

XL. PRAYER AND MEDITATION

Compiled from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, Abdu'l

Original English



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A. Prayer and Meditation

1. A Prayerful Condition is the Best of Conditions, Especially in Private and at Midnight

"The prayerful condition is the best of all conditions, for man in such a state communeth with God, especially when prayer is offered in private and at times when one's mind is free, such as at midnight. Indeed, prayer imparteth life."

(Abdu'l-Bahá, from a recently translated Tablet: Spiritual Foundations: Prayer, Meditation, and the Devotional Attitude, A Compilation of the Universal House of Justice, 1980)

1. The Reason for Privacy When Communing with God

"The reason why privacy hath been enjoined in moments of devotion is this, that thou mayest give thy best attention to the remembrance of God, that thy heart may at all times be animated with His Spirit, and not be shut out as by a veil from thy Best Beloved. Let not thy tongue pay lip service in praise of God while thy heart be not attuned to the exalted summit of Glory, and the Focal Point of communion. Thus if haply thou dost live in the Day of Resurrection, the mirror of thy heart will be set towards Him Who is the Day-Star of Truth; and no sooner will His light shine forth than the splendour thereof shall forthwith be reflected in thy heart. For He is the Source of all goodness, and unto Him revert all things. But if He appeareth while thou hast turned unto thyself in meditation, this shall not profit thee, unless thou shalt mention His Name by words He hath revealed. For in the forthcoming Revelation it is He Who is the Remembrance of God, whereas the devotions which thou art offering at present have been prescribed by the Point of the Bayan, while He Who will shine resplendent in the Day of Resurrection is the Revelation of the inner reality enshrined in the Point of the Bayan — a Revelation more potent, immeasurably more potent, than the one which hath preceded it."

(The Bab: Selections from the Writings of the Bab, pp. 93-94)

1. The More Detached and Pure the Prayer the More Acceptable to God

"The most acceptable prayer is the one offered with the utmost spirituality and radiance; its prolongation hath not been and is not beloved of God. The more detached and the purer the prayer, the more acceptable is it in the presence of God."



ORIGINAL

(Ibid., pp 77-78)

1. The Inspiration Received Through Meditation

"...There are no set forms of meditation prescribed in the teachings, no plan, as such, for inner development. The friends are urged — nay enjoined — to pray, and [pg 457] they also should meditate, but the manner of doing the latter is left entirely to the individual..."

"The inspiration received through meditation is of a nature that one cannot measure or determine. God can inspire into our minds things that we had no previous knowledge of, if he desires to do so."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 25, 1943: *Spiritual Foundations: Prayer, Meditation and the Devotional Attitude*, op. cit.)

1. With Prayer and Meditation Must Go Action and Example

"Prayer and meditation are very important factors in deepening the spiritual life of the individual, but with them must go also action and example, as these are the tangible results of the former. Both are essential."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, May 15, 1944: Ibid.)

1. The Importance and Power of Meditation

"Through meditation the doors of deeper knowledge and inspiration may be opened. Naturally, if one meditates as a Bahá'í he is connected with the Source; if a man believing in God meditates he is tuning in to the power and mercy of God; but we cannot say that any inspiration which a person, not knowing Bahá'u'lláh, or not believing in God, receives is merely from his own ego. Meditation is very important, and the Guardian sees no reason why the friends should not be taught to meditate, but they should guard against superstitious or foolish ideas creeping into it."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 19, 1945: Ibid.)

1. Every Day Upon Arising One Should Compare Today with Yesterday and Pray...

"...Every day, in the morning when arising one should compare today with yesterday and see in what condition you are. If you see your belief is stronger and your heart more occupied with God and your love increased and your freedom from the world greater then thank God and ask for the increase of these qualities. You must begin to pray and repent for all that you have done which is wrong and you must implore and ask for help and assistance that you may become better than yesterday so that you may continue to make progress."

