

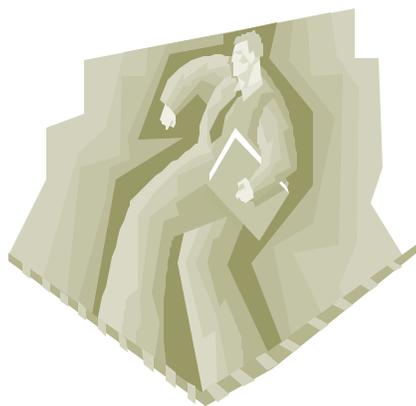
Feast of Sharaf (Honour)—December 31

Reading 1

Man reacheth perfection through good deeds, voluntarily performed, not through good deeds the doing of which was forced upon him. And sharing is a personally chosen righteous act: that is, the rich should extend assistance to the poor, they should expend their substance for the poor, but of their own free will, and not because the poor have gained this end by force. For the harvest of force is turmoil and the ruin of the social order. On the other hand voluntary sharing, the freely-chosen expending of one's substance, leadeth to society's comfort and peace. It lighteth up the world; it bestoweth **honour** upon humankind.

(`Abdu'l-Baha: Selections ... `Abdu'l-Baha, Page: 115)

Reading 2



This Wronged One hath invariably treated the wise with affection. By the wise is meant men whose knowledge is not confined to mere words and whose lives have been fruitful and have produced enduring results. It is incumbent upon everyone to **honour** these blessed souls. Happy are they that observe God's precepts; happy are they that have recognized the Truth; happy are they that judge with fairness in all matters and hold fast to the Cord of My inviolable Justice. (Bahá'u'lláh: Tablets of Baha'u'llah, Page: 62)

Reading 3

In every nation thou beholdest unnumbered spiritual leaders who are bereft of true discernment, and among every people thou dost encounter myriads of adherents who are devoid of the same characteristic. Ponder for a while in thy heart, have pity on thyself and turn not aside thine attention from proofs and evidences. However, seek not proofs and evidences after thine idle fancy; but rather base thy proofs upon what God hath appointed. Moreover, know thou that neither being a man of learning nor being a follower is in itself a source of glory. If thou art a man of learning, thy knowledge becometh an **honour**, and if thou art a follower, thine adherence unto leadership becometh an **honour**, only when these conform to the good-pleasure of God. And beware lest thou regard as an idle fancy the good-pleasure of God; it is the same as the good-pleasure of His Messenger. Consider the followers of Jesus. They were eagerly seeking the good-pleasure of God, yet none of them attained the good-pleasure of His Apostle which is identical with God's good-pleasure, except such as embraced His Faith. (The Bab: Selections from the Bab, Page: 124)

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Reading 4

Thou art God's shadow on earth. Strive, therefore, to act in such a manner as befitteth so eminent, so august a station. If thou dost depart from following the things We have caused to descend upon thee and taught thee, thou wilt, assuredly, be derogating from that great and priceless **honour**. Return, then, and cleave wholly unto God, and cleanse thine heart from the world and all its vanities, and suffer not the love of any stranger to enter and dwell therein. Not until thou dost purify thine heart from every trace of such love can the brightness of the light of God shed its radiance upon it, for to none hath God given more than one heart. This, verily, hath been decreed and written down in His ancient Book. And as the human heart, as fashioned by God, is one and undivided, it behoveth thee to take heed that its affections be, also, one and undivided. Cleave thou, therefore, with the whole affection of thine heart, unto His love, and withdraw it from the love of any one besides Him, that He may aid thee to immerse thyself in the ocean of His unity, and enable thee to become a true upholder of His oneness. God is My witness. My sole purpose in revealing to thee these words is to sanctify thee from the transitory things of the earth, and aid thee to enter the realm of everlasting glory, that thou mayest, by the leave of God, be of them that abide and rule therein....

(Bahá'u'lláh: Proclamation of Baha'u'llah, Page: 52)

Reading 5

Ye have, one and all, been called into being to seek His presence and to attain that exalted and glorious station. Indeed, He will send down from the heaven of His mercy that which will benefit you, and whatever is graciously vouchsafed by Him shall enable you to dispense with all mankind. Verily on that Day the learning of the learned shall prove of no avail, neither the accomplishments of the exponents of knowledge, nor the pomp of the highly **honoured**, nor the power of the mighty, nor the remembrance of the devout, nor the deeds of the righteous, nor the genuflexion of the kneeling worshipper, nor his prostration or turning towards the Qiblih, nor the **honour** of the **honoured**, nor the kinship of the highly born, nor the nobility of those of noble descent, nor the discourse of the eloquent, nor the titles of the prominent - none of these shall be of any avail unto them - inasmuch as all these and whatever else ye have known or comprehended were created by His word of command 'Be' and it is. Indeed if it be His Will He can assuredly bring about the resurrection of all created things through a word from Himself. He is, in truth, over and above all this, the All-Powerful, the Almighty, the Omnipotent.

