

Welcome/Introduction Music Selection #1

Prayer for America

“O Thou kind Lord! This gathering is turning to Thee. These hearts are radiant with Thy love. These minds and spirits are exhilarated by the message of Thy glad-tidings. O God! Let this American democracy become glorious in spiritual degrees even as it has aspired to material degrees, and render this just government victorious. Confirm this revered nation to upraise the standard of the oneness of humanity, to promulgate the Most Great Peace, to become thereby most glorious and praiseworthy among all the nations of the world. O God! This American nation is worthy of Thy favors and is deserving of Thy mercy. Make it precious and near to Thee through Thy bounty and bestowal.” - *Abdu'l-Baha*

1. “Observe, for My Beauty’s Sake, the Fast, O People....” -- *Baha’u’llah*

2.Let the days in excess of the months [Intercalary Days, Ayyam-i-Ha] be placed before the month of fasting....It behoveth the people of Baha, throughout these days, to provide good cheer for themselves, their kindred and, beyond them, the poor and needy, and with joy and exultation to hail and glorify their Lord, to sing His praise and magnify His Name; and when they end---these days of giving that precede the season of restraint---let them enter upon the Fast. Thus hath it been ordained by Him Who is the Lord of all mankind.Abstain from food and drink from sunrise to sundown, and beware lest desire deprive you of this grace that is appointed in the Book.

Baha’u’llah: ; The Kitab-i-Aqdas, pp. 24-25

3. The fasting period, which lasts nineteen days starting as a rule from the second of March every year and ending on the twentieth of the same month,...is essentially a period of meditation and prayer, of spiritual recuperation, during which the believer must strive to make the necessary readjustments in his inner life, and to refresh and reinvigorate the spiritual forces latent in his soul. Its significance and purpose are, therefore, fundamentally spiritual in character. Fasting is symbolic, and a reminder of abstinence from selfish and carnal desires.

Shoghi Effendi: From a letter to the National Spiritual Assembly of the U.S., January 1936

4. ...Besides all this, prayer and fasting [are] the cause of awakening and mindfulness and conducive to protection and preservation from tests.

Abdu'l-Baha: Baha'i World Faith, p. 368

From other religious traditions:

5. To “make medicine” is to engage upon a special period of fasting, thanksgiving, prayer and self-denial, even of self-torture. The procedure is entirely a devotional exercise. The purpose is to subdue the passions of the flesh and to improve the spiritual self. The bodily abstinence and the mental concentration upon lofty thoughts cleanses both the body and the mind and puts them into or keeps them in health. Then the individual mind gets closer toward conformity with the mind of the Great Medicine above us.

Wooden Leg, Cheyenne tradition

6. You who have believed, fasting is decreed for you as it was for those who came before you, with a view to a deep sense among you of devotion to God....The month of Ramadan was the time in which the Qur’an was sent down as guidance for mankind....So then, any of you, observing the incidence of the month, let him take up the fast throughout it....

Islam: The Qur’an, from Sura 2

7. And the Lord said unto Moses, Write Thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with Thee and with Israel. And He was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; He did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And He wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.

Judaism: The Old Testament, Exodus 34:27-28

8. Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterward [hungry]. And when the tempter came to Him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Christianity: The New Testament, St. Matthew 4:1-4

9. The Divine wisdom in fasting is manifold. Among [the reasons] is this: As during those days (which the followers afterward observe), the Manifestation of the Sun of Reality, through Divine inspiration, [was] engaged in the revealing of Verses,...there [remained] no condition or time for eating and drinking.

...For example, when His Holiness Moses went to Mount Sinai and there engaged in instituting the Law of God, He fasted forty days. For the purpose of awakening and admonishing the people of Israel, fasting was enjoined upon them. Likewise, His Holiness Christ, in the beginning of instituting the Spiritual Law,...for forty days abstained from eating and drinking. In the beginning the disciples and Christians fasted. Later the assemblages of the chief Christians changed fasting into lenten observances. Likewise the Qur’an having descended in the month of Ramadan, fasting during that month became a duty.

