be seen of the second heaven
before ascending the heights
to continue this wondrous journey
to approach the gates of the third heaven



Our Lord! Cause not our hearts to stray after
Thou hast guided us, and bestow upon us
mercy from Thy Presence. Lo! Thou, only
Thou, art the Bestower.

from *Al-Imran* (The Family of Imran)
Surah 3, Verse 8

Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

And when My servants question thee
concerning Me, then surely I am nigh. I
answer the prayer of the suppliant when he
crieth unto Me. So let them hear My call
and let them trust in Me, in order that they
may be led aright.

from *Al-Baqara* (The Cow)
Surah 2, Verse 186

Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

section:
the third heaven

And We task not any soul beyond its scope,
and with Us is a Record which speaketh the
truth, and they will not be wronged.

from *Al-Mu'minun* (The Believers)

Surah 23, Verse 62

Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

And surely We shall try you with something
of fear and hunger, and loss of wealth and
lives and crops; but give glad tidings to the
steadfast, who say, when a misfortune
strieth them: Lo! we are Allaah's and Lo!
unto [Allaah] we are returning. Such are they on
whom are blessings from their Lord, and
mercy. Such are the rightly guided.

from *Al-Baqarah* (The Cow)

Surah 2, Verses 155 - 157

Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

And put thy trust in the Mighty, the Merciful.

from *Ash-Shu'ara* (The Poets)

Surah 26, Verse 217

Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

oh *muhammad*
peace and blessings are upon you
that this journey brings you
to the gate of the third heaven

now i see
what the gates to the place of prostration
seek to imitate

jibriil as the guide
escorted *muhammad* to this immaculate gate
and said
“let the gates be open”
the angels serving as gatekeepers responded
“who is it”
jibriil replied
“it is *jibriil*”
the gatekeepers responded
“is there anyone with you”
jibriil replied
“here is *muhammad*,
also known in the heavens as *ahmad*”
the gatekeepers responded
“has he been called,
has revelation been sent to him,
has his mission been released upon earth”
jibriil replied,
“yes,
yes,
and yes”

the gatekeepers responded
“oh, he is welcomed
what a wonderful visit is his”
and with that
the gates to the third heaven were opened

upon seeing the gatekeepers
muhammad greeted them saying
“*as-salaamu alaykum*”
(peace be upon you)
and they responded
“*as-salaamu alaykum wa rahmatullaah*”
(peace and mercy from the beloved be upon you)
for such is how the angels greet all the prophets
and all humans who will enter the gates of paradise
a blessing they express to the blessed
which returns as a blessing to them

it is a grace to be able to bless the blessed
it is a grace that they receive such blessing

behold those who have been bestowed,
the fragrance of peace
a fragrance no one can attain,
only be granted
to such an one,
is the way of all ways opened
to be made obvious
to such an one,

are the prayers of all prayers revealed
to be made manifest

within the third heaven
so many wonders there are
more than words can tell
more than minds can comprehend
words and minds fail
when relaying the wonders of the heavens
so why bother seeking to describe
with words that fail to minds that cannot comprehend

in all its vastness
the third heaven makes the entire second heaven
seem like a small ring lost in a desert
and the second heaven makes the entire first heaven
seem like a small ring lost in a desert
and the first heaven makes all the earth
seem like a small stone on a small ring lost in a desert
so consider what the earth seems like to the third heaven
how small, how small
yet all the vastness of the third heaven
was shown to *muhammad*
making his humility even more humble
for there is no end to the wonders of the beloved's creations
a wonder such as
an angel who has *malik* among its names
the guardian of *jahannam* (hell)
who, by the might of its hands, twists ropes of fire
and makes searing shackles of burning flames

one who, since receiving its assignment,
has never smiled nor laughed, nor ever will again
not even seeing the perfect light of *muhammad*
moved *malik's* lips to a slight grin
such is how *malik* shall remain
even as the fires of *jahannam* are fueled by the souls of the wicked
even as they cry within the inferno,
begging to be expelled from existence
unmoved, *malik* shall serve its duty
in being the overseer of *jahannam*

jibriil encouraged *muhammad* to approach and greet *malik*
upon doing so, *muhammad* was overcome with fear
by the countenance of *malik*
which reflects a horrifying anger
a face of torment that scares even the pious and innocent
so imagine how it will scare the evil and wicked
for whom this face is shaped
malik, in turn, greeted *muhammad* with peace and respect
and then relayed
“fear not, oh pious prophet
the beloved has forbidden
the flames and punishments of *jahannam* from touching you
and has forbidden such
for those of your *ummah* who sincerely follow you
know:
the protection of the beloved
is a refuge from all harms
for *jahannam*,
despite its insatiable hunger to consume all

will not taste even a drop of sweat that falls
from the righteous and the pious
and surely not their bodies or souls
this the beloved has decreed

“the details of *jahannam* need not be part of your knowledge
relate only as much about it
so that those you are sent to warn
cannot claim they were not told of its existence
but let the faithful who surrender to the beloved
not be concerned with what lays
within the seven layers of *jahannam*
only know that it is real
so that you not turn away from the beloved
for in facing the beloved, the faithful are brought to paradise

“only a rare few of the faithful
are brought near to, but not into *jahannam*
such as yourself, *muhammad*
to testify and warn to those who go astray
and to remind those who face the beloved
to not turn away
the worst hardships and tortures on earth
compare not with the mildest treatment in hell
the worst hardships and tortures on earth
compare not with the mildest treatment in hell”

and *muhammad*, hearing these words from *malik*
thought immediately of those among his nation
from the past, present, and future

wishing that they heed the guidance
such that they never turn away from the beloved
such that they never face the direction of *jahannam*
and surely such that they never be led through its gates
into the fire of endless tortures
for he feared for their weaknesses,
that they may fall into temptation
and then fall into sin
the mercy of his heart inspired him
to pray for the forgiveness of his nation
that the beloved forgive their past, present, and future sins
that they be spared the punishments of *jahannam*
and refrain from doing things that will lead them there

muhammad then thought immediately
of those outside of his nation
who in the past, present, and future
are granted the mercy
to hear the warnings uttered through his voice
even those who reject and persecute him in his lifetime
even those who, thousands of years later,
read translations of his utterances of (divine) revelation
he wished for them to heed the guidance
and turn to face the beloved
and live obedience to the beloved
to embrace surrender to the beloved
the mercy of his heart inspired him
with inclinations to pray for their forgiveness too
but some of these included disbelievers

and he remembered how the beloved forbade him
to pray for the forgiveness of those who disbelieve
so instead *muhammad* prayed
that, if the beloved wills,
they be guided to the road of surrender
even if walked in the shoes of other religions
and other nations
so they too may be spared from the fires of *jahannam*
to instead tread the straight path
that faces only the beloved
and leads only to paradise

oh, note the mercy of *muhammad*
that he doesn't wish the doom of *jahannam*
nor hasten the coming of such doom
upon even his most hateful enemies
even if he must declare
that their course of actions
and disobedience are leading them there
and surely, he wouldn't wish that a single faithful one
walk through the gates of *jahannam*
or even face it
for just the sight of it
leaves an eternally everlasting impression
that, at best, is very unpleasant

jahannam was never created for the faithful and obedient
so why should we do things that will lead us there

in the midst of these prayers
muhammad was immersed even deeper
into the compassion of the compassionate
a spark alighted by the words of *malik*
and moved thus, *muhammad* offered
the depth of his peace to *malik*
and *malik*, in return, offered
the depth of its peace to *muhammad*
the silence of their offering being more powerful than their words
for in (their) silence they could both be heard simultaneously
even if *muhammad* was still terrified by *malik's* appearance

those whose hearts are clear to hear,
let them hear this sacred silence

another wonder there was in the third heaven
a man aglow with the light of a hundred full moons
and yet not shining
even this metaphor
only begins to describe his dignity
every direction he looked upon became more radiant
for within the humbleness of his being
is beauty glorifying beauty
and pure beauty sees naught but itself
nothing else compares in sight of its purity
yet within this man's compassion,
he is not blind to those without beauty
a most bounteous of bounties extending even beyond eternity
yet gracious enough to allow a portion of its infiniteness
to reflect its presence within the vast limits of time

and *muhammad*, looking upon him,
could not turn away
and asked *jibriil*
“who is this man”
jibriil replied
“he is your brother, the prophet *yuusuf*
may *allaah* be pleased with him
will you not greet him and pay him respects”

muhammad approached *yuusuf*, greeting him
“*as-salaamu alaykum*”
(peace be upon you)
and *yuusuf* responded
“*as-salaamu alaykum wa rahmatullaah*
(peace and mercy from the beloved be upon you)
welcome, oh pious prophet,
oh beautiful and pious brother,
you are welcomed”

immediately *muhammad* felt a feeling of shame come upon him
that this vessel of abounding beauty would call him beautiful
yuusuf replied in a voice that was almost not heard
because the grace underlying it outshone the words
“be not ashamed of your beauty
compare it not with the beauty that exudes through me
for “your beauty” and “my beauty” and all beauty
are only offshoots of the endless beauty of the beloved”

and without a single word it was conveyed
as angels gathered around *muhammad's* heart to witness

of all the beauty that is, half is given to *yuusuf*
and given it is merely for the sake of his realization
that all beauty extends from the beauty of the beloved
(it is one thing to know this with the mind,
another reality to surrender to live this realization)
and it is the beloved that adds, increases, and enlarges
from what it gives
which in *yuusuf*,
approaches the fullness of beauty's manifestation
but what this means from the depth of its essence
is as the difference between knowing
the difference between:
the beloved's promise is the very truth
and
the promise of the beloved is true

the one abounding in beauty
realizes
these statements hold no difference at all
any apparent differences are only appearance
and what appears,
although dependent upon what is
does not necessarily reflect what is (reality)

the one abounding in beauty
realizes
it is not one's place to add or subtract
to what the beloved gives or takes away
for with the beloved is the certainty of its promise
which is true and the very truth

oh, the mystic poet is reminded of a prayer of *ayyub*
“*naked came i into this world*
and naked shall i depart
the beloved gives
and the beloved takes away
yet still may the beloved be praised
yet still may the beloved be pleased”

the effort of what is finite
 can only reduce what is infinitely effortless
our effort cannot even sustain what is effortlessly given to us
 let alone our effort sustaining itself
but in completely humbling one’s self
to be what the beloved gives one to be
and in completely humbling one’s self
to be what remains from what the beloved takes away
one realizes what is true and the very truth

within this supreme equation
effort is only useful for removing the barriers effort creates
to our own innate humility
the barriers we impose upon ourselves
and the barriers we allow the efforts of others
 to place upon us

but behold
upon the royal road of complete humility
a penny given by the beloved
equates to all the riches created by the beloved
for wealth is not what is manifested

wealth is the essence that manifests
whether it reflects apparent riches or apparent poverty
the essence is the wealth
the obvious is obvious for all to see
but most of us prefer our own sight
over the light which allows us to see
our preferred sight
being nothing more than blindness
 imagining its own seeing

if you can understand these metaphors
in relation to pennies and all the universe’s riches
then, maybe then,
you can approach the threshold
of knowing beyond all knowing
the wealth of beauty
which all the universe’s riches cannot even be compared to
for beauty is as light (*nuur*)
which allows this universe to be seen
 and things within it
 some of which we deem to be valuable
yet
don’t limit the metaphor of light to just the eyes
the light of beauty allows all forms of observation

(just observe life,
observe this dreamed world
and nothing more
to realize beauty...)

yet who with eyes puts the emphasis of their sight
on seeing the light which allows sight
instead of the objects the sight sees
and sometimes completely imagines

(most of us are so consumed with sight
we ignore the light which allows us to see)

the ones who see light
or seek to see light
or seek to not have their sight limited to objects
these ones,
not bound to the bondage of sight,
realize
the reality of beauty is the light
which allows even the adoration of its lesser appearances
and imitations
and imaginations

the mystic poet is crying again
when i ponder all the ways i've defined beauty in the past
in my ignorance
i am ashamed of all my definitions
for i have defined beauty by objects seen
not the light which allows the sight of all objects
and even the imagination of objects
where there is no sight
but in (my) remembering,
re-awakening to light
i realize beauty is the light

and all objects are nothing but shadows
even the most alluring of objects
that we foolishly call beautiful
all imitations of beauty fail to the extent
that i declare in complete, unrestrained honesty
there are no imitations of beauty
for no object can imitate light
there is only beauty
only that beloved light

no object can imitate light
for no object can make itself seen
or cause other objects to see it
or cause other objects to be seen
objects can only be seen by the grace of light
for even seeing eyes
are rendered blind if there is no light
to reflect upon objects
and then illuminate the eyes with reflected light
no object can be light
but it can reflect light if it surrenders to being an object seen

in the depth of surrender
lays the opportunity of being illuminated by light
therefore,
the beautiful breathe the humility
of knowing they are not beauty
but can only be beautiful
by surrendering to reflect the light of beauty
the light of the beloved

yet
even the grace of reflecting light
does not approach the fullness of reflecting light
for an object that holds itself to be an object cannot fully reflect
like an object that holds itself to be nothing
an object lost in its own motions cannot fully reflect
like an object found in stillness
yet in all this,
we are only talking about
seeing the reflections of light
not seeing the light directly
not seeing beauty directly

oh, those who do not see the light of the beloved directly
let what you see reflect what appears to be invisible
the light is,
 even if your sight does not perceive it
the light is,
 awaiting (your) realization (of it)

and so it is within the soul of *yuusuf*
the soul of one who approaches fully reflecting beauty
that such an one surrenders on the path of religion
to reflect the light of the beloved not yet seen directly
and in the purity of such surrender
is the reflection of the light which alights one's reflection
and presents to the sight of those enamored with objects
the opportunity to see such an one as beautiful
powerfully reflecting beauty

powerfully reflecting beauty
powerfully reflecting the beauty of the beloved

and so it is within the soul of *yuusuf*
the soul of one who approaches fully reflecting beauty
that such an one surrenders to embody the patience of patience
a calmness unmoved by tribulations, afflictions, and adversity
that even if the mind and body be distressed
there is a realization of the heart
that despite how things may appear
the beloved controls all events and all affairs
nothing happens outside what the beloved wills or allows
nothing is reflected in experience and destiny
 without that light
fully realizing this,
one is not consumed by the appearance
of reflected light, bouncing off objects, reaching one's eyes
for even reflected light is light
 and light is indivisible
 and speaks to the promise of the beloved
none can alter the decisions of the beloved
none can overcome or change what it wills or allows
the true and very truth of such wealth being
the essence that manifests, not the manifestations
so after the mind and its bodies react to whatever may befall
(while being restrained from disobedience and committing sins)
grieve not nor be distressed
for if you see anything, that means light is (still) with you
enjoy or bear the objects revealed in such light

with a patience that is beautiful
resting in the nature of the light of beauty
for the promise of the beloved is the true and very truth
which outlasts all objects and their motions
and the corresponding consequences they appear to cause
the one who lives this realization
powerfully reflects beauty
powerfully reflects beauty
powerfully reflects the beauty of the beloved

and so it is within the soul of *yuusuf*
the soul of one who approaches fully reflecting beauty
that such an one surrenders to the unchanging firmness
of steadfastness
for the beloved is the beloved and is always the beloved
and is never ever not the beloved
only the beloved is the reliable, to be relied upon
therefore, let your commitment to the beloved be just as constant
objects and their motions may come and go,
but the light which reveals them is and remains
realizing this quality of the light leads to its direct sight
for those sincere seekers of light
and the mercy of beauty seeks to bring you to this realization
over and over again if you ignore it
over and over again even as humans often misunderstand
challenging events speak the invitation of this realization
to be consistently loyal to the beloved
even within the inconsistencies of this world
(and one's false self)
so surely when we ignore this merciful call

we are tried in our persons
and all we associate with the person we identify with being
tried with events,
tried with our possessions,
tried with those we hold close
in hopes that we may see within the inconsistency of objects
that the consistency of love lives the consistency of light
which once realized beckons a consistency with objects
and their motions
that is not abandoned nor diminished
by hardship, pain, persecution, and loss
that is not affected by the moving facade of (personal) identity
until the identity is finally dropped completely
and the will of the beloved becomes who we are
(understand the metaphor)
mature into a willingness to bear the sufferings of objects
and their motions
be unattached to these
while remaining firmly loyal to the sovereignty of light
even if it means embracing the honor of dying righteously
for even the object of (your) life only appears
because of the light which allows it to be perceived
yet make not the death of martyrdom, the persecution
of martyrdom
objects misunderstood
even in martyrdom and the willingness to sacrifice
it is living one's committed loyalty to the beloved
that gives value to dying and suffering for such commitment
and it is living one's committed loyalty to the beloved while living
that reflects beauty upon that which we call life

to fulfill one's duty to the beloved in everything you do
and don't do
to be just always because the beloved commands us
to always be just
to not let the disobedience of others move us from our obedience
(to the beloved)
to not let the hatred of others move us to hate
when we are commanded to love
and honor love and serve love
as love wills
that we are commanded
to always repel evil with good
to always do what is right
to always combat the recklessness of sin
with the restraint of righteousness
to always overcome the temptation of objects
with the remembrance of light
the remembrance of the beloved
for in the midst of living and in the final hour,
you are held to account for you and only you
so to you be your deeds, and to others what they do
you are innocent of what they do,
and they are innocent of what you do
don't even argue with those who are oblivious to light
let not your commitment to light be swayed
by others' glorification of objects and their motions
for those who live committed to light will not only reflect light
but will be touched by light and its unending grace
(touched beyond the surface which only reflects)
and for those who are touched by light

exists the opportunity to be filled by light
for those who immerse into the deepening stillness and surrender
of being touched by light
remember
not a single instant of living commitment to light is lost in light
the promise of the beloved is fulfilled in full
to those who are committed to being fully committed
that they may
powerfully reflect beauty
powerfully reflect beauty
powerfully reflect the beauty of the beloved
(if not more in being touched and filled with beauty)

and so it is within the soul of *yuusuf*
the soul of one who approaches fully reflecting beauty
that such an one surrenders to the modesty of humility
that one created to adorn the thrones of sovereigns
endures being made low in the sight of the ignorant and blind
for if in being seen by others,
they see not the light of the beloved
reflecting upon you, touching you, fulfilling you
it is better to not be seen by their eyes
even if regarded as lesser than other objects
there is only one sight that matters to the beautiful
the sight of the light of beauty
the beautiful allow no objects, not even one's self,
to interfere with such sight
the beautiful allow nothing

to get in the way of light seeing its light
reflecting upon, touching, fulfilling
the one who humbles one's being to beauty
even if this means bearing tribulation or witnessing tribulation
even if this means bearing adversity or witnessing adversity
or even needless suffering or distress
the light is the light
the humble will not even hold one's self as an object in the light
or in the sight of the light
the humble realize the value the light shines upon us
in reflecting upon us, touching us, fulfilling us
the humble carry this (known) secret revealed in plain sight
with a quiet and reserve that makes them not
an object in the light
for only a fool would cast shadows upon a perfect light
by holding one's self to be an object standing in the light
(prostrate yourself)
even the revelations of the beloved
humble themselves to the beloved who reveals them
so how much less are we important
as humble servants guided by such revelations
even the beloved veils itself
refraining from being an object seen
so how much less are we important
as humble servants who love and surrender to the beloved
but if the light turns the sight of others toward us
to reflect upon us its beauty for them to see
in humility and modesty
we cannot refuse allowing them to see
what the light reveals

whether the beautiful be made transparent, concealed, seen,
or glorified
is a matter determined by the light,
and light alone
and the one who surrenders to be this realization
powerfully reflects beauty
powerfully reflects beauty
powerfully reflects the beauty of the beloved

and so it is within the soul of *yuusuf*
the soul of one who approaches fully reflecting beauty
that such an one surrenders to a trust that never doubts
a trust that is honest not to the objects seen
or their motions felt,
but to the light that reveals
for objects seen can be deceiving
so too can be their motions
even your own sight can be deceiving
when it strays from the sight of light
but what the light reveals as light
and what the light reveals as its sight of light
oh, deception cannot even approach
such is an abode for trust that never doubts
and only increases in faith
and only surrenders more deeply into love
the light and sight of light only leads aright
place unyielding trust in the beloved
then observe how the that which observes all
paints its beauty upon even the ugliness in (your) life
to invite you into beauty

