

NAMES

– for the Feast of Asmá

by

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ASMA' – FEAST OF "NAMES"

August 20th

[Upstage center hangs a large calligraphy image of the Greatest Name. LIGHTS dim. NARRATOR ONE enters to signal start of devotions. LIGHTS RISE on Greatest Name as Christina Quinn's CD "He is the Healer" RISES as opening prayer.]

[CHANTED prayer plays for over seven minutes. Just before eight minutes conclude, the volume FADES, so that after the sixth and last intonation of "He is the Healer," the CHANT completely fades to silence. Pause CD player.]

[NARRATOR TWO enters. Both Narrators, flanking the Greatest Name, stand at opposite sides of the stage. They read Bahá'u'lláh's words in a reciprocal exchange.]

NARRATOR ONE

"Who is there among you, O people, who will renounce the world, and draw nigh unto God, the Lord of all **names**? Where is he to be found who, through the power of My **name** that transcendeth all created things, will cast away the things that men possess, and cling, with all his might, to the things which God, the Knower of the unseen and of the seen, hath bidden him observe?" 1

(pause)

Say: Would it profit you in the least if, as ye fondly imagine, your **names** were to endure?... Should your **names** fade from every mortal mind, and yet God be well pleased with you, ye will indeed be numbered among the treasures of His **name**, the Most Hidden." 2

(pause)

"Arise before the nations of the earth, and arm thyself with the power of this Most Great **Name**...

(gestures toward Greatest Name)

... and be not of those who tarry." 3

NARRATOR TWO

"People for the most part delight in superstitions. They regard a single drop of the sea of delusion as preferable to an ocean of certitude. By holding fast unto **names** they deprive themselves of the inner reality and by clinging to vain imaginings they are kept back from the Dayspring of heavenly signs." 4

NARRATOR ONE

"Beware lest Thou become occupied with... those who are so enslaved by their lust for leadership that they would not hesitate to destroy themselves in their desire to emblazon their fame and perpetuate their **names**. God hath recorded such souls in the Preserved Tablet as mere worshippers of **names**."

5

(pause)

"The remembrance of His **Name**...

(indicates Greatest Name)

...is able to set on fire the hearts of all men, and burn away the veils that intervene between them and His glory." 6

(pause)

"Tear ye asunder the veils of **names** and cleave ye their kingdom.

By My Beauty! He Who is the Monarch of all **names** is come, He at Whose bidding every single **name** hath, from the beginning that hath no beginning, been created, He Who shall continue to create them as He pleaseth. He, verily, is the All-Powerful, the All-Wise." 7

(pause)

"Cling, O ye people of Baha, to the cord of servitude unto God, the True One, for thereby your station shall be made manifest, your **names** written and preserved, your ranks raised and your memory exalted in the Preserved Tablet." 8

NARRATOR TWO

"I implore Thee, by Thy **name** which Thou hast raised up above every other name, and hast caused to overshadow all that are in heaven and all that are on earth, to cast not away him that hath turned towards Thee..." 9

(pause)

"Thine is the command at all times, O Thou Who art the Lord of all **names**;

and mine is resignation and willing submission to Thy will, O Creator of the heavens!... I testify that Thou hast been sanctified above all attributes and holy above all **names**." 10

NARRATOR ONE

"O My **Name**! Hearken thou unto My Voice coming from the direction of My Throne. He wisheth to make mention of thy **name** at all times inasmuch as thou hast proved thyself steadfast in extolling His virtues amongst men." 11

NARRATOR TWO

"Thy **Name** is my healing, O my Lord..." 12

NARRATOR ONE

(gesturing at NARRATOR TWO)

"This people have passed beyond the narrow straits of **names**, and pitched their tents upon the shores of the sea of renunciation..." 13

NARRATOR TWO

"I beseech Thee, O my God, by Thy **Name** which Thou hast made the King of **Names**, by which all who are in heaven and all who are on earth have been enraptured, to enable me to gaze on the Daystar of Thy Beauty, and to supply me with the wine of Thine utterance. Thou seest me, O my God, holding to Thy **Name**, the Most Holy, the Most Luminous, the Most Mighty, the Most Great, the Most Exalted, the Most Glorious, and clinging to the hem of the robe to which have clung all in this world and in the world to come..." 14

NARRATOR ONE

"God hath, in truth, inscribed your **names** upon a Tablet wherein are enshrined the hidden secrets of all that hath been. Erelong shall the faithful call to remembrance your exile and all your journeys in His path. He, verily, loveth those who love Him, and is the helper of the sincere." 15

[PAUSE button of CD player is released and the final four minutes and 50 seconds of the "He is the Healer" CHANT concludes.]

