

The Bahá'ís of Florence Inter-Faith Devotional Service



Prayer & Fasting

Hinduism

This Atman¹, resplendent and pure, whom the sinless disciples behold residing within the body, is attained by unceasing practice of truthfulness, austerity, right knowledge, and continence.

Mundaka Upanishad 3.1.5

(¹ That part of a living being which is eternal and beyond physical description)

It is greedy desire and wrath, born of passion, the great evil, the sum of destruction: this is the enemy of the soul. All is clouded by desire: as fire by smoke, as a mirror by dust, as an unborn babe by its covering. Wisdom is clouded by desire, the ever present enemy of

the wise, desire in its innumerable forms, which like a fire cannot find satisfaction. Desire has found a place in man's senses and mind and reason. Through these it blinds the soul, after having overclouded wisdom. Set thou, therefore, thy senses in harmony, and then slay thou sinful desire, the destroyer of vision and wisdom. They say that the power of the senses is great. But greater than the senses is the mind. Greater than the mind is Buddhi, reason; and greater than reason is He - the Spirit in man and in all.



Know Him therefore who is above reason; and let His peace give thee peace. Be a warrior and kill desire, the powerful enemy of the soul.

Bhagavad Gita 3.37~43

Judaism

Rabbi Johanan said, “Would that man could pray all day, for a prayer never loses its value.”

Jerusalem Talmud, Berakot 1.1

“To serve the Lord your God with all your heart”. What is a service with the heart? It is prayer.

Midrash, Sifre Deuteronomy 41

Always let a man test himself: if he can direct his heart, let him pray; if he cannot, let him not pray.

Talmud, Berakot 30b

Prayer should not be recited as if a man were reading a document.

Jerusalem Talmud, Berakot 4.3

He, who prays for his fellowman, while he himself has the same need, will be answered first.

Talmud, Baba Kamma 92a

In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; in the first year of his reign I, Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: And I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love Him, and to them that keep His commandments; we have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly,

and have rebelled, even by departing from Thy precepts and from Thy judgments: Neither have we hearkened unto Thy servants the prophets, which spake in Thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto Thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither Thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against Thee.

Daniel 9.1~4

And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth from the greatest

of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decrees of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent and turn away from His fierce anger that we perish not? And God saw their works that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that He had said that He would do unto them; and He did it not.

Jonah 3.4~10

Zoroastrianism

The pure whom you have found worthy for their righteousness and their good mind, fulfil their desire, O Wise Lord, let them attain it! I know that words of prayer which serve a good end are successful before you.

Avesta, Yasna 28.10

Holy is the man of devotion; through thoughts and words and deed and through his conscience he increases Righteousness; the Wise Lord as Good Mind give the dominion. For this good reward I pray. I know that my greatest good is to worship the Wise Lord and those that have been and are. By their names will I worship them and come before them with praise.

Avesta, Yasna 50.21~22

Buddhism

Beings possessed by carnal passions, anger, or infatuation have but to revere and remember the Bodhisattva Kuan Shih Yin and they will be set free from their passions.

Lotus Sutra 25

O Shariputra, having perceived this cause and effect, I with reverence say thus, "Every son and every daughter of a family ought with their whole mind to make fervent prayer for (rebirth in) the Pure Land of Buddha Amitayus²."

Smaller Sukhavativyuha Sutra 10

²lit. "infinite life"

Sitting cross-legged, they should wish that all beings have firm and strong roots of goodness and attain the state of immovability. Cultivating concentration, they should wish that all beings

conquer their minds by concentration ultimately, with no remainder. When practicing contemplation, they should wish that all beings see truth as it is and be forever free of opposition and contention.

Garland Sutra 11

Christianity

We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshipper of God and does His will, God listens to him.

John 9.31

Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards He was famished. And when the tempter came to Him, he said, If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But He

answered and said, It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Matthew 4.1~10

And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

Acts 14.21~23

Then came to Him the disciples of John, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but Thy disciples fast not?" And Jesus said unto them, "Can the children of the bride chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with

them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast. No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old skins: else the skins break, and the wine runneth out, and the skins perish: But they put new wine into new skins, and both are preserved.”

Matthew 9. 14~17

Pray constantly.

1 Thessalonians 5.17

Islam

O believers, when you stand up to pray wash your faces, and your hands up to the elbows, and wipe your heads, and your feet up to the ankles. If you are defiled, purify yourselves; but if you are

sick or on a journey, or if any of you comes from the privy, or have touched women, and you can find no water, then have recourse to wholesome dust and wipe your faces and hands with it. God does not desire to make any impediment for you; but He desires to purify you, and that He may complete His blessing upon you; haply you will be thankful.

