



## **SACRIFICE & PROTECTION** **DEVOTIONAL PROGRAM** **PART II**

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

### **1. Welcome & Introductory Prayer**

\*O thou who art seeking the good-pleasure of the Lord of Glory! I have no time to spare. I am completely absorbed in thinking of, in meditating upon and in lamenting for those distinguished martyrs -- may My life be offered up as a sacrifice for them. On the one hand this grievous calamity hath, like unto a dagger, inflicted upon me so profound an injury that no salve can soothe, nor can any balm assuage; while on the other the scene of sacrifice is seen bedecked with such splendid pageantry, such marvellous festivity that the holy ecstasy of its wine seizeth forevermore the minds of those that are godly and spiritual. Moreover, the Concourse on high and the dwellers in the Abhá Kingdom are now expounding the mystery of sacrifice, the main purport of all heavenly Scriptures. Therefore this hath to some degree relieved my grief. In short, the day is approaching when the meads of the Cause of God, having been watered with blood, will have put forth roses and lilies in such profusion that East and West will become fragrant and North and South perfumed. Peace be upon you!  
(\*Abdu'l-Bahá - Fire and Light, p. 23)

### **2. Reading: Sacrifice & Protection**

\*Briefly it is as follows: The moth is a sacrifice to the candle. The spring is a sacrifice to the thirsty one. The sincere lover is a sacrifice to the loved one and the longing one is a sacrifice to the beloved. The point lies in this: He must wholly forget himself, become a wanderer (in the Abode of the Beloved) enamoured with His Tresses. He must consign to oblivion the body and soul, the life, comfort and existence. He must seek the good pleasure of the True One; desire the Face of the True One; and walk in the Path of the True One. He must become intoxicated with His Cup, resigned in His Hand and close the eyes to life and living, in order that he may shine like unto the Light of Truth from the Horizon of Eternity. This is the first station of sacrifice.

The second station of sacrifice is as follows: Man must become severed from the human world, be delivered from the contingent gloominess, the illumination of mercifulness must shine and radiate in him, the nether world become as non-existent and the Kingdom become manifest. He must become like unto the iron thrown within the furnace of fire. The qualities of iron, such as blackness, coldness and solidity which belong to the earth disappear and vanish while the characteristics of fire, such as redness, glowing and heat, which belong to the Kingdom become apparent and visible. Therefore, iron hath sacrificed its qualities and grades to the fire, acquiring the virtues of that element.

Likewise, when the souls are released from the fetters of the world, the imperfections of mankind and that animalistic darkness, and have stepped into the Realm of Abstraction, have partaken a share from the outpouring of the Placeless and have acquired lordly perfections, they are the "ransomed ones" (or the martyrs) of the Sun of Truth, who are hastening to the altar of heart and soul.  
(Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Pages 353-355: gr4)

### **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.

\*He is God! O God, my God! These are servants attracted in Thy days by the fragrances of Thy holiness, enkindled with the flame burning in Thy holy tree, responding to Thy voice, uttering Thy praise, awakened by Thy breeze, stirred by Thy sweet savors, beholding Thy signs, understanding Thy Revelation and assured of Thy loving-kindness. Their eyes, O Lord, are fixed upon Thy kingdom of effulgent glory and their faces turned toward Thy dominion on high, their hearts beating with the love of Thy radiant and glorious beauty, their souls consumed with the flame of Thy love, O Lord of this world and the world hereafter, their lives seething with the ardor of their longing for Thee, and their tears poured forth for Thy sake.

Shield them within the stronghold of Thy protection and safety, preserve them in Thy watchful care, look upon them with the eyes of Thy providence and mercy, make them the signs of Thy divine unity that are manifest throughout all regions, the standards of Thy might that wave above Thy mansions of grandeur, the shining lamps that burn with the oil of Thy wisdom in the globes of Thy guidance, the birds of the garden of Thy knowledge that warble upon the topmost boughs in Thy sheltering paradise, and the leviathans of the ocean of Thy bounty that plunge by Thy supreme mercy in the fathomless deeps.

O Lord, my God! Lowly are these servants of Thine, exalt them in Thy kingdom on high; feeble, strengthen them by Thy supreme power; abased, bestow upon them Thy glory in Thine all-highest realm; poor,

enrich them in Thy great dominion. Do Thou then ordain for them all the good Thou hast destined in Thy worlds, visible and invisible, prosper them in this world below, gladden their hearts with Thine inspiration, O Lord of all beings! Illumine their hearts with Thy joyful tidings diffused from Thine all-glorious Station, make firm their steps in Thy Most-Great Covenant and strengthen their loins in Thy firm Testament, by Thy bounty and promised grace, O Gracious and Merciful One! Thou art, verily, the Gracious, the All-Bountiful.

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá - Bahá'í Prayers, p. 155)

\*He is the All-Glorious. O ye who are inebriated with the draught of His Covenant!

It is time to pass beyond the desolate wilds of remoteness, so that ye may reach the retreats of the Beloved, drink your fill from the wine of the bestowals of the All-Merciful, hold a heavenly festival, deck forth the stage for a spiritual celebration and to the strains of harp and lute and the melodies of the Concourse on high and of the songsters in the meads of holiness, break into sweet lays and wondrous tunes in praise and glorification of the Abhá Beauty.

O ye friends of God! Let not the cavils of the foolish grieve you nor the tribulation of this world dismay you. Indeed, the motivating impulse whereby the sweet savours of God are diffused throughout the world is none but the suffering that befalleth His loved ones and the dire troubles that constantly touch His chosen ones.