endure the invitation and whatever it pulls you through
with abounding confidence in the light
for no object can benefit or harm you
 unless the beloved wills such or allows such
but not even the greatest object compares with the light
and in trusting the light does one mature to
powerfully reflect beauty
powerfully reflect beauty
powerfully reflect the beauty of the beloved

it all began to explain itself
the wonder of *yuusuf's* earthly life
that the beauty reflected upon him by the light,
 the beauty that touched him,
 and the beauty that eventually began to fulfill him
was already there
before the seeds of (his) prophetic destiny began to sprout
allowing him, empowering him, and humbling him
to be beautiful toward others
even in the face of great fame and fortune
even in the face of persecution and hardship
experiences allowed or willed by the beloved
that the beloved may reveal the fullness of beauty
upon *yuusuf* in a way for others to see

the path of religion laid before *yuusuf* by his lineage
the leaning of *ibraahiim's* devotion to the beloved
reaching across three generations
to turn *yuusuf* to face the beloved
although as a youth,

he had not seen directly the light of the beloved
he had the grace of *ibraahiim's* footsteps
as a guide toward the opportunity to realize such beauty
a light that manifested, in part, as the language of dreams
which *yuusuf* was allowed to read and interpret
 by the grace of the beloved
and by the beauty of humility
he was not moved to arrogance by the dream which showed
the sun, the moon, and eleven planets prostrating before him
he knew all praise belongs only to the beloved
and in his praise of the beloved
he took faith in this promise
a merciful token given
before it was made manifest in the dream of life
a helping invitation
to pull *yuusuf* through the hardships he would face

but even as the reflection of beauty alighted upon *yuusuf*
making him much adored in his father's eyes
(the eyes of *ya'quub* who became *israaa'il*)
most of *yuusuf's* brothers were blind to this beauty
and caught up in the jealousy of their blindness,
 desiring the beneficent bounties of beauty
 without surrendering to it
caught up in the jealousy of their blindness
they seized and entrapped *yuusuf*
dropping him into a well
leaving him abandoned
they covered the lies of their wrongdoing
by covering his shirt with the blood of a goat

and with tears in their eyes
brought this symbol of their lies to their father
declaring *yusuuf* was devoured by a wolf
a contrived lie
thus, *yuusuf* and *ya'quub*,
the adored and the adoring,
were left to tread the path of comely patience

the path of trust and patience
as *yuusuf* was pulled from the well by a caravan
that sold him as a servant in egypt to a ranking official
the path of trust and patience
that while separated from his family,
 bearing a fate he did not choose
the beauty of the beloved still shone upon him
and was made evident to others through his work
earning the trust of his master
yuusuf was endowed with increased responsibility
but he remained more concerned with
being worthy of the trust of the beloved
by deepening his trust of it
and earning increased responsibility from the beloved
by proving to be increasingly responsible
to its will and commands
 an undeniable proof of love

the path of trust and patience
as the light of beauty reflected more and more upon *yuusuf*
touching him with knowledge and wisdom
filling him with power and righteousness

the path of trust and patience
as *yuusuf* never turned his worship away from the beloved
for nothing can benefit or harm you
 unless the beloved allows or wills such
in the beloved, *yuusuf* placed all his trust
a trust that never doubts
a trust that never betrays
a trust that never abandons
 or is abandoned

the holiness of beauty
and that it reflects upon
attracts even the eyes of the wicked
although attracted,
the wicked cannot long remain
in the presence of that beauty reflects upon
without being transformed
or seeking to corrupt and afflict
 that upon which beauty reflects
and so it was, that the wife of the egyptian master
lacking the humility to be transformed by *yuusuf's* presence
sought to corrupt him with her lust
and seduce him into the sin of adultery
with her own attractiveness
had it not been for the grace of the beloved
he would have desired her too
but instead he chose to honor (his) piety
 and the kindness of his master
he refused the wife's invitation to sin
taking refuge in *allaah*,

he declared
those who do wrong do not prosper

the righteous know they should not obey the wicked
or be convinced by the guilty to sin
fleeing the wife's passion, *yuusuf* raced for the door
and she, in the rage of lust, tore his shirt from behind
with his shirt in her hand, the master walked upon this scene
whereby the wife charged *yuusuf* sought to seduce
 and impose himself upon her
 an (self-proclaimed) innocent woman
she called for *yuusuf* to be imprisoned for such a despicable act
but by the grace of the beloved
yuusuf's claim of innocence was supported by proof
his shirt being torn from behind
proving he sought to flee evil, not impose it

his master respected the proof of innocence
sparing *yuusuf* from shame and imprisonment

the holiness of beauty begets the holiness of beauty
surely those who become temples for this
shine and shine and shine the light of beauty
 even before those who go astray
the master's wife,
seeking to quiet the rumors of other wealthy women
who ridiculed her, an official's wife, for lusting a lowly servant
how before a feast prepared, she gave each one a knife
and called *yuusuf* into the room
upon seeing him

and the beauty reflecting in and upon him
they cut their hands

 and proclaimed the wife blameless
 praising the beloved
 declaring that *yuusuf* surpassed all mortal beauty
 to behold the beauty of an angel

the arrogance of the wife's lust refused to be transformed
insisting instead
that if he did not serve her desires, he would be imprisoned
and *yuusuf* declared prison to be preferable over sin
praying,
that if the beloved did not protect him from the women
he would eventually incline to join them in evil

so, while in the eyes of most,
his imprisonment seemed unfortunate
in the eyes of the beautiful,

 it was a wonderful saving grace
the hardships of wrongful imprisonment he willingly bore
without complaints

so as to not break his commitment
to remain obedient to the beloved

 and the commands of the religious law
yuusuf ceased not in remembering the beloved within himself
even within places that showed no signs or encouragements
 to remember the beloved

(how beautiful)

he ceased not in putting his trust in the beloved
for the beloved surely loves those who put their trust in it
(how beautiful)

he knew, in time, those who were in error would be revealed
even if he must endure hardship for the sake of righteousness
for even the righteous comforts of this world are passing
but that which is with the beloved
is better and everlasting
 such as the light of beauty

even within prison, the favor of beauty was upon *yuusuf*
for he remained devoted to the beloved
objects and their motions will come and go
the conditions and consequences of objects
 and their motions come and go
but the everlasting light of beauty
always is
always
and in remaining unchangingly firm
in (his) steadfast commitment to the beloved
the beloved used objects and their motions
 to bestow its glory upon *yuusuf*
for few could foretell
that interpreting the dreams of fellow prisoners
 a gift bestowed to him by the beloved
would lead to *yuusuf* interpreting a dream of the king
a portent of fate that led to his freedom from prison
 and a position of greatness in the kingdom
yet *yuusuf* refused to leave the prison
 until his innocence was declared
until the wife who had him imprisoned admitted the truth
not for the sake of his own reputation

but as a testament that
the beloved guides not the false and unfaithful

it is only by the grace of the beloved
that humans can resist falling to the temptation of sin
so pray and pray to the beloved
take refuge in *allaah*
that you may resist such falling

for those who withstand evil temptation
the bounties of beauty await you

with the truth made known
the king placed *yuusuf* over the royal storehouses
but if the truth be understood,
yuusuf was placed there by the beloved
with the power of this position
yuusuf prepared the country for a coming famine
preventing much starvation, suffering, death, and violence
yet it was the conditions of this famine
that brought *yuusuf*'s brothers to egypt, seeking to buy food
standing before his very eyes,
 the passing years made him seem unfamiliar (to them)
he knew them to be his brothers but did not reveal himself
allowing beauty to use the days to play its playful game
of having the family of *ya'quub* be reunited in egypt
to be moved from a land ravaged by famine
to a kingdom where *yuusuf* attained
great influence, power, and fame
yet *yuusuf* did not refrain the slightest

from being forgiving toward his brothers
for within the reflection, touch, and fulfillment of beauty
he knew beyond knowing
it was the beloved, only the beloved,
that used objects and their motions within its light
to move him and have him be moved
by objects and their motions
to arrive at this very place
within time and space

what grace, even if presented through hardships
granting *yuusuf* the opportunity to realize
the fulfillment of the promise
 the beloved made to him
and when his parents bowed before him on his throne
and his brothers too
yuusuf remembered the dream
of the sun, the moon, and eleven planets prostrating before him
the fulfillment of this dream now made manifest
but its meaning lay not in the display of objects and their motions
for *yuusuf* knew the prostration of his family
was for the beloved
only the beloved

and *yuusuf* exclaimed
“oh, my lord
the power they bow down to is you
the ability to interpret dreams
and the blessings of such
 lay only with you

the ability to interpret and navigate the dream of life
and the blessings of such
 lay only with you
you are
the creator of all that is
my only protecting friend
 in this world and the hereafter
only you know best all that you will and allow
for you are the knowing, the wise
this life i live is as one who surrenders to you
 and only you
make my surrender acceptable to you
make me to live as one who surrenders to you
make me to die as one who surrenders to you
 and only you
that i may join the oneness of the righteous
for such are beautiful
and you, only you, are beauty
subhan allaah!
(glory be to *allaah*)”

and there were smiles between the tears
of *muhammad* and *yuusuf*
the beauty of *yuusuf* reminding
the beauty of *muhammad*
that the hardship and persecution
muhammad was experiencing on earth
were only objects and their motions
and corresponding consequences

not the light of beauty
 the light of the beloved
the beauty of *yuusuf* reminding
the beauty of *muhammad*
that the promise of the beloved
is the true and very truth
that the final chapter of his beautiful tale
was not yet complete
because, for the beautiful,
the promise of glory and victory
the promise of the everlasting eternal light
 outlasting the objects and their motions it alights
the promise of beauty
these promises and more are one promise
 the promise of the essence
 which is the true and very truth
this promise alone
makes despair and hopelessness
unnecessary and useless for the beautiful
this promise alone
is worthy of unending uncompromised commitment
the beauty of *yuusuf* reminding
the beauty of *muhammad*
to continue to be ever more humble
in righteousness and piety and surrender and love
that *muhammad* had surpassed
the need to be humbled by
the disgrace and difficulties
of sin, affliction, adversity, and punishment
for righteousness and piety and surrender and love

are softer to the touch
within the touch of beauty
and sweeter to the taste
that is fulfilled by beauty
which transforms the beauty of mortals
into the beauty of angels
 a beauty that cannot exist
 outside of unyielding obedience
 to the beloved

unending adoration poured forth
as beauty adored beauty adoring beauty
upon and within the objects and motions
of *yuusuf* and *muhammad*
and the angels surrounding their hearts

and as is the nature of prophets to do when they come together
yuusuf and *muhammad* took a moment to share a departing prayer
and in their praying
muhammad prayed for the forgiveness and well-being of *yuusuf*
and in their praying
yuusuf prayed for the forgiveness and well-being of *muhammad*
and *yuusuf* encouraged *muhammad*
to serve with unending faith
his mission as a prophet and messenger of the beloved
with an encouragement that is vast in its brevity:
 be beautiful
such will suffice in demonstrating to his *ummah*
the sacredness of beauty
the blessing of being beautiful

when their prayers were done
yuusuf and *muhammad* shared parting expressions
muhammad carrying within him the unending memory
of what *yuusuf* shared
the beauty reflecting, touching, and fulfilling *yuusuf*
speaking profoundly without speaking
to the beauty that
reflects, touches, and fulfills *muhammad*
because beauty sees naught but itself
and what a sight such is

yuusuf took a moment to adore once more
the piety and beauty of his cherished brother
watching as *jibriil* led *muhammad* away
to see what remained to be seen of the third heaven
before ascending the heights
to continue this wondrous journey
to approach the gates of the fourth heaven



O my dear son! Establish worship and
enjoin kindness and forbid iniquity, and
persevere whatever may befall thee. Lo!
that is of the steadfast heart of things.

from *Luqman*

Surah 31, Verse 17

Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

So have patience (O Muhammad)! Allaah's
promise is the very truth, and let not those
who have no certainty make thee impatient.

from *Al-Rum* (The Romans)

Surah 30, Verse 60

Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

Allaah is the Light of the heavens and the
earth. ... Light upon light. Allaah guideth
unto [Allaah's] light whom [Allaah] will. And Allaah
speaketh to mankind in allegories, for Allaah
is Knower of all things.

from *An-Nuur* (The Light)

Surah 24, Verse 35

Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

section:
the fourth heaven

Lo! worship preserveth from lewdness and iniquity, but verily remembrance of Allaah is more important. And Allaah knoweth what ye do.

from *Al-‘Ankabut* (The Spider)
Surah 29, Verse 45

Translation of Qur’aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

Lo! Thou canst not make the dead to hear, nor canst thou make the deaf to hear the call when they have turned to flee; nor canst thou lead the blind out of their error. Thou canst make none to hear, save those who believe Our revelations and who have surrendered.

from *Al-Naml* (The Ant)
Surah 27, Verses 80-81

Translation of Qur’aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

oh *muhammad*
peace and blessings are upon you
that this journey brings you
to the gate of the fourth heaven

now i see
what the gates to the place of prostration
seek to imitate

jibriil as the guide
escorted *muhammad* to this immaculate gate
and said
“let the gates be open”
the angels serving as gatekeepers responded
“who is it”
jibriil replied
“it is *jibriil*”
the gatekeepers responded
“is there anyone with you”
jibriil replied
“here is *muhammad*,
also known in the heavens as *ahmad*”
the gatekeepers responded
“has he been called,
has revelation been sent to him,
has his mission been released upon earth”
jibriil replied,
“yes,
yes,
and yes”

the gatekeepers responded
“oh, he is welcomed
what a wonderful visit is his”
and with that
the gates to the fourth heaven were opened

upon seeing the gatekeepers
muhammad greeted them saying
“*as-salaamu alaykum*”
(peace be upon you)
and they responded
“*as-salaamu alaykum wa rahmatullaah*”
(peace and mercy from the beloved be upon you)
for such is how the angels greet all the prophets
and all humans who will enter the gates of paradise
a blessing they express to the blessed
which returns as a blessing to them

it is a grace to be able to bless the blessed
it is a grace that they receive such blessing

there are stages within the apportioned steps
shades of light and shades within and beyond the light
although the course of movements appear
to be limited to what is perceived
the only course that is is the will of the beloved
so surrender to this in stillness

within the fourth heaven
so many wonders there are

more than words can tell
more than minds can comprehend
words and minds fail
when relaying the wonders of the heavens
so why bother seeking to describe
with words that fail to minds that cannot comprehend

in all its vastness
the fourth heaven makes the entire third heaven
seem like a small ring lost in a desert
and the third heaven makes the entire second heaven
seem like a small ring lost in a desert
and the second heaven makes the entire first heaven
seem like a small ring lost in a desert
and the first heaven makes all the earth
seem like a small stone on a small ring lost in a desert
so consider what the earth seems like to the fourth heaven
how small, how small
yet all the vastness of the fourth heaven
was shown to *muhammad*
making his humility even more humble
for there is no end to the wonders of the beloved’s creations
a wonder such as
the glorious place of rest for celestial bodies
a place of solace and comfort
a place safe and pure
imbrued with a silence like none other
in which all that is hidden can no longer be hidden (or ignored)
even if it is not revealed
this place has no name

for all who come near it, basking in its effusion,
are moved to quietude
and those who reach this place
are immersed into the endless depths of silence
where there is only the oneness of the purest prayer

there is no distance in prayer
no distance in time or space
or any other apparition of separation
and after walking the moments of time
each day, each year, each eon
the sun, the moon, the stars
and other celestial bodies
that dance their devotions through the firmaments
come here to make their prayers to the beloved
in complete silence

it is a grace that they pray in silence
for if even just the sun, or just the moon
prayed in words or songs
their power would invoke utterances
that shake all the heavens and all the universe
except that place beyond the seventh heaven
where sits the glorious throne
 in immovable stillness
and that is just the sun or just the moon
how much more would the universe shake
if other celestial bodies simultaneously prayed in voice
yet by their silence,
we can partake in the power of their prayers

if we tune into the depths of silence
by being sincerely silent

there are mansions in what humans perceive to be the heavens
what we imagine to be the orbits
of the suns, moons, planets, stars, and other celestial bodies
doesn't begin to describe what their movements are
the maps we ascribe to them are, at best, limited understandings
 but more often, naught but imaginations
their only course is the will of the beloved

it is mercy that the movements of their bodies
adhere to some consistency
that by the consistent obedience of the sun,
we can measure days and nights
and by the consistent obedience of the moon
we can measure months and seasons
that by the consistent obedience of the planets and stars
we can measure a verse of the orchestration of the universe
and by the consistent obedience of other celestial bodies
we can begin to measure the limitlessness
 of the universe's orchestration
 portents the beloved reveals as it wills
yet despite how these all appear
there is not a single celestial body
that does not move or remain in stillness
but by the will of the beloved
a proof none will be able to deny
when that day in which all routines end arrives

for the sake of the beauty and wonder
of the perfect service of the celestial bodies
the beloved appoints within their courses times for rest
times for their service to be replenished by silent prayer

within the timelessness of *muhammad's* time here
he saw the moon come to meditate
and within the stillness of its movement
it radiated shifting reflections of light
from full to new to full again
within its meditative stillness

within the timelessness of *muhammad's* time here
he saw countless stars come to make prostration
 (to the beloved)
some moving with the speed of flashing streaks
others with the stoic carefulness of a very delicate vase
 carrying itself
yet despite the immense power of each star
and the light they emitted
when they bowed to worship the beloved
they were humbler than a candle flame extinguishing itself

within the timelessness of *muhammad's* time here
he witnessed the sun, bearing the exhaustion of a day's burning
come to honor the beloved
to make its daily prayer vigil through the night
muhammad noticed how bright the sun is
to be so close to that shining orb
which, even by being so far away, can blind eyes on earth

to be so close to the sun draped in its abounding radiance
everything else became as if invisible
the sun not withholding a spark of its light
in prostrating to the beloved
touching its sphere to its own shadow
to then diminish its overwhelming light
 to be less than a withering candle flame
muhammad could feel the power of the sun's prostration
 in his heart
words cannot describe the wonder of witnessing this
and yet
there were others celestial bodies *muhammad* witnessed in prayer
which words cannot suffice in describing
great powers that cannot be hidden or restrained
prostrating in complete humility to the beloved

being so close to this parade of celestial bodies
and even more,
being drawn into the intimacy of their powerful prayers
muhammad could see why some humans
would be drawn into such awe
that they worship
the sun, the moon, the stars, and other celestial bodies
their power and beauty even more evident to *muhammad*
in being so close to them
but he saw greater wisdom
in following the example of these miraculous celestial bodies:
 to pray to the beloved they pray to
 and to be humble to the beloved
for they come to pay homage to the beloved

which replenishes them through their prayers
that they may continue to perform the great deeds they perform
in serving the beloved

and *muhammad*, intimately immersed into the endless depths
of the silent prayer of these celestial bodies
thought immediately of those among his nation
from the past, present, and future
who are benefitted by these celestial bodies
and the prayers they make
through which they are replenished
to continue to serve

muhammad was moved to a deeper appreciation
of the endless, indivisible depth of silence
how such silence can connect the prayers of the faithful
to one another
and to the powerful prayers of the celestial bodies
and to all humble creations praying throughout the universe
to share the oneness of the purest prayer
muhammad took hope
that his *ummah* would follow his example
of making a place for silence in prayer
that they too may be immersed in the benefits
of such sincere silence
(which unites one's prayer with the prayers
of the sun, the moon, the stars,
and all the portents of the universe
that honor the beloved)
and moved thus, *muhammad* offered
the depth of his peace to this nameless resting place

and all the celestial beings that come here to pray
and in return,
this nameless place offered the depth of its peace to *muhammad*
and so too do all the celestial beings
that step out of time to make their prayers here
receiving the impression of *muhammad's* peace upon themselves
when they come here to pray
all of this done in the endless depth of silence
that resonates in this holy, holy place
the silence of their offering being more powerful than any words
for in the depth of silence the all of all is effortlessly said
and effortlessly heard