Qur'án 5.6

O you wrapped up in your raiment! Keep vigil the night long, save a little-- A half thereof, or abate a little thereof or add (a little) thereto and chant the Qur'án in measure, for We shall charge you with a word of weight. Lo! The vigil of the night is when impression is more keen and speech more certain. Lo! You have by day a chain of business. So remember the name of thy Lord and devote thyself with complete devotion.

Qur'án 73.1~8

Call on your Lord with humility and in private.

Qur'án 7.55

O believers, prescribed for you is the Fast, even as it was prescribed for those that were before you--haply you will be God-fearing--for days numbered; and if any of you be sick, or if he be on a journey, then a number of other days; and for those who are able to fast, a redemption by feeding a poor man. Yet better it is for him who volunteers good, and that you should fast is better for you, if you know; the month of Ramadan, wherein the Qur'án was sent down to be a guidance to the people, and as clear signs of the Guidance and the Salvation. So let those of you, who are present at the month, fast it; and if any of you be sick, or if he be on a journey, then a number of other days; God desires ease for you, and desires not hardship for you; and that you

fulfill the number, and magnify God that He has guided you, and haply you will be thankful.

Qur'án 2.183~85

There is a polish for everything that becomes rusty, and the polish for the heart is the remembrance of God.

Hadith of Tirmidhi

The fire of hell has been forbidden to these two eyes: the eye that remained sleepless through watching in the ways of God, and the eye that wept with spirit trembling at the fear of God.

Hadith of Darimi

Bábí Faith

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 the 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

Bayán, while He Who will shine resplendent in the Day of Resurrection is the Revelation of the inner reality enshrined in the Point of the Bayán--a Revelation more potent, immeasurably more potent, than the one which hath preceded it.

Selections from the Writings of the Báb, p. 93-94

Bahá'í Faith

Recite ye the verses of God every morning and evening. Whoso reciteth them not hath truly failed to fulfil his pledge to the Covenant of God and His Testament, and who in this day turneth away therefrom hath indeed turned away from God since time immemorial. Fear ye God, O concourse of My servants! Take heed lest excessive reading and too many acts of piety in the daytime and in the night season make you vainglorious. Should a

person recite but a single verse from the Holy Writings in a spirit of joy and radiance, this would be better for him than reciting wearily all the Scriptures of God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. Recite ye the verses of God in such measure that ye be not overtaken with fatigue or boredom. Burden not your souls so as to cause exhaustion and weigh them down, but rather endeavour to lighten them, that they may soar on the wings of revealed Verses unto the dawning-place of His signs. This is conducive to nearer access unto God, were ye to comprehend.

Kitáb-i-Aqdas, p. 74

We have commanded you to pray and fast from the beginning of maturity; this is ordained by God, your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers. He has exempted from this those who are weak from illness or age, as a bounty from

His Presence, and He is the Forgiving, the Generous.

We have enjoined upon you fasting during a brief period, and at its close have designated for you Naw-Ruz as a feast...The traveller, the ailing, those who are with child or giving suck, are not bound by the fast...Abstain from food and drink, from sunrise to sundown, and beware lest desire deprive you of this grace that is appointed in the Book.

Kitáb-i-Aqdas, p. 22; 24

O My Friends! Have ye forgotten that true and radiant morn, when in those hallowed and blessed surroundings ye were all gathered in My presence beneath the shade of the tree of life, which is planted in the all-glorious paradise? Awestruck ye listened as I gave utterance to these three most holy words: O friends! Prefer not you will to Mine, never desire that

which I have not desired for you, and approach Me not with lifeless hearts, defiled with worldly desires and cravings. Would ye but sanctify your souls, ye would at

this present hour recall that place and those surroundings, and the truth of My utterance should be made evident unto all of you.

The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh (Persian #19)

PRAYER FOR AMERICA

O Thou kind Lord! This gathering is turning to Thee. These hearts are radiant with Thy love. These minds and spirits are exhilarated by the message of Thy glad-tidings. O God! Let this American democracy become glorious in spiritual degrees even as it has aspired to material degrees, and render this just government victorious. Confirm this revered nation to upraise the standard of the oneness of humanity, to promulgate the Most Great Peace, to become thereby most glorious and praiseworthy among all the nations of the world. O God! This American nation is worthy of Thy favors and is deserving of Thy mercy. Make it precious and near to Thee through Thy bounty and bestowal.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

