

# Recitation of the Greatest Name

## INTRODUCTION: *Approaching the threshold...*

Compared with Dispensations of the past, the Bahá'í Faith has very little ritual, formality or ceremony. The few prescribed forms of worship remaining are outward expressions that aid with our inward spiritual training. For the spiritual development of the individual, Bahá'u'lláh has instituted certain spiritual disciplines and laws. One such discipline is for the individual to repeat, in an attitude of prayerful devotion, the Greatest Name of God ninety-five times each day. Shoghi Effendi wrote through his secretary: “‘*Reciting*’ the Greatest Name means to repeat it over and over, silently or out loud...”<sup>1</sup> The Greatest Name of God to be repeated ninety-five times each day is “Alláh-u-Abhá”. Translated from the Arabic it means “God is All-Glorious” or “God is Most Glorious”.

In Islám there is a tradition that among the various names or attributes of God, one is the greatest. However, by Islámic tradition, the identity of that Name is considered hidden. Bahá'u'lláh revealed that the Greatest Name of God is “Bahá”, which means “Glory”, “Splendor” or “Light”. This means that Bahá'u'lláh, the supreme Manifestation of God, has appeared in the Station of God’s Greatest Name, that is, in His highest or most excellent attribute. There are several forms of the Greatest Name, all of which are derivatives of the name “Bahá”, such as “‘Abhá”, as well as certain phrases such as “Alláh-u-Abhá”, “Yá Bahá'u'lláh”, or “Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá”.

“Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá” is an invocation that can be translated either as “O Glory of Glories” or “O Glory of the All-Glorious”. “Yá Bahá'u'lláh” means “O Glory of God”, “O Splendor of God” or “O Light of God”.



Prayer beads of the Báb

## OBJECTIVE: *A look to the horizon...*

### Facilitator

Review the following objective with the participants:

The objective of this study is to understand the fundamental verities or basic truths regarding the importance of recitation of the Greatest Name of God ninety-five times a day.

<sup>1</sup> UD, p. 450

## THE STUDY PROCESS: *Attaining the water of life...*

### Facilitator

Review the following study process with the participants. Then study the numbered quotations that follow, one at a time as described below.

1. **READING:** *A drink from the cup of guidance...*

Two volunteers take turns reading the quotation out loud so it is read twice.

2. **CONFIRMING MEANING:** *A spray from the fountain of light...*

**PARTICIPANTS:** To better understand certain words used in the quotation, take turns with the following:

A. Choose a word from the quotation and state it for the whole group to hear. (Like a fun game – pick a word!) Then...

B. Read out loud the sentence that contains the **word** you selected, **while substituting for that word**, its given phrase, definition, or synonym from the boxes below the quotation.

Repeat A and B above until everyone is satisfied with their understanding of the words.

3. **FINDING VALUE:** *Mining the gems of truth...*

Ask the participants to state each basic fact or truth that can be found in the quotation about recitation of the Greatest Name of God.

## QUOTATIONS: *Within the meadows of Thy nearness...*

1. *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 “Alláh-u-Abhá” 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.*

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 26)

**Alláh-u-Abhá:** God is All-Glorious; God is Most Glorious

**decree:** official decision and order

**Maker:** One who is the Creator, Fashioner, and Cause of the existence

**Names:** glorious spiritual Attributes

**ordained:** established by command or order

**repeat:** say over again silently or out loud (see *UD*, p. 450)

**shall:** should under obligation

**thrones:** supreme positions of heavenly power and dignity

**turning:** directing ones thought and attention

**washed:** cleansed with water

2. It is the name of comfort, protection, happiness, illumination, love and unity. ... The use of the Greatest Name and dependence upon it, cause the soul to strip itself of the husks of mortality and to step forth freed, reborn, a new creature....