those whose hearts are clear to hear,
let them hear this sacred silence

another wonder there was in the fourth heaven
just upon the edge of the nameless resting place
a man was praying among rows of angels
all facing the nameless resting place to partake of its silence
as they uttered their prayers in whispers
when they prayed together, they prayed together
and when they performed individual prayers
there was still (an) oneness in their gathering
after each prayer the sun of the fourth heaven
would move another step
to paint the firmament with another distinction
marking another time for prayer
a brief time for angels to come and go and rest
before another call for prayer was made

muhammad asked *jibriil*
“who is this man”
jibriil replied
“he is your brother, the prophet *idriis*
may *allaah* be pleased with him
will you not greet him and pay him respects”

muhammad approached *idriis*, greeting him
“*as-salaamu alaykum*”
(peace be upon you)
and *idriis* responded
“*as-salaamu alaykum wa rahmatullaah*
(peace and mercy from the beloved be upon you)
welcome, oh pious prophet,
oh beautiful and pious brother,
you are welcomed”

and without a single word it was conveyed
as angels gathered around *muhammad's* heart to witness
the silence of *idriis*,
which did not even make him
a breath within his own whispers
oh *idriis*,
a devoted flame that burns in quietude,
 its emanating light a powerful teaching
due to his piety and unblemished obedience
the beloved walked with him while he was on earth
he came to know the beloved as that which is near
an intimacy that makes the closest of humans
 seem like distant strangers

so what that he became a seer and sage
guiding generations only steps removed from *aadam*,
 many who had already gone astray
his guidance encouraging them
to return obedience and surrender to the beloved
imploring the people to restrain and limit,
 if not eliminate, all desires
for desires spew seeds such as jealousy and ungratefulness
and obsessions with a world that is not everlasting
which turn us away from the beloved
and the righteous path which leads to
 everlasting paradise in the hereafter

so what if his prophethood did not leave a lineage of followers
who tout his name in the annals of human history
some prophets come to be followed by many
and some, to be followed by none
but such matters not
for no prophet has any need for followers,
 not a single one
prophets only need to receive divine revelation
and make known what they are commanded to declare
nothing more
although *idriis* served many,
some who heeded his teachings, some who resisted
he was content with being withheld from fame and acclaim
not even associating his name with the revelations
declared through his actions, voice, and pen

so what that he became a scribe,
 holding the first of pens upon earth
to record revelation from the beloved as a guidance
he regarded himself to be no more educated than an illiterate
for some of the greatest prophets and messengers
 never put pen to paper or read from scrolls
but even if all the prophets and messengers
put to paper all the revelations revealed through them
and all the trees were made to be pens
using all the waters of the oceans as ink to scribe
all the trees would be scribbled to dust
and all the oceans drained to be parched land,
 even if filled again and again
before all the words of divine revelation would be written
the words of the beloved are without end
and yet the words are the lesser part
even if every breath of every creature spoke a verse of revelation
there would still be verses not spoken
in realizing this,
idriis realized, with great humility,
what he was given to write
did not even equate to a drop of water in all the universe's oceans
and all the universe's oceans
equate not to a drop in the endless ocean
of the revelations of the beloved

and so what if he was among the first of humans
to establish the studies of celestial bodies
and the science of numbers
to lay foundations to guide our observations and measurements

that we may bring our ways of living more into the reach of order
and be humbled by what we learn of the universe created
which can only suggest the indescribable beyond creation
so what
idriis would say
for these and other achievements mean nothing
if he did not obey and surrender to the beloved
to mature a piety and sincerity that welcomed
the beloved to walk with him while he was still on earth

if his silence would give words
there would be no mistake in hearing him say
be sincere in devotion to the beloved
those seeking the perfection of piety
must keep their acts far from immorality
 and disobedience of the beloved
we must take time to devote ourselves wholeheartedly
to worship and honor the beloved
a time we must let nothing interfere with
a time we must not surrender to anything else

it is within the silence of sincere devotion
that the mirror of awareness shines the light of realization
 upon one's self
where the noise so many unknowingly hide behind,
concealing sin and disobedience,
is stripped away
and what one does and holds one's self to be
is placed undeniably before one's perception
to expose what is wrong to be wrong

not veiled in facades of fair-seeming justification
to expose what is one's own will from the will of the beloved
for it is one's own will which places one's ego
in the self-imagined throne of sovereignty
the most pious realize
it is not by their will that they can even approach righteousness

 let alone reach it and live it
it is only by the will of the beloved
that we can be brought to righteousness
and then be brought even deeper into piety
for if the beloved does not guide us,
 we will perceive our evil to be good
 our own ego (and its calculating) to be holy
an imagined holiness we drape with noise
even if our whispers echo revelations of the beloved
the call is to surrender
there is no other call that leads to the beloved

but once the silence of sincere devotion is reached
perfection is the perfect grace
 to carry this most delicate blessing
whereby *idriis* implores us all to be perfect in piety
for the wholeness of silence can be disturbed
by even a partial noise
whereby he denounced the lusts of passions
the calculation of all desires
in their cleverness,
 they imitate the callings the beloved places within us
 to fulfill the destiny of (our) creation
yet even when desires are satisfied

they are already moving toward wanting more
and in their movements lay hiding places for noise

even hidden noise can disturb the wholeness of silence
but if we want nothing, desire nothing
the callings within us draw their own fulfillment
for what the beloved places within us,
 the beloved serves if we are pure
idriis even renounced all intoxicants and attachments
for what one may do in a moment of drunkenness
can disturb lifetimes blessed by silence
but if we live in the carefulness of patience
in the peace of grateful contentedness
and keep our sacred oaths and vows
these are as soundless footprints
in the dance of piety and sincerity
that draws the beloved to you (from within),
to be intimate with you
unfolding secrets and mysteries
that only silence can speak
yet the paradox is
 silence says nothing
 (that the mind can perceive)

in reaching this station
it should be no surprise
that in living deeply in the silence of sincere devotion
the beloved walked with *idriis* even upon earth
those who the beloved walks with
the angels befriend

and such it was that an angel brought *idriis*
to walk in the heavens
upon this glorious ascended walk
while partaking of the wonders of the fourth heaven,
 and its immaculate silence
idriis came to meet the angel of death,
 who has *azraa'il* among its names
and *azraa'il* said to *idriis*
where have you been
i have been searching the earth for you
idriis asked why
because your time upon the earth is fulfilled
and so *idriis* received the kiss of death
 within the wings of an angel
 while in the fourth heaven

but what is it to die in the heavens
to only be stripped of the body that binds one to earth
for the righteous, death is liberation
a liberation *idriis* received in the freedom of the heavens
whereby *idriis* is no stranger to the fourth heaven
and in particular, the nameless resting place
which he visits often to be pulled deeper
 into the silence of sincere devotion
and to pray with the angels who gather here to pray
in the presence of celestial bodies coming to make prostration

whether we live or die
or are risen to the heavens
matter not

as much as if
we make our existence
a beautiful honoring
of the beloved

at that moment
the sun of the fourth heaven
took another step in the firmament
painting the sky with another distinction
as the voice of an angel rang out
in sweet *adhan*
the call to prayer begun
idriis invited *muhammad* to join the prayer
as all the angels present assembled in rows
a gathering of such effortless intimacy
that no one greeted another
for greetings are only necessary
when we perceive ourselves to be separate

where there is oneness
greetings become hypocritical

muhammad started to ask *idriis*
how many times a day do they pray here
but silence interceded to reveal
the question is irrelevant
for whether they make
five or fifty or fifty thousand prayers a day
the only prayer that counts
is the one you are presently making

and let it be the purest prayer
let your every prayer be your first and last prayer
beholding the eager attentiveness of the beginner
and the assured trust of the elder
within the union of the beginner and the elder
is an approach that enriches every single prayer
to be precious
and why not make every single prayer
to be as precious as it can be
in honoring the beloved

when the call to prayer,
which was enunciated with such sweetness
it sounded like a song although not sung,
when the call to prayer was done
idriis, muhammad, and all the angels gathered
stood with a focus that could not be distracted
facing the *qiblah* of the heavens
which from this spot faces the nameless resting place
one could feel the deepening of silence
as each individual remembered
contributing to their collective remembrance
of the beloved
only the beloved

oh, you who pray
it is not righteousness that you turn your faces east or west
toward the *qiblah* or the city of peace
or even toward the throne of the beloved
rather make the prostration of prayer

inwardly and outwardly
in the fullness of surrender to the beloved
how can such surrender be made if you do not first
remember the beloved
for if you do not remember the beloved in your prayers
your prayers are but an imitation of prayer
even if a well-orchestrated imitation

when all present were deep within such remembrance
they all humbly raised their hands and wings to their ears
and uttered
allaahu akbar
for indeed,
the beloved is the most great
a greatness beyond all understanding
there they stood,
with their backs straight and firm
their eyes focused on the ground before them
their ears focused on their words
no straying eyes or wandering minds or distracted senses
they all were focused on making their prayer
an honor to the beloved

although the words they spoke were memorized
for each one, in the earnestness of prayer,
they were speaking in private to the beloved
the words, an exchange witnessed
the words given by the beloved to its lover

that the words may be a means
of the lover remembering the beloved
as the beloved would have the lover
remember
but the prayer is not the words of the prayer
the words are but clothes on the speechless body of love
just as words of revelation are not the revelation
in essence, the revelation is the beloved
yet the words of prayer are precious gifts nonetheless
for when uttered with sincere devotion
they are as a key that unlocks the door
to allow the space around the heart
to be cleared of all impurities
that love, as love, may be

within such purity
the heart opens
and in the openness of the pure heart
the lover disappears into the beloved
until even the perception (and separation)
of the beloved disappears
for the beloved is all that is
nothing is but the beloved

hearing these revealed praises of the beloved
al-faatihah (the opening) pronounced yet again
the beloved opened the door of the heart of each faithful one
what the beloved opens, none can close
as the beloved showers (its) love on (its) devoted lovers

oh beloved
you who are
the most beneficent and merciful and compassionate
the lord and sustainer of the worlds
how can we not again praise (your) beneficence
and mercy
and compassion
you who are the judge and ruler of the last day
the day all days answer to
you alone do we worship, for only you should be worshiped
you alone do we ask for help, for only you can help
so please guide us on the straight path that leads to you
the revelation and realization of you
the straight path of those who behold, receive, and dwell within
your unending grace and favor
please spare us from the paths of those who earn your wrath
or turn away to go their own ways which lead astray
so be it
so it is
the beloved willing

in oneness,
all present affirmed the oneness of this opening
all with their hearts opened by the beloved
to the beloved
what words can describe such beautiful grace
what words

the angel leading the prayer recited another revelation
for such is the food of the heart, the food of the spirit

and when all were fed
all bowed in appreciation
their every movement made with grace and purpose
their backs made straight to lower their heads to the beloved
uttering praise of the beloved's all-mighty greatness and
magnificence
who can praise such enough

then they all stood again to acknowledge as has been
acknowledged
that the beloved listens to those who praise the beloved
whereby they all bowed down to prostrate
with heads, hands, wings, knees, and feet on the ground
to utter praise to the beloved as the most high
but just as their bodies faced outward
their attention bowed inwardly too
to touch their focus to the heart
 wherein the beloved dwells

then all sat up to speak another brief invocation
some praying for forgiveness, some for protection
some just praising the beloved again
and then they bowed to prostrate again
for prostration is the purest posture of prayer
the body and attention mirroring what all faithful ones must do
(completely) surrender one's all to the all of the beloved
whereupon they stood again
to make cycles of prayer
until the prayer was completed kneeling

their every movement precise,
 imbrued with sacred reverence
it was not forgotten to them
that they were making their prayer
to and before the beloved

although they were gathered in assembly
for each one,
 it was as if they were in private
 with the beloved
every genuine prayer beholds such intimacy
making every such prayer
sacred

within the silence of the fourth heaven
they found places for silence between their words of prayer
to allow the silence
to pray for things their words could not speak
when they were done with all the words
there was a period of silence
for some to be pulled deeper beyond the reach of noise
for others, to hear a message from the beloved
and *muhammad* could hear in *idriis'* silence
a simple yet profound prayer
that these words only partially capture:
 you will never realize the fullness of the beloved
 if you never move beyond its mercy

oh, the praying mystic interrupts again to proclaim
what the heart exclaims in the openness of prayer

for every time i thought i reached the fullness of surrender
the depths of the surrender of surrender pulled me deeper
until i realized, beyond what the mind can conceive,
that there is no end to surrender
because the contentedness of the heart
only lays with the endlessness of the beloved
therefore, it is a mercy to be able to surrender
and surrender endlessly forever

oh, when the prayer recites and performs itself
allow it
be a humble observer and participant of it
to be able to pray is a mercy
and a greater mercy it is
when the beloved prays through your prayer
speaks words of love from the beloved
through the lover's mouth
for only the beloved is the absolute owner of all prayers
and all praise
only the beloved

do not ever think it is you that prays
true prayer is only made through you,
not from you
and if that prayer becomes silence
oh, rest in such silence
be even a more attentive observer and participant
allow it to intercede on your behalf
to make prayers you cannot even imagine,
let alone speak

for the purest prayer surrenders even to its own prayer
which all language fails to reach
and no understanding can (fully) encompass
because the fullness of surrender reaches even beyond silence
an intimacy that cannot even be pointed to
or inferred

and as is the nature of prophets to do when they come together
idriis and *muhammad* took a moment to share a departing prayer
and in their praying
muhammad prayed for the forgiveness and well-being of *idriis*
and in their praying
idriis prayed for the forgiveness and well-being of *muhammad*
and *idriis* encouraged *muhammad*
to serve with unending faith
his mission as a prophet and messenger of the beloved
to live a life that immerses into the depths
of the silence of sincere devotion
living such is an example that needs no words,
that speaks better than words
for if one lives such a life,
and goes even deeper beyond the reach of silence
the beloved will walk with that one upon the earth

what words spoke will suffice
to describe the value of silence,
the fullness of silence
what words spoke will suffice
to describe what lays beyond
sacred silence

when their prayers were done
idriis and *muhammad* shared parting expressions
muhammad carrying within him the unending memory
of what *idriis* shared
 with words and with silence
vowing to convey both to his *ummah*
the revelations of the beloved manifesting as words
the revelations of the beloved manifesting as sacred silence
and vowing to embody in the presence of his *ummah*
that which is beyond words and silence

idriis took a moment to adore once more
the piety and beauty of his cherished brother
watching as *jibriil* led *muhammad* away
to see what remained to be seen of the fourth heaven
before ascending the heights
to continue this wondrous journey
to approach the gates of the fifth heaven



So remember the name of thy Lord and
devote thyself with a complete devotion.

from *Al-Muzzammil* (The Enshrouded One)
Surah 73, Verse 8

Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

Thou (O Muhammad) seest them bowing and
falling prostrate (in worship), seeking bounty
from Allaah and [Allaah's] acceptance. The mark
of them is on their foreheads from the traces
of prostration.

from *Al-Fath* (The Victory)
Surah 48, Verse 29

Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

section:
the fifth heaven

Would ye exchange that which is higher for
that which is lower?

from *Al-Baqarah* (The Cow)
Surah 2, Verse 61

Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

And who doth greater wrong than he who is
reminded of the revelations of his Lord, then
turneth from them?

from *As-Sajdah* (The Prostration)
Surah 32, Verse 22

Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

oh *muhammad*
peace and blessings are upon you
that this journey brings you
to the gate of the fifth heaven

now i see
what the gates to the place of prostration
seek to imitate

jibriil as the guide
escorted *muhammad* to this immaculate gate
and said
“let the gates be open”
the angels serving as gatekeepers responded
“who is it”
jibriil replied
“it is *jibriil*”
the gatekeepers responded
“is there anyone with you”
jibriil replied
“here is *muhammad*,
also known in the heavens as *ahmad*”
the gatekeepers responded
“has he been called,
has revelation been sent to him,
has his mission been released upon earth”
jibriil replied,
“yes,
yes,
and yes”

the gatekeepers responded
“oh, he is welcomed
what a wonderful visit is his”
and with that
the gates to the fifth heaven were opened

upon seeing the gatekeepers
muhammad greeted them saying
“*as-salaamu alaykum*”
(peace be upon you)
and they responded
“*as-salaamu alaykum wa rahmatullaah*”
(peace and mercy from the beloved be upon you)
for such is how the angels greet all the prophets
and all humans who will enter the gates of paradise
a blessing they express to the blessed
which returns as a blessing to them

it is a grace to be able to bless the blessed
it is a grace that they receive such blessing

will you surrender to know the friend
who is sincere, who is untroubled,
 who is serene, who is pure
who quiets the mind with a precise clarity
through love
which sustains (the) faith
that endures patience
that is everlastingly unbroken
even if for just one moment

surrender to know the friend
that moment
is worth more than all eternity
and more

within the fifth heaven
so many wonders there are
more than words can tell
more than minds can comprehend
words and minds fail
when relaying the wonders of the heavens
so why bother seeking to describe
with words that fail to minds that cannot comprehend

in all its vastness
the fifth heaven makes the entire fourth heaven
seem like a small ring lost in a desert
and the fourth heaven makes the entire third heaven
seem like a small ring lost in a desert
and the third heaven makes the entire second heaven
seem like a small ring lost in a desert
and the second heaven makes the entire first heaven
seem like a small ring lost in a desert
and the first heaven makes all the earth
seem like a small stone on a small ring lost in a desert
so consider what the earth seems like to the fifth heaven
how small, how small
yet all the vastness of the fifth heaven
was shown to *muhammad*
making his humility even more humble

for there is no end to the wonders of the beloved's creations
a wonder such as
a sea so massive its size is incalculable
containing waters that rage with peace and a tempest of stillness
each wave singing a song that encompasses absolute serenity
and the most violent ferocity
at the outermost edge of this sea are huge bolted gates
where a troop of angels stand guard
gates that have not been opened
since the days of *nuuh* and his ark
when that great flood was unleashed
those days when the exceeding majority of humans
had taken such comfort in sin
that they would never turn back to the beloved
never
in the ocean of ignorance
there is a point of no return to wisdom
in the ocean of wickedness and sin
there is a point of not returning to righteousness and piety

every angel who passes by these gates
hearing the song of the sea,
which beholds peace and rage
every passing angel utters aloud *astaghfiruullaah*
(which means "i seek forgiveness from *allaah*")
and the troop of angels standing guard, chant in reply
rabbi ghfir lee, ghfir lee
(which means "oh my lord, forgive me, forgive me")
on behalf of those who commit sins
the beloved is willing to forgive

the angels speak these phrases in remembrance of the days
when those floodgates were opened
allowed to pour unendingly upon the earth
in a downpour of fierce rain
that covered even the highest mountains with drowning water
each drop retaining the wholeness of the sea's song
a promise of peace in deliverance of raging punishment
because the spread of wickedness among humans reached so far
that only a handful were left
who could even approach righteousness
who would turn their faces away from evil

despite the patient implorations of *nuuh*
all of the earth was washed away for the sins of humanity
except those few humans and animals saved
for even the merciful tolerance of the beloved
has a limit in its limitlessness
before it must submit to the anger of perfect justice
an anger served to grant mercy to what mercy tolerates
(it is a mercy to evil to bring an end to evil
if only the wicked knew)

the prevailing face of mercy returned
as the earth, washed away of all wickedness and sin,
was polluted by humanity's disobedience yet again
from a handful saved, seeds of evil spread again
through the notorious whims of humans
turning away from the beloved yet again

the mercy of a punishment that washed away
the stains of evil from earth
to give humanity a new start
this punishment,
rendered at the expense of so many other creatures,
will not be repeated

the whole of the earth will not be flooded again
because of humanity going astray
instead the harvest of the final hour
will be selective in pulling out the wicked
to place them, and only them, in the fires of *jahannam* (hell)
while those who earn a place in *jannah* (paradise)
may dwell therein
undisturbed
the service of perfect justice
is the resting abode
of mercy and judgment