In like manner His Holiness [The Bab],...through the excessive effect of descending verses, passed days in which His nourishment was reduced to tea only. Likewise, the Blessed Beauty [Baha'u'llah],...during the days when the Verses descended continuously, through the great effect of the Verses and the throbbing of the heart, took no food except the least amount. ...In order to follow the Divine Manifestation for the purpose of admonition and the commemoration of their state, it became incumbent upon the people to fast during those days....

Abdu'l-Baha: quoted by Corinne True in Star of the West, vol. IV, no. 18, p. 305

Music Selection #2

On Detachment:

10. A prayer in French by Yunus Emre on "Detachment":

Je peux offrir mon ame au pillage
car j'ai trouve maintenant l'Ame des ames ;
je peux offrir ma boutique au pillage
que m'importe, a present, le gain ou la perte ?

Je peux offrir maintenant mes doutes au pillage
car j'ai renonce a mon moi ;
je me suis debarrasse du voile qui couvrait mes yeux
et je suis parvenu a l'union avec Dieu

Je peux offrir ma langue au pillage
car je suis maintenant depouille de mon moi ;
tout le royaume de mon etre est envahi par Dieu
et c'est Lui seul qui parle, a present, par ma langue

Je peux offrir mon palais au pillage
car j'ai brese tous mes liens ;
je me suis envole vers Dieu
et je suis descendu au palais de l'amlur

Je peux offrir mon remede au pillage
car, rebute de la dualite
je me suis rassasie a la table de l'Unite
et j'ai bu le vin de la douleur qui vient de Dieu

Je peux offrir mon univers au pillage
car c'est suelement lorsque mon etre me quitte
que Dieu vient pres de moi

et que mon coeur s'emplit de lumiere

Je peux offrir mon jardin au pillage
car je suis las des reves interminables
las des hivers et des etes
et j'ai trouve le plus merveil s jardins.

Yunus, quelles douces paroles tu dis la
tes mots sont comme sucre et miel.
Je peux offrir tout ma ruche au pillage
car j'ai trouve le miel des miels

YUNUS EMRE

11. That man alone is wise who keeps the mastery of himself!

If one ponders on objects of the sense, there springs attraction; from attraction grows desire, desire flames to fierce passion, passion breeds recklessness; then the memory- all betrayed- lets noble purpose go, and saps the mind, Till purpose, mind, and man are all undone. But, if one deals with objects of the sense, not loving and not hating, making them serve his free soul, which rests serenely lord, Lo! such a man comes to tranquillity; and out of that tranquillity shall rise the end and healing of his earthly pains, Since the will, governed, sets the soul at peace.

Hinduism: Bhagavad-Gita, from Chapter II

12. The desire of a thoughtlessly living man grows like a creeper. He drifts from one life to another like a monkey looking for fruit in the forest. When one is overcome by this wretched, clinging desire in the world, one's sorrows increase like grass growing up after a lot of rain. But when one masters this wretched desire, which is so hard to overcome, then one's sorrows just drop off, like a drop of water off a lotus. People beset by desire run here and there, like a snared rabbit, and those trapped in the bonds of attachments keep returning for a long time to suffering.... The wise say that it is not an iron, wooden or fibre fetter which is a strong one, but the besotted hankering after trinkets, children and wives, that, say the wise, is the strong fetter. It drags one down, and loose as it feels, it is hard to break. Breaking this fetter, people renounce the world, free from longing and abandoning sensuality.

Buddhism: The Dhammapada, verses 134-136, 342-346

13. ...Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other....

...Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.

Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass,...how much more will He clothe you, O ye of little faith? And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind....But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Christianity: The New Testament, Galatians 5:16-17; and St. Luke 12:22-23, 27-31

14. Say: God sufficeth in me: in Him let the trusting trust. *Islam: The Qur'an, 39:39*

15. O My servant! Free thyself from the fetters of this world, and loose thy soul from the prison of self. Seize thy chance, for it will come to thee no more.

Bahá'u'lláh: The Persian Hidden Words, no. 40

15a. The above Hidden Words in Persian.

16. Cleanse from your hearts the love of worldly things, from your tongues every remembrance except His remembrance, from your entire being whatsoever may deter you from beholding His face, or may tempt you to follow the promptings of your evil and corrupt inclinations. Let God be your fear, O people, and be ye of them that tread the path of righteousness....