(`Abdu'l-Bahá, cited in *Lights of Guidance: A Bahá'í Reference File*, p. 267, #892)

**comfort:** strength, hope and cheer that eases grief or trouble  
**dependence:** reliance for support and favor  
**freed:** liberated; delivered from desires  
**Greatest Name:** highest invocation or praise of God – Alláh-u-Abhá, Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá, or Yá Bahá'u'lláh  
**husks:** empty shell  
**illumination:** intellectual and spiritual enlightenment, insight, and knowledge  
**mortality:** the lower nature, subject to sin and death

**protection:** that which guards or shields from injury or destruction  
**reborn:** changed from a life of the lower nature to one of the spirit  
**soul:** immortal essence of one's rational, spiritual, and emotional self  
**step forth:** become obviously  
**strip:** separate or remove  
**unity:** a spiritual condition of harmony, agreement, peace and accord, with freedom from, dissension, contention and strife

3. Call ye to mind the blessed Name of our peerless Beloved, the `Abhá Beauty, in an uplifting spirit of unbounded ecstasy and delight, then unloose your tongues in His Praise in such wise that the realm of the heart may be purged from the woes and sorrows of the world of water and clay, that the great heights of spiritual perception may be unveiled before your eyes, that the glorious signs of His Divine Unity may shine resplendent, a fresh outpouring of His grace may stream forth, and a liberal effusion of celestial confirmations may be vouchsafed unto you.

(`Abdu'l-Bahá, an unpublished authorized translation, cited in *Ocean Research Library*, in a letter from the Universal House of Justice, Department of the Secretariat, to an individual believer, dated 22 May 2000)

**`Abhá Beauty:** Manifestation, Bahá'u'lláh [one of His titles]; `Abhá meaning 'Most Glorious'  
**celestial:** heavenly  
**confirmations:** validations and assurances that cause spiritual strength  
**Divine Unity:** *"Regard thou the one true God as One Who is apart from, and immeasurably exalted above, all created things. The whole universe reflecteth His glory, while He is Himself independent of, and transcendeth His creatures. This is the true meaning of Divine unity. He Who is the Eternal Truth is the one Power Who exerciseth undisputed sovereignty over the world of being, Whose image is reflected in the mirror of the entire creation. All existence is dependent upon Him, and from Him is derived the source of the sustenance of all things. This is what is meant by Divine unity; this is its fundamental principle."* (GWB, p. 166)  
**ecstasy:** entrancing emotion of joy  
**effusion:** pouring out  
**grace:** gifts of loving kindness that make one ↗

morally pure and strong  
**heart:** seat of spiritual or conscious life; soul; spirit; special favor of affection  
**liberal:** broad and generous  
**outpouring:** full and continuous outflowing  
**perception:** awareness with understanding  
**praise:** glorification and exaltation by attributing value through song, chant, or prayer  
**purged:** made clean and free  
**realm:** region of activity and influence  
**resplendent:** with great brilliance  
**signs:** indications of the presence or existence  
**sorrows:** uneasiness or pain of mind due to real or supposed loss of any good  
**tongues:** expressions of speech  
**unbounded:** unlimited; unrestricted  
**unloose:** release from restraints and set free  
**unveiled:** opened; revealed  
**vouchsafed:** given or bestowed out of graciousness  
**woes:** conditions of great sorrow, grief, or distress

4. His Name is indeed the healing medicine for every illness, and imparteth warmth unto those starving with cold. It is the sovereign remedy and the supreme talisman. It is the source of life in both worlds, and of salvation unto such as have gone astray. Today this hallowed Name serveth as a shield for all mankind, and as a veritable refuge for the children of men. It is the wondrous accent of the Lord of Mercy, and His celestial melody.

(Abdu'l-Bahá, an unpublished authorized translation, cited in *Ocean Research Library*, in a letter from the Universal House of Justice, Department of the Secretariat, to an individual believer, dated 22 May 2000)

**accent:** distinguishing mode of expression  
**astray:** the path of error  
**celestial:** heavenly  
**cold:** lack of spirit or normal human emotion  
**hallowed:** holy; sacred  
**imparteth:** causes to be given  
**melody:** sweet and agreeable arrangement of sounds  
**refuge:** shelter or protection from danger or distress  
**salvation:** spiritual rescue and safety from the consequences of sin, danger, evil, difficulty, or ☞

destruction  
**shield:** guard and protection  
**source:** origin or cause  
**sovereign:** all-encompassing, all-pervading, and greatest spiritual [type of]  
**starving:** being destroyed or suffering greatly  
**supreme:** most excellent and greatest possible  
**talisman:** combination of words for producing wonderful and extraordinary effects  
**veritable:** true and genuine  
**warmth:** passion and enthusiasm  
**wondrous:** wonderful; marvelous

5. Remembrance of God is like the rain and dew which bestow freshness and grace on flowers and hyacinths, revive them and cause them to acquire fragrance, redolence and renewed charm. ... Strive thou, then, to praise and glorify God by night and by day, that thou mayest attain infinite freshness and beauty.

