

# **Book 1: Reflections on the Life of the Spirit**

## **Unit 1: Understanding the Baha'i Writings**

### **Section 1**

"The betterment of the world can be accomplished through pure and goodly deeds, through commendable and seemly conduct...." (Compilations, The Compilation of Compilations vol. I, p. 62 )

"Beware, O people of Baha, lest ye walk in the ways of them whose words differ from their deeds." (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 305 )

"O Son of Being! Bring thyself to account each day ere thou art summoned to a reckoning..." (Baha'u'llah, The Arabic Hidden Words)

"Say, O brethren! Let deeds, not words, be your adorning." (Baha'u'llah, The Persian Hidden Words)

"Holy words and pure and goodly deeds ascend unto the heaven of celestial glory." (Baha'u'llah, The Persian Hidden Words)

### **Section 2** -- no quotations

### **Section 3**

"Truthfulness is the foundation of all human virtues." (Compilations, NSA USA - Developing Distinctive Baha'i Communities)

"Without truthfulness, progress and success, in all the worlds of God, are impossible for any soul." (Compilations, NSA USA - Developing Distinctive Baha'i Communities)

"Beautify your tongues, O people, with truthfulness, and adorn your souls with the ornament of honesty." (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 297 )

"Let your eye be chaste, your hand faithful, your tongue truthful and your heart enlightened." (Baha'u'llah, Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 138 )

"They who dwell within the tabernacle of God, and are established upon the seats of everlasting glory, will refuse, though they be dying of hunger, to stretch their hands and seize unlawfully the property of their neighbor, however vile and worthless he may be." (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 298 )

#### **Section 4** - no quotations

#### **Section 5**

"A kindly tongue is the lodestone of the hearts of men. It is the bread of the spirit, it clotheth the words with meaning, it is the fountain of the light of wisdom and understanding." (Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 15 )

"O ye beloved of the Lord! In this sacred Dispensation, conflict and contention are in no wise permitted. Every aggressor deprives himself of God's grace." (Abdu'l-Baha, Baha'i World Faith - Abdu'l-Baha Section, p. 445 )

"Nothing whatever can, in this Day, inflict a greater harm upon this Cause than dissension and strife, contention, estrangement and apathy, among the loved ones of God." (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 9 )

"Do not be content with showing friendship in words alone, let your heart burn with loving kindness for all who may cross your path." (Abdu'l-Baha, Paris Talks, p. 16 )

"When a thought of war comes, oppose it by a stronger thought of peace. A thought of hatred must be destroyed by a more powerful thought of love." (Abdu'l-Baha, Paris Talks, p. 29 )

#### **Section 6** - no quotations.

#### **Section 7**

"...backbiting quencheth the light of the heart, and extinguisheth the life of the soul." (Baha'u'llah, The Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 193 )

"Breathe not the sins of others so long as thou art thyself a sinner." (Baha'u'llah, The Arabic Hidden Words)

"Speak no evil, that thou mayest not hear it spoken unto thee, and magnify not the faults of others that thine own faults may not appear great..." (Baha'u'llah, The Persian Hidden Words)

"O SON OF BEING! How couldst thou forget thine own faults and busy thyself with the faults of others? Whoso doeth this is accursed of Me." (Baha'u'llah, The Arabic Hidden Words)

#### **Section 8** - no quotations

## **Unit 2: Prayer**

### **Section 1** - no quotations

### **Section 2**

"I beseech Thee...to make of my prayer a fire that will burn away the veils which have shut me out from Thy beauty, and a light that will lead me unto the ocean of Thy Presence." (Compilations, Baha'i Prayers, p. 7 )

### **Section 3**

"There is nothing sweeter in the world of existence than prayer. Man must live in a state of prayer. The most blessed condition is the condition of prayer and supplication. Prayer is conversation with God. The greatest attainment or the sweetest state is none other than conversation with God. It creates spirituality, creates mindfulness and celestial feelings, begets new attractions to the Kingdom and engenders the susceptibilities of the higher intelligence." (Words of Abdu'l-Baha cited in Star of the West, vol. VIII, no. 4 (17 May 1917), p. 41)

### **Section 4**

"Intone, O My servants, the verses of God that have been received by thee, as intoned by them who have drawn nigh unto Him, that the sweetness of thy melody may kindle thine own soul, and attract the hearts of all men. Whoso reciteth, in the privacy of his chamber, the verses revealed by God, the scattering angels of the Almighty shall scatter abroad the fragrance of the words uttered by his mouth, and shall cause the heart of every righteous man to throb. Though he may, at first, remain unaware of its effect, yet the virtue of the grace vouchsafed unto him must needs sooner or later exercise its influence upon his soul. Thus have the mysteries of the Revelation of God been decreed by virtue of the Will of Him Who is the Source of power and wisdom." (Compilations, Baha'i Prayers, p. iv )