Know ye that by "the world" is meant your unawareness of Him Who is your Maker, and your absorption in aught else but Him. The "life to come," on the other hand, signifieth the things that give you a safe approach to God, the All-Glorious, the Incomparable. Whatsoever deterreth you, in this Day, from loving God is nothing but the world. Flee it, that ye may be numbered with the blest. Should a man wish to adorn himself with the ornaments of the earth, to wear its apparels, or partake of the benefits it can bestow, no harm can befall him, if he alloweth nothing whatever to intervene between him and God; for God hath ordained every good thing, whether created in the heavens or in the earth, for such of His servants as truly believe in Him. Eat ye, O people, of the good things which God hath allowed you, and deprive not yourselves from His wondrous bounties. Render thanks and praise unto Him, and be of them that are truly thankful.

Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, pp. 275-276

17. The essence of detachment is for man to turn his face towards the courts of the Lord, to enter His Presence, behold His Countenance, and stand as witness before Him.

Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 155

Music Selection #3

18. Man must be lofty in endeavor. He must seek to become heavenly and spiritual, to find the pathway to the threshold of God and become acceptable in the sight of

God. This is eternal glory-to be near to God. This is eternal sovereignty-to be imbued with the virtues of the human world. This is boundless blessing-to be entirely sanctified and holy above every stain and dross.

Consider the human world. See how nations have come and gone. They have been of all minds and purposes. Some were made captives of self and desire, engulfed in the passions of the lower nature. They attained to wealth, to the comforts of life, to fame. And what was the final outcome? Utter evanescence and oblivion. Reflect upon this. Look upon it with the eye of admonition. No trace of them remains, no fruit, no result, no benefit; they have gone utterly-complete effacement.

Souls have appeared in the world who were pure and undefiled, who have directed their attention toward God, seeking the reward of God, attaining nearness to the threshold of God, acceptable in the good pleasure of God. They have been the lights of guidance and stars of the Supreme Concourse. Consider these souls, shining like stars in the horizon of sanctity forevermore.

It must not be implied that one should give up avocation and attainment to livelihood. On the contrary, in the Cause of Baha'u'llah monasticism and asceticism are not sanctioned.... Baha'u'llah has even said that occupation and labor are devotion. All humanity must obtain a livelihood by sweat of the brow and bodily exertion, at the same time seeking to lift the burden of others, striving to be the source of comfort to souls and facilitating the means of living. This in itself is devotion to God. Baha'u'llah has thereby encouraged action and stimulated service. But the energies of the heart must not be attached to these things; the soul must not be completely occupied with them. Though the mind is busy, the heart must be attracted toward the Kingdom of God in order that the virtues of humanity may be attained from every direction and source.

We have forsaken the path of God; we have given up attention to the divine Kingdom; we have not severed the heart from worldly attractions; we have become defiled with qualities which are not praiseworthy in the sight of God; we are so completely steeped in material issues and tendencies that we are not partakers of the virtues of humanity.

Little reflection, little admonition is necessary for us to realize the purpose of our creation. What a heavenly potentiality God has deposited within us! What a power God has given our spirits! He has endowed us with a power to penetrate the realities of things; but we must be self-abnegating, we must have pure spirits, pure intentions, and strive with heart and soul while in the human world to attain everlasting glory.

Abdu'l-Baha: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, pp. 186-187

19. “O God! As I am fasting from the appetites of the body and not occupied with eating and drinking, even so purify and make holy my heart and my life from aught else save Thy Love....”

Abdu'l-Baha: quoted in Star of the West, op. cit.

Prayer for New York

6

“I eagerly anticipate the day when New York will become a blessed spot from which the call to steadfastness in the Covenant of God will go forth to every part of the world, thus making that city outstanding from every point of view.

Bless Thou, O King of Kings, the city of New York! Cause the friends there to be kind to one another. Purify their souls and make their hearts to be free and detached. Illumine the world of their consciousness. Exhilarate their spirits and bestow celestial power and confirmation upon them.

Establish there a heavenly realm, so that the City of Bahá may prosper and New York be favoured with blessings from the Abhá Kingdom, that this region may become like the all-highest Paradise, may develop into a vineyard of God and be transformed into a heavenly orchard and a spiritual rose garden.”

Abdu'l-Bahá

Music Selection #4

Prayer Requests

Announcements

Fellowship