to hear blameless angels say
astaghfiruullaah
while passing by the bolted gates of the sea
and to hear blameless angels chant
rabbi ghfir lee, ghfir lee
in response to the calls for forgiveness
is to hear a song of prayer
in harmony with the song of this sea
a song of mercy and judgement

to hear the sinless say
i seek forgiveness from the beloved
to hear the sinless say
oh lord, forgive me, forgive me
is as a prayer for those who have sinned
made by those who have not sinned
for what other reason
would the sinless ask for forgiveness

and *muhammad*, hearing the tender reminder
of this short but powerful prayer
thought immediately of those among his nation
from the past, present, and future
who are benefitted by this repeating prayer
and moved thus, *muhammad* went and offered
the depth of his peace to the bolted gates
that all who passed and will pass by these powerful gates
uttering calls for forgiveness
receive his peace
the ground before these gates received his peace
and, in return, offered
the depth of the peace of all who passed
and will pass by these gates
to *muhammad*
ask not how this peace is transmitted to him
the ways of the heavens' transference cannot be reduced to words
but know, what is said in the heavens
and what is said on earth
can reach across all space and time

even into the realmless realm
that is beyond space and timeless
when what is said in the heavens
and what is said on earth
is spoken within the silence of sincere devotion
the silence of such offering
is a force more powerful than all words
whether spoke aloud or not
for in such silence
all words and all that is beyond words
can be heard simultaneously

those whose hearts are clear to hear,
let them hear this sacred silence

another wonder there was in the fifth heaven
seeing a man dressed in a distinguished robe
leading a small group of followers
they walked along the shores of the restrained sea
singing psalms of praise and hymns of humility
among the chorus of voices
in the timbre of his voice was a notable eloquence
indicating this is no ordinary man

muhammad asked *jibriil*

“who is this man”

jibriil replied

“he is your brother, the prophet *haaruun*
may *allaah* be pleased with him
will you not greet him and pay him respects”

muhammad drew near to the group
and waited for them to finish singing
tasting of the nectar of their devotion
when they paused
muhammad approached *haaruun*, greeting him
“*as-salaamu alaykum*”
(peace be upon you)
and *haaruun* responded
“*as-salaamu alaykum wa rahmatullaah*
(peace and mercy from the beloved be upon you)
welcome, oh pious prophet,
oh beautiful and pious brother,
you are welcomed”

and without a single word it was conveyed
as angels gathered around *muhammad's* heart to witness
the transmission from heart to heart
of the beautiful story of companionship
that encompassed *haaruun's* earthly life
how he was reunited with his brother *muusaa*
after *muusaa* was transformed
haaruun, called to be the voice speaking the words of the beloved
called to be a companion of surrender
the companion that did not depart
serving what seemed an impossible task
in leading the children of *israaa'il*
through their exodus from egypt
for the nation that received and benefitted from
the beauty of *yuusuf*
had forgotten his contribution to that nation's fate

and the prosperity of *yuusuf's* descendants
became perceived as a justification for jealousy
and the oppression that followed

we remember the days
when the pharaoh of egypt commanded
that the male babies born of the children of *israaa'iiil*
be killed after being brought forth from the womb
a scheme devised to avert a foretelling dream
that a son born of the hebrew nation
would grow to be the one
to overthrow his throne
so pharaoh schemed, but we schemed too
although our plot was not first apparent
to the fearful eyes of a mother
 who birthed her son in secrecy
concealing him for three months
because she didn't want him killed
by her faith, she received our inspiration
to place the young babe in a basket set upon the river waters
the raging currents made gentle for even the waters knew
the dangers of the river made safe because even the river knew
a prophet not yet revealed was riding upon the river waters
and we fulfilled the promise of our commands to the mother
when we told her not to fear or grieve
we promised to bring the living babe back to the mother
and our promises always come true

we made the basket to be drawn out of the waters
and reach the home of pharaoh,
 under the watching eyes of the babe's sister
and when the wife of pharaoh sought to keep the hebrew babe
 as a son or a servant
pharaoh agreed, in spite of the forewarning dream
and when the babe refused to be comforted by any other wet nurse
the babe's sister was there to suggest another
whereby the mother was reunited with her infant son,
unbeknownst to pharaoh and his folk
only the uninterpreted sounds of the babe spoke her identity
which she greeted with the silence of righteousness
and when his mother fed him
her milk brought silence to the cries no other breast could quell
for indeed her milk was sweet
with a sweetness no child would refuse
the sweetness of obedience and love
 for she was a righteous woman

thus, the babe was named *muusaa*
for he was drawn out of the waters

we reunited *muusaa* with his righteous mother
and had him raised in the very household
 that would later be set against him
we filled him with strength and wisdom and knowledge
because the promise of the beloved is true and always fulfilled
even when he fell into the sin of murder
defending one of his people against an egyptian
muusaa prayed for forgiveness

for in realizing his physical strength,
 he realized his weakness to evil's temptations
and to see, the very next day, the man he defended fighting again
this time with a fellow child of *israaa'il*
muusaa realized how he was pulled into evil
 defending an evil person
 a quarrelsome hothead
as *muusaa* approached him,
 the hothead feared *muusaa* might kill him too
and made known the murder of the fallen egyptian
forcing *muusaa* to flee into the desert, scared for his life
because the sentence of his crime was likely death

think not this story of *muusaa* so far has no relevance to *haaruun*
for the bonds of spiritual companionship
 exist beyond all bounds of time
even when they are separate
what they share in the destiny of their shared presence
they share even in their apparent separation
so yes, we pulled the infant *muusaa* from the waters
and raised him in the household of pharaoh
and even allowed him to kill a man and flee into the desert
although these experiences were not lived directly by *haaruun*
they are connected to him by his timeless companionship
 with *muusaa*
a companionship revealed later in time along the line of events
but this revealing in time is only of things already existing
 in timelessness
and for the righteous, nothing that happens is beyond our will
or beyond the reach of the plans we lay

trust to know
that everything we will and allow
is only to be a testament of our glory
but judge not the story until the ending is revealed
for sometimes every chapter but the last chapter
refrains from revealing our glory
but every chapter leads to the final chapter
which leads to itself in our unending glory

thus, it played out
as *muusaa* fled to the desert without provisions
a brutal desert where even travelers with provisions
 sometimes died
where the sands cover the corpses
as quickly as they fall to the ground
but who can reach the abode of eternal life
without crossing the pathways of death
(very few)
through that brutal desert *muusaa* made his way
venturing into a land he did not know
his skin torched by the heat of the sun
and scoured by the abrasive wind
as the burning sand cut open his feet to leave trails of blood
tortured by intense hunger and thirst,
 he endured many days of harsh travel
leaving him weary and famished
by our invisible guiding hand, we brought him to a well
where he helped two women to water their sheep
an act of kindness performed despite his personal hardship
yet this became the introduction to his new home

where the father of the women hired him
and married him to one of the daughters
with whom he began a family

removed from the lushness of pharaoh's home,
muusaa embraced the simplicity of living as a shepherd
herein lay powerful seeds of his prophethood
for he was to be a fathering shepherd to the children of *israaa'iil*
relinquishing the wealth of the world

to be endowed with the wealth of spirit
through humility and the hard work of caring for
his family and his flock
ten years he lived this way until that day
we drew his sight to a fire
near a mountain in the distance
the surface not revealing the sacredness of this call

in the light of that burning bush that did not burn
we revealed to *muusaa* a portion of his prophetic purpose
with such revelation
his spiritual companions were drawn more closer to appear
that the work of (their) prophetic service may be performed
was it his own eye that saw the fire in the distance
or was it our invisible hand that called his sight to the flames
for all *muusaa* sought
was to bring a portion of the fire to his family
that they may be warm
but we had a grander purpose

as he neared the mountain he saw
that the fire he perceived from a distance
was flames engulfing a bush that did not burn
beholding the strangeness of this sight,
he gripped more tightly to his staff
as he continued to approach the fire

the praising mystic proclaims
blessed be whatsoever is in that fire
and blessed be whosoever is near to its flames
with *muusaa*'s every step toward that burning bush
he carried the presence of his spiritual companions
for blessed are those who are graced with the precious gift
of having a miraculous encounter with the beloved
within the appreciation of this gift
is the opportunity to have one's whole life transformed
if we honor the gift and don't discount it
or run from it

surely *muusaa* did not discount this gift
for when he reached the fire,
we spoke to him with one voice
calling him by his name
"*muusaa*"
for it was we who drew him out of the water
although he appeared to be drawn out by human hands
and now we were drawing him out of the life of his choosing
to the life we chose for him as a prophet
we spoke to him with one voice
"i am the lord of your father, *ibraahiim*

the lord of *ishaaq* and *yaquub*,
and you being a living son of them,
i am the lord of you too”

we continued to speak with one voice
“i am *al-malik*
(the lord of all)
take off your shoes for you are in my presence
the ground before me is always holy,
always sacred
take off your shoes to be touched
by this holy sacred presence”

muusaa did so hiding his face
as we revealed our inspiration to him
his call to serve fulfillment of our covenant with *ibraahiim*
to make many nations of his descendants
the children off *israaa'ail* among these nations
that they may everlastingly possess
a share of the land we promised *ibraahiim*
and we be their protecting lord
but to be a child of *ibraahiim*,
an inheritor of our covenant with him
requires that one uphold his righteous ways
the religion of worshiping and obeying and surrendering to
the almighty oneness,
for whom there is no second
if one does not uphold these sacred ways
one cannot be an inheritor of this covenant
one cannot be a child of *ibraahiim*

for the sake of our covenant with *ibraahiim*
we vowed to bring the children of *israaa'ail* out of egypt
and we vowed to *muusaa*, to always be with him
as long as he sustained his prayers, his worship,
his remembrance of the beloved
we assured him of an undeniable sign of our promise
that he would lead his people to the foot of this mountain
to worship their lord
and we commanded him to go to the children of *israaa'ail*
with this our name:
i am who i am
this everlasting name revealed as a gift
for prior to this,
we had not revealed this name to most humans
prior we came to *ibraahiim*, *ishaaq*, and *yaquub* with the name
the almighty all-providing
but we guide whom we will
and reveal what we will of our names
that they may be remembered and honored and chanted
from generation to generation
till the last of all generations

the things kept hidden belong only to us
but what we reveal is a gift to the children
until the end of all time
that they may live never turning away from us

we told *muusaa*
go to pharaoh and make the request
that the children of *israaa'ail* be allowed

to make a three-day journey into the desert
to worship in the ways we bestowed upon *ibraahiim*
and to offer religious sacrifices
we forewarned *muusaa*
how we would harden pharaoh's heart to resist
for he had transgressed exceedingly the bounds of righteousness
for the wickedness and oppression he inflicted
we would strike him and his nation,
 which followed his misguided leadership
we vowed to strike him and his nation with abounding wonders
that they will call plagues
(only because they suffer them)
but soon enough we would turn their hearts
to allow the children of *israaa'iil* to leave
 and not depart empty-handed
for the hour of deliverance approaches but is kept hidden
so let the faithful strive for the beloved which is its own reward
let them not be turned away from us
to their own desires and their own ways,
 which lead only to doom
let their faces face only the beloved
which leads only to the love of love

when *muusaa* spoke his fear
because what we revealed was daunting to him,
 challenging his comprehension
when *muusaa* spoke his fear
we commanded him to cast his staff to the ground
whereupon it became a writhing snake
and *muusaa* started to flee in fear

but we told him to pause and pick up the snake by its tail
as his hesitating hand touched the moving scales
it became his staff again
he was amazed by this miracle,
 but for us it was easy
yet still part of his fear remained
so we commanded him to cast his hand inside his robe
whereby it came out shining bright like the sun
 and without color
despite the burning light, he felt no pain
again, he was amazed by this miracle,
 but for us it was easy
these two signs and more
we promised he would perform before pharaoh
 by our power and our will
“so be removed from all fear and all doubt
for *i am who i am* is with you, *muusaa*
everlastingly forever
just as *i am who i am*
am at the burning bush with you now”

muusaa was moved and prayed
oh my beloved
expand my heart and relieve my mind
the heart is willing but the mind is fearful and resists
and i would that i surrender to your will
i can carry my body to the task
but my speech is exceedingly impaired
slow of speed with a knot upon my tongue

so give me ease
please, give me ease

we replied in one voice to say
who is it that gives humans mouths to speak or be muted
and ears to hear or be deaf
and eyes to see or be blind
muusaa,
go as you are
the words will be put in your very mouth
for i am that *i am who i am*
i am *the almighty all-providing*
sufficient for every moment of time
and beyond
into timelessness

but *muusaa* would not be comforted
bound by a lifetime of memories of struggled speech
although the present before him
was sufficient to override the past and the future
if he would accept it
instead
he pleaded for his brother, *haaruun*, to be his helping companion
for he knew *haaruun* to be upright and eloquent in speech
and if *haaruun* spoke,
muusaa felt he would not embarrass himself
or his lord
with his labored mouth

so we conceded in the fulfillment of our unfolding victory
because *muusaa* would not receive
the unfailing gift we offered him
there is no compulsion on the path of surrender
yet the time of our unfolding victory could be delayed no longer
so a portion of *muusaa*'s prophetic power we gave to *haaruun*
the eloquence we planned to put upon *muusaa*'s tongue
we placed upon *haaruun* to add eloquence to his eloquence
for we already had him heading through the desert to visit *muusaa*
we had already planned for him to serve as *muusaa*'s companion
in prophetic service

while humans love to plan, we already have our plans
yet because *muusaa* doubted and disobeyed our command
we took from his prophetic portion to give to *haaruun*
making *haaruun*'s role more prominent
to be the voice that speaks the revealed word
yet the favor of talking directly with us
we reserved for *muusaa* alone
that remained non-negotiable
for that rested with the heart of *muusaa*

so at the foot of that sacred mountain
we drew out the one to be drawn out
to be accompanied by a mountain of strength
that sang on high the words of our messages
our revelations which are a benefit to the faithful
to both we gave enduring strength, power, and authority
to speak boldly to pharaoh and be untouched by his rage

to *muusaa* and *haaruun* we gave the unfolding of our victory
while to pharaoh we gave a loss that ends in perishment

hearken the one who speaks our revelations
you need not have direct audience with us
to speak what we share
but heed
a vessel must be pure to be a deliverer of purity
you can only give what you have
you can only share what you have and are willing to receive
this principle cannot be compromised
for the revelation is not wholly in words
the words and their meanings are only pointers
 to something deeper and more subtle
a vessel must be pure to be a deliverer of purity
where purity is lacking, let the impure be purified

think not that we were not purifying *muusaa* and *haaruun*
when we unleashed our wonders
sending them to confront pharaoh
who reminded *muusaa* of his past sins
of being raised in the royal household
partaking of the fruits of oppression
and even committing murder
 and fleeing to avoid the punishment
even the wicked can give an accounting of sins
but purification lays not in being removed from all sin
although sinlessness is better than being sinful
purification lays

in turning to and never turning away from the beloved,
 even when in the presence of the wicked
and in not turning away,
we spoke to *muusaa* who spoke to *haaruun*
so he could declare aloud our revelations

when pharaoh demanded proof,
we gave him proof
having *muusaa* cast his staff to the ground
 to become a writhing snake
but pharaoh discounted our work as mere magic
and called forth his wizards
so that their magic could prove supreme
yet think not that this was done for the sake of the wicked
for their witnessing of miracles only strengthens their turning away
all miracles are always performed only for the sake of the faithful
that, in witnessing the power of the beloved,
they may be strengthened
to repent, to serve selflessly, to be more deeply humble
to surrender within sweet surrender
that they may never turn away from the beloved
(ever again)
that they may be humbled to mature
to the station of not needing miracles
(or anything external)
to refrain from turning away from the beloved
(ever again)

when the wizards cast their ropes and rods with a powerful magic
muusaa nearly turned away again with fear

for before his eyes,
the ropes and rods became a mass of moving serpents
a powerful and deceiving magic indeed
but we strengthened him
 with the strength we placed upon and within him
supported by the mountain of strength we made to be
 his companion
inspired by the memory of the miracle we had performed before
muusaa cast his staff to the ground and we made it
 a writhing snake
that devoured the sea of moving serpents
not a single serpent escaped
tens and tens of wizards amazed by what they saw
yet *muusaa* and *haaruun* were made more steadfast and secure
for what righteous person would not be made so
after witnessing the power of the beloved

not a single serpent was spared from being devoured
and not a single wizard refrained from prostrating to exclaim
we surrender in worship to the lord of *muusaa* and *haaruun*
al-malik, i am who i am, the almighty all-providing
an affirmation they did not abandon
even as pharaoh threatened to cut off their hands and feet
 and crucify them
they proved to be righteous
strengthened by the miracle, they did not turn away
asking for forgiveness from the beloved
praying to die as servants of the beloved
humbling themselves to whatever fate this brought

knowing the fate of this world is only of this world
but the fate of the hereafter is everlasting

think not that this was done for the sake of the wicked
and all the other wonders we unleashed in egypt
this was done for *muusaa* and his companion, *haaruun*
and all other faithful ones who surrender to be strengthened
 by the glory of the beloved
that the faithful may be as *haaruun* was
a companion to the unfolding of a prophet
that the companions may give voice to what is revealed
 even if it is not revealed directly to them
that the companions may give voice to what is revealed
and thereby earn their holy robes
by being a pure vessel that delivers purity
by giving what they have
by sharing what they have and receive
for indeed, it is a blessing to be a companion to a prophet
a companion of surrender
such is a great blessing

the mystic poet interjects
oh, do not limit holy companionship to mere space and time
for the oneness of such companionship is not limited
to rules of the physical realm and illusion of time
in this very present moment,
you can be a living companion
to prophets who walked the earth centuries ago
if you live the life of a vessel pure
that echoes to speak the revelations of the beloved

a language more powerfully lived through how one lives
than words spoke
if you live the revelations of the beloved
your footsteps are placed beside the footsteps of the prophets
then, even if they are not here in body for you to walk beside,
as you walk in obedience to the beloved
the presence of the prophets walks with you

what righteous person
would not welcome being a companion to a prophet
for a prophet is mercy to those the prophet serves
to be a companion to that is a mercy indescribable
gifts only understood by those on whom such gifts are bestowed
such as when *haaruun* spoke our revelations
with the power we placed upon him in those moments
there was an eloquence upon his eloquence
in which his person was totally transformed
even as he spoke to repeat the words
we told *muusaa* to tell him to speak
we seized his person to make him empty of himself
we seized his words to make them our words
to declare our revelations
in those moments we touched him with a touch
that shakes the cornerstones of the heavens,
tosses the seas from top to bottom and inbetween,
reduces mountains to fleeting dust
changing things in ways that they will never be the same again
who can be the same after being touched in such a way

even a moment of companionship with a prophet is priceless
for in one such timeless moment
can be realized more than what all time can offer
and yet, being timeless,
the gifts of such a moment
cannot be ravaged by the decaying nature of time
gifts of the timeless do not decay
they only fade or are taken away
if one turns away from surrender

at that very moment,
haaruun began to sing a song
and the eloquence of eloquence poured forth
as he humbled his voice to the voice of the beloved
a stirring psalm for those who do not fall away
the most important task of any companion
is to not fall away
(oh beloved, make our foothold strong...)
for even in his walk with *muusaa*
with one who spoke directly with the beloved
his walk was not removed
from the reach of doubts and hesitations
pulling temptations to have him turn away
his walk of companionship had moments
when he had to place his faith in a basket set upon a raging river
trusting it would be returned to him fulfilled
yet bearing the patience of trusting to not run away
because faith only returns to where it comes from
his faith would only return to where he was
it would not search for him if he departed

and if he ran away, he would not only run from his faith
but the blessings that would return with it
(a call to stillness)

there were even moments
when *haaruun* was placed in the houses of those set against him
houses constructed of fear, lusts, wicked inclinations,
and disobedience
yet, even within the presence of these,
he was challenged to not turn away from the beloved
for keeping one's face to the beloved is essential to companionship
so essential
there were even moments
when the realization of his strengths revealed his weaknesses
weaknesses to be tempered by the strength of his conviction
to remain pious and holy
and there were even moments
when he had to tread barefoot upon the hot desert sands
of persecution
which burned his feet, leaving trails of blood behind him
yet, given the hardships of these challenges and more
some never seen by others but bore nonetheless
haaruun did not abandon the one he was sent to accompany
bearing the endurance of humility to be a companion of a prophet
not aspiring to be a prophet himself
yet this humility, absent of selfish aspiration,
was the means by which *haaruun* was raised to prophethood
to not only receive the portion the beloved reserved for him
but also a portion of *muusaa*'s prophethood which he lost for fear