### **Section 5**

"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." (Compilations, The Compilation of Compilations vol II, p. 236 )

"If one friend loves another, is it not natural that he should wish to say so? Though he knows that the friend is aware of his love, does he still not wish to

tell him of it?...It is true that God knows the wishes of all hearts; but the impulse to pray is a natural one, springing from man's love to God." (Abdu'l-Baha cited in *Spiritual Foundations: Prayer, Meditation and the Devotional Attitude*, comp. the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, no. 34, p. 12)

## **Section 6**

"O God, my God! Look not upon my hopes and my doings, nay rather look upon Thy will that hath encompassed the heavens and the earth. By Thy Most Great Name, O Thou Lord of all nations! I have desired only what Thou didst desire, and love only what Thou dost love." (Baha'u'llah, *Prayers and Meditations* by Baha'u'llah, p. 318 )

"Make my prayer, O my Lord, a fountain of living waters whereby I may live as long as Thy sovereignty endureth, and may make mention of Thee in every world of Thy worlds." (Baha'u'llah, *Prayers and Meditations* by Baha'u'llah, p. 318 )

"Too high art Thou for the praise of those who are nigh unto Thee to ascend unto the heaven of Thy nearness, or for the birds of the hearts of them who are devoted to Thee to attain to the door of Thy gate. I testify that Thou hast been sanctified above all attributes and holy above all names. No God is there but Thee, the Most Exalted, the All-Glorious." (Baha'u'llah, *Prayers and Meditations* by Baha'u'llah, p. 320 )

## **Section 7**

"O SON OF LIGHT! Forget all save Me and commune with My spirit. This is of the essence of My command, therefore turn unto it." (Baha'u'llah, *The Arabic Hidden Words*)

"Depend thou upon God. Forsake thine own will and cling to His, set aside thine own desires and lay hold of His..." (Abdu'l-Baha, *Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha*, p. 79 )

"Spirit has influence; prayer has spiritual effect. Therefore, we pray, "O God! Heal this sick one!" Perchance God will answer. Does it matter who prays? God will answer the prayer of every servant if that prayer is urgent. His mercy is vast, illimitable. He answers the prayers of all His servants. He answers the prayer of this plant. The plant prays potentially, "O God! Send me rain!" God answers the prayer, and the plant grows. God will answer anyone." (Abdu'l-Baha, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 246 )

## **Section 8**

"Recite ye the verses of God every morn and eventide. Whoso faileth to recite them hath not been

faithful to the Covenant of God and His Testament, and whoso turneth away from these holy verses in this Day is of those who throughout eternity have turned away from God. Fear ye God, O My servants, one and all."  
(Baha'u'llah, The Kitab-i-Aqdas, p. 73 )

"The daily obligatory prayers are three in number. The shortest one consists of a single verse which has to be recited once in every twenty-four hours at midday. The medium [prayer] has to be recited three times a day, in the morning, at noon, and in the evening. The long prayer which is the most elaborate of the three has to be recited once in every twenty-four hours, and at any time one feels inclined to do so.

The believer is entirely free to choose any one of those three prayers, but is under the obligation of reciting either one of them, and in accordance with any specific directions with which they may be accompanied.

These daily obligatory prayers, together with a few other specific ones, such as the Healing Prayer, the Tablet of Ahmad, have been invested by Baha'u'llah with a special potency and significance, and should therefore be accepted as such and be recited by the believers with unquestioned faith and confidence, that through them they may enter into a much closer communion with God, and identify themselves more fully with His laws and precepts." (Compilations, Principles of Baha'i Administration, p. 7 )

## **Section 9** - no quotations

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## **Unit 3: Life and Death**

### **Section 1** - no quotations

### **Section 2** - no quotations

### **Section 3**

"And now concerning thy question regarding the soul of man and its survival after death. Know thou of a truth that the soul, after its separation from the body, will continue to progress until it attaineth the presence of God, in a state and condition which neither the revolution of ages and centuries, nor the changes and chances of this world, can alter. It will endure as long as the Kingdom of God, His sovereignty, His dominion and power will endure. It will manifest the signs of God and His attributes, and will reveal His loving kindness and bounty." (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 155 )

### **Section 4**

"Know thou that every hearing ear, if kept pure and undefiled, must, at all times and from every direction, hearken to the voice that uttereth these holy words: "Verily, we are God's, and to Him shall we return." The mysteries of man's physical death and of his return have not been divulged, and still remain unread. By the righteousness of God! Were they to be revealed, they would evoke such fear and sorrow that some would perish, while others would be so filled with gladness as to wish for death, and beseech, with unceasing longing, the one true God -- exalted be His glory -- to hasten their end.

Death proffereth unto every confident believer the cup that is life indeed. It bestoweth joy, and is the bearer of gladness. It conferreth the gift of everlasting life.

As to those that have tasted of the fruit of man's earthly existence, which is the recognition of the one true God, exalted be His glory, their life hereafter is such as We are unable to describe. The knowledge thereof is with God, alone, the Lord of all worlds." (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 345 )

## **Section 5**

"The purpose of God in creating man hath been, and will ever be, to enable him to know his Creator and to attain His Presence. To this most excellent aim, this supreme objective, all the heavenly Books and the divinely-revealed and weighty Scriptures unequivocally bear witness. Whoso hath recognized the Day Spring of Divine guidance and entered His holy court hath drawn nigh unto God and attained His Presence, a Presence which is the real Paradise, and of which the loftiest mansions of heaven are but a symbol....Whoso hath failed to recognize Him will have condemned himself to the misery of remoteness, a remoteness which is naught but utter nothingness and the essence of the nethermost fire. Such will be his fate, though to outward seeming he may occupy the earth's loftiest seats and be established upon its most exalted throne." (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 70 )

## **Section 6**

"In the beginning of his human life man was embryonic in the world of the matrix. There he received capacity and endowment for the reality of human existence. The forces and powers necessary for this world were bestowed upon him in that limited condition. In this world he needed eyes; he received them potentially in the other. He needed ears; he obtained them there in readiness and preparation for his new existence. The powers requisite in this world were conferred upon him in the world of the matrix...

Therefore in this world he must prepare himself for the life beyond. That which he needs in the world of the Kingdom must be obtained here. Just as he prepared himself in the world of the matrix by acquiring forces necessary in this

sphere of existence, so likewise the indispensable forces of the divine existence must be potentially attained in this world." (Abdu'l-Baha, Foundations of World Unity, p. 63 )

### **Section 7**

"The whole duty of man in this Day is to attain that share of the flood of grace which God poureth forth for him. Let none, therefore, consider the largeness or smallness of the receptacle. The portion of some might lie in the palm of a man's hand, the portion of others might fill a cup, and of others even a gallon-measure." (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 8 )

### **Section 8**

"Thou hast asked Me concerning the nature of the soul. Know, verily, that the soul is a sign of God, a heavenly gem whose reality the most learned of men hath failed to grasp, and whose mystery no mind, however acute, can ever hope to unravel. It is the first among all created things to declare the excellence of its Creator, the first to recognize His glory, to cleave to His truth, and to bow down in adoration before Him. If it be faithful to God, it will reflect His light, and will, eventually, return unto Him. If it fail, however, in its allegiance to its Creator, it will become a victim to self and passion, and will, in the end, sink in their depths." (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 158 )

### **Section 9**

"Ye are even as the bird which soareth, with the full force of its mighty wings and with complete and joyous confidence, through the immensity of the heavens, until, impelled to satisfy its hunger, it turneth longingly to the water and clay of the earth below it, and, having been entrapped in the mesh of its desire, findeth itself impotent to resume its flight to the realms whence it came. Powerless to shake off the burden weighing on its sullied wings, that bird, hitherto an inmate of the heavens, is now forced to seek a dwelling-place upon the dust. Wherefore, O My servants, defile not your wings with the clay of waywardness and vain desires, and suffer them not to be stained with the dust of envy and hate, that ye may not be hindered from soaring in the heavens of My divine knowledge." (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 327 )

### **Section 10**

"Having created the world and all that liveth and moveth therein, He, through the direct operation of His unconstrained and sovereign Will, chose to confer upon man the unique distinction and capacity to know Him and to love Him -- a capacity that must needs be regarded as the generating impulse and the primary purpose underlying the whole of creation.... Upon the inmost reality of each and every created thing He hath shed the light of one of His names, and

made it a recipient of the glory of one of His attributes. Upon the reality of man, however, He hath focused the radiance of all of His names and attributes, and made it a mirror of His own Self. Alone of all created things man hath been singled out for so great a favor, so enduring a bounty." (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 65 )

### **Section 11**

"These energies with which the Day Star of Divine bounty and Source of heavenly guidance hath endowed the reality of man lie, however, latent within him, even as the flame is hidden within the candle and the rays of light are potentially present in the lamp. The radiance of these energies may be obscured by worldly desires even as the light of the sun can be concealed beneath the dust and dross which cover the mirror. Neither the candle nor the lamp can be lighted through their own unaided efforts, nor can it ever be possible for the mirror to free itself from its dross. It is clear and evident that until a fire is kindled the lamp will never be ignited, and unless the dross is blotted out from the face of the mirror it can never represent the image of the sun nor reflect its light and glory." (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 65 )

### **Section 12**

"The door of the knowledge of the Ancient Being hath ever been, and will continue for ever to be, closed in the face of men. No man's understanding shall ever gain access unto His holy court. As a token of His mercy, however, and as a proof of His loving-kindness, He hath manifested unto men the Day Stars of His divine guidance, the Symbols of His divine unity, and hath ordained the knowledge of these sanctified Beings to be identical with the knowledge of His own Self. Whoso recognizeth them hath recognized God. Whoso hearkeneth to their call, hath hearkened to the Voice of God, and whoso testifieth to the truth of their Revelation, hath testified to the truth of God Himself. Whoso turneth away from them, hath turned away from God, and whoso disbelieveth in them, hath disbelieved in God. Every one of them is the Way of God that connecteth this world with the realms above, and the Standard of His Truth unto every one in the kingdoms of earth and heaven. They are the Manifestations of God amidst men, the evidences of His Truth, and the signs of His glory." (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 49 )

### **Section 13**

"Man is the supreme Talisman. Lack of a proper education hath, however, deprived him of that which he doth inherently possess. Through a word proceeding out of the mouth of God he was called into being; by one word more he was guided to recognize the Source of his education; by yet another word his station and destiny were safeguarded. The Great Being saith: Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value. Education can, alone, cause it to reveal

its treasures, and enable mankind to benefit therefrom. If any man were to meditate on that which the Scriptures, sent down from the heaven of God's holy Will, have revealed, he would readily recognize that their purpose is that all men shall be regarded as one soul, so that the seal bearing the words "The Kingdom shall be God's" may be stamped on every heart, and the light of Divine bounty, of grace, and mercy may envelop all mankind." (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 259 )

#### **Section 14**

"Blessed is the soul which, at the hour of its separation from the body, is sanctified from the vain imaginings of the peoples of the world. Such a soul liveth and moveth in accordance with the Will of its Creator, and entereth the all-highest Paradise. The Maids of Heaven, inmates of the loftiest mansions, will circle around it, and the Prophets of God and His chosen ones will seek its companionship. With them that soul will freely converse, and will recount unto them that which it hath been made to endure in the path of God, the Lord of all worlds." (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 156 )

"The souls of the infidels, however, shall -- and to this I bear witness -- when breathing their last be made aware of the good things that have escaped them, and shall bemoan their plight, and shall humble themselves before God. They shall continue doing so after the separation of their souls from their bodies." (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 170 )

"He should forgive the sinful, and never despise his low estate, for none knoweth what his own end shall be. How often hath a sinner attained, at the hour of death, to the essence of faith, and, quaffing the immortal draught, hath taken his flight unto the Concourse on high! And how often hath a devout believer, at the hour of his soul's ascension, been so changed as to fall into the nethermost fire!" (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 266 )

#### **Section 15**

"The mysteries of which man is heedless in this earthly world, those will he discover in the heavenly world, and there will he be informed of the secret of truth; how much more will he recognize or discover persons with whom he has associated. Undoubtedly, the holy souls who find a pure eye and are favored with insight will, in the kingdom of lights, be acquainted with all mysteries, and will seek the bounty of witnessing the reality of every great soul. They will even manifestly behold the Beauty of God in that world. Likewise will they find all the friends of God, both those of former and recent times, present in the heavenly assemblage." (Compilations, Baha'i Scriptures, p. 482 )

"The difference and distinction will naturally become realized between all men after their departure from this mortal world. But this (distinction) is not in respect

to place, but it is in respect to the soul and conscience. For the Kingdom of God is sanctified (or free) from time and place; it is another world and another universe. But the holy souls are promised the gift of intercession. And know thou for a certainty, that in the divine worlds, the spiritual beloved ones (believers) will recognize each other, and will seek union (with each other), but a spiritual union. Likewise, a love that one may have entertained for any one will not be forgotten in the world of the Kingdom. Likewise, thou wilt not forget (there) the life that thou hast had in the material world." (Abdu'l-Baha, Tablets of Abdu'l-Baha v1, p. 205 )

### **Section 16**

"Thou hast, moreover, asked Me concerning the state of the soul after its separation from the body. Know thou, of a truth, that if the soul of man hath walked in the ways of God, it will, assuredly, return and be gathered to the glory of the Beloved. By the righteousness of God! It shall attain a station such as no pen can depict, or tongue describe. The soul that hath remained faithful to the Cause of God, and stood unwaveringly firm in His Path shall, after his ascension, be possessed of such power that all the worlds which the Almighty hath created can benefit through him." (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 161 )

### **Section 17**

"Sorrow not if, in these days and on this earthly plane, things contrary to your wishes have been ordained and manifested by God, for days of blissful joy, of heavenly delight, are assuredly in store for you. Worlds, holy and spiritually glorious, will be unveiled to your eyes. You are destined by Him, in this world and hereafter, to partake of their benefits, to share in their joys, and to obtain a portion of their sustaining grace. To each and every one of them you will, no doubt, attain." (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 329 )

### **Section 18** - no quotations