[Silence.]

NARRATOR ONE

"In Islám there is a tradition that among the many **names** of God, one was the greatest; however, the identity of this Greatest **Name** was hidden. Bahá'u'lláh has confirmed that the Greatest **Name** is "Bahá".

(beat)

"Alláh-u-Abhá" is an Arabic phrase meaning "God the All-Glorious". It is a form of the Greatest **Name** of God." 16

[The CHANT "Allah'u'Abha from the *Songs of the Ancient Beauty* CD plays. After one minute, when HUMMING begins, NARRATOR ONE speaks.]

NARRATOR TWO

(over HUMMING)

"The Greatest **Name** is the **Name** of Bahá'u'lláh. "Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá" is an invocation meaning: "O Thou Glory of Glories!". "Alláh-u-Abhá" is a greeting which means: "God the All-Glorious". Both refer to Bahá'u'lláh. By Greatest **Name** is meant that Bahá'u'lláh has appeared in God's Greatest **Name**, in other words, that He is the supreme Manifestation of God." 17

[CHANTING of "Allah'u'Abha continues and concludes.]

NARRATOR TWO

"It beseemeth all men, in this Day, to take firm hold on the Most Great **Name**, and to establish the unity of all mankind. There is no place to flee to, no refuge that any one can seek, except Him." 18

NARRATOR ONE

"It hath been ordained that every believer in God, he 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**." 19

[The CHANT "Ya-Baha'u'l-Abha" from the *Songs of the Ancient Beauty* CD plays. After two minutes, when HUMMING begins, NARRATOR TWO speaks.]

NARRATOR TWO

(over HUMMING)

"The Greatest **Name** should be found upon the lips in the first awakening moment of early dawn. It should be fed upon by constant use in daily invocation, in trouble, under opposition, and should be the last word breathed when the head rests upon the pillow at night.

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..." 20

[As final minute of "Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá" CHANT continues and concludes, LIGHTS rise brightly on the Greatest Name calligraphy.]

END OF DEVOTIONAL PROGRAM

SUGGESTED COMPLIMENTARY CHILDREN'S PROGRAM FOR FEAST:

Using Adib Taherzadeh's "Revelation of Baha'u'llah" Vol, III, 39-43, the children's teacher – via an arts project – can explain the concepts of "the Kingdom of Names" and the attributes of God. – Children make banners (strips of cloth) that depict attributes of

God that might be assigned to individuals: "So Smart"; "Such a Good Leader"; "So Generous"; "Trustworthy"; "Kind", etc.

–Teacher explains that the attributes of God may be seen as the names of God; that all humans' good qualities come from God.

– Children take turns wrapping themselves in strips of cloth, as if

boasting of their good qualities. Teacher explains concepts of pride and humility; that humility comes from one's recognition that all good comes from God.

– Through prayer, chanting, reading the Writings, or being assisted

by a friend to understand, the prideful child releases his/her

"shawl' of attributes. By a string, the strips of cloth (showing

attributes), are raised above the heads of the children to hang from a Greatest Name.

– During the Administrative or Social portion of the Feast, the children may present their dramatic performance and sing the song they learned.

Possible Song to be learned: "The Greatest Name" as recorded by England Dan and John Ford Coley

REFERENCES

- 1 Gleanings 34
- 2 Summons 46
- 3 Gleanings 28
- 4 Tablets 58
- 5 Summons 17
- 6 Gleanings 286
- 7 Gleanings 258
- 8 Synopsis & Codification of Kitab-i-Aqdas 24
- 9 Prayeres & Meditations 63
- 10 Baha'i Prayers 12
- 11 Tablets 200
- 12 Baha'i Prayers 87
- 13 ESW 74
- 14 Baha'i Prayers 240
- 15 Summons 151
- 16 Kitab-i-Aqdas n33
- 17 Kitab-i-Aqdas n33
- 18 Gleanings 203
- 19 Kitab-i-Aqdas 26
- 20 'Abdu'l-Baha, Lights of Guidance 211 #569