(The Bab: Selections from the Bab, Pages: 165-166)

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Reading 6

Amongst the people is he who seateth himself amid the sandals by the door whilst coveting in his heart the seat of **honour**. Say: What manner of man art thou, O vain and heedless one, who wouldst appear as other than thou art? And among the people is he who layeth claim to inner knowledge, and still deeper knowledge concealed within this knowledge. Say: Thou speakest false! By God! What thou dost possess is naught but husks which We have left to thee as bones are left to dogs. By the righteousness of the one true God! Were anyone to wash the feet of all mankind, and were he to worship God in the forests, valleys, and mountains, upon high hills and lofty peaks, to leave no rock or tree, no clod of earth, but was a witness to his worship - yet, should the fragrance of My good pleasure not be inhaled from him, his works would never be acceptable unto God. Thus hath it been decreed by Him Who is the Lord of all. How many a man hath secluded himself in the climes of India, denied himself the things that God hath decreed as lawful, imposed upon himself austerities and mortifications, and hath not been remembered by God, the Revealer of Verses. Make not your deeds as snares wherewith to entrap the object of your aspiration, and deprive not yourselves of this Ultimate Objective for which have ever yearned all such as have drawn nigh unto God. Say: The very life of all deeds is My good pleasure, and all things depend upon Mine acceptance. Read ye the Tablets that ye may know what hath been purposed in the Books of God, the All-Glorious, the Ever-Bounteous. He who attaineth to My love hath title to a throne of gold, to sit thereon in honour over all the world; he who is deprived thereof, though he sit upon the dust, that dust would seek refuge with God, the Lord of all Religions. (Bahá'u'lláh: The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, Pages: 31-32)

Reading 7

O army of God! Praise be to God, Baha'u'llah hath lifted the chains from off the necks of humankind, and hath set man free from all that trammelled him, and told him: Ye are the fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch; be ye compassionate and kind to all the human race. Deal ye with strangers the same as with friends, cherish ye others just as ye would your own. See foes as friends; see demons as angels; give to the tyrant the same great love ye show the loyal and true, and even as gazelles from the scented cities of Khata and Khutan offer up sweet musk to the ravening wolf. Be ye a refuge to the fearful; bring ye rest and peace to the disturbed; make ye a provision for the destitute; be a treasury of riches for the poor; be a healing medicine for those who suffer pain; be ye doctor and nurse to the ailing; promote ye friendship, and **honour**, and conciliation, and devotion to God, in this world of non-existence.

(Abdu'l-Baha: Selections ... `Abdu'l-Baha, Page: 72)

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Reading 8

Blessed is the man that hath acknowledged his belief in God and in His signs, and recognized that "He shall not be asked of His doings." Such a recognition hath been made by God the ornament of every belief, and its very foundation. Upon it must depend the acceptance of every goodly deed. Fasten your eyes upon it, that haply the whisperings of the rebellious may not cause you to slip.

Were He to decree as lawful the thing which from time immemorial had been forbidden, and forbid that which had, at all times, been regarded as lawful, to none is given the right to question His authority. Whoso will hesitate, though it be for less than a moment, should be regarded as a transgressor.

Whoso hath not recognized this sublime and fundamental verity, and hath failed to attain this most exalted station, the winds of doubt will agitate him, and the sayings of the infidels will distract his soul. He that hath acknowledged this principle will be endowed with the most perfect constancy. All **honor** to this all-glorious station, the remembrance of which adorneth every exalted Tablet. Such is the teaching which God bestoweth on you, a teaching that will deliver you from all manner of doubt and perplexity, and enable you to attain unto salvation in both this world and in the next. He, verily, is the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Bountiful.

(Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, Pages: 86-87)

Reading 9

Note thou carefully that in this world of being, all things must ever be made new. Look at the material world about thee, see how it hath now been renewed. The thoughts have changed, the ways of life have been revised, the sciences and arts show a new vigour, discoveries and inventions are new, perceptions are new. How then could such a vital power as religion - the guarantor of mankind's great advances, the very means of attaining everlasting life, the fosterer of infinite excellence, the light of both worlds - not be made new? This would be incompatible with the grace and loving-kindness of the Lord.

Religion, moreover, is not a series of beliefs, a set of customs; religion is the teachings of the Lord God, teachings which constitute the very life of humankind, which urge high thoughts upon the mind, refine the character, and lay the groundwork for man's everlasting **honour**.

(`Abdu'l-Baha: Selections ... `Abdu'l-Baha, Pages: 52-53)