not every companion becomes a prophet
but every companion intimately shares in the prophethood
of the prophets one accompanies
not every companion becomes a prophet
yet let this not diminish the beauty and greatness
of what it is to be a companion of a prophet

in his unwavering companionship of *muusaa*
haaruun witnessed wonders so profound
that the angels in the heavens envy him
for not being able to be there
to experience firsthand the revealed power of the beloved
such was among the rewards of *haaruun*'s willing service
to be a servant of the beloved
just by being there
humble, endearing to this role
blessings outpoured from *muusaa*'s heart into *haaruun*'s
such that a line of those consecrated
was established through *haaruun*
to remain pure
to remain in the presence of revelation
to be serving companions to the line of prophets and saints,
companions of surrender
the beloved took this consecrated line to be
servants of the presence of the beloved
which continues to radiate through the service of prophets
and saints
through generation through generation
through to many generations
such is a mercy of the beloved

for when the servants of the beloved
and the companions of such servants live unity
there is no room for anything but the victory of love
anything counter to this will be brought down
removed or transformed
so love may reign
so love may reign

when the words of the psalm *haaruun* sung were done
there was silence
as all resonated within the voice beyond all voices
whereby truth vindicates itself
as truth revealed
muhammad then looked into the eyes of *haaruun*
to see the eyes of *muusaa*, of *ibraahiim*, and all the prophets
muhammad could even see his own eyes
in the eyes of *haaruun*

a culminating blessing of being a companion of the prophets
is the presence of the prophets residing everlastingly in you

oh, you who walk the path of righteousness
surrender in surrender to be a companion of the prophets
no words can describe the glorious wonder of such
no words

and as is the nature of prophets to do when they come together
haaruun and *muhammad* took a moment to share
a departing prayer
and in their praying

muhammad prayed for the forgiveness and well-being of *haaruun*
and in their praying
haaruun prayed for the forgiveness and well-being of *muhammad*
and *haaruun* encouraged *muhammad*
to impart to his *ummah*
the waiting treasures of being a companion to a prophet
even if such companionship occurs
in the absence of the prophet's body
that even
centuries after *muhammad's* body tastes death
those of his *ummah* can live lives that do not fall away
from the revelations and guidance
spoken through his voice
and the life he lived
(oh beloved, make our foothold strong...)
by the sincere piety of their footsteps
if they never abandon the path of guidance
the presence of *muhammad* and all the prophets
walks with them
even if the pious think they walk alone
and if the sincere piety of their footsteps
immerses into the depths of spirituality
the presence of all the prophets and saints
resides everlastingly in them

be companions of the righteous and the pious
to become companions of the saints
and companions of the prophets
that the blessings of the presence of the prophets
and the presence of the beloved

may accompany you
forever

when their prayers were done
haaruun and *muhammad* shared parting expressions
muhammad carrying within him the unending memory
of what *haaruun* shared
the presence of a pious and holy companion
that the presence of all the prophets accompany
and reside within
how *muhammad* vowed to convey the importance of such
with an eloquence of voice that surrenders
to the voiceless voice of the beloved
an invitation for the sincerely surrendered
to never be separate from the presence of the prophets
despite how time and space appear to separate

the prophets walk the path of surrender to the beloved
the saints walk the path of the prophets
the pious walk the path of the saints
the righteous walk the path of the pious
and the rest,
they don't know what they're doing
walking any way delusion guides them
let the sincerely humble follow the righteous
until they are led to the path of surrender to the beloved

haaruun took a moment to adore once more
the piety and beauty of his cherished brother
watching as *jibriil* led *muhammad* away

to see what remained to be seen of the fifth heaven
before ascending the heights
to continue this wondrous journey
to approach the gates of the sixth heaven



[Allaah] said: Fear not. Lo! I am with you twain, Hearing and Seeing. So go ye unto him and say: Lo! we are two messengers of thy Lord. So let the children of Israel go with us, and torment them not. We bring thee a token from thy Lord. And peace will be for him who followeth right guidance.

from *Ta Ha**

Surah 20, Verses 46-47

Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall
(Ta and Ha are letters in Arabic)

Is [one] who is a believer like unto [one] who is an evil-liver? They are not alike. But as for those who believe and do good works, for them are the Gardens of Retreat - a welcome (in reward) for what they used to do.

from *As-Sajdah* (The Prostration)

Surah 32, Verses 18-19

Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

section:
the sixth heaven

And messengers We have mentioned unto thee before and messengers We have not mentioned unto thee; and Allaah spake directly unto Moses;

from *An-Nisa* (The Women)
Surah 4, Verse 164

Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

And (remember) when Moses said unto his people: O my people! Why persecute ye me, when ye well know that I am Allaah's messenger unto you? So when they went astray Allaah sent their hearts astray. And Allaah guideth not the evil-living folk.

from *As-Saff* (The Ranks)
Surah 61, Verse 5

Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

oh *muhammad*
peace and blessings are upon you
that this journey brings you
to the gate of the sixth heaven

now i see
what the gates to the place of prostration
seek to imitate

jibriil as the guide
escorted *muhammad* to this immaculate gate
and said
“let the gates be open”
the angels serving as gatekeepers responded
“who is it”
jibriil replied
“it is *jibriil*”
the gatekeepers responded
“is there anyone with you”
jibriil replied
“here is *muhammad*,
also known in the heavens as *ahmad*”
the gatekeepers responded
“has he been called,
has revelation been sent to him,
has his mission been released upon earth”
jibriil replied,
“yes,
yes,
and yes”

the gatekeepers responded
“oh, he is welcomed
what a wonderful visit is his”
and with that
the gates to the sixth heaven were opened

upon seeing the gatekeepers
muhammad greeted them saying
“*as-salaamu alaykum*”
(peace be upon you)
and they responded
“*as-salaamu alaykum wa rahmatullaah*”
(peace and mercy from the beloved be upon you)
for such is how the angels greet all the prophets
and all humans who will enter the gates of paradise
a blessing they express to the blessed
which returns as a blessing to them

it is a grace to be able to bless the blessed
it is a grace that they receive such blessing

these are the songs that sing beyond the grains of sand
for beyond two (duality), there is one
and beyond one, there is oneness
and what is beyond oneness cannot be put into words
but therein lays the endlessness of nothingness
from which all emanates
to which all returns

within the sixth heaven
so many wonders there are
more than words can tell
more than minds can comprehend
words and minds fail
when relaying the wonders of the heavens
so why bother seeking to describe
with words that fail to minds that cannot comprehend

in all its vastness
the sixth heaven makes the entire fifth heaven
seem like a small ring lost in a desert
and the fifth heaven makes the entire fourth heaven
seem like a small ring lost in a desert
and the fourth heaven makes the entire third heaven
seem like a small ring lost in a desert
and the third heaven makes the entire second heaven
seem like a small ring lost in a desert
and the second heaven makes the entire first heaven
seem like a small ring lost in a desert
and the first heaven makes all the earth
seem like a small stone on a small ring lost in a desert
so consider what the earth seems like to the sixth heaven
how small, how small
yet all the vastness of the sixth heaven
was shown to *muhammad*
making his humility even more humble
for there is no end to the wonders of the beloved’s creations
a wonder such as
a set of large scales never used before

some scales so vast
they stretch across the length of the horizons of the heavens
breadths so long
that if you unrolled the earth, the moon, and the sun
upon these scales
there would still be more space
to lay out other planets, moons, and stars
and yet
these scales perfect perfection
measuring to precision the fraction of a grain of sand

before these scales are countless scrolls
bearing the accounts of all who ever live
once scribed by the pen of the beloved
and signed complete
these scrolls are sealed and brought here by angels
to be guarded by angels
remaining unopened until the day of judging

these scales and scrolls
are testaments for those
who will be brought forth to be judged
the judge already knows the verdict of all
yet for all who will argue against what cannot be argued against
these scales and scrolls will reveal what cannot be denied
that the wicked meet not the measure of righteousness
that evil deeds forgotten, hidden, or denied
are not lost to the pen that marks the accounting of life

oh, if every soul could see these scales and scrolls
they would set the measures of their lives
to the best of proper measures
and live the record of their lives with the ink of obedience and love
that they may stand before the perfect judge in perfection
but even if you see not these scales and scrolls
until the day of judging
don't discount the accounts of their existence
from ones whose testimonies are trustworthy

and *muhammad*, witnessing these scales and scrolls
thought immediately of those among his nation
from the past, present, and future
who would benefit from this undeniable sight
the impression of this sight marked deeply upon him
an impression he vowed to convey to his followers
and moved thus, *muhammad* went and offered
the depth of his peace to these scales and scrolls
the depth of his peace returning to him
encouraging him to live a life resonating in peace
a life of surrender, obedience, righteousness, and piety
the silence of these being more powerful than any words
for no words will avail aught
when these scales and scrolls begin to speak

those whose hearts are clear to hear,
let them hear this sacred silence

another wonder there was in the sixth heaven
as *jibriil* led *muhammad* to the other side of the scales

there he saw the nations of the prophets gathering
because the last of days leading to the final hour is near
some prophets consisted of a nation of one
for no prophet is defined by a following
rather that one receives the revelation bestowed to it
(by living a life that can receive such)
that one declares what is to be declared from such revelation
and keeps quiet about that which is not to be disclosed

there they were
prophets and their nations
gathering before the scales
all in hopeful anticipation of the final hour
for the final hour begins the unending hour of their reward
some nations being a nation of one
some nations being a nation of a few
some nations being a nation of tens
others of hundreds,
 of thousands,
 of millions
yet when they are all added up
they consist of only a sliver of humanity
making this hopeful scene a cause for pause

only a pure bowl-full will be pulled
from the polluted oceans
of humanity going astray

muhammad scanned the gathering of these nations
most with prophets standing before them

some prophets were familiar to him,
others completely unknown
yet his heart was receiving from them
their stories, their glories, and outpouring of *barakaa* (blessings)

no one stood before the largest gathering
yet by the next largest was a man dressed in light
 berating a child

muhammad asked *jibriil*

“who is this hot-headed man
can he be a prophet displaying such behavior”

jibriil replied

“indeed he is
he is your brother, the prophet *muusaa*
may *allaah* be pleased with him
will you not greet him and pay him respects”

as *muhammad* turned to look again at *muusaa*
their eyes caught each others’ glance
immediately they were both reduced to tears
for the depth of their fraternity goes intimately deep
as *muhammad* approached *muusaa*, *muusaa* headed toward him
when they reached each other,
muhammad greeted *muusaa*, saying

“*as-salaamu alaykum*”

(peace be upon you)

and *muusaa* responded

“*as-salaamu alaykum wa rahmatullaah*

(peace and mercy from the beloved be upon you)

welcome, oh pious prophet,

oh beautiful and pious brother,
you are welcomed”

and without a single word it was conveyed
as angels gathered around *muhammad*'s heart to witness
the unyielding radiance that emitted from *muusaa*'s face
a radiance that will never fade
never
for *muusaa* spoke directly with the beloved
 no intermediary, no messenger
the face of his body while on earth
graced directly with words from the beloved
although veiled by a cloud, so as not to destroy *muusaa*'s body
extremely rare is the human body
 that can survive direct sight of the beloved
just as extremely rare is the dream
 that can survive full awakening
it is only by mercy that veils exist
that we may be allowed to exist
in the veiled presence of the beloved
that pervades all of creation
yet mistake not this veiled space,
 this veiled existence for life
life is beyond all veils,
 life is the beloved

stories from *muusaa* started to outpour from his heart
into the heart of *muhammad*
but *muusaa* stopped the flow and said
“come, let this be revealed before your nation”

muhammad asked
“what nation, is not my *ummah* on earth”
muusaa replied, with tears streaming from his eyes
cries interrupting his spoken words
“what you have seen is only the beginning
portents of the end are already revealed in the timeless
see there, the souls of the saints of your nation
who have already vowed the unbreakable vow
to live the path of surrender to the beloved
following your footsteps”

muusaa's hand, unsteady by the force of his crying,
pointed to the largest gathering
among the nations of the prophets
muusaa took *muhammad* by the hand
to place him before the gathering of his *ummah*
souls waiting to be born
yet they already took hand with the seal of *muhammad*
although they were unfamiliar to his eyes,
they were not strangers
for the bond of their oath
makes them collectively one(ness)

muusaa continued to cry
muhammad comforted him,
 asking him why he was crying
muusaa said abruptly
“because one who comes after me
will lead more into paradise than me
i speak this not in jealousy or anger

it is only a sign of the more sensitive side
of my zeal for my beloved
see how they stretch back to the horizon
and this does not include all who will join your *ummah*
for some will enter life uncommitted
and then choose to follow your footsteps
these gathered here only include
a small portion of those who have already died
and those, although not yet born,
who have unfailingly made their oaths to you
all here have vowed to live their lives
to the measure of righteousness
the firmness of their souls bound by their sacred oaths
to live unfailingly their surrender to the beloved
in the trail of your footsteps
the example of your path of surrender
i wish i could lead this many into paradise
not out of envy,
only because of how it will honor my beloved”

muusaa continued to cry
as *muhammad* scanned the faces of the souls before him
all endowed with the beauty of modest grace
all pleasant and humble
yet his eyes were in search of a particular face
muusaa knew immediately who he was looking for
so *muusaa* said
“you will not find your wife waiting here
she already dwells in immaculate mansions

the beloved reserved for her in paradise
may my beloved be pleased with *khadiija*”

immediately *muhammad* was moved to tears
as *muusaa* continued to cry
and even the angels gathered around their hearts were crying
and even the souls of *muusaa*'s and *muhammad*'s nations
began to cry
and even other prophets and their gatherings too
even *jibriil* was moved to tears
as amidst the flowing tears
the stories in *muusaa*'s heart could not be restrained

what of truth can be restrained
when love overflows

we remember when *muusaa* said
my lord, let me gaze upon thy face with my eyes
for even he was not content
that in his portion

we gave him more than we give to other prophets
with most prophets,
we speak to them through visions and dreams
or send angels as messengers with our revelations
but more we gave to *muusaa*
by visiting him veiled with a cloud
yet this was not enough for him

do not take this as arrogance on his part
for he is aboundingly humble despite being hot-headed

it is only in his unrestrained yearning
that he will not be contented in his hunger for the beloved
by anything other than the fullness of the beloved
and we allow that he will not be satisfied by less

but we remember when he said,
my lord, let me gaze upon thy face with my eyes
and we told him,
what human has looked upon my face and lived
it is not yet time for your deliverance
but gaze upon that mountain
and if it remains standing then you will see me

we made but a portion of our glory
descend toward the mountain
and when the fingertip of that glory
 but touched the mountain's summit
the whole mountain was sent crashing down,
 crumbling to dust
and *muusaa*, a powerful prophet, fell unconscious
by the mere presence of our unrestrained glory

if this befalls a powerful prophet,
strong in endearing humility and surrender
what do you think will befall a weaker human
if we but reveal the presence of our unrestrained glory

when *muusaa* awoke he was full of repentance
vowing to be first among the faithful,
 among those who surrender

affirming again and again
how it is only the beloved that saves
and only the beloved that guides the righteous
not even the greatest prophet
can save or guide their own fingernail
if the beloved intends to destroy it or lead it astray
it is only by the grace of the beloved
that our lives are given, sustained, benefitted, and blessed
in realizing the fullness of this
in a way that exceeds what words can convey
muusaa fell to his knees to exclaim
“only you do i rely on, my beloved
only you do i choose”

we assured *muusaa* of our favor for him
how we preferred him by our messages,
 by speaking directly to him
warning him to not become ungrateful
with how we favor him
for ungratefulness, even of miracles,
only leads to disobedience
which only leads to sin and evil

did not ungratefulness turn the people *muusaa* led out of egypt
to disobedience and sin and evil
for even after the array of wonders we performed before their eyes
and our care for them in the treacherous desert
 which most beings cannot survive
they became a stiff-necked people

not even content with manna raining down from the heavens
 which cannot be found anywhere on earth
they became a stiff-necked people
not content with pure waters drawn from rocks
 by the touch of *muusaa*'s staff
they became a stiff-necked people
not content that we shielded them from the burning sun
 with the shadow of the cloud we led them with
still they complained in lack of faith
asking why *muusaa* brought them out into the desert to die
yet still, we granted them mercy
and provided them the opportunity to hear our voice directly
when we led them to the mountain we promised
 muusaa would return to
that holy place where first we spoke to him
 as the burning bush that did not burn
how when we descended in a cloud
the people trembled with fright
because of the thunder and lightening and smoke
 accompanying our powerful presence
in their fear they told *muusaa*
“do not have the beloved speak to us directly,
we fear we may die
you speak to the beloved and then speak to us
and we will listen”
this we allowed
because we very rarely speak directly to those who disobey and sin
it is a mercy that we allowed *muusaa*
to be an intermediary for them

how many fools say they wish to see the beloved
yet become terrified at just the shadow of our presence
any sin or even the smallest of disobedience
will illicit terror with the approach of our presence
how many fools discount the mercy
that we allow humans to live with even the smallest
 of disobedience
 when such is worthy of death
yet mercy we extend by letting humans live in disobedience
and still we send prophets and messengers to them
 to reveal our revelations
 to be vessels of the nectar of divine guidance
yet most humans ignore and doubt
what the prophets and messengers relay
even when we validate their coming and messages with miracles
with proof that cannot be ignored or denied

that's why we say
faith is more valuable than miracles
and if you saw the faith of *muusaa*
you would see why his hot-headed bluntness is irrelevant to us

even when the angel of death,
 who has *azraa'il* among its names
came to *muusaa* at his appointed time
and *muusaa*, unwilling to die, struck the angel in the eye
an offense worthy of immense torment in hell
yet the cause of *muusaa*'s offense was his unrestrained love
that he wanted to hear from his lord, and only his lord,
that his time for death had come

and even when *muusaa*, in the heat of bluntness,
 raised his voice at us
we heard not the harshness of his tongue
 in savoring the sweetness of faith pouring from his heart
oh yes, faith is more valuable than miracles
we say again,
 faith is more valuable than miracles
and surely more precious than mere displays of reverence
and facades of righteousness and piety
and illusions of spirituality

what reverence seeks, faith beholds
what facades and illusions imitate, faith contains
and there are few whose depth of faith
approaches the faith of *muusaa*
let alone the faith of the other prophets

by *muusaa*'s faith
a faith untouched by the influence of the faithless ones he led
when others were afraid
we called him to climb the mountain our cloud descended upon
alone we called him to the top
where our cloud was filled with consuming fire
surrounded by a deep unrelenting darkness
therein he dwelled for forty days and forty nights
in solitude, that he may be in company with us
fed by our word even as his stomach remained empty
for he alone had the courage to come near to the fire
and be drawn into it
to be annihilated within its roaring heat

not even feeling the ground beneath his feet
leaving all that was behind in the flames
thus, that mountain became the abode
of his irreversible transformation
the man who descended from the mountain
was not the man who climbed it

we choose whom we will among our servants

we heard *muusaa*'s crying prayer
oh my beloved, make me an empty vessel pure
purge me of everything
even my sullied devotion to you
for there were days when i had my doubts
take away even my devotion and faith
for you can give me a deeper devotion and a doubtless faith
that i may dwell everlastingly constant in you
such that turning away from you
is removed from being even a remote possibility
(for my life)

how in that fire
which few souls approach, let alone enter
we made *muusaa* completely transformed and pure
burning away the seeds and remnants of all disobedience
to make him a creature anew
immersed in a perfect obedience
such that he could receive in his hands
tablets containing the holy law
which was only a reflection of what we imprinted upon his heart

that holy law
which lays a road that leads directly to us
for surely every soul will see the beloved with one's own eyes
if not before, surely on that day
 the great scales are used and sealed scrolls opened
when the beloved will be seen as clearly as the sun
in a cloudless daytime sky