(Abdu'l-Bahá: Star of the West, Vol. VIII, No. 6, p. 68)

1. How to Pray — One Must Start Out with the Right Concept of God

"...we must not be rigid about praying; there is not a set of rules governing it; the main thing is we must start out with the right concept of God, the Manifestation, the Master, the Guardian — we can turn, in thought, to any one of them when we pray. For instance, you can ask Bahá'u'lláh for something, or, thinking of Him, ask God for it. The same is true of the Master or the Guardian. You can turn in thought to either of them and then ask their intercession, or pray direct to God. As long as you don't confuse their stations, and make them all equal, it does not matter much how you orient your thoughts."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 24, 1946) [pg 458]

1. Wiser to Use Meditations Given by Bahá'u'lláh — Not Set Form Recommended by Someone Else

"As to your question about prayer and whether it is necessary to recite the prayers of only the Central Figures of our Faith, we have been asked to quote here the following two excerpts on this subject, from letters written by Shoghi Effendi's secretary on his behalf:

'...as the Cause embraces members of all races and religions we should be careful not to introduce into it the customs of our previous beliefs. Bahá'u'lláh has given us the obligatory prayers, also prayers before sleeping, for travellers, etc. We should not introduce a new set of prayers He has not specified, when He has given us already so many, for so many occasions.'

'He thinks it would be wiser for the Bahá'ís to use the Meditations given by Bahá'u'lláh, and not any set form of meditation recommended by someone else; but the believers must be left free in these details and allowed to have personal latitude in finding their own level of communion with God.'

"As to the reading of prayers or selections from the Sacred Writings of other religions: Such readings are permissible, and indeed from time to time are included in the devotional programmes of Bahá'í Houses of Worship, demonstrating thereby the universality of our Faith."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, June 7, 1974)

1. Turn to Manifestation

"While praying it would be better to turn one's thoughts to the Manifestation as He continues, in the other world, to be our means of contact with the Almighty. We can, however, pray directly to God Himself."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, April 27, 1937: Dawn of a New Day, p. 67)

1. Praying to Bahá'u'lláh

"You have asked whether our prayers go beyond Bahá'u'lláh: It all depends whether we pray to Him directly or through Him to God. We may do both, and also can pray directly to God, but our prayers would certainly be more effective and illuminating if they are addressed to Him through His Manifestation, Bahá'u'lláh."

"Under no circumstances, however, can we, while repeating the prayers, insert the name Bahá'u'lláh where the word 'God' is used. This would be tantamount to a blasphemy."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, October 14, 1937)

1. Praying to Bahá'u'lláh — As the Door

"We cannot know God directly, but only through His Prophets. We can pray to Him realizing that through His Prophets we know Him, or we can address our prayer in thought to Bahá'u'lláh, not as God, but as the Door to our knowing God."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer: High Endeavors: Messages to Alaska, p. 71) [pg 459]

1. We May Turn to the Guardian in Prayer, But Should Not Confuse His Station with that of a Prophet

"We pray to God, or to Bahá'u'lláh, as we please. But if in our thoughts we desire to turn to the Guardian first and then address our prayer, there is no objection, as long as we always bear in mind he is only the Guardian, and do not confuse his station with that of the Prophet or even of the Master."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, August 22, 1947)

1. Turning Toward the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh in Prayer

"In prayer the believers can turn their consciousness toward the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh, provided that in doing so they have a clear and correct understanding of His station as a Manifestation of God."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 15, 1935)

1. Through Abdu'l-Bahá One Can Address Bahá'u'lláh

"If you find you need to visualize someone when you pray, think of the Master. Through Him you can address Bahá'u'lláh. Gradually try to think of the qualities of the Manifestation, and in that way a mental form will fade out, for after all the body is not the thing, His Spirit is there and is the essential, everlasting element."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 31, 1949)

1. People Who Desire to Meet and Pray

"In some places the Bahá'ís have held meetings for prayer, for people who desire to meet and pray. As we have such wonderful prayers and meditations in our writings, the reading of these with friends who are interested in and crave for this type of small meeting is often a step towards attracting them to the Faith. Perhaps you can start such an activity in your city."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, February 4, 1956: Bahá'í Meetings, A Compilation of the Universal House of Justice, November 1975)

