

O GOD GUIDE ME Celebrating Parents, Children & Questions

Opening Prayer

O Thou kind Lord! These lovely children are the handiwork of the fingers of Thy might and the wondrous signs of Thy greatness. O God! Protect these children, graciously assist them to be educated and enable them to render service to the world of humanity. O God! These children are pearls, cause them to be nurtured within the shell of Thy loving kindness.

‘Abdu’l Baha

Asking Questions

Do we have an innate desire to ask questions or is interrogation something we need to learn, to have stimulated? If questions are the means by which one stirs the passive mind and awakens the soul, how can they be asked so as to alert us to passionate inquiry rather than provide us with false choices? Why do we sometimes fear questions? Or is it the answers we fear? And how can we guard against questions that coerce, that manipulate? Can questions freely asked, tap the vast resources of spiritual, intellectual and emotional power in spite of being subject to contingency, as answers surely are?...“I love to lose myself in a mystery,” wrote Sir Thomas Browne over three centuries ago...The mystery of God for this scholar was as he puts it, “wonderful in what we perceive but far more in what we comprehend not, for we behold him but askunt upon reflex or shadow.”

Bahiyih Nakhjavani

Dramatic Reading from THE LITTLE PRINCE by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry—The Accountant & the Stars

Mark and Liam McKenna

MUSIC—Theme and variation from the Surprise Symphony by Franz Joseph Haydn

Julia Lipkis, violin
Rory Lipkis, piano
Larry Lipkis, viola da gamba

From the Gospel According to Saint Matthew
Ask, and it shall be given you; seek. And ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you. For

every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

From Jalalu D-Din Rumi

One night a certain man cried “Allah!” until his lips grew sweet with praising Him. The Devil said, “O man of many words, where is the response ‘Here am I’ to all this Allah? Not a single response is coming from the Throne: how long will you say ‘Allah’ with grim face?” He was broken hearted and lay down to sleep: In a dream he saw Khadir amidst the verdure, Who said, “Hark, you have held back from praising God: why do you repent of calling unto Him?” He answered. “No ‘Here am I’ is coming to me in response: I fear that I am turned away from the Door.” Said Khadir, “Nay; God saith: That ‘Allah’ of thine is My ‘Here am I’, and that supplication and grief and ardour of thine is My messenger to thee. Thy fear and love are the noose to catch My Favour: Beneath every ‘O Lord’ of thine is many a ‘Here am I’ from Me.”

Hasidic Story

It is related that a little farmer boy, having been left an orphan at an early age, was unable to read, but had inherited a large, heavy prayer book from his parents: and that one Day of Atonement he brought it into the synagogue, laid it on the reading-desk, and, weeping, cried out:

“Lord of Creation! I don’t know how to pray; I do not know what to say—I give Thee the entire prayer book.”

SONG -Irish Blessing

Maggie, Loretta & Kathleen Montoney

May the road rise to meet you,
May the wind be always at your back,
May the sun shine warm upon your face
And the rain fall soft upon your fields

And until we meet again, until we meet again,
May you live well in the heart of your home
Until we meet again
May you live well in the heart of your home
Until we meet again.

One song for all of us
One song could bring us peace
One song could make a miracle for all of us
A song of peace

QUESTIONS

Jennie Gilrain leads us in sharing our questions

MUSIC for Reflection

Slow Air Shetland Islands
Medley of slides County Cork, Ireland

Julia Lipkis, violin
Larry Lipkis, viola da gamba

Dramatic Reading from THE LITTLE PRINCE
by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry—the Fox & the Rose

Mark, Aidan and Liam McKenna

MAKING PAPER CRANES

Aidan leads us in making paper cranes inspired by the story of *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*

SONG—A Song of Peace by Teresa Jennings
Maggie, Loretta and Kathleen Montoney

If I could write a magic song that everyone could sing, I would write of love, of hope, and joy, and things that peace could bring.

And when we sang my magic song, all hate and war would cease.

If I could write a magic song,
I'd write a song of peace.

Love is the Secret

Know thou of a certainty that Love is the secret of God's holy Dispensation, the manifestation of the All-Merciful, the fountain of spiritual outpourings. Love is heaven's kindly light, the Holy Spirit's eternal breath that vivifieth the human soul. Love is the cause of God's revelation unto man, the vital bond inherent, in accordance with the divine creation, in the realities of things. Love is the one means that ensureth true felicity both in this world and the next. Love is the light that guideth in darkness, the living link that uniteth God with man, that assureth the progress of every illumined soul. Love is the most great law that ruleth this mighty and heavenly cycle, the unique power that bindeth together the divers elements of this material world, the supreme magnetic force that directeth the movements of the spheres in the celestial realms. Love revealeth with unfailing and limitless power the mysteries latent in the universe. Love is the spirit of life unto the adorned body of mankind, the establisher of true civilization in this mortal world, and the shedder of imperishable glory upon every high-aiming race and nation...

O ye beloved of the Lord! Strive to become the manifestations of the love of God, the lamps of divine guidance shining amongst the kindreds of the earth with the light of love and concord.

Abdu'l-Baha

SONG—A chant from Taize

Ubi caritas at amor
Ubi caritas Deus ibi est
Live in charity and steadfast love
Live in charity; God will dwell with you

Derelict

The grime of the ghetto smells
On his roughened hands and face
And we recoil as he takes his place
On the bus beside us.
His shabby clothes smell
Of greens and fatback.
He sits there poker-faced,
His blurred eyes gazing into space.