(Abdu'l-Bahá, cited in *The Compilation of Compilations*, Prepared by the Universal House of Justice, 1963-1990, Vol. II, p. 232, #1745)

**acquire:** gain new or added  
**bestow:** gives the gift of  
**charm:** traits that fascinate, allure, and delight  
**dew:** pure condensed moisture  
**fragrance:** sweet and pleasant smells  
**freshness:** restored strength and liveliness  
**glorify:** magnify in worship by giving glory to  
**grace:** natural elegance, charm, and beauty  
**hyacinths:** a specific plant with fragrant flowers  
**infinite:** limitless amounts and an endless ☞

duration of  
**praise:** honor and exalt through song, chant, or prayer  
**redolence:** the quality of emitting distinct and agreeable odors  
**remembrance:** bringing to mind by making mention  
**revive:** from a state of suspension or neglect returns activity and life to  
**strive:** devote serious energy or effort

6. You should rest assured that your strict adherence to the laws and observances enjoined by Bahá'u'lláh is the one power that can effectively guide and enable you to overcome the tests and trials of your life, and help you to continually grow and develop spiritually.

(Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, cited in *The Compilation of Compilations*, Prepared by the Universal House of Justice, 1963-1990, Vol. II, p. 240, #1769)

**adherence:** faithful conformity  
**develop:** gradually improve or advance  
**effectively:** while producing the desirable results  
**enable:** provide the means and opportunity for  
**enjoined:** imposed as an order or command  
**laws:** rules of conduct  
**observances:** practices, rites, and ceremonies  
**overcome:** win a victory over

**power:** force or influence  
**rest assured:** be certain, confident, and free of anxiety  
**spiritually:** in the higher or divine nature  
**strict:** rigid and exact [type of]  
**tests:** trying situations in which one is tempted to act or behave in ways contrary to the teaching of the Faith; difficulties, hardships, and calamities

## SHARING: *A breath from the spirit of inspiration...*

### Facilitator

Ask the participants to complete the statements below. When everyone has finished, have each person share, in a round, the one thing that was most outstanding or inspiring and how it made him or her feel. Please remind everyone not to remark on the comments of others.

The one thing from the quotations that was the most outstanding or inspiring to me was \_\_\_\_\_

It made me feel \_\_\_\_\_

Explain \_\_\_\_\_

## SOME QUESTIONS: *A gentle breeze from the testing winds...*

### Facilitator

Ask the participants to answer the following questions. They can usually find answers in the quotations just studied or in the introduction. When everyone has finished, review the questions, then share and discuss the answers.

1. Bahá'ís are to repeat the Greatest Name of God, "Alláh-u-Abhá", \_\_\_\_\_ times every day.
2. The repetition of "Alláh-u-Abhá" is to be preceded by the performance of ablutions. If one has already performed ablutions for an Obligatory Prayer and wants to proceed with repetition of the Greatest Name, an additional ablution is not necessary. If one has just bathed and is preparing to repeat the Greatest Name, ablutions must be performed. If there is no water available for ablutions Bahá'ís are to instead repeat five times the words, "*In the Name of God, the Most Pure, the Most Pure,*" and then proceed with repetition of the Greatest Name.<sup>1</sup> Ablutions are
  - a. washing the hands and face with water.
  - b. exercises for the stomach muscles.
  - c. also performed for the daily obligatory prayers.
  - d. also performed before eating.
  - e. an outward form with inward spiritual significance.
3. The Bahá'í day begins and ends at sunset. (answer not found in the quotations or introduction)
  - true
  - false
4. Daily repetition of the Greatest Name of God should be performed while
  - a. standing facing the shrine of Bahá'u'lláh.
  - b. sitting facing the east.
  - c. seated.
  - d. prostrate. [kneeling with the forehead bowed to the ground]