1. Prayers Should Be Read as Printed

"Regarding your question as to the changing of pronouns in Bahá'í prayers: The Guardian does not approve of such changes, either in the specific prayers or in any others. They should be read as printed without changing a single word."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, April 13, 1944: Bahá'í News, No. 171, November 1944, p. 3)

1. Strictly Adhere to the Text of the Holy Writings

"In regard to your question as to whether it is permissible to substitute the plural pronoun for the singular in prayers worded in the singular, the Guardian would strongly urge your N.S.A. to inform the friends to strictly adhere to the text of the Holy Writings, and not to deviate even a hair-breadth from what has been revealed by the Holy Pen. Besides, it should be noted that congregational prayer has been discouraged by Bahá'u'lláh, and that it is allowed only in the case of the prayer for the dead."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia and New Zealand, October 17, 1934) [pg 460]

1. In Quoting Prayers

"In quoting prayers any part may be used, but should be quoted as it is, however short."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 19, 1945: Bahá'í News, No. 210, August 1948, p. 3)

1. Specific Time for Remembrance of God

"...Moreover the friends must observe the specific times for the remembrance of God, meditation, devotion and prayer, as it is highly unlikely, nay, rather impossible, that any enterprise should prosper and develop short of Divine bestowals and confirmations...."

(From a letter of the Guardian to the Bahá'ís of the East, December 19, 1923: Living the Life, p. 1)

1. Dawn Prayers

"Blessed is he who, at the hour of dawn, centring his thoughts on God, occupied with His remembrance, and supplicating His forgiveness, directeth his steps to the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar

and, entering therein, seateth himself in silence to listen to the verses of God, the Sovereign, the Mighty, the All-Praised...."

(Bahá'u'lláh: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, K 115, p. 61)

"QUESTION: Concerning the remembrance of God in the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar 'at the hour of dawn'."

"ANSWER: Although the words 'at the hour of dawn' are used in the Book of God, it is acceptable to God at the earliest dawn of day, between dawn and sunrise, or even up to two hours after sunrise."

(Bahá'u'lláh: The Kitab-i-Aqdas: Q 15, p. 111)

1. Morning Prayers

"One of the characteristics of Bahá'í society will be the gathering of the believers each day during the hours between dawn and two hours after sunrise to listen to the reading and chanting of the Holy Word. In many communities at the present time, especially in rural ones, such gatherings would fit naturally into the pattern of the friends' daily life, and where this is the case it would do much to foster the unity of the local community and deepen the friends' knowledge of the Teachings if such gatherings could be organized by the Local Spiritual Assembly on a regular basis. Attendance at these gatherings is not to be obligatory, but we hope that the friends will more and more be drawn to take part in them. This is a goal which can be attained gradually."

(From the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World, Naw-Ruz, 1974)

1. We Should Not Make a Practice of Saying Grace or of Teaching It to Our Children

"He does not feel that the friends should make a practice of saying grace or of teaching it to children. This is not part of the Bahá'í Faith, but a Christian practice, and as the Cause embraces members of all races and religions we should be careful not to introduce into it the customs of our previous beliefs. Bahá'u'lláh has given us the obligatory prayers, also prayers before sleeping, for travellers, etc. We should not introduce a new set of prayers He has not specified, when He has given us already so many, for so many occasions."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, September 27, 1947)

1. Congregational Prayer Only for the Dead

"The daily prayers are to be said each one for himself, aloud or silent makes no difference. [pg 461] There is no congregational prayer except that for the dead. We read healing and other prayers in our meetings, but the daily prayer is a personal obligation, so someone else reading it is not quite the same thing as saying it for yourself..."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 31, 1949: Bahá'í News, No. 220, June 1949, pp. 2-3)

1. Prayers May Be Recited in Unison

"You have asked whether it is permissible for the friends to chant a prayer collectively. There is a difference between chanting a prayer collectively and congregational prayer. The latter is a formal prayer usually led by an individual using a prescribed ritual. Congregational prayer in this form is forbidden in the Faith except in the case of the Prayer for the Dead. While reciting prayers in unison and spontaneously joining in the recitation of the Words of God is not forbidden, the friends should bear in mind the advice of the beloved Guardian on this subject when he stated that:

'...although the friends are thus left free to follow their own inclination, ... they should take the utmost care that any manner they practice should not acquire too rigid a character, and thus develop into an institution. This is a point which the friends should always bear in mind, lest they deviate from the clear path indicated in the Teachings.'

