



DEVOTIONAL PROGRAM **SACRIFICE & PROTECTION** **PART I**

This devotional is also dedicated to the martyrs of the Bahá'í Faith and the Bahá'ís imprisoned in Iran.

1. Welcome & Introductory Prayer

*Lauded be Thy name, O Lord my God! I entreat Thee by Thy Name through which the Hour hath struck, and the Resurrection came to pass, and fear and trembling seized all that are in heaven and all that are on earth, to rain down, out of the heaven of Thy mercy and the clouds of Thy tender compassion, what will gladden the hearts of Thy servants, who have turned towards Thee and helped Thy Cause.

Keep safe Thy servants and Thy handmaidens, O my Lord, from the darts of idle fancy and vain imaginings, and give them from the hands of thy grace a draught of the soft-flowing waters of Thy knowledge.

Thou, truly, art the Almighty, the Most Exalted, the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Generous.

(Bahá'u'lláh - Baha'i Prayers, p. 129)

2. Reading: Sacrifice

*In order to understand the reality of sacrifice let us consider the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ. It is true that He sacrificed Himself for our sake. What is the meaning of this? When Christ appeared, He knew that He must proclaim Himself in opposition to all the nations and peoples of the earth. He knew that mankind would arise against Him and inflict upon Him all manner of tribulations. There is no doubt that one who put forth such a claim as Christ announced would arouse the hostility of the world and be subjected to personal abuse. He realized that His blood would be shed and His body rent by violence. Notwithstanding His knowledge of what would befall Him, He arose to proclaim His message, suffered all tribulation and hardships from the people and finally offered His life as a sacrifice in order to illumine humanity—gave His blood in order to guide the world of mankind. He accepted every calamity and suffering in order to guide men to the truth. Had He desired to save His own life, and were He without wish to offer Himself in sacrifice, He would not have been able to guide a single soul. There was no doubt that His blessed blood would be shed and His body broken. Nevertheless, that Holy Soul accepted calamity and death in His love for mankind. This is one of the meanings of sacrifice.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, Pages 449-452: gr5)

3. Prayers and Readings

Open session – friends may choose any prayer or reading that they would like to recite. This may include the selected writings from the Bahá'í Faith included below.

*Ordain for me, O my Lord, and for those who believe in Thee that which is deemed

best for us in Thine estimation, as set forth in the Mother Book, for within the grasp of Thy hand Thou holdest the determined measures of all things.

Thy goodly gifts are unceasingly showered upon such as cherish Thy love, and the wondrous tokens of Thy heavenly bounties are amply bestowed on those who recognize Thy divine Unity. We commit unto Thy care whatsoever Thou hast destined for us, and implore Thee to grant us all the good that Thy knowledge embraceth.

Protect me, O my Lord, from every evil that Thine omniscience perceiveth, inasmuch as there is no power nor strength but in Thee, no triumph is forthcoming save from Thy presence, and it is Thine alone to command. Whatever God hath willed hath been, and that which He hath not willed shall not be.

There is no power nor strength except in God, the Most Exalted, the Most Mighty. (The Báb - Bahá'í Prayers, p. 130)

*In the Name of God, the Lord of overpowering majesty, and All-Compelling.

Hallowed be the Lord in Whose hand is the source of dominion. He createth whatsoever He willeth by His Word of command "Be," and it is. His hath been the power of authority heretofore, and it shall remain His hereafter. He maketh victorious whomsoever He pleaseth, through the potency of His behest. He is in truth the Powerful, the Almighty. Unto Him pertaineth all glory and majesty in the kingdoms of Revelation and Creation and whatever lieth between them. Verily, He is the Potent, the All-Glorious. From everlasting He hath been the Source of indomitable strength and shall remain so unto everlasting. He is indeed the Lord of might and power. All the kingdoms of heaven and earth and whatever is between

them are God's, and His power is supreme over all things. All the treasures of earth and heaven and everything between them are His, and His protection extendeth over all things. He is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and whatever lieth between them, and He truly is a witness over all things. He is the Lord of Reckoning for all that dwell in the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them. Verily, He is the Supreme Protector. He holdeth in His grasp the keys of heaven and earth and of everything between them. At His Own pleasure doth He bestow gifts, through the power of His command. Indeed His grace encompasseth all, and He is the All-Knowing.

Say: God sufficeth unto me; He is the One Who holdeth in His grasp the kingdom of all things. Through the power of His hosts of heaven and earth and whatever lieth between them, He protecteth whomsoever among His servants He willeth. God, in truth, keepeth watch over all things.

Immeasurably exalted art Thou, O Lord! Protect us from what lieth in front of us and behind us, above our heads, on our right, on our left, below our feet and every other side to which we are exposed. Verily, Thy protection over all things is unfailing.[1] [1. The original of this prayer for protection is written in the Báb's own hand, in the form of a pentacle.] (The Báb - Bahá'í Prayers, p. 133)

*O God, my God! Shield Thy trusted servants from the evils of self and passion, protect them with the watchful eye of thy loving-kindness from all rancor, hate and envy, shelter them in the impregnable stronghold of Thy care and, safe from the darts of doubtfulness, make them the manifestations of Thy glorious signs, illumine their faces with the effulgent rays shed from the Dayspring of Thy divine unity, gladden their hearts with the verses

revealed from Thy holy kingdom, strengthen their loins by Thine all-swaying power that cometh from Thy realm of glory. Thou art the All-Bountiful, the Protector, the Almighty, the Gracious.