Consider a while. the greater the affliction they suffered, the higher was raised the banner of devotion and faithfulness, and the more grievous the trials they endured, the more abundant were the outpourings of grace from the Abhá Beauty. For it is during the darksome night that the radiance of light is conspicuous and the illumination of the lamp most perceptible. Therefore enlightened faces when exposed to dire

hardships shine forth with the utmost radiance and brightness, and the hearts of His chosen ones when held in chains and fetters are filled with exceeding joy, gladness and ecstasy. In the Qayyúmu'l-Asmá the Exalted One [the Báb] addresseth the Abhá Beauty in these words: 'O Thou our great and omnipotent Master! I have sacrificed myself wholly for Thee and have yearned for naught but martyrdom in Thy path.' Ponder ye carefully. The highest aspiration cherished by Him Who is the Leader of the righteous and the Day-Star of divine splendour was to lay down His life for the sake of the One Who doeth whatsoever He willeth. Thus it is clear and manifest what should be the supreme aspiration and longing of the loved ones of God. And upon ye be greetings and praise (Bahá'u'lláh - Fire and Light, p. 25)

\*How numerous the souls raised to life who were exposed to dire humiliation in Thy Path for exalting Thy Word and for glorifying Thy divine Unity! How profuse the blood that hath been shed for the sake of Thy Faith to vindicate the authenticity of Thy divine Mission and to celebrate Thy praise! How vast the possessions that were wrongfully seized in the Path of Thy love in order to affirm the loftiness of Thy sanctity and to extol Thy glorious Name! How many the feet that have trodden upon the dust in order to magnify Thy holy Word and to extol Thy glory! How innumerable the voices that were raised in lamentation, the hearts that were struck with terror, the grievous woes that none other than Thee can reckon, and the adversities and afflictions that remain inscrutable to anyone except Thyself; all this to establish, O my God, the loftiness of Thy sanctity and to demonstrate the transcendent character of Thy glory.

These decrees were ordained by Thee so that all created things might bear witness that they have been brought into being for the sake of naught else but Thee. Thou hast withheld from them the things that bring

tranquility to their hearts, that they might know of a certainty that whatever is associated with Thy holy Being is far superior to and exalted above aught else that would satisfy them; inasmuch as Thine indomitable power pervadeth all things, and nothing can ever frustrate it.

Indeed Thou hast caused these momentous happenings to come to pass that those who are endued with perception may readily recognize that they were ordained by Thee to demonstrate the loftiness of Thy divine Unity and to affirm the exaltation of Thy sanctity. (The Báb - Fire and Light, p 18)

\*Glory be unto Thee, O Lord, Thou Who has 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 heaven and earth and all that is between, to aid Thy servants, to succour and strengthen them, to enable them to achieve success, to sustain them, to invest them with glory, to confer upon them honour 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 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 - Fire and Light*, p. 18)

#### **4. Closing Prayer**

\*He is God! O Lord my God! O Thou Helper of the feeble, Succorer of the poor and Deliverer of the helpless who turn unto Thee.

With utmost lowliness I raise my suppliant hands to Thy kingdom of beauty and fervently call upon Thee with my inner tongue, saying: O God, my God! Aid me to adore Thee, strengthen my loins to serve Thee; assist me by Thy grace in my servitude to Thee; suffer me to remain steadfast in my obedience to Thee; pour forth upon me the liberal effusions of Thy bounty, let the glances of the eye of Thy loving-kindness be directed towards me, and immerse me in the ocean of Thy forgiveness. Grant that I may be confirmed in my allegiance to Thy Faith, and bestow upon me a fuller measure of certitude and assurance, that I may wholly dispense with the world, may turn my face with entire devotion towards Thy face, be reinforced by the compelling power of proofs and testimonies, and, invested with majesty and power, may pass beyond every region of heaven and earth. Verily Thou art the Merciful, the All-Glorious, the Kind, the Compassionate.

O Lord! These are the survivors of the martyrs, that company of blessed souls. They have sustained every tribulation and displayed patience in the face of grievous injustice. They have forsaken all comfort and prosperity, have willingly submitted to dire suffering and adversity in the path of Thy love, and are still held captive in the clutches of their enemies who continually torment them with sore torment, and oppress them because they walk steadfastly in Thy straight path. There is no one to help them, no one to befriend them. Apart from the

ignoble and the wicked, there is no one to associate and consort with them.

O Lord! These souls have tasted bitter agony in this earthly life and have, as a sign of their love for the shining beauty of Thy countenance and in their eagerness to attain Thy celestial kingdom, tolerated every gross indignity that the people of tyranny have inflicted upon them.

O Lord! Fill their ears with the verses of divine assistance and of a speedy victory, and deliver them from the oppression of such as wield terrible might. Withhold the hands of the wicked and leave not these souls to be torn by the claws and teeth of fierce beasts, for they are captivated by their love for Thee, entrusted with the mysteries of Thy holiness, stand humbly at Thy door and have attained to Thine exalted precinct.

O Lord! Graciously reinforce them with a new spirit; illumine their eyes by enabling them to behold Thy wondrous evidences in the gloom of night; destine for them all good that aboundeth in Thy Kingdom of eternal mysteries; make them as brilliant stars shining over all regions, luxuriant trees laden with fruit and branches moving in the breezes of dawn.

Verily, Thou art the Bountiful, the Mighty, the Omnipotent, the Unconstrained. There is none other God but Thee, the God of love and tender mercy, the All-Glorious, the Ever-Forgiving. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

#### **5. Social Portion**

Refreshments and conversation.