within the imprint upon *muusaa*'s heart
and the tablets containing the holy law
is a guide of conduct every religious tradition can embrace
without adding or subtracting from it
even when he broke the tablets
upon seeing the faithless ones quickly return to idolatry
 with the days of their exodus from egypt
 still fresh upon them
in our mercy, we replaced what he broke
because even in the face of their sin
 of worshiping a cow made of gold
muusaa kept what we imprinted upon his heart
from the slightest pollution

oh *muusaa*,
we love those who love us
we love those who love
who, in their surrender to be lovers of the beloved,
become living occasions for the outpouring of (our) love
few things are sweeter in all of creation

oh *muusaa*,
how we would come to visit you in the tent of meeting
descending upon it as a cloud
wherein we poured upon thee of our glory
such that you had to veil your face when we departed
because of the unending radiance of (our) love
 outpouring through you
oh, how your face shined

oh *muusaa*,
remember when we led you through the desert
with our cloud
you moving when it moved,
 you stopping when it stopped
how you said with a voice of devotion
that echoes through the expanses of all time
into timelessness
“oh my beloved,
if your presence doesn't go with us, we will not move
how will anyone know that you are pleased with me
 unless you go with us”
and how we promised you
to teach you of our ways
and to always know you by your name
 although we are no respecter of persons
but you have made us so pleased with you
by your faith and unyielding surrender
that we revealed to you some of our unknown names
and how we sent angels to prepare the way for you
and decreed that we had already given you victory

to take the land we promised to the children of *israaa'ii*
in honor of our covenant with *ibraahiim*
yet the people rebelled and went astray many times
with you intervening even as we served them death
only by the force of your love were we distracted from their sins
only by the beauty of admiring your love and devotion
 did we not bury all their bones in the desert sands
yet
forgiveness does not mean no punishment is served
for some deeds must be punished for they exceed the bounds of
grace
whereby those who exited egypt
were forbidden from entering the land we promised
those who disobeyed this command were killed
and even you, *muusaa*,
 who we love
we had to bar your entry into the promised land
because you interceded and prayed for
 the forgiveness of the faithless
you doubted us after taking the oath
 to never abandon (your) trust (of us) again
by interceding on their behalf
you took part of their sin
therefore, you had to suffer a part of the punishment
 for a sin that could not go unpunished
such punishment had to be served
even if by grace
we allowed you to be buried a stone's throw
 from the promised land
 a land your eyes could see, but not enter

oh *muusaa*,
the strong and trustworthy
your prophethood is a song of sincere determination
for when faced with the hardships of life
you sought not comfort in the fleeting pleasures of sin
but instead sought relief in faith, trusting patience,
 and remembrance of the beloved
for surely all did not fit within your mind's comprehension
when we led you through the desert for forty years
and subjected the people to tests
to reveal the righteous
and expose the wicked to serve them due punishment
the course of these events we did not explain
yet even as the stiff-necked children of *israaa'ii*
 failed and failed again
we heard your wishing prayers
asking that we bestow our spirit on all who followed you
and make them all prophets
who receive, live, and declare our law and revelations
prayers we heard but did not fulfill
because the people continued to sin
even in the face of our continuing wonders
 our continuing providence and protection
yet still you pleaded on their behalf
saving many from the punishment of death
even after we vowed to build a new and better nation through you
an invitation you declined
because you love your people, your nation

oh *muusaa*,
when it became clear to you
that the adults would remain stiff-necked and disobedient
you focused on teaching the children and the generations
yet to come
such that a continuing legacy of your prophethood
is passing the teachings on from generation to generation
such that most of those who came to gather with you
among the nations of prophets
are of those born after you died
for they heard your song before their souls embodied
and vowed to live their oaths of surrender to the beloved
striving in the trails of your footsteps
for their sake, we keep the melodies of your song alive
even through the voices of hypocrites and sinners
that souls coming to be born along the lineage of *ibraahiim*
particularly those of the lineage of *israaa'ii*
may hear your song as water to the seeds
imprinted upon their hearts
as children they are told
how in the days of old
there was a great prophet named *muusaa*
a prophet so devoted and full of love
the beloved visited him often
and called him by his name
and spoke to him directly
and gave him the holy law
which leads all who sincerely follow it
directly to the beloved

muusaa's words could no longer be restrained
as he proclaimed
give me no glory or praise,
give such only to the beloved
for all i did was surrender
and it is within the fullness of surrender
that the beloved fully protects, provides for, and guides
and within
such perfect protection,
perfection provision,
and perfect guidance
one is humbled to realize
all else is insufficient and unimportant
for there is only the beloved

and love the beloved, your lord,
with all your heart and soul and strength
for if you sincerely seek the beloved with these
the beloved will find you
and purge the evil from within you
and purge the evil from around you
so that you will not be tempted to add or subtract
from the holy law revealed
it is only by mercy
that the revelations of the beloved
are placed in your very ears
that by (your) surrender
the revelations may be imprinted upon your heart
for you to live forever

it is not by means of your righteousness
that you receive these blessings
rather by the surrender of your foreparents
ibraahiim and the nations he fathered
and prophets and pious ones who uphold
the covenant the beloved made with him
it is by the means of their surrender
that the inheritance of this covenant
is offered to their descendants
who live lives fit to receive
the blessings of this covenant
its opportunities extending to a thousand generations

this song continues to sing in the heart of *muusaa*
and the line of prophets that follow him
and *muusaa*, as an old prophet, has become so sentimental
that anytime he sees a prophet whose heart
is filled with such a song
he is moved to tears

in seeing *muhammad*,
muusaa not only saw such a song in *muhammad's* heart
but more and more
whereby *muusaa* and *muhammad* passed their time together,
crying
muhammad moved by *muusaa's* tears
and *muusaa* moved more by *muhammad's* tears
and *muhammad* moved even more by *muusaa's* continuing tears
and on and on and on

as they adored and admired the song of love
(they) realized in each other's hearts

the tears of the pious are closer to understanding
for humans are not given minds to understand the beloved
yet signs abound affirming divine glory
such as *muusaa's* clothes and sandals not wearing out
after spending forty years in the treacherous desert
the beloved can support the righteous
from sources unimaginable,
and sometimes unperceived
even when life for the righteous is very difficult
it is not too difficult to bear
in every moment we live
a blessing and a curse is set before us
for the holy law and revelations
are only given to us for our own good
and when we suffer
let us turn to the beloved with all our heart and soul
and when the suffering has passed
let us turn to the beloved with all our heart and soul
let us forget not the hardships we were brought through
for it all points to the treasured possession of remembrance
which leads to the endless wealth of love

when the flowing of their tears had come to an end
muusaa said to *muhammad*
you are to be blessed on this journey
by meeting with the beloved
in the bliss of whatever you are granted

do not forget your nation
most humans are weak
and fall short of the strength of prophets

muhammad nodded his head
knowing it was time to go
and as is the nature of prophets to do when they come together
muusaa and *muhammad* took a moment to share a departing prayer
and in their praying
muhammad prayed for the forgiveness and well-being of *muusaa*
and in their praying
muusaa prayed for the forgiveness and well-being of *muhammad*
and *muusaa* encouraged *muhammad*
to trust and surrender with undying faith
the will of the beloved
for faith succeeds when all else fails
and when faith succeeds,
what righteous person can be defeated
for the disobedient and evil,
 even their success is failure
but for the obedient and righteous,
 even their apparent failure is victory
and *muusaa* encouraged *muhammad*
to let his life be a song
that the guidance and revelations of the beloved
 sing through his living
to let his life lived be a lasting remnant
for the unborn souls coming to follow his footsteps

so that if the adults go astray, as many will,
 the children and future generations are still provided for
 by the continuing emanations of the life you live
establish portents of traditions
that sing guidance into the ears of babes and youth
for that song will remind them
of the oaths imprinted upon their hearts
even if we do not see the beloved directly
the beloved sees us directly, even if from behind veils
and even from behind countless veils
the beloved cares for its righteous children
those who become children of the beloved
by living surrender
even if the trail of your footsteps, *muhammad*
is covered by the sands
of descendants of your nation going astray
know
souls have already vowed
to come and retrace these glorious footsteps
and reestablish the path of *islam* throughout all time
therefore, let the traditions of your nation be shaped
to remember and care for the babes and the children,
 the parented and the orphaned
even when present generations do not care for themselves
do not cater your mission just for those who are present
but let there always be a leaning toward
 those who have yet to come

when their prayers were done
muusaa and *muhammad* shared parting expressions

muhammad carrying within him the unending memory
of what *muusaa* shared
the fathering shepherd who endured with unyielding faith
faith so pure the beloved had to come and talk to him directly

muusaa took a moment to adore once more
the piety and beauty of his cherished brother
watching as *jibriil* led *muhammad* away
to see what remained to be seen of the sixth heaven
before ascending the heights
to continue this wondrous journey
to approach the gates of the seventh heaven



We verily sent Moses with Our revelations,
saying: Bring thy people forth from darkness
unto light. And remind them of the days of
Allaah. Lo! therein are revelations for each
steadfast, thankful (heart).

from *Ibraahiim* (Abraham)

Surah 14, Verse 5

Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

And verily We gave unto Moses the
Scripture and We caused a train of
messengers to follow after him...

from *Al-Baqara* (The Cow)

Surah 2, Verse 87

Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

Again, We gave the Scripture unto Moses,
complete for him who would do good, an
explanation of all things, a guidance and a
mercy, that they might believe in the
meeting with their Lord.

from *Al-An'am* (Cattle)

Surah 6, Verse 154

Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

section:
the seventh heaven

Who is better in religion than [one] who
surrendereth [one's] purpose to Allaah while
doing good (to [humanity]) and followeth the
tradition of Abraham, the upright? Allaah
chose Abraham for friend.

from *An-Nisa* (The Women)
Surah 4, Verse 125

Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

Lo! Abraham was a nation obedient to Allaah,
by nature upright, and he was not of the
idolaters; Thankful for [Allaah's] bounties;
[Allaah] chose him and [Allaah] guided him
unto a straight path. And We gave him good
in the world, and in the Hereafter he is
among the righteous.

from *An-Nahl* (The Bee)
Surah 16, Verses 120-122

Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

oh *muhammad*
peace and blessings are upon you
that this journey brings you
to the gate of the seventh heaven

now i see
what the gates to the place of prostration
seek to imitate

jibriil as the guide
escorted *muhammad* to this immaculate gate
and said
“let the gates be open”
the angels serving as gatekeepers responded
“who is it”
jibriil replied
“it is *jibriil*”
the gatekeepers responded
“is there anyone with you”
jibriil replied
“here is *muhammad*,
also known in the heavens as *ahmad*”
the gatekeepers responded
“has he been called,
has revelation been sent to him,
has his mission been released upon earth”
jibriil replied,
“yes,
yes,
and yes”

the gatekeepers responded
“oh, he is welcomed
what a wonderful visit is his”
and with that
the gates to the seventh heaven were opened

upon seeing the gatekeepers
muhammad greeted them saying
“*as-salaamu alaykum*”
(peace be upon you)
and they responded
“*as-salaamu alaykum wa rahmatullaah*”
(peace and mercy from the beloved be upon you)
for such is how the angels greet all the prophets
and all humans who will enter the gates of paradise
a blessing they express to the blessed
which returns as a blessing to them

it is a grace to be able to bless the blessed
it is a grace that they receive such blessing

to approach that place
where all colors lose their hue
only to be seen by the illumination of essence
the sight of the world cannot comprehend
the sight of love
the breath of what is finite cannot breathe
what is beyond infinity

within the seventh heaven
so many wonders there are
more than words can tell
more than minds can comprehend
words and minds fail
when relaying the wonders of the heavens
so why bother seeking to describe
with words that fail to minds that cannot comprehend

in all its vastness
the seventh heaven makes all the sixth heaven
seem like a small ring lost in a desert
and the sixth heaven makes the entire fifth heaven
seem like a small ring lost in a desert
and the fifth heaven makes the entire fourth heaven
seem like a small ring lost in a desert
and the fourth heaven makes the entire third heaven
seem like a small ring lost in a desert
and the third heaven makes the entire second heaven
seem like a small ring lost in a desert
and the second heaven makes the entire first heaven
seem like a small ring lost in a desert
and the first heaven makes all the earth
seem like a small stone on a small ring lost in a desert
so consider what the earth seems like to the seventh heaven
how small, how small
yet all the vastness of the seventh heaven
was shown to *muhammad*
making his humility even more humble
for there is no end to the wonders of the beloved’s creations

a wonder such as
al-bayt al-ma'muur
the much frequented house
where the angels come to make a pilgrimage of worship
 honoring the beloved
seventy thousand angels come everyday
making their first and last pilgrimage
until the last day has come
yet for every day that occurs,
 seventy thousand new angels come
 who have never been here before
it is remembrance of the beloved that draws them here
this house made in remembrance of the beloved
and in their hunger to worship and praise
they come in complete order, humility, and surrender
to worship the beloved in a way the beloved asks of them

contemplate, if you can
how countless the angels are
that for every day that is,
seventy thousand different angels come to make pilgrimage
immersed in the depth of appreciation
they take not for granted this special trip
for them, the opportunity to make *hajj* (pilgrimage)
is not granted once a year
but once in eternity
until eternity dissolves into the final day

shedding their immaculate appearances
pilgrim angels bathe in a veil of modest light,
 for that is the ceremonial wear of their *hajj*
here, they circumambulate this sacred house
in remembrance that there is only the oneness of the beloved
just as *al-ka'bah* in *makka*, built by *ibraahiim* and *ismaa'il*,
beholds this same sacred purpose
there is a mystical bond that connects
al-ka'bah and *al-bayt al-ma'muur*
as sacred places to make *hajj*
 in honor of the oneness of the beloved

it is an immeasurable mercy
that *al-ka'bah* was built on earth
as a sacred destination for holy pilgrimage and remembrance
a *qiblah* for prayer
a sanctuary to meditate on the beloved
a gift to the many nations that descend from *ibraahiim*
how the angels cried in dismay
when *al-ka'bah* was filled with idols
and reduced to a place of commerce and greed
because while humans forgot,
the angels always remember the holiness
 of *al-ka'bah* and *al-bayt al-ma'muur*
it is by the shared mystical holiness of these sacred houses
that if a stone fell from *al-ka'bah*
a corresponding stone would fall from *al-bayt al-ma'muur*
such that *al-ka'bah* always has the presence of angels circling it
because angels are constantly circumambulating
 al-bayt al-ma'muur

such that *al-ka'bah* always has the fragrance of *hajj*
because the angels are always performing *hajj*
 at *al-bayt al-ma'muur*
such that *al-ka'bah* always has the imprint of devotion and love
because the angels are moving testaments
 of devotion and love at *al-bayt al-ma'muur*

and *muhammad*, witnessing the wonder of *al-bayt al-ma'muur*
thought immediately of those among his nation
from the past, present, and future
who benefit from the unceasing pilgrimage of angels
and the depth of appreciation and remembrance
 they bring to their *hajj*
he prayed for a day
when the sacred tradition of pilgrimage to *al-ka'bah*
would return to the purity of purpose
for which *ibraahiim* and *ismaa'il*
 were commanded to build it
and all commerce,
and all idols,
(whether as things carved
or things held in the mind to be more important than
 or equal to the beloved)
muhammad prayed for a day
when these distractions
would be cast away or placed in a proper place
(of secondary importance)
that our worship of the beloved
 may be worthy of the beloved's attention

that we may worship the beloved
 in ways the beloved asks of us
and the sacred house be purified
adorned with the fragrance of sincere devotion
so those humans who have surrendered to the beloved
may have the opportunity, at least once in a lifetime,
to join with other humans as pilgrims honoring the beloved
and feel in the presence of *al-ka'bah*
the presence of *al-bayt al-ma'muur*
and through sincerity and faith
surrender to be transformed
to one who surrenders the whole of one's life
 to the beloved
so that one's whole life may forever circumambulate
the oneness of the beloved

and moved thus, *muhammad* sought to offer
the depth of his peace to *al-bayt al-ma'muur*
but before he could
the presence of *al-bayt al-ma'muur*
flooded him with immense peace
and he could feel in the humility of the angel pilgrims
how close he is to the beloved
the seventh heaven is among the last of veils
that veil creation from the fullness of the beloved
and there was silence
for what can explain what these veils veil
especially when these veils are removed
so one can feel beyond feeling
what it is

to be close to the fullness of the beloved
in its unrestrained intimacy

those whose hearts are clear to hear,
let them hear this sacred silence

another wonder there was in the seventh heaven
a man sitting amongst a large group of children and babies
muhammad could see in their souls
that most of these youth died while young
before reaching the dawn of adulthood
he could also see the imprint of the man's love
upon the souls of these children and babies
how he cared for them and nurtured them
and prepared them
to stand before the beloved on the day of accounting
that they may enter paradise

muhammad asked *jibriil*

“who is this man”

jibriil replied

“he is your father, the prophet *ibraahiim*
may *allaah* be pleased with him
will you not greet him and pay him respects”

muhammad approached *ibraahiim*, greeting him

“*as-salaamu alaykum*”

(peace be upon you)

and *ibraahiim* responded

“*as-salaamu alaykum wa rahmatullaah*”

(peace and mercy from the beloved be upon you)
welcome, oh pious prophet,
oh beautiful and pious son,
you are welcomed”

and without a single word it was conveyed
as angels gathered around *muhammad's* heart to witness
a timeless moment of sweet and cherished reunion
a father's joy in realizing his child fulfill
the purpose of establishing the road of religion
for *ibraahiim* was called to submit
where there was no road paved through forgetfulness
to guide seeking footsteps in the direction
of remembrance of and submission to the beloved
the steps of his surrender to the beloved
clearing the way of rough rocks, sharp thorns,
and overreaching brush
his life afflicted by the task
of leaving a clear way for his descendants
as he embraced the responsibility of being
a father to many nations

although humans boast,
few are those who would pave a way
of faith and tireless obedience
through the wilderness of ignorance and disobedience
leaving behind one's family and homeland
and everything one knows
in trust of us, the beloved
what such sacrifice entails

the mind cannot fully comprehend
but by the complete openness of his heart to us
we choose *ibraahiim* as our friend
the friend the friend chooses as a friend
al-khaliil-ullaah

for the sake of this sacred friendship
we made a sacred covenant with *ibraahiim*
to care for those descendants of his
who live up to the measure of being his children
rendering the consequences of violating this covenant
till the third and fourth subsequent generations
but offering the blessings of fulfillment of this covenant
to at least a thousand generations to come

to be a child of *ibraahiim* is a vast honor
a lineage not measured solely in blood
although the bloodline places one closer
to his loving presence
to be close to *ibraahiim* as his child
is to fulfill the lineage of obedience
and surrender to the beloved
these are the bonds of family that never fail
when such is available,
why settle for anything else
a bond that makes even a single child
as numerous and valuable as all the stars in the sky
and all the grains of sand on all the beaches
and all the dust that is upon the earth

when one lives to be such a child
one's worth becomes beyond measure

within *ibraahiim* there was always a hunger for us
but there were times when he sought us in the wrong ways,
in the wrong places
for he was born among those who worshiped idols
carvings of their own creation
or things held in their own minds
to possess or share the supremacy of the beloved
or be better able to intercede on their behalf with the beloved
yet
if you ask the aspects of creation they worshiped
their silence would point to the beloved
or the example of their lived existence would declare
worship only the beloved
whether it be the statue of an ancestor
whose greatness sprung from complete surrender to the beloved
or a carving of the sun or the moon,
or the sun or the moon itself
or even an idol created from complete imagination
all speak in various ways
that only the beloved should be worshiped
yet people gone astray make the paths they chose as religion
more important than the lessons of that they worship
more important than the beloved

ibraahiim saw the error of his people worshiping things carved
whether by human hands or the hands of creation
things that have not the power to speak or hear of their own accord

that cannot move on their own
that cannot command or answer prayers
that cannot render benefit or harm
that cannot avail anything but must be tended to
that cannot do anything on their own
realizing the error of his people's way
ibraahiim set out to find his own way

even when his father threatened to stone him to death,
ibraahiim refused to worship the idols of his father
declaring himself to be guiltless of that his people worshiped
besides the absolute, the supreme
instead, *ibraahiim* sought to find *al-haqq* (the truth)
that his worship may be pure and without intermediaries
in his searching, he looked to the night sky
where a star shone bright among the prevailing darkness
and, in his wanting, he deemed,
this star must be my lord
but when the star set, *ibraahiim* was moved to question
how can i love as my lord that which falls away
how can that which is supreme be subject to anything
even in his ignorance he knew this could not be the absolute
so he declared:

“i love not things that set”

then the moon began to rise
and, in his wanting, *ibraahiim* took it to be his lord
but then the moon set, to leave him disappointed again
yet in his searching was a prayer that would deliver him

“unless my lord guide me,
i am sure to be of those who go astray”
but his reliance upon us was not yet complete
for when the sun began to rise,
uplifting in its radiant magnificence
he deemed its rising greater than the moon's ascent
and figured, in his wanting mind,
the sun must be my lord
yet at day's end
he found the sun setting
like the star and the moon before
again he was left face to face with his own folly
of regarding something other than the absolute, the supreme
to be the most high

oh, the mind will seek to find its gods in what it can perceive
and how often is the mind colored by its own desires
within the mind's perception is its unspoken proclaimed
supremacy
because for anything to be perceived by the mind
it must fall within the limitations of the mind's perception
the mind cannot perceive what exceeds its limitations
but if you ask the heart, which is boundless,
and even the stars, the moon, and the sun will affirm
no mind can perceive the absolute
no perception comprehends the supreme

how foolish many of us are
to seek to find the beloved

with the mind
and its perceptions

no ocean can be fully seen by seeing a drop of its water
and even the most vast mind cannot even see
a whole drop of water of the endless ocean that is the beloved
such is the glory of all glory
such is the magnificence of what is beyond magnificence
such is truth
such is reality
such is the absolute, the supreme

but by grace, *ibraahiim* was given that prayer
“unless my lord guide me,
 i am sure to be of those who go astray”
yes, it is we who placed this prayer in his perception
but it was his willingness to move beyond his own mind
and embrace this prayer with the heart
that unlocked the fulfillment of this prayer within him

it is so simple
it eludes the minds of most people

“unless my lord guide me,
 i am sure to be of those who go astray”
when the mind is surrendered,
and all desires humbled and restrained,
 especially to such a prayer
we can reach the sincere through their hearts

and they can be found (by us)
 instead of foolishly trying to find
 that which cannot be found
and they can be guided (by us)
 instead of foolishly trying to guide themselves
 to that which is beyond their perception

we find whom we choose
we guide whom we choose

when *ibraahiim* surrendered just the wanderings of his mind
including his well-intentioned desire
 of finding the absolute, the supreme
when *ibraahiim* surrendered
we spoke to him through his heart
to turn away from his own mind and the misguided minds of others
to leave what is familiar to embrace what is beyond (his) knowing
to turn his face to that subtle awareness
that creates and sustains the stars, the moons, and all the suns
and all that is in the heavens
and all that is in the earth
there is no absolute but the absolute
there is no supreme but the supreme
there is no beloved but the beloved
there is no reality but *allaah*

your vision cannot grasp us
we grasp your vision
to unfailingly guide you to us,
your lord, your beloved

but if you do not hear us
when we speak to you through the heart
you make it as if
we never spoke at all

oh, you who are heading in the wrong directions
treading your own paths that only go astray
realize what is deceiving you and stop your misguided pursuits
more often than not it is your own mind,
 your own desires
even if these cleverly project blame on outer things
cease the motions of your own mind
restrain your own desires
to embrace *ibraahiim*'s prayer
“unless my lord guide me,
 i am sure to be of those who go astray”
without this prayer
even the prophet *ibraahiim* would have remained lost

the mind and its desires will hesitate not
to imagine their own religion and righteousness
and even the imagined fulfilment of these
unless the mind is quieted and its desires are restrained
even if such imagination seems exceedingly wonderful
it is nothing more than a path gone astray
it is only we who guide whom we will
on a straight path that reaches the abode of peace
 there is no other way
if you wish to be among those whom we guide
quiet your mind and restrain your desires

until you are able to
surrender your mind and your desires
to us

oh, seekers of truth,
 you in pursuit of reality
bring the mind to the stillness of quietude
by focusing only on the beloved
bring your desires to a state of restraint
by learning to be content with what you have
(even in face of what you do not have)
so you may hear the callings we make (to you) through the heart
for rarely will we guide you through the mind
 and even less rare through desires
these are too full of their own thoughts,
 deceptions, imaginations,
 impressions, and misguided inclinations
but the heart is a straight (direct) path for (our) guidance
(oh beloved, guide us on the straight path)
therein, within the heart,
is clarity that never need be doubted
even when the mind is boisterous and rebellious,
 wicked and confused
even when desires are lusting in their wantings
look to the heart
therein you will find (our) genuine guidance
the guidance of truth,
 the guidance of reality,
 the guidance of love,
 the guidance of pure absolute awareness

you will never find us going your own way
you will never find truth, reality, love,
 or pure absolute awareness
 going your own way
but if you surrender (your way) to our way,
we always find you
always

for those who are not yet ready to surrender
and relinquish the bondage of the mind
and the chains of desires
for the sake of our friend, *al-khaliil-ullaah*
we send prophets and messengers and saints
with revelations and proofs
that reveal the road of true religion
a road cleared by the living example of their footsteps
submit the mind and desires to this road
 even within the limits
 of their own perceptions and wantings
submit the mind and desires to the road of true religion
to avert being lost on paths that go astray
paths that may forever turn you away from the beloved

set your life to the example of the footsteps
 of the prophets and messengers and saints
set your approach to life to how they live
and quiet the mind and restrain the desires
that these may be polished, cultivated,
 stilled, and purified
to no longer be barriers to surrender

thus, allowing the sovereignty of the heart to rule
where then the sincere are made ready to receive
direct guidance from the beloved
 through the heart
even scriptures read a thousand times
then read again will speak anew
a speaking in the present moment
that relays the guidance of the beloved
which leads to the fulfillment of the beloved's will

in the realization of this was the inspiration
that overflows through *ibraahiim's* heart
to relinquish his way to embrace our way
to yield his mind and desires to our will
to trust and submit and surrender to us in perfect obedience
to do whatever we ask or command him to do,
 no matter what
after embracing surrender, he never refused or rejected us
even when there was nothing in his mind or desires
to realize and justify the logic of serving our will
he found the trust of our friendship with him,
 within his heart
the freedom of surrender that dwells
on the straight path leading to us
because only we, the beloved, guide with unerring guidance
all else has the potential to lead astray,
 a potential often manifested
but *ibraahiim* also realized with his heart
with (our) guidance comes duty

for we guide whom we will,
and lead astray whom we will
a will that is all-knowing
and always just
and always perfect

the beloved makes no mistakes
in guiding whom the beloved guides
and leading astray whom the beloved leads astray
few greater treasures there are than to be guided
few worse tragedies there are than to be lead astray

it is for these reasons
ibraahiim urged his people to abandon worship of idols
and when they ignored his arguments
he destroyed the graven objects in their temple
it was an act of mercy
that he sought to break them
from the bondage of their minds and desires
a bondage that would not turn away
from worshiping that which would forever keep them
turned away from the beloved
and when they questioned him,
ibraahiim told them to question their idols
for if these behold or share in the supremacy of the absolute
these should be able to say who destroyed them
instead of realizing the truth of his words
they threw *ibraahiim* into a large burning fire
choosing to continue worshiping idols over accepting truth
even here is a telling lesson,

for we guide whom we choose
and we, the friend, abandon not those who we befriend
we protect those friends who remain obedient to us
so we made the burning flames cool to *ibraahiim's* body
because he trusted, surrendered, and submitted to us
with the whole of his heart and being
and we made him to depart his hometown with hostility for them
for they refused truth, the callings of reality

trusting the inspiration we placed in his heart
we led *ibraahiim*, his wife, and nephew to a land they knew not
sarah and *luut* being the only family left for him
even when his mind was visited by doubts
and his desires stirred to wanting
his heart dwelled in trust of us
and our providence
from nothing, we gave him great wealth
and protected him through many dangers
to establish our covenant with him
a lasting inheritance
for those of his descendants
who make their lives to fit within his prayer
“unless my lord guide me,
i am sure to be of those who go astray”
in living this prayer,
ibraahiim never went astray

we even gave him children when he was old in years
the seeds of many nations he still remains a father to
we filled *ibraahiim's* life with honors

that will shine beyond the last of days
because he never abandoned the prayer
 that his lord is his only guide
even the willingness to sacrifice the blessings we gave him
he embraced
such as when he laid his son, whom he loved,
whom he endured many long years of patience to receive
how *ibraahiim* laid his own son upon the sacrificial altar
ready to kill him to fulfill our command
a sacrifice we averted at the last of moments
ibraahiim wouldn't even let the blessings we bestowed upon him
hinder his surrender to our guiding will
for this reason we are to him the near, the intimate
and make him the father of many nations,
 a father of the prophets
you will see his prayer present
in all the revelations the prophets declare
“unless my lord guide me,
 i am sure to be of those who go astray”
we made him a leader for all of humanity
a model for every righteous soul who seeks (the) truth

although many cherish *ibraahiim's* stories
most live not the reality of heart he lives
out of the whole sea of humanity,
 he is one of the few drops we can rely upon
this is why he is our friend
this is why we choose him to be our friend
the friend of the friend
al-khaliil-ullaah

muhammad was overcome by deep emotion
and abounding appreciation
and unending humility
seeing *ibraahiim* only confirmed
his paternal presence that is always present in *muhammad's* life
 and the lives of all who live as children to *ibraahiim*
a parental love reflecting the love of the beloved
yet *ibraahiim* sought to impart one more prayer
 into the heart of *muhammad*
a prayer that only a caring parent could impart

muhammad could see in *ibraahiim's* eyes
the sight of the angels who came to visit him
 while en route to sodom and gomorrah
although he was touched with joy
by the good news
that his old barren wife would birth him a son
as a father of the righteous,
ibraahiim was concerned
about the pending doom of sodom and gomorrah
vile places where the ignorance of evil had accumulated such
that the people there sought to defile holy angels
no longer was there any place there for love and truth
cities worthy of complete destruction
abhorrent stench upon the earth they had become
our tolerance of their sins was long
and they could not claim ignorance about other evil places
 we destroyed because of unrelenting wickedness
the stories of such destruction were known in sodom and gomorrah
yet *ibraahiim*, in his abounding compassion and care,

spoke on behalf of those vile cities
although none of the destruction was coming his way
he asked his lord
will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked
although the evil of sodom and gomorrah
must needs be destroyed

ibraahiim prayed and pleaded to the beloved
if there be but fifty righteous people
fifty who seek to be guided by you
for just the sake of those fifty
let those entire cities of thousands
be spared their due destruction

the meditating mystic interjects
for some will not realize the significance of this request
why not pray just for the protection of the righteous
and let all the other wicked ones be destroyed
how i am reminded
of my first realization of love and truth
a realization made within an imperfect state
a culmination of imperfectly striving
on the road of religion for many years
leading to the opportunity of the most perfect realization
love of truth and (the) truth of love
that in this dreamworld fabric of causes
 effecting effects and causes
it is all one fabric
even if woven with the appearance of many threads
although the imperfections of (my) ignorance

are abhorrences to my beloved
my beloved will not take away
those imperfections that lead to (my) perfection
even if these cause great harm
 and suffering
 and unnecessary hardship

for how many of the righteous
are our lives woven with threads of unrighteousness
until we transcend both
 even (our) righteousness
to just dwell in love and truth
even the fabric of the path to such transcendence
shares the perfections of righteousness
and the imperfections of unrighteousness
steps of a path leading (to) home
but once home is reached,
 the path is no longer needed
yet for those on the path
it may be that they presently need
the unrighteous as much as righteousness
just as it was within the presence of idol worshipers
that *ibraahiim* was moved to seek
guidance that comes only from the beloved
a realization to seek only the beloved directly
after foolishly seeking to worship things created
(the star, the moon, the sun)
yet be aware
this only applies to those imperfections that lead to perfection
any imperfections not leading to such

are unnecessary and useless
let them be avoided, released, or destroyed

don't delude yourself into thinking
(for all thinking happens in the mind)
that you need unnecessary imperfections
for even the necessary ones are needed only to be released
and transcended
so if there is any doubt
about whether an imperfection is necessary
release it
for even the necessary imperfections are destined to be released
if you are being led to perfection

mourn not for that which should not be mourned
care not for that which should not be cared for
seek not to protect that which is best to be destroyed
even if your purpose is only to love
 even to love those who will be destroyed
let those with other purposes serve their purposes
and for a select few
their purpose is to destroy what needs be destroyed
such as the angels sent to sodom and gomorrah

what the beloved wills to be destroyed
only a fool would be against such destruction

but back to *ibraahiim*
how he prayed and pleaded to the beloved
if there be fifty righteous who seek to be guided by you

for just those fifty
let sodom and gomorrah be spared
 the destruction they have earned
and we, who are the benefice of benefice,
 the mercy of mercy,
conceded
that if there be fifty righteous ones,
 the whole of those wicked cities would be spared

ibraahiim was content for a moment
yet he wondered if his request was insufficient
if he had set the standard too high
if there were actually fifty righteous ones
 among those many thousands
so he made another plea
confessing to being nothing but dust and ashes
but compelled by the compassion in his heart
he requested that the number be reduced by five
and adoring the love and concern of our chosen friend
we conceded again
to withhold due and just destruction
 if there be but forty-five righteous ones

yet still troubled,
ibraahiim pleaded again and again
that the number be reduced to forty
and then thirty
and then twenty
and then only ten
and we conceded yet again

if there be but ten righteous ones
ten among those cities of thousands and thousands
 who seek to be guided by us
for those ten we would repel a doom that cannot be repelled
for such was the stench of sin emanating from sodom
 and gomorrah

although *ibraahiim* wished to reduce the number further
he knew not to ask for such
for even mercy has a limit
 to protect and distinguish what is mercy
and what the absolute supreme concedes
 should not be tested beyond due measure
but for the sake of ten among thousands and thousands
 just ten
we refrain from destroying many imperfections
 which lead not to (our) perfection
refrain from destroying stench of evil
 that have forever turned away from the beloved
refrain from destroying that which warrants destruction

the meditating mystic interjects again
oh, you who have not yielded your imperfections
acknowledge and honor those
who seek and live the guidance of the beloved
it is for their sake due destruction is delayed
even if they amount to but a teardrop in the ocean
it is for their sake due destruction is delayed
although the abomination of sin calls for immediate ruin

the meditating mystic continues on to say
despite the pleading prayer of *ibraahiim*
sodom and gomorrah were destroyed
 reduced to smoldering, stinking ashes
only three were allowed to find refuge in the mountains
only three out of thousands and thousands
for no longer was there any place in these cities for love and truth
the thorned weeds choking every growing space for good plants
and if there be not ten among thousands
why should a seeker of truth remain there
why even have the beloved have to contemplate
the fate of the righteous within the presence of such wickedness
let the seekers of love find other places to be
where they may gather to be at least ten among thousands
run to the mountains without looking back if you must
and mourn not for that which should not be mourned
and care not for that which should not be cared for
be a vagabond for love if there is no earthly home for you
for the love of the beloved
will be your protecting grace
if you surrender (your) life for love
the beloved will be your shelter on the unroofed plains
and will even redirect cold winds and raining clouds
 to keep you dry and warm
even if in the blinding darkness of moonless nights
 you walk off a cliff,
the beloved will place firm ground underneath your feet
even if you wander barren deserts that creatures cannot survive
the beloved will shower manna from the heavens upon your head
and transform the falling crumbs

into drops of quenching water to wet your dry throat
doubt not
even if you sit for forty-nine days and nights
upon the summits of high, isolated mountains
the beloved will roll blankets up the heights
to cover you from the cold of night
and blow forth clouds to shield you from the burning light of day
such is the protecting grace of the love of the beloved
such is the wonderful protecting grace of the love of the beloved

if you must, become a vagabond for love
the beloved will not leave you unattended or uncared for
but if you ignore calls from the beloved
to depart places where there is no longer
 any place for love and truth
be not surprised if the beloved withdraws all love from you
and without love
everything you have will eventually be destroyed or lost
often sooner than later
but even what you possess will prove worthless
because it is separate from love

and *ibraahiim* said to *muhammad*
even if the world denies you a place of peace
to be a blossoming depth of love and truth
be denied by the world
but place your trust in and surrender to the beloved
for the beloved will open heavens' gates to you

that you may blossom there in the depth of peace
 the depth of truth
 the depth of love
the life of the world is but a fleeting pastime
 that serves as an invitation to paradise
for the righteous,
the world is nothing more than a step on the path to home
the path to love, the path to truth,
 the path to pure absolute awareness
 the path to supreme peace that surpasses all understanding
that is my lord, the absolute, the supreme
the beloved

but if you, in your own mind, make the path your home
instead of a path to (your) home
then you have none but yourself to blame
for being a homeless traveler
forever lost

ibraahiim continued on, saying
the beloved will not destroy the righteous with the wicked
but if the beloved sends destruction to the wicked
do not remain among them
for even i had to leave my hometown,
 everyone and everything i knew
so the beloved could give me another land to live upon
precious valleys flowing with milk and honey
a better share than what i left
so it may be with you, *muhammad*
that you may have to leave your hometown

to be established somewhere else
a place to build a community of those
who seek the guidance of my lord
fear not and abandon all despair,
for you are my child
a rightful inheritor of my covenant
my prayers and care are with you
my prayers and care are with you, my child

and *ibraahiim* laid his hands upon *muhammad*
continuing in prayer, he declared
oh my lord,
please make us surrender to you
a nation of nations submitting to you
and only you
please guide us as to how to worship and honor and serve you
as you would have us worship and honor and serve
please be merciful and merciful and merciful to us
please forgive us of our many sins,
 especially those we are unaware of
please keep us mindful of your revelations
and those who you send to live and declare what you reveal
please let us keep this in our hearts
that we may sincerely surrender to your will

oh my lord,
please protect us from those who go astray
please protect us from our own willingness to go astray
instead
please remind my children of my example

a road for them to follow if they find themselves in doubt
please tell all my children
to not be confused by the dramas of the world
instead to seek your guidance in every moment,
 in every situation
for in every moment and every situation
you make yourself and your love available to us
you who never abandon us,
 even when we abandon and disobey you

oh my lord,
please tell all my children
to not forget the prayer of their father *ibraahiim*
for your guidance is always present and always perfect
and let them seek your guidance in the present moment
for the guidance of yesterday and the guidance for tomorrow
may not be the guidance of today
 the guidance of this moment
but the guidance of the present moment always leads to paradise
always
always

oh my lord,
please let all my children know
there is plenty of space in paradise
where the land is good and plentiful,
filled with gardens underneath which precious rivers flow
where they are greeted with peace
and share the company of only good companions
if you are willing, oh my lord,

please let all my children strive for paradise
and strive for paradise
and strive for paradise

 with all their heart and being
only you provide the way there
because, oh my lord, if you do not guide us
we are all surely to go astray

there is only one destination for all who go astray
and it is not paradise

forget not these prayers
for in living the heart of these prayers
one can become one the beloved relies upon
and if the beloved can rely upon you
you become a friend of the friend
and if you become a friend of the friend
the beloved may choose you
to be a friend of the beloved

may all who receive the precious gift and duty
of being a parent
fulfill the measure of being a good parent
just as *ibraahiim* is a righteous father
 his paternal example being among the greatest treasures
 he passes on to his lineage

may all who receive the duty and blessing
of being children
meet the measure of *muhammad*

by treading upon the good road laid by righteous parents
that unfailingly leads to paradise
this road has not led a single child to hell

and there was a moment of silence
as the resonance of *ibraahiim*'s prayer filled all the seventh heaven
and all the heavens were brought to stillness
the humility of peace

when *ibraahiim* pulled his hands from *muhammad*
they both knew it was time for *muhammad* to go
and as is the nature of prophets to do when they come together
ibraahiim and *muhammad* took a moment to share a
 departing prayer
and in their praying
muhammad prayed for the forgiveness and well-being of *ibraahiim*
and in their praying
ibraahiim prayed for the forgiveness and well-being of *muhammad*
and *ibraahiim* encouraged *muhammad*
to serve with unending faith
his unfolding mission as a messenger of the beloved
and to not forget and to impart unto his nation
that it is only the beloved that provides unerring guidance
a guidance we should humbly and earnestly seek directly
even if in humility we seek and follow the example of those
 rare few
who receive and live unerringly the guidance of the beloved
that even *muhammad*, in all his greatness,
if he did not surrender to allow the beloved to guide him
even *muhammad*, that gem of the universe,

would have gone astray
and *ibraahiim* encouraged *muhammad*
to not forget and to impart unto his nation
that the beloved will not destroy the righteous with the wicked
the beloved will protect and guide
those who live to be children of *ibraahiim*
so do not forget your father *ibraahiim*,
and the lessons his life reflects
because he cares for you more than you may realize
his care approaching but not reaching
the unsurpassed care of the beloved

when their prayers were done
ibraahiim and *muhammad* shared parting expressions
muhammad carrying within him the unending memory
of what *ibraahiim* shared and imparted into his heart
that even as a child of *ibraahiim*
muhammad realized
he must be in some ways as a father to his *ummah*

ibraahiim took a moment to adore once more
the piety and beauty of his cherished son
one who fulfills to perfection
what it is to be a child of *ibraahiim*
tears of joy rolled from *ibraahiim's* eyes
as he watched as *jibriil* led *muhammad* away
to see what remained to be seen of the seventh heaven
before ascending the heights
to continue this wondrous journey
to the limits of the seventh heaven

and that great lote tree beyond which only exists
the throne of the beloved



And We left for him among the later folk
(the salutation): Peace be unto Abraham!
Thus do We reward the good.

from *As-Saffat* (Those Who Set The Ranks)
Surah 37, Verses 108 - 110
Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

Say (O Muslims): We believe in Allaah and
that which is revealed unto us and that which
was revealed unto Abraham, and Ishmael,
and Isaac, and Jacob, and the tribes, and that
which Moses and Jesus received, and that
which the prophets received from their Lord.
We make no distinction between any of
them, and unto [Allaah] we have surrendered.

from *Al-Baqarah* (The Cow)
Surah 2, Verse 136
Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

section:
beyond the farthest limit

The Reality! What is the Reality? Ah, what
will convey unto thee what the Reality is!

from *Al-Haqqah* (The Reality)

Surah 69, Verses 1 -3

Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

Then he drew nigh and came down till he
was (distant) two bows' length or even
nearer, and [Allaah] revealed unto [Allaah's]
slave that which [Allaah] revealed. The heart
lied not (in seeing) what it saw.

from *An-Najm* (The Star)

Surah 53, Verses 8 - 11

Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

if one does not realize the beloved in the heart
how can one see the beloved on the throne

no footsteps can bring you here
no seeking will bring you any closer
only in the purest depths of humility
can one be drawn to this holiest of all that is holy

there are glories enveloping us that we will never perceive
for if we did, we would regret every millisecond
we do not spend honoring the beloved
there are treasures beyond perception
that call us to the sweetest of surrenders
and among these treasures is *sidrat al-muntahaa*
the lote tree of the farthest limit

oh *muhammad*

peace and blessings are upon you
that you arrive at *sidrat al-muntahaa*

there are no gates here
no need for angels to stand guard
there are no waters to separate it
or barriers to protect it
no need to even conceal it
for only those drawn here can arrive
so it would be incorrect to say *jibriil* led *muhammad* here
instead, *jibriil* was before *muhammad*
as they were both drawn to the farthest limit
where stands a massive tree

its size and beauty are beyond description
but know
with one of its leaves,
 it can envelope whole nations
its fruit so sweet that even the sweetest fruit on earth
 compared to it is exceedingly sour

upon each leaf there is an angel
here with the sole purpose of engaging in the bliss
 of praising the beloved
endowed with colors that would make
 the most colorful sight on earth seem bland
and prayers so beautiful, that if humans heard them
instantly their minds would destroy themselves
 lacking the purity to even witness such prayers
yet despite the millions and millions of angels
uttering aloud their prayers and praise
the harmony of their voices is as a sweet silence

just to be here is to experience a passing fragrance of paradise
no bliss in the world can compare with being at this tree
yet this tree compares not to an imitation of paradise
where the bliss there is not passing
but everlastingly everlasting

at the foot of *sidrat al-muntahaa*,
jibriil revealed the fullness of its form
and its former reserved appearance seemed so obsolete
the immaculate sublime of *jibriil's* unrestrained beauty
overwhelmed *muhammad* so

that he started to bow to *jibriil*
but *jibriil* quickly prevented him, saying
all praise and worship should be only for the beloved
even in the fullness of my overflowing form
i compare not even with the shadow of our lord

jibriil went on to say
only the rarest of the rarest of the rare
are drawn to this point
and even among that rare,
only the rarest of that rarest rare
are drawn beyond
for between the beloved and most of its creation
are thousands and thousands and thousands of veils
because of the impurity they live
by turning away from the beloved
yet even with me
who has never turned away,
 not even for the smallest instant of time
there exist a handful of veils
for without these veils
even i, in (my) angelic perfection,
cannot exist as a serving angel
cannot exist as a creation distinct from the beloved
which is why i cannot accompany you beyond this point
but you, *muhammad*,
have been called to be drawn closer
it is here that the heavens stop
where beyond the court of the beloved endlessly begins
 to never end

where beyond awaits the hereafter and its paradise
where beyond is *al-kursi*, the throne of the beloved
beyond this point i have never been
beyond this point i have no knowledge or knowing of
beyond this point is beyond all perception,
conception,

and description
yet beyond you are called to be drawn
fear not, just surrender
for beyond is only the fullness of the beloved
all your journey through all the seven heavens
were only baby steps to this destination beyond

with that,
jibriil ascended to a leaf upon the tree
as a light overtook the sight of everything
and *muhammad* was snatched beyond

the greatest of miracles were instantly reduced to petty feats
as *muhammad* was pulled beyond the impassable veils
all that is possible is nothing,
only the impossible begins to approach
the full power and ability of the beloved
muhammad's perception dissolved into the perception
of perception
as the knowing of all was realized
all time, space, and duality immediately dissolved
into the endless endlessness
i, you, me, we

neither affirmed or negated
only the all of the beloved is

what is reality
even the question is unworthy of itself
for any response can only speak but poor metaphors
and that which we call *muhammad*
that perfect light
embodied in heart, soul, and body
was pulled beyond the impassable veils
until but only one veil remained
a veil of light which blinds all sight
muhammad and all that he is
ceased to be and yet still is
while in such intimate presence with
the only being of the beloved

if *muhammad* was taken beyond that last veil
even the memory of him would be removed
from all time and all that is timeless
but by the mercy of the beloved
and the prophetic mission bestowed upon him
the memory of him was retained
to be sent back to earth
to complete the seal of his prophecy

the reality
what is reality
only reality can convey what reality is
and only the heart can contain

the memory of experiencing this
memories the mind and body cannot fathom
yet alone express
yet there the heart of *muhammad* was
(and still is
and will be until the end of time)
closer than two bows' length to the throne of the beloved
with only a blinding light
to veil the fullness of the beloved
that which no perception can grasp
nor any language begin to convey
muhammad
was annihilated to the essence
for this is the purest of purest prayers

the lover before the beloved
the one surrendering prostrated before
 that which it surrenders to
what greater prayer can be fulfilled
all of creation will never be the same again

most of what *muhammad* "experienced"
(for lack of a better word)
he could not reveal
for the realities of the seven heavens expand beyond
the mind's ability to comprehend
then how much more
for what is beyond the farthest limit
for what is at the very throne of the beloved
but some things registered as metaphors

that pitifully attempt to reflect
 as impressions upon his heart
a heart forever marked by the bliss
of such complete intimate encounter with the beloved

it is only for the sake of his love for his nation
that *muhammad* did not request to never leave the throne
a request the beloved would have granted without hesitation
muhammad, unlike most, willingly returned
from the wonder of bliss
to this world scarred by unending ignorance and suffering
muhammad willingly returned
to share the *barakah* of this meeting with the beloved
such as the memory
of hearing the divine pen scribing
that never ceases in writing and rewriting
the fates of humans
as affected by whether we obey or disobey
 turn to or turn away from the beloved
and such as the memory
of a name that has a meaning beyond all meanings
that *muhammad* is *habibullaah*
 beloved of the beloved
and such as the memory
that imprinted upon *muhammad's* heart
that in prayer, he would be as he is
 when he is before the throne of the beloved
and the graceful blessing of such prayer
would be also be upon the hearts
of all who sincerely follow *muhammad*

and set the direction of their lives by his living example
even if the mind is blind to such blessing
the blessing unfolds upon such ones nonetheless

thus, he remembered the decree the beloved put upon him
that his nation make fifty prayers a day
to be immersed in this glory of prayer
but at the suggestion of *muusaa*
who wisely saw the immoral
and egotistical weaknesses of humans
muhammad, at *muusaa*'s bidding,
went back and forth to the lote tree
to request that the decree of prayer be reduced
until eventually it was reduced to five prayers a day
just five
yet the beloved, in abounding mercy,
made the power of one such prayer to count as ten
so that even in performing merely five prayers a day
the obedient of *muhammad*'s nation may still fulfill
the original decree to perform fifty prayers a day

for those who surrender to the heart of surrender
to be a vessel for the purest prayer
for them their prayers place them
at the very footstool of the beloved
within such prayer
you will not only find the heart of *muhammad*
but the heart of all the prophets and messengers
within your very own heart
within such prayer is the very bread of life

(not the life of this world but of reality)
for such prayer places one in the presence of
truth, love, and (that) pure absolute awareness of the beloved
when in the presence of such
you do not pray
you become a pure vessel for
the beloved to pray through you to the beloved

the beloved
loving the beloved
and loving the lover
through the heart of the lover

thus, invigorated
thus, inspired
muhammad received all the knowledge and knowing
he would ever need to fulfill his mission on earth
thus, the year of sadness
led to a timeless night of indescribable joy and victory
the hardships of (his) life
were brought to the table of flourishing ease and peace
and he came to live the understanding of
fa-'inna ma'al-'usri yusraa
'inna ma'al-usri yusraa
fa'idha faraghta fanşab
wa'ila rabbika farghab
[Translation:
"but lo! after hardship goeth ease
lo! after hardship goeth ease

so when thou art relieved, still toil
and strive to please thy lord”]

● ❖ ○

Say: Who is Lord of the seven heavens, and
Lord of the Tremendous Throne?

from *Al-Mu'minun* (The Believers)
Surah 23, Verse 86

Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

[Allaah] knoweth that which is in front of
them and that which is behind them, while
they encompass nothing of [Allaah's]
knowledge save what [Allaah] wills.
[Allaah's] throne includeth the heavens and
the earth, and He is never weary of
preserving them. [Allaah] is the Sublime,
the Tremendous.

from *Al-Baqara* (The Cow)
Surah 2, Verse 255

Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

And that thy Lord, [Allaah] is the goal.

from *An-Najm* (The Star)
Surah 53, Verse 42

Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

section:
the epilogue

The Prophet is closer to the believers than their selves...

from *Al-Ahzab* (The Clans)

Surah 33, Verse 6

Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

O [humanity]! Keep your duty to your Lord
and fear a Day when the parent will not be
able to avail the child in aught, nor the child
to avail the parent. Lo! Allaah's promise is
the very truth. Let not the life of the world
beguile you, nor let the deceiver beguile
you, in regard to Allaah.

from *Luqman*

Surah 31, Verse 33

Translation of Qur'aan by Marmaduke Pickthall

thus, in a timeless moment of prayer
the young woman found herself
upon her knees to hear the old lady say
“and we end the prayer
by turning first to our right shoulder to say
as-salaamu alaykum wa rahmatullaah
then we turn to the left and say again
as-salaamu alaykum wa rahmatullaah
in this way, we wish peace
upon those who are praying beside us
as well as the angel on our right shoulder
who records all our good deeds
and the angel on our left shoulder
who keeps a record of our bad ones”

and there was a silence
the young woman still returning to the consciousness of her body
for she could feel that it was led through the prayer
yet she could feel beyond feeling
the resonance of the journey of the prayers of the *mi'raaj*
why even try to put in words what her heart was basking in

prayer is a gift beyond our ability to fully appreciate
for how can we thank that which needs no prayer
yet gives us, through prayer,
the opportunity to be everlastingly connected with the beloved
and, if we surrender into the depths of purity,
the opportunity to be before the very throne of the beloved

the old lady continued
“when we pray with another
it is tradition to say
‘may *allaah* receive our prayers’
and then rub our hands over our faces this way”

as the young woman rubbed her hands over her face
a warm tear fell from her eye

“this is beautiful”

“prayer, when done from the heart
is beyond description
i just consider myself blessed
to have received this tradition from the prophet,
peace be upon him
i make my best efforts
to make my every prayer with a sense of deepening gratitude”

the old lady smiled
“but this is just the introduction
a first time
you may be surprised what this simple prayer can become”

within that old lady’s smile
are messages that surpass what words can say



Prayers of the Mi'raaj
Glossary

~ A ~

aadam - Arabic name for the prophet Adam (a.s.)

abu talib - An uncle of the prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.s.)

ahmad - One of the names of the prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.s.)

al-barr - A name of the Beloved, can be translated as "The Doer of Good."

al-faatihah - The Opening, first chapter of the *Qur'aan*.

al-haadii - A name of the Beloved, can be translated as "The Guide."

al-hakiim - A name of the Beloved, can be translated as "The Wise."

al-haqq - A name of the Beloved, can be translated as "The Truth."

al-islam - (See islam.)

al-jabbaar - A name of the Beloved, can be translated as "The Compeller."

al-kariim - A name of the Beloved, can be translated as "The Generous."

al-khaaliq - A name of the Beloved, can be translated as "The Creator."

al-khaliil-ullaah - A name of the Beloved, can be translated as "the friend of Allaah."

al-malik - A name of the Beloved, can be translated as "The Lord of All."

al-mu'min - A name of the Beloved, can be translated as "The Illuminator of Faith (within the heart.)"

al-waduud - A name of the Beloved, can be translated as "The Loving (One.)"

al-wahhaab - A name of the Beloved, can be translated as "The Bestower."

al-walii - A name of the Beloved, can be translated as "The Protecting Friend."

al-yashbi - Wife of the prophet *Zakariyyaa* (Zachariah), can be translated as Elisabeth in English.

allaah - A name of the Beloved, considered the greatest name of the Beloved.

allaahu akbar - Can be translated as “allaah is the greatest.”

an-nuur - A name of the Beloved, can be translated as “The Light.”

ar-rahmaan - A name of the Beloved, can be translated as “The Beneficent.”

ar-rahiim - A name of the Beloved, can be translated as “The Merciful” or “The Compassionate.”

ar-rashiid - A name of the Beloved, can be translated as “The Righteous Teacher.”

as-sabuur - A name of the Beloved, can be translated as “The Patient (One)” or “The Most Patient (One).”

as-salaam - A name of the Beloved, can be translated as “The (Supreme) Peace.”

“*as-salaamu alaykum*” - Can be translated as “peace be upon you.”

“*as-salaamu alaykum wa rahmatullaah*” - Can be translated as “peace and mercy from the beloved be upon you.”

ash-shahiid - A name of the Beloved, can be translated as “The Witness.”

astaghfiruullaah - Can be translated as “I seek forgiveness from Allaah.”

ayyuub - Arabic name for the prophet Job.

azraa'iiil - Arabic name for the angel of death.

~ B ~

barakaa - Can be translated as “blessings.”

bismillaah - Can be translated as “in the name of allaah.”

buraaq - The small four-legged creature that carried the prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.s.) on the Night Journey.

~ D ~

dhuul-jalaali wal-ikraam - A name of the Beloved, can be translated as “The Lord of Majesty and Bounty.”

~ E ~

ehyeh asher ehyeh - A Hebrew name of the Beloved, can be translated as “I am that I am.”

~ H ~

haajar - Arabic name for Hagar, wife (some say concubine) of *Ibraahiim* (Abraham) (a.s.), mother of *Ismaa'il* (Ishmael) (a.s.)

habiib - Can be translated as “beloved.”

habiibullaah - A name of the prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.s.), can be translated as “The Beloved of Allaah.”

hannah - Arabic name of the mother of *Maryam* (Mary), grandmother of *Iisaa* (a.s.) (Jesus.)

haaruun - Arabic name of the prophet Aaron (a.s.)

hawwa - Arabic name for Eve, wife of Aadam (Adam) (a.s.)

~ I ~

ibraahiim - Arabic name of the prophet of Abraham (a.s.)

idriis - Arabic name of the prophet Idris (a.s.)

iisaa - Arabic name of the prophet Jesus (a.s.)

imraan - An Arabic name, part of the title of the third chapter of the *Qur'aan*. Some regard Imraan as the father of *Maryam* (Mary), others as the father of the prophet *Muusaa* (Moses) (a.s.).

ishaaq - Arabic name of the prophet Issac (a.s.)

islam - Can be translated as “Surrender.” The name ascribed to the religion revealed through the life of the prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.s.)

ismaa'il - Arabic name for the prophet Ishmael (a.s.)

israaa'il - Arabic name for the prophet Israel (a.s.), and the nations that descend from him.

~ J ~

jahannam - Can be translated as “hell.”

jannah - Can be translated as “paradise.”

jibriil - Arabic name for the angel “Gabriel.”

~ K ~

ka'bah - Arabic name for the Kaba, the sacred house built to honor the Beloved by the prophets *Ibraahiim* and *Ismaa'il* (a.s.)

khadiija - Arabic name for the first wife of the prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.s.)

~ L ~

luut - Arabic name for the prophet Lot (a.s.)

~ M ~

malik - Arabic name for the guardian angel of *jahannam* (hell).

makka - Arabic name for the city of Mecca.

maryam - Arabic name for Maryam, the mother of the prophet *Iisaa* (Jesus) (a.s.)

masjid al-aqsa - Can be translated as the Mosque of the Farthest Place, located in the old city of Jerusalem.

mi'raaj - Can be translated as "Ascension."

muhammad - Name of the prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.s.)

341

muusaa - Name of the prophet Moses (a.s.)

~ N ~

nuuh - Name of the prophet Noah (a.s.)

nuur - Can be translated as "light." (See *an-nuur*.)

~ Q ~

qaasim - Arabic name for an angel in the second heaven.

qiblah - Arabic term indicating the direction in which prayer is to be made.

qur'aan - Arabic name for the Qur'aan, a holy book of Islam.

~ R ~

ar-rahmaan - A name of the Beloved, can be translated as "The Beneficent."

ar-rahiim - A name of the Beloved, can be translated as "The Merciful."

rabbi ghfir lee, ghfir lee - Can be translated as "oh my Lord, forgive me, forgive me."

342

~ S ~

salawaat - Can be translated as “blessing,” such as a phrase of blessing said after the name of a prophet is spoken or read.

sarah - Arabic name for Sarah, wife of *Ibraahiim* (Abraham) (a.s.)

shaytaan - Arabic name for Satan.

sidrat al-muntahaa - Can be translated as “the lote tree of the farthest limit.”

~ T ~

ta'if - An Arab town.

~ U ~

ummah - Can be translated as “nation” or “community.”

~ Y ~

yahyaa - Arabic name for the prophet John (a.s.)

yaquub - Arabic name for the prophet Jacob (a.s.)

yhwh (yahweh) - A Hebrew name for the Beloved, can be translated as Jehovah.

yuusuf - Arabic name for the prophet Joseph (a.s.)

~ Z ~

zakariyyaa - Arabic name for the prophet Zachariah (a.s.)

zam-zam - A well by the Kabah in Makka (Mecca).

###

prayers of the mi'raaj (ascension). Copyright © 2013. nashid
fareed-ma'at.