A woman stands with her sleeping child
And reaches for the strap,
In an effort not to fall.
A man, face protected
By his *New York Times*,
Cocks up one eye to see—
Yet does not see.
Across the aisle

A strapping youth
Tightly holds his girl-friends hand,
As seated he watches the fragile mother
With her sleeping youngster.
Then a silence prevails,
The derelict's dark face
Breaks into a smile,
Revealing stron white teeth,
As he rises and gives the woman
Holding the child her seat.

Helen Underhill

From Number Our Days

Number Our Days is the fruit of Dr. Meyerhoff's "third birth." To write it she has returned not only to her nation of birth, but also to her Jewish heritage. Anthropologists learn respect for elders among those they study. It was thus a felicitous chance that brought Barbara Myerhoff among the truly elderly folk of the Aliyah Senior Citizen's Center, a group of former migrants from Eastern Europe now mostly abandoned by their more or less successful New World progeny...

Chapter 4 "for an educated man he could learn a few things" ...Kominsk's last and most definitive breach of a Center norm occurred when on a member's behalf he accepted packages of holiday foods donated by a Jewish organization for the next Passover season. Basha brought matters to a head at the following meeting. "We don't take charity here. We give it. For a few pennies, they (the donors) get rid of guilt and expect we should be grateful. Nobody here is so poor they couldn't afford a box of matzo. A lot of people here got plenty of money. If anybody don't believe me, I am going to stand up her and tell just what everyone in this room is worth, because this I know. Then we can write it down and send to the people with the handouts, so they should know too. Tell them this is not the way to do things. If they got what to give away, let them send it to Israel." People felt Kominsky had humiliated them publicly, depicting them as paupers to the outside world.

After this episode, Schmucl told me that great skill was always required in getting people to accept money or gifts that they might actually need. "You see, one year Abe did a very smart thing. The temple sent round boxes of matzo. Abe just stacked them in a corner, didn't say anything. Someone would come, look at them, and ask about them. Abe said, "I'm selling them, I got them cheap. What do you think they are worth? Whatever we get we can send to Israel." That was smart. People paid what they could. Abe sent the money to Israel in the Center's name. Everyone got Passover foods. You see, all this is laid

out by our ancient sages. Jewish tradition is very exact about charity. The one who gives must avoid pride and the one who receives must not be shamed. They arranged this in the old days by having two rooms in the Temple of Jerusalem. In the one, the Chamber of Vessels, you put gifts for the Temple. In the other, the Chamber of Secret Gifts, were put gifts that the poor drew out in secret. So no one know who gives and no one knows who receives.”

Barbara Myerhoff

SONG—Taize Chant repeated (all sing)

Ubi caritas et amor

Ubi caritas, Deus ibi est

Live in charity and steadfast love

Live in charity. God will dwell with you.

From Resurrection by Leo Tolstoy

“That is the whole truth of the matter,” thought Nekhlyudov. “If once we admit, be it for a single hour or in a single instance, that there can be anything more important than compassion for a fellow human being, then there is no crime against man that we cannot commit with an easy conscience...Suppose a problem in psychology were set to find means of making people of our time—Christians, humane, simple, kindly people—commit the most horrible crimes without having any feeling of guilt, only one solution would present itself: to do precisely what is being done now, namely, to make them governors, inspectors, officers, policemen and so forth; which means, first that they must be convinced that there is a thing called government service which allows men to treat other men like inanimate objects, thereby banning all human brotherly relations with them; and secondly, that the people entering this “government service” must be so conjoined that the responsibility for the results of their treatment of people can never fall on any one of them individually. Without these conditions it would be impossible in our times to commit such atrocious deeds as those I have seen today. *The whole trouble is that people think there are circumstances when one may deal with human beings without love, but no such circumstances ever exist...* human beings cannot be handled without love any more than bees can be handled without care. That is the nature of bees. If you handle bees carelessly you will harm the bees and yourself. And so it is with people. And it cannot be otherwise, because mutual love is the fundamental law of human life.”

Leo Tolstoy

Outwitted by Edward Markham

He drew a circle that shut me out—

Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.

But Love and I had the wit to win;

We drew a circle that took him in!

CIRCLE DANCE—Humble by Shaker and Anja
(All join in the dancing and singing)

You’ve got to humble yourself in the sight of your
mother

You’ve got to know what she knows

And humble yourself in the sight of your mother

You’ve got to know what she knows

And we shall lift each other up

Higher and higher we shall lift each other up.

(REPEAT with new verses

You’ve got to humble yourself in the sight of your

father

sisters

brothers

children

elders

yourself

mother

And we shall lift each other up

Higher and higher we shall lift each other up)

Closing Prayer

O God, my God! Praise be unto Thee for kindling the fire of divine love in the Holy Tree on the summit of the loftiest mount: that Tree which is “neither of the East nor of the West.” that fire which blazed out till the flame of it soared upward to the Concourse on high, and from it cried out: “Verily have we perceived a fire on the slope of Mount Sinai.”

O God, my God! Increase Thou this fire, as day followeth day, till the blast of it setteth in motion all the earth. O thou, my Lord! Kindle the light of Thy love in every heart, breathe into men’s souls the spirit of Thy knowledge, gladