

Branch of Holiness

Blessed is whosoever sought shelter beneath it and is of those who rest therein.

#1

Whoso reciteth this prayer with lowliness and fervour will bring gladness and joy to the heart of this Servant; it will be even as meeting Him face to face.

He is the All-Glorious!

O God, my God! Lowly and tearful, I raise my suppliant hands to Thee and cover my face in the dust of that Threshold of Thine, exalted above the knowledge of the learned, and the praise of all that glorify Thee. Graciously look upon Thy servant, humble and lowly at Thy door, with the glances of the eye of Thy mercy, and immerse him in the Ocean of Thine eternal grace.

Lord! He is a poor and lowly servant of Thine, enthralled and imploring Thee, captive in Thy hand, praying fervently to Thee, trusting in Thee, in tears before Thy face, calling to Thee and beseeching Thee, saying:

O Lord, my God! Give me Thy grace to serve Thy loved ones, strengthen me in my servitude to Thee, illumine my brow with the light of adoration in Thy court of holiness, and of prayer to Thy Kingdom of grandeur. Help me to be selfless at the heavenly entrance of Thy gate, and aid me to be detached from all things within Thy holy precincts. Lord! Give me to drink from the chalice of selflessness; with its robe clothe me, and in its ocean immerse me. Make me as dust in the pathway of Thy loved ones, and grant that I may offer up my soul for the earth ennobled by the footsteps of Thy chosen ones in Thy path, O Lord of Glory in the Highest.

With this prayer doth Thy servant call Thee, at dawning and in the night-season. Fulfil his heart's desire, O Lord! Illumine his heart, gladden his bosom, kindle his light, that he may serve Thy Cause and Thy servants.

Thou art the Bestower, the Pitiful, the Most Bountiful, the Gracious, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

~`Abdu'l-Bahá

#2 O Thou Who art the apple of Mine eye! My glory, the ocean of My loving-kindness, the sun of My bounty, the heaven of My mercy rest upon Thee. We pray God to illumine the world through Thy knowledge and wisdom, to ordain

for Thee that which will gladden Thine heart and impart consolation to Thine eyes.

The glory of God rest upon Thee, and upon whosoever serveth Thee and circleth around Thee. Woe, great woe, betide him that opposeth and injureth Thee. Well is it with him that sweareth fealty to Thee; the fire of hell torment him who is Thine enemy.

#3 We have made Thee a shelter for all mankind, a shield unto all who are in heaven and on earth, a stronghold for whosoever hath believed in God, the Incomparable, the All-Knowing. God grant that through Thee He may protect them, may enrich and sustain them, that He may inspire Thee with that which shall be a wellspring of wealth unto all created things, an ocean of bounty unto all men, and the dayspring of mercy unto all peoples.

#4 Thou knowest, O my God, that I desire for Him naught except that which Thou didst desire, and have chosen Him for no purpose save that which Thou hadst intended for Him. Render Him victorious, therefore, through Thy hosts of earth and heaven... Ordain, I beseech Thee, by the ardor of My love for Thee and My yearning to manifest Thy Cause, for Him, as well as for them that love Him, that which Thou hast destined for Thy Messengers and the Trustees of Thy Revelation. Verily, Thou art the Almighty, the All-Powerful.

#5 When the ocean of My presence hath ebbed and the Book of My Revelation is ended turn your faces towards Him Whom God hath purposed, Who hath branched from this Ancient Root.

When the Mystic Dove will have winged its flight from its Sanctuary of Praise and sought its far-off goal, its hidden habitation, refer ye whatsoever ye understand not in the Book to Him Who hath branched from this mighty Stock.

Bahá'u'lláh, cited by Shoghi Effend in
The World Order of Baha'u'llah, pp. 134-6

#6 Blessed, doubly blessed, is the ground which His footsteps have trodden, the eye that hath been cheered by the beauty of His countenance, the ear that hath been honoured

by hearkening to His call, the heart that hath tasted the sweetness of His love, the breast that hath dilated through His remembrance, the pen that hath voiced His praise, the scroll that hath borne the testimony of His writings.

Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 227

#7 Guard ye the Cause of God, protect His law and have the utmost fear of discord. This is the foundation of the belief of the people of Bahá (may my life be offered up for them): "His Holiness, the Exalted One (the Báb), is the Manifestation of the Unity and Oneness of God and the Forerunner of the Ancient Beauty. His Holiness the Abhá Beauty (may my life be a sacrifice for His steadfast friends) is the Supreme Manifestation of God and the Dayspring of His Most Divine Essence. All others are servants unto Him and do His bidding."

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Will and Testament*, p. 19

#8 He is, and should for all time be regarded, first and foremost, as the Center and Pivot of Bahá'u'lláh's peerless and all-enfolding Covenant, His most exalted handiwork, the stainless Mirror of His light, the perfect Exemplar of His teachings, the unerring Interpreter of His Word, the embodiment of every Bahá'í ideal, the incarnation of every Bahá'í virtue, the Most Mighty Branch sprung from the Ancient Root, the Limb of the Law of God, the Being "round Whom all names revolve," the Mainspring of the Oneness of Humanity, the Ensign of the Most Great Peace, the Moon of the Central Orb of this most holy Dispensation—styles and titles that are implicit and find their truest, their highest and fairest expression in the magic name 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He is, above and beyond these appellations, the "Mystery of God"—an expression by which Bahá'u'lláh Himself has chosen to designate Him, and which, while it does not by any means justify us to assign to Him the station of Prophethood, indicates how in the person of 'Abdu'l-Bahá the incompatible characteristics of a human nature and superhuman knowledge and perfection have been blended and are completely harmonized.

Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 133

#9

The Passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá November 28, 1921

At 1:15 A.M. He arose, and, walking to a table in His room, drank some water, and returned to bed. Later on, He asked one of His two daughters who had remained awake to care for Him, to lift up the net curtains, complaining that He had difficulty in breathing. Some rose-water was brought to Him, of which He drank, after which He again lay down, and when offered food, distinctly remarked: "You wish Me to take some food, and I am going?" A minute later His spirit had winged its flight to its eternal abode, to be gathered, at long last, to the glory of His beloved Father, and taste the joy of everlasting reunion with Him.

#10 As to the funeral itself...-- a funeral the like of which Palestine had never seen -- no less than ten thousand people participated representing every class, religion and race in that country. "A great throng," bore witness at a later date, the High Commissioner himself, "had gathered together, sorrowing for His death, but rejoicing also for His life."

The coffin containing the remains of 'Abdu'l-Bahá was borne to its last resting-place on the shoulders of His loved ones. The cortege which preceded it was led by the City Constabulary Force, acting as a Guard of Honor... The long train of mourners, amid the sobs and moans of many a grief-stricken heart, wended its slow way up the slopes of Mt. Carmel to the Mausoleum of the Báb.

#11 Close to the eastern entrance of the Shrine, the sacred casket was placed upon a plain table, and, in the presence of that vast concourse, nine speakers, who represented the Muslim, the Jewish and Christian Faiths, and who included the Mufti of Haifa, delivered their several funeral orations. ... These concluded, the High Commissioner drew close to the casket, and, with bowed head fronting the Shrine, paid his last homage of farewell to 'Abdu'l-Bahá: the other officials of the Government followed his example. The coffin was then removed to one of the chambers of the Shrine, and there lowered, sadly and reverently, to its last resting-place in a vault adjoining that in which were laid the remains of the Báb.

Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 311-313

#12 O friends! Praise be to God that the banner of Divine Unity hath been hoisted in every land, and the melody of the Abhá Kingdom hath been raised on every side. The holy Seraph of the Concourse on high is raising the cry of “Yá Bahá’u’l-Abhá!” in the midmost heart of the world, and the power of the Word of God is breathing true life into the body of existence.

Wherefore, O ye faithful friends, it behoveth you all to join ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in self-sacrifice and in service to the Cause of God and thralldom to His divine Threshold. If ye be aided to attain unto such a supreme bounty, the whole world shall erelong be made the recipient of the effulgent splendours of God, and the longed-for oneness of humanity shall be revealed in the utmost beauty and charm in the midmost heart of the world. This is the dearest wish of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá! This is the greatest yearning of them that are faithful! The Glory of Glories rest upon you.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Light of the World / 45

#13 A century has now elapsed since the noble spirit of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá ascended to its eternal home. His birth had coincided with the dawn of the Faith’s Heroic Age, and His passing signalled the setting of the sun upon its final epoch. No clearer demonstration could be imagined of how He embodied the forces of unity than the sight of His funeral, at which a vast crowd of mourners from every creed in this land came together to grieve their common loss. In His day, so many of the friends who embraced the Faith absorbed the spirit of the divine teachings simply by observing Him; still today, if we wish to align our lives with that same spirit, we look to the example set by the Master, Whose word and deed reflected the brilliance of the light that shone from Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation.

#14 In every respect, His example is central to Bahá’í identity. Every Bahá’í may turn to Him to understand better how to diffuse the light of the Faith and for a model to follow as we seek to awaken spiritual susceptibilities in those we encounter. His own counsel, that the teacher must be “fully enkindled” so that his utterance may “exert influence”, and yet be “totally self-effaced and evanescent” so that “he may teach with the melody of the Concourse on high”, is vividly realized in the unnumbered accounts of souls transformed by being in the company of

‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Countless are the lessons to be learned from how He presented the divine precepts to every kind of person, constantly widening the circle of unity, without regard for any outward dissimilarities of appearance, language, custom, or belief. The universality of His love produced a community that, even at that time, could justly claim to be a cross-section of society. His love revived, nurtured, inspired; it banished estrangement and welcomed all to the banquet table of the Lord. Every community-building endeavour undertaken today, every educational activity and every outreach, carries with it the hope of communicating, through our own efforts, a token of the same love He showered upon every soul. Such efforts are the best tribute that can be rendered to Him, at this centenary and every day that follows.

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On the Occasion of the Centenary Commemoration
of the Ascension of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*

Personal Prayers

Reflection on the Texts

Discussion

What is meant by “His example is central to Bahá’í identity”?

How can we widen the circle of unity “without regard for any outward dissimilarities of appearance, language, custom, or belief”?