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, February 6, 1975)

1. One Person Should Read the Funeral Prayer

"We have received your letter of 14th December inquiring which funeral prayer is considered as the desirable one for use in Europe, whether there is any obligatory prayer and what instructions are concerning standing at a Bahá'í funeral service."

"The only obligatory prayer for use at Bahá'í funerals is the prayer No. 167 in 'Prayers and Meditations'. This prayer should be recited by one of those present and all present should stand while it is being read. There is no requirement to face the Qiblah or any other particular direction while this prayer is being read."

"The reading of any other prayers or writings at a Bahá'í funeral is entirely optional. In general it is desirable to keep the service simple and dignified."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Finland, January 31, 1971)

1. Recital or Chanting of Prayers — Prayer is Essentially Communion Between God and Man

"...There is no objection to the recital or chanting of prayers in the Oriental language, but there is also no obligation whatever of adopting such a form of prayer at any devotional service in the auditorium of the Temple. It should neither be required nor prohibited. The important thing that should always be borne in mind is that with the exception of certain specific obligatory prayers, Bahá'u'lláh has given us no strict or special rulings in matters of worship whether in the Temple or elsewhere. Prayer is essentially communion between man and God, and as such transcends all ritualistic forms and formulae."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, June 15, 1935: Bahá'í News, No. 93, July 1935, p. 1) [pg 462]

1. Healing Prayer and Prayers for the Fast

"Concerning the Healing Prayer, the Guardian wishes me to inform you that there is no special ruling for its recital. The believer is free to recite it as many times and in the way he wishes. There are also no obligatory prayers for the Fast. But there are some specific ones revealed by Bahá'u'lláh for that purpose."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia and New Zealand, October 17, 1934)

1. Effectiveness of Healing Prayer

"The Healing Prayers revealed by Bahá'u'lláh can be effective even though used by non-believers. But their effectiveness is of course greater in the case of those who fully accept the Revelation."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 19, 1939: Bahá'í News, No. 134, March 1940, p. 2)

1. Prayers Answered Through Action

"...It is not sufficient to pray diligently for guidance, but this prayer must be followed by meditation as to the best methods of action and then action itself. Even if the action should not immediately produce results, or perhaps not be entirely correct, that does not make so much difference, because prayers can only be answered through action and if someone's action is wrong, God can use that method of showing the pathway which is right."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, August 22, 1957: The Individual and Teaching, A Compilation of the Universal House of Justice, 1977)

1. Pray to be Protected from Contamination of Society

"...Love for each other, the deep sense that we are a new organism, the dawn-breakers of a New World Order, must constantly animate our Bahá'í lives, and we must pray to be protected from the contamination of society which is so diseased with prejudice."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Spiritual Assembly of Atlanta, Georgia, February 5, 1947: Living the Life, p. 13)

1. Five Steps of Prayer

"Regarding the five steps of prayer outlined by the Guardian and recorded by Mrs. Moffett in her booklet the 'Call to Prayer': These, he wishes me to explain, are merely personal suggestions and need not, therefore, be adopted strictly and universally by the believers."

(From a letter dated June 30, 1938 written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer)

1. Reciting Any Prayer Nine Times Not Obligatory

"There is no obligation for a believer to recite always any prayer nine times. Ritualism is certainly to be avoided in all matters affecting Bahá'í worship...."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, November 26, 1939) [pg 463]

1. The Spiritual Man Prays Only for Love of God

"In the highest prayer, men pray only for the love of God, not because they fear Him or hell, or hope for bounty or heaven... When a man falls in love with a human being, it is impossible for him to keep from mentioning the name of his beloved. How much more difficult is it to keep from mentioning the Name of God when one has come to love Him... The spiritual man finds no delight in anything save in commemoration of God."

(Report of Abdu'l-Bahá's words quoted in Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era, p. 105, Wilmette 1976 ed: The Importance of Prayer, Meditation, and the Devotional Attitude, A Compilation)

1. Prayer Beads, Chanting, Congregational Prayer, etc.

"In the matter of the distribution and use of prayer beads, in this and other matters of secondary importance he does not wish that any hard and fast rules be set up. The believers should not be required to use prayer beads, nor should they be prevented from doing so, as the Teachings do not contain any specific instructions on the subject."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, April 4, 1940: Bahá'í News, No. 137, July 1940, p. 3)

1. Reading Prayers on the Radio

"You have asked specifically about reading prayers on the radio. Of course this is permissible, but you will be cautious concerning the setting of the prayers, i.e., what kind of materials may be presented before and after the prayers ... so that they are assured of that dignity and reverence which they deserve. There may also be considerations of timing (the hours of the day best chosen, Sunday as the customary day of religious observance, etc.), in relation to the customs of the station, of the area, or other. Such recorded disc programs as 'Words for the World' include prayers, of course."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador, July 8, 1973)

1. Bahá'í Children, Communes and Prayers

"...Every day at first light, ye gather the Bahá'í children together and teach them the communes and prayers. This is a most praiseworthy act, and bringeth joy to the children's hearts; that they should, at every morn, turn their faces toward the Kingdom and make mention of the Lord and praise His Name, and in the sweetest of voices, chant and recite."

(Abdu'l-Bahá: Bahá'í Education, p. 28)

"...there is no objection to children who are as yet unable to memorize a whole prayer learning certain sentences only."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, September 27, 1947)

1. Mothers or Others Delegated Should Choose Excerpts from the Sacred Word for Children to Memorize

"The Guardian feels that it would be better for either the mothers of Bahá'í children — or some Committee your Assembly might delegate the task to — to choose excerpts [pg 464] from the Sacred Word to be used by the child rather than just something made up. Of course prayer can be purely spontaneous, but many of the sentences and thoughts combined in Bahá'í writings of a devotional nature are easy to grasp, and the revealed Word is endowed with a power of its own."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, August 8, 1942)

1. There Are No Special Instructions for Repeating Prayers of the Bab

"Concerning the prayer for difficulty revealed by the Bab: He wishes me to inform you that it is not accompanied by any instructions for its recital."¹

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 6, 1937)

"Regarding your questions: The Guardian feels it is not necessary to repeat the Bab's prayer so many times."²

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, September 30, 1950)

1. Community Prayer Sessions

"The Guardian wishes me to assure you that he sees no objection to the friends coming together for meditation and prayer. Such a communion helps in fostering fellowship among the believers, and as such is highly commendable."

¹ Written in response to a question as to how often this prayer should be repeated to produce the greatest results.

² Written in response to a question about the repetition 114 times in the morning for 19 days of the prayer of the Bab, 'Say! God sufficeth all things above all things...' (See also: No. 1528)

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 20, 1937: Spiritual Foundations: Prayer, Meditation, and the Devotional Attitude, op. cit.)

1. **Bahá'ís Should Be Taught to Meditate, But Also to Guard Against Superstitious Practices**

"Through meditation the doors of deeper knowledge and inspiration may be opened. Naturally, if any one meditates as a Bahá'í he is connected with the Source; if a man believing in God meditates he is tuning in to the power and mercy of God; but we cannot say that any inspiration which a person not knowing Bahá'u'lláh, or not believing in God, receives is merely from his own ego. Meditation is very important, and the Guardian sees no reason why the friends should not be taught to meditate, but they should guard against superstitious or foolish ideas creeping into it."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 19, 1945)

1. **"O Subduer of Winds", an Invocation for Moments of Danger**

"Regarding the invocation 'Ya Musakin el Arian': It literally means 'O Subduer of Winds'. The believers are not required to recite it, but may do so in moments of personal danger."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 6, 1939)
[pg 465]



B. Obligatory Prayer

1. **There Are Mysteries and a Wisdom in Every Word and Movement of the Obligatory Prayers**

"Know thou that in every word and movement of the obligatory prayer there are allusions, mysteries and a wisdom that man is unable to comprehend, and letters and scrolls cannot contain."