<sup>1</sup> KA, pp. 26, 112-13, 129, 180-81

5. The Greatest Name of God to be repeated ninety-five times a day is
- a. Yá Bahá'u'lláh.                       c. Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá.
- b. Alláh-u-Abhá.                               d. Bahá'u'lláh.
6. Traditionally around the world, believers of various religions have used a string of beads to count specific verses or chants during devotional practices. An individual Bahá'í wrote Shoghi Effendi about the use of prayer beads to keep count while repeating the Greatest Name of God. He responded through his secretary: "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."<sup>1</sup> This counsel leaves the Bahá'ís free to decide for themselves whether to use prayer beads to keep count during recitation of the Greatest Name.

Some believers use another way to keep count: Using the tip of your thumb, touch on the same hand the tip and then successively the three knuckles on the palm side of each finger, counting to 16. Then, use your pointing finger to touch and count the tip and two knuckles of your thumb. That's 19! Stick one finger out on your other hand, and repeat. When all five fingers are out you're finished.

How will you keep track during your recitation? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. The Greatest Name of God is to be repeated
- a. out loud.
- b. silently.
- c. either silently or out loud.
8. Recitation of the Greatest Name of God, like the other personal devotional exercises of prayer and meditation, is to be done in private.<sup>2</sup> How will you make arrangements in your life for private recitation of the Greatest Name of God? \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**APPLICATION:** *Showing forth divine light...*

**Facilitator**

Read through the following paragraph together and proceed as stated. Then take time for the participants to write out their individual plans for action. When everyone has finished, move on to the closing reading.

**Bahá'u'lláh wrote:** "It is incumbent upon every man of insight and understanding to strive to translate that which hath been written into reality and action...." Imagine how the Bahá'í Teachings in this study class could be translated into reality and action. Take turns sharing the possibilities. Begin your statements with: "**One could....**"

From your experience in this study class on recitation of the Greatest Name of God, describe what **you** are inspired to put into reality and action. **I will make conscious efforts to...** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

<sup>1</sup> LOG, p. 466, #1525  
<sup>2</sup> LOG, p. 542, #1836

*A prayer from the Tablets of Tarázáat "Ornaments"...*

*Glory be unto Thee, O Lord of the world and Desire of the nations, O Thou Who hast become manifest in the Greatest Name whereby the pearls of wisdom and utterance have appeared from the shells of the great sea of Thy knowledge, and the heavens of divine revelation have been adorned with the light of the appearance of the Sun of Thy countenance.*

*I beg of Thee, by that Word through which Thy proof was perfected among Thy creatures and Thy testimony was fulfilled among Thy servants to strengthen Thy people in that whereby the face of the Cause will radiate in Thy dominion, the standards of Thy power will be planted among Thy servants, and the banners of Thy guidance will be raised throughout Thy dominions.*

*O my Lord! Thou beholdest them clinging to the rope of Thy grace and holding fast unto the hem of the mantle of Thy beneficence. Ordain for them that which may draw them nearer unto Thee, and withhold them from all else save Thee. I beg of Thee, O Thou King of existence and Protector of the seen and the unseen, to make whosoever ariseth to serve Thy Cause as a sea moving by Thy desire, as one ablaze with the fire of Thy Sacred Tree, shining from the horizon of the heaven of Thy Will. Verily Thou art the mighty One Whom neither the power of all the world nor the strength of nations can weaken. There is no God but Thee, the One, the Incomparable, the Protector, the Self-Subsistent.*

*(Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, pp. 33-34)*

**ANSWERS:** *Affirming treasures...*

1. ninety-five (95)
2. a, c, and e
3. true (LOG, p. 301, #1020), unless ruled upon otherwise by National Spiritual Assemblies in the extreme northern or southern regions of the earth that may determine the beginning of the day be established by clocks instead of the setting of the sun
4. c
5. b
6. all answers are valuable
7. c
8. all answers are valuable

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