

FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

“Know ye that the Torah is what was revealed in the Tablets unto Moses, may peace be upon Him, and in that which He was commanded to do.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

1. Magnified be Thy Name, O Lord of all beings and Desire of all created things! I beseech Thee, by the Word which hath caused the Burning Bush to lift up its Voice and the Rock to cry out, whereby the well-favored have hastened to attain the court of Thy presence and the pure in heart the dayspring of the light of Thy countenance, and by the sighing of Thy true lovers in their separation from Thy chosen ones and by the lamentation of them that long to behold Thy face before the dawning splendor of the light of Thy Revelation, to graciously enable Thy servants to recognize what Thou hast ordained for them by Thy bounty and Thy grace.

Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh / 11. Tablet of Maqṣúd

2. Know ye that the Torah is what was revealed in the Tablets unto Moses, may peace be upon Him, and in that which He was commanded to do. But the stories are historical narratives and were written after Moses, may peace be upon Him.... The glorious Book, the Mighty Decree, is what was in the Tablets which Moses, upon Him be peace, brought from Mt. Sinai, and that which He proclaimed unto the Children of Israel, in accordance with the explicit text of those Tablets.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Additional Tablets, Extracts and Talks, Bahá’í Reference Library

3. Deuteronomy 6.1-15*

Now this is the commandment, the statutes, and the ordinances, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it— that thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son’s son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged. Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD, the God of thy fathers, hath promised unto thee—a land flowing with milk and honey.

4. Hear, O Israel: The Lord Our God, The Lord Is One. And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be for frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the door-posts of thy house, and upon thy gates.

5. And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land which He swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee—great and goodly cities, which thou didst not build, and houses full of all good things, which thou didst not fill, and cisterns hewn out, which thou the didst not hew, vineyards and olive-trees, which thou didst not plant, and thou shalt eat and be satisfied— then beware lest thou forget the LORD, who brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; and Him shalt thou serve, and by His name shalt thou swear. Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the peoples that are round about you; for a jealous God, even the LORD thy God, is in the midst of thee; lest the anger of the LORD thy God be kindled against thee, and He destroy thee from off the face of the earth.

6. I Kings 19.1-11

And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying: ‘So let the gods do [to me], and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time.’ And when he saw

that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom-tree; and he requested for himself that he might die; and said: 'It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.' And he lay down and slept under a broom-tree; and, behold, an angel touched him, and said unto him: 'Arise and eat.' And he looked, and, behold, there was at his head a cake baked on the hot stones, and a cruse of water. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again. And the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him, and said: 'Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee.' And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meal forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God.

7. And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and He said unto him: 'What doest thou here, Elijah?' And he said: 'I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.' And He said: 'Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD.' And, behold, the LORD passed by...

8. Psalm 30

A Psalm; a Song at the Dedication of the House; of David.

I will extol thee, O LORD, for Thou hast raised me up,

And hast not suffered mine enemies to rejoice over me.

O LORD my God,

I cried unto Thee, and Thou didst heal me;

O LORD, Thou broughtest up my soul from the nether-world;

Thou didst kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.

Sing praise unto the LORD, O ye His godly ones,

And give thanks to His holy name.

For His anger is but for a moment, His favour is for a life-time;

Weeping may tarry for the night,

But joy cometh in the morning.

Now I had said in my security:

'I shall never be moved.'

Thou hadst established, O LORD, in Thy favour my mountain as a stronghold—

Thou didst hide Thy face; I was affrighted.

9. Unto Thee, O LORD, did I call,

And unto the LORD I made supplication: 'What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit?

Shall the dust praise Thee? Shall it declare Thy truth?

Hear, O LORD, and be gracious unto me;

LORD, be Thou my helper.'

Thou didst turn for me my mourning into dancing;

Thou didst loose my sackcloth, and gird me with gladness;

So that my glory may sing praise to Thee, and not be silent;

O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto Thee for ever.

10. Psalm 113

Hallelujah.

Praise, O ye servants of the LORD,

Praise the name of the LORD.

Blessed be the name of the LORD

From this time forth and for ever.

From the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof

The LORD's name is to be praised.

The LORD is high above all nations,

His glory is above the heavens.

Who is like unto the LORD our God,

That is enthroned on high,

That looketh down low

Upon heaven and upon the earth?

Who raiseth up the poor out of the dust,

And lifteth up the needy out of the dunghill;

That He may set him with princes,

Even with the princes of His people.

Who maketh the barren woman to dwell in her house

As a joyful mother of children.

Hallelujah.

11. Psalm 115

Not to us, O Lord, not to us but to Your name bring glory for the sake of Your love and Your faithfulness.

Let the nations not say, "Where, now, is their God?" when our God is in heaven and all that He wills He accomplishes.

Their idols are silver and gold, and the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but cannot see; they have ears, but cannot hear, noses, but cannot smell; they have hands, but cannot touch, feet, but cannot walk; they can make no sound in their throats.

Those who fashion them, all who trust in them, shall become like them. O Israel, trust in the Lord! He is their help and shield. O house of Aaron, trust in the Lord! He is their help and shield. O you who fear the Lord, trust in the Lord! He is their help and shield.

12. The Lord is mindful of us. He will bless us; He will bless the house of Israel; He will bless the house of Aaron; He will bless those who fear the Lord, small and great alike.

May the Lord increase your numbers, yours and your children's also. May you be blessed by the Lord, Maker of heaven and earth.

The heavens belong to the Lord, but the earth He gave over to man. The dead cannot praise the Lord, nor any who go down into silence. But we will bless the Lord now and forever.

Hallelujah.

13. PRAISED be Thou, O my God! This servant of Thine testifieth that naught else except Thee can ever express Thee, nor canst Thou be described by any one save Thyself. The thoughts of them that have recognized Thy reality, however much they may ascend towards the heaven of Thy praise, can never hope to pass beyond the

bounds which, by Thy behest and decree, have been fixed within their own hearts. How can the creature who is as nothing comprehend Him Who is the Ancient of Days, or succeed in describing the full measure of His sovereignty, His glory, and His grandeur? Nay, and to this Thou Thyself dost witness, O Thou Who art the Governor of nations! Every created thing hath recognized its own impotence, and the power of Thy might, and hath confessed its own abasement and Thy great glory.

I beseech Thee by Thy Lastness which is the same as Thy Firstness, and by Thy Revelation which is identical with Thy Concealment, to grant that they who are dear to Thee, and their children, and their kindred, may become the revealers of Thy purity amidst Thy creatures, and the manifestations of Thy sanctity amongst Thy servants.

Thou art, verily, powerful to do Thy pleasure. Thou art, in truth, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting.

Bahá'u'lláh / *Prayers and Meditations*: CXL

Personal Prayers

Reflection on the Texts

Discussion

Discuss the following statement:

Celebrations are not only joyous and festive activities. They can be times for deep reflection, serious discussion, charitable acts, and bringing more and more people into the circle of friends.

1. What makes an event worthy of celebration?
2. What features and characteristics make a celebration meaningful and memorable?
3. In what ways do celebrations contribute to building stronger communities? Do some celebrations harm a community? If so, why?