(Abdu'l-Bahá: Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá, Vol. I, p. 85)

1. **Obligatory Prayers**

"As obligatory prayers require either genuflection or ablution and orienting toward Bahji, they cannot truly be said by one person for a group of people without it being in effect a form of congregational prayer, so he thinks it better to avoid it."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 31, 1946: Bahá'í News, No. 197, July 1947, p. 6)

1. Turning Towards Akka in Prayer is a Physical Symbol of an Inner Reality — One Who Does Not Understand the Acts Accompanying the Long Prayer Can Use the Short

"He would advise you to only use the short midday Obligatory Prayer. This has no genuflections and only requires that when saying it the believer turn his face towards Akka where Bahá'u'lláh is buried. This is a physical symbol of an inner reality, just as the plant stretches out to the sunlight — from which it receives life and growth — so we turn our hearts to the Manifestation of God, Bahá'u'lláh, when we pray; and we turn our faces, during this short prayer, to where His dust lies on this earth as a symbol of the inner act."

"Bahá'u'lláh has reduced all ritual and form to an absolute minimum in His Faith. The few forms that there are — like those associated with the two longer obligatory daily prayers, are only symbols of the inner attitude. There is a wisdom in them, and a great blessing but we cannot force ourselves to understand or feel these things; that is why He gave us also the very short and simple prayer, for those who did not feel the desire to perform the acts associated with the other two."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, June 24, 1949: *Spiritual Foundations: Prayer, Meditation, and the Devotional Attitude*, op. cit.)

1. If a Believer is Ill or Physically Unable to Perform Genuflections

"As regards the questions about the proper use of the Long Obligatory Prayer: All the writings of the Faith may be read and should be read for the instruction and inspiration of the friends. This includes the specific prayers. If a believer is physically incapable of performing the genuflections accompanying one of the prayers, and yet he longs to say it as an obligatory prayer, then he may do so. By physically incapable is meant a real physical incapacity which a physician would attest as genuine."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, February 17, 1955) [pg 466]

1. The Medium Prayer — Repeating the Greatest Name 95 times

"With regard to the three daily obligatory prayers:... The Bahá'í worshipper is free to choose any of these three prayers. The short prayer consists of one verse to be recited once a day at noon. The medium prayer should be recited three times a day: in the morning, at noon, and in the evening. It is accompanied by certain physical gestures such as kneeling, raising the hands, etc. The long prayer which is also accompanied by regulations should be recited once every twenty-four hours. The adoption of one of these three prayers is a spiritual obligation imposed upon all the believers. For as Abdu'l-Bahá says in His Writings — prayer and fasting are the twin pillars that sustain the Law of God."

"As regards the repeating of the Greatest Name ninety-five times, this also has been mentioned by Bahá'u'lláh but He has given no directions as to how the prayer beads should be used in this connection."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, April 25, 1937)

1. Physical Gestures and Washing Hands and Face in Connection with Obligatory Prayers Are Laws of Bahá'u'lláh

"...The genuflections and washing of hands and face (as clearly put down in 'Prayers and Meditations of Bahá'u'lláh', which he himself translated), associated with the two longer daily prayers (obligatory prayers) are laws of Bahá'u'lláh, applicable to any Bahá'í whether of Muslim background, Christian background or otherwise. It is blasphemy to suggest otherwise. However, the Bahá'ís have been left free by Bahá'u'lláh to choose one of the 3 obligatory prayers, and those who prefer not to perform these acts can say the very short one."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria, June 30, 1949)

1. Each One Must Say His Obligatory Prayer by Himself

"As to the obligatory prayer: Each one must say his prayer alone by himself, and this is not conditional on a private place; that is, both at home and in the worshipping-place, which is a gathering-place, it is allowable for one to say his prayer; but each person must say his prayer by himself. But if they chant supplications together, in a good and effective voice, that is very good."

(Abdu'l-Bahá: Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá, Vol. II, p. 464)

1. Regarding Reading the Bab's Prayer 500 Times

"On page 1 of your October News letter you have quoted the Bab's prayer for the removal of difficulties and have added: 'Bahá'u'lláh has said to repeat this prayer 500 times by day and by night that it may aid us to recognize Him and our souls will be illumined.'"

"The above statement gives the impression that the repetition of the said prayer 500 times is one of the prescribed devotionals of the Faith, and has a specified effect on the believer who observes this form of prayer."

"We do not feel it is justified to infer such conclusions from the reference in 'God Passes By', page 119, which you mention. The passage in question obviously refers to a specific circumstance in the life of Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdad before the declaration of His Mission, and should not be presented to the believers as one of the prescribed observances of the faith."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, November 24, 1971) [pg 467]

1. The Medium Prayer to be Recited Morning, Noon and Evening — Three Times a Day

"...The friends are free to choose any one of these three prayers, but have to follow the instructions revealed by Bahá'u'lláh concerning them. The long prayer should be recited once in every 24 hours, and is accompanied by certain physical acts. The short prayer, consisting of one verse, should be recited once a day at noon; while the medium prayer should be said three times a day; in the morning, at noon and in the evening. The believer is entirely free to choose any one of these three prayers for daily use."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, April 27, 1937)

1. Definition of "Morning", "Noon" and "Evening"

"By 'morning', 'noon' and 'evening', mentioned in connection with the Obligatory Prayers, is meant respectively the intervals between sunrise and noon, between noon and sunset, and from sunset till two hours after sunset."

(Bahá'u'lláh, The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, p. 146)

1. In High Latitudes the National Spiritual Assembly May Fix Hours of Prayer and Fasting by the Clock.

"Concerning the times for prayer and fasting, it is correct that, in the high latitudes, where the lengths of day and night vary considerably from season to season of the year, it is permissible to observe the laws of prayer and fasting in accordance with the clock rather than with the rising and setting of the sun. As Iceland lies in such latitudes, it is for your Assembly to decide this matter for the believers in your country. All should then abide by whatever your Assembly lays down."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, July 27, 1976: Notes on Obligatory Prayers and Ablutions, A Compilation of the Universal House of Justice)

1. Based on Texts in the "Kitáb-i-Aqdas" and "Questions and Answers" — The Universal House of Justice Permits Use of Clock

"There are two texts, in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas and its annexe, which refer to the use of clocks. In the Book itself it is written that in lands where the days and nights are long the hours of prayer shall be determined by reference to clocks and other timepieces. In the 'Questions and Answers', in answer to the more general question whether, in determining time, it is permissible to make use of timepieces, Bahá'u'lláh states that it is permissible."

"Although in the first instance the Sacred Text specifically mentions the use of clocks for determining the times of prayer it does not limit their use to that purpose, and the Universal House of Justice, on the basis of the more general statement in the 'Questions and Answers', has permitted their use also in determining the hours of fasting, leaving the application of the law to the National Spiritual Assembly in each country that lies in the high latitudes."

"In the case of fasting, as Mr. ... correctly comments, there is little difference between sunrise and sunset as observed astronomically and hours of fasting as fixed by the clock, because the fast falls just before the Equinox. However, by this ruling it is possible for the believers in the high latitudes to use the same standard for both prayer and fasting, as well as for fixing the ending of each day in the Bahá'í calendar in determining the time for the starting of each Holy Day and the holding of the [pg 468] Nineteen Day Feasts."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, June 13, 1978: Ibid.)

1. "Allah-u-Abha" is the Form of the Greatest Name to be Used in the Long Obligatory Prayer

"Shoghi Effendi has explained that 'Allah-u-Abha' should be used when the Greatest Name is to be repeated three times in the Long Obligatory Prayer."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, January 28, 1977: Ibid.)

1. Instructions in the Long Obligatory Prayer

"The Universal House of Justice received your letter of 7 January 1975, enquiring about the correct way of following certain instructions in the Long Obligatory Prayer, and has asked us to give you this reply."

"In following the direction stating: 'Let him then stand and raise his hands twice in supplication, and say ... ': the believer does not have to read twice the paragraph which follows. Whether the believer raises his hands twice before the reciting of the paragraph, or commences the reciting after having raised his hands once, and raises them a second time soon thereafter, is left to his choice."

"As to the direction which states: 'Let him then raise his hands thrice, and say ... ', an individual believer asked the beloved Guardian the following question:

'...the direction to raise the hands thrice and say "Greater is God than every great one." Does this mean after every raising of the hands, or only to be said once, after the three raisings?"

"Shoghi Effendi's secretary answered on his behalf as follows: 'The hands should be raised three times and each time the sentence be repeated in conjunction with the act.'"

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, February 13, 1975: Ibid.)

1. Instructions for the Medium Obligatory Prayer

"Each phrase which one may substitute is for a particular portion of the prayer, and the instructions are quite specific where the substitutions may be made. For instance, the longest verse in the prayer begins with the same words as those which may be substituted; that is, after the instructions 'Then let him stand up, and facing the Qiblih, let him say: God testifieth that there is none other God but Him.' The second phrase which may be substituted, which states, 'it would suffice were he, while seated,...' may be used in place of the concluding paragraph which carries the instruction 'Let him, then, be seated and say:' — and, again, the substituted words follow exactly the first sentence of that final paragraph."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, April 23, 1981: Ibid.)

1. The Correct Position for "Sitting" During Obligatory Prayers

"...one of the believers asked the Guardian a question about the correct position for sitting. From the context it seems clear that this question is related to the medium Prayer, but this is not explicitly stated. The Guardian's reply states that sitting on [pg 469] a chair is permissible, but to sit on the floor is preferable and more fitting."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, April 1, 1982: Ibid.)

1. Ablutions and Movements to Accompany the Recitation of the Long Obligatory Prayer

"Concerning the movements to accompany the recitations of the Long Obligatory Prayer, in response to an enquiry from the National Spiritual Assembly of the Near East, the House of Justice stated in a letter dated September 1, 1975:

'Ablutions are necessary for all three Obligatory Prayers.' 'Reciting the words specified in the medium Obligatory Prayer pertains only to that prayer, i.e., for the short and long Obligatory Prayers it would be sufficient to wash one's hands and face in preparation for each of these two prayers.'"

"However, the Universal House of Justice has stated to National Spiritual Assemblies in the West that no issue should be made of this matter at the present time and since it has not been clarified and applied in detail to the western believers, they are under no obligation to go beyond the instructions given by the beloved Guardian in 'Prayers and Meditations' in which ablutions are prescribed only in connection with the medium Obligatory Prayer."

"The instruction to raise one's hands occurs once in the medium Obligatory Prayer and five times in the long Obligatory Prayer. The term used in the original Arabic for the first, second and fourth occasions in the long Prayer is the same as that used in the medium Prayer. Therefore it would be entirely correct for the worshipper, when raising his hands on these occasions during the recitation of the long Obligatory Prayer, to follow the more specific instructions given in English by the Guardian in his translation of the medium one. On the third and fifth occasions the instruction is given in the long Prayer, the words 'in supplication' are omitted. The House of Justice does not wish at this time to give any specific guidance in this connection; it leaves the matter to the discretion of the friends."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, April 1, 1982: Ibid.)

1. Ablutions Before Obligatory Prayers and Repetition of the Greatest Name

"It hath been ordained that every believer in God, the Lord of Judgement, shall, each day, having washed his hands and then his face, seat himself and, turning unto God, repeat 'Allah-u-Abha' ninety-five times. Such was the decree of the Maker of the Heavens when, with majesty and power, He established Himself upon the thrones of His Names. Perform ye likewise, ablutions for the Obligatory Prayer; this is the command of God, the Incomparable, the Unrestrained."

(Bahá'u'lláh: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, K 18, p. 26)

1. **The Verse to be Recited When There is No Water**

"...Let him that findeth no water for ablution repeat five times the words 'In the Name of God, the Most Pure, the Most Pure', and then proceed to his devotions. Such is the command of the Lord of all worlds...."

(Bahá'u'lláh: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, K 10, p. 23) [pg 470]