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá - Bahá’í Prayers, p. 134)

*He is God! O Lord, my God, my Well-Beloved! These are servants of Thine that have heard Thy Voice, given ear to Thy Word and hearkened to Thy Call. They have believed in Thee, witnessed Thy wonders, acknowledged thy proof and testified to Thine evidence. They have walked in Thy ways, followed Thy guidance, discovered Thy mysteries, comprehended the secrets of Thy Book, the verses of Thy Scrolls and the tidings of Thy Epistles and Tablets. They have clung to the hem of Thy garment and held fast unto the robe of Thy light and grandeur. Their footsteps have been directions and that no one can dispel or transmute made firm in Thy Testament. Lord! Do Thou kindle in their hearts the flame of Thy divine attraction and grant that the bird of love and understanding may sing within their hearts. Grant that they may be even as potent signs, resplendent standards, and perfect as Thy Word. Exalt by them thy Cause, unfurl Thy banners and publish far and wide the wonders. Make by them Thy Word triumphant, and strengthen the loins of Thy loved ones. Unloose their tongues to laud Thy Name, and inspire them to do Thy holy will and pleasure. Illumine their faces in Thy Kingdom of holiness, and perfect their joy by aiding them to arise for the triumph of Thy Cause.

Lord! Feeble are we, strengthen us to diffuse the fragrances of Thy Holiness; poor, enrich us from the treasures of Thy Divine Unity; naked, clothe us with the robe of Thy bounty; sinful, forgive us our sins by Thy grace, Thy favor and Thy pardon. Thou art, verily, the Aider, the Helper, the Gracious,

the Mighty, the Powerful. The glory of glories rest upon them that are fast and firm. (‘Abdu'l-Bahá - Bahá’í Prayers, p. 201)

*Lauded be Thy name, O Lord my God! Darkness hath fallen upon every land, and the forces of mischief have encompassed all the nations. Through them, however, I perceive the splendors of Thy wisdom, and discern the brightness of the light of Thy providence.

They that are shut out as by a veil from Thee have imagined that they have the power to put out Thy light, and to quench Thy fire, and to still the winds of Thy grace. Nay, and to this Thy might beareth me witness! Had not every tribulation been made the bearer of Thy wisdom, and every ordeal the vehicle of Thy providence, no one would have dared oppose us, though the powers of earth and heaven were to be leagued against us. Were I to unravel the wondrous mysteries of Thy wisdom which are laid bare before me, the reins of Thine enemies would be cleft asunder.

Glorified be Thou, then, O my God! I beseech Thee by thy Most Great Name to assemble them that love Thee around the Law that streameth from the good pleasure of Thy will, and to send down upon them what will assure their hearts.

Potent art thou to do what pleaseth Thee. Thou art, verily, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting.

(Bahá’u’lláh - Bahá’í Prayers, p. 195)

*Glory be unto Thee, O Lord, Thou Who hast brought into being all created things, through the power of Thy behest.

O Lord! Assist those who have renounced all else but Thee, and grant them a mighty victory. Send down upon them, O Lord, the

concourse of the angels in the heaven and earth and all that is between, to aid Thy servants, to succor and strengthen them, to enable them to achieve success, to sustain them, to invest them with glory, to confer upon them honor and exaltation, to enrich them and to make them triumphant with a wondrous triumph.

Thou art their Lord, the Lord of the heavens and the earth, the Lord of all the worlds. Strengthen this Faith, O Lord, through the power of these servants, and cause them to prevail over all the peoples of the world; for they, of a truth, are thy servants who have detached themselves from aught else but Thee, and Thou, verily, art the protector of true believers.

Grant Thou, O Lord, that their hearts may, through allegiance to this, thine inviolable Faith, grow stronger than anything else in the heavens and on the earth and in whatsoever is between them; and strengthen, O Lord, their hands with the tokens of Thy wondrous power that they may manifest Thy power before the gaze of all mankind. (The Báb - Bahá'í Prayers, p. 196)

*O Lord! Provide for the speedy growth of the Tree of Thy divine Unity; water it then, O Lord, with the flowing waters of Thy good-pleasure, and cause it, before the revelations of Thy divine assurance, to yield such fruits as Thou desirest for thy glorification and exaltation, thy praise and thanksgiving, and to magnify thy Name, to allude the oneness of Thine Essence and to offer adoration unto Thee, inasmuch as all this lieth within Thy grasp and in that of none other.

Great is the blessedness of those whose blood Thou hast chosen wherewith to water the Tree of Thine affirmation, and thus to

exalt Thy holy and immutable Word. (The Báb - Bahá'í Prayers, p. 197)

4. Closing Prayer

*O God, my God! Thou seest Thy loved ones turning their hearts to Thee, and holding fast unto the cord of Thy ordinances and laws. I beseech Thee by the waves of the sea of Thine utterance, and by Him through whom Thou didst adorn the heavens of Thy might, to graciously protect them by the aid of Thy hosts.

O God! Thou beholdest Thy lovers in Iran in the clutches of hate and enmity. I beg of Thee, by Thy mercy which hath preceded the contingent world, to raise up from the earth those who will be moved to aid and protect them, and to preserve their rights and the restitution due to them by those who broke Thy Covenant and Testament, and perpetrated such acts as made the inmates of the cities of Thy justice and equity to lament. Thou art, verily, the All-Powerful, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise (Bahá'u'lláh - Fire and Light, p. 1)

5. Social Portion

Refreshments and conversation.