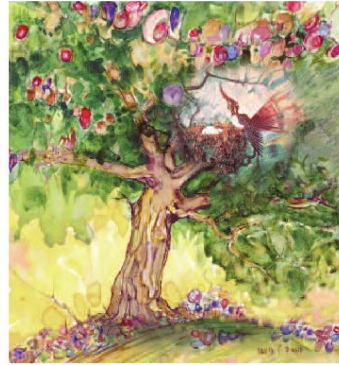


The following story is from the book

The Central Figures

Bahá'u'lláh

Volume One



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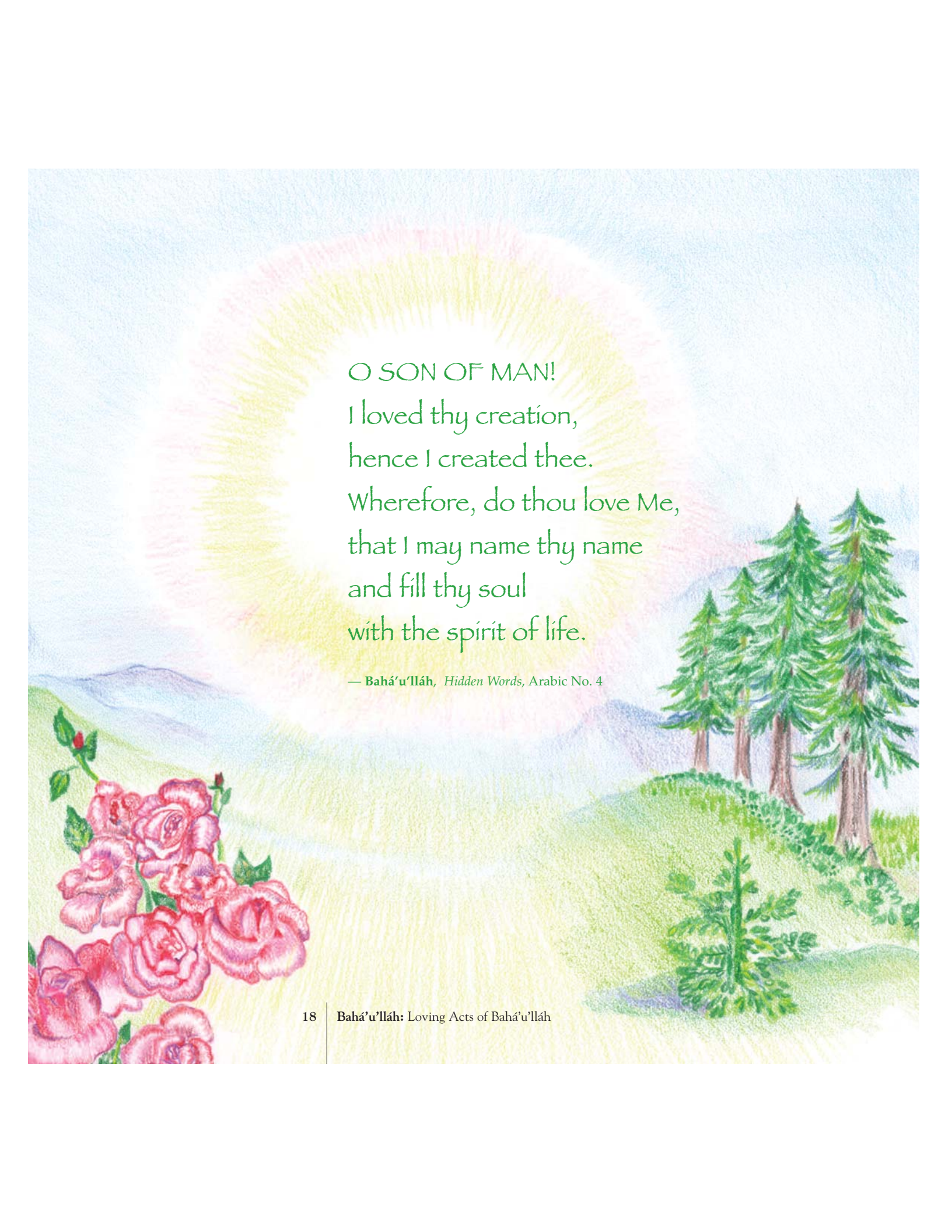
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O SON OF MAN!
I loved thy creation,
hence I created thee.
Wherefore, do thou love Me,
that I may name thy name
and fill thy soul
with the spirit of life.

— Bahá'u'lláh, *Hidden Words*, Arabic No. 4



Father of the Poor

Written by Gail Radley
Illustrated by Jai Kenyatta-Anderson

Before Mírzá Ḥusayn-‘Alí was called Bahá’u’lláh, before He was known as the Promised One of God, He was called by another title: “Father of the Poor.” Mírzá Ḥusayn-‘Alí was born into a wealthy family. His father was a mírzá, a nobleman, who was so respected for his talents, wisdom, generosity, and courage that the Sháh gave him the title “Buzurg,” meaning “the great one,” and made him governor.

Mírzá Buzurg owned a vast estate, and many peasants worked the land and tended his livestock for him. Often young Mírzá Ḥusayn-‘Alí walked or rode His horse through the countryside, stopping to speak with the peasants and learn about their lives and troubles. Believing that He would one day rule the estate, the peasants watched Him as He grew and were no doubt comforted by the understanding Mírzá Ḥusayn-‘Alí showed.

When He was nearly eighteen, Mírzá Ḥusayn-‘Alí married Ásíyih Khánum, the daughter of another wealthy nobleman. Ásíyih Khánum had everything a young woman in Persia could hope to have. She was tall and beautiful, wise, gentle, and kind. The young couple started their life together with great wealth and comfort. A jeweler worked for six months fashioning her jewels, even creating gold buttons studded with gems for her clothing. Forty mules carried Ásíyih Khánum’s belongings to her new home. The couple would, everyone thought, enjoy a grand life of power and luxury, filled with parties and important ceremonies.

But Mírzá Ḥusayn-‘Alí was not interested in living a life of wealth and ease. He had never forgotten the poor peasants whose lives had touched His heart, and so He was rarely seen among the wealthy and powerful. Instead, He and Ásíyih Khánum took care of the poor. They listened to their problems and tried to help them. Often they invited them to share meals with them. No needy person was ever turned away. Because of the kind comfort she offered so willingly, Ásíyih Khánum soon earned the title “Mother of Consolation.” And the generous, wise Mírzá Ḥusayn-‘Alí was known as “Father of the Poor.”

It was no wonder that Mírzá Ḥusayn-‘Alí and Ásíyih Khánum’s children would grow to have the same loving and generous hearts.

One day, their Son ‘Abdu’l-Bahá set off to see His Father’s sheep, just as His Father had done as a young Man. What a sight it must have been—thousands of them roamed the mountainsides! The shepherds were happy to be visited by their kind, young master, and they prepared a feast for Him.

Finally, it was time for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to go home.

The head shepherd drew ‘Abdu’l-Bahá aside. “It is the custom to leave the shepherds a gift,” the shepherd told him.

“But I have nothing to give,” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá replied.

“They have just given you a feast,” the shepherd pointed out. “You must give them something.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá thought a moment and then decided. “I will give them all the sheep!”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá must have wondered what His Father would say when He learned that His Son had given away thousands of His sheep.

But Mírzá Ḥusayn-‘Alí only laughed. “We will have to protect ‘Abdu’l-Bahá from Himself,” He said. “Some day He will give Himself away!”

Bahá’u’lláh truly was the “Father of the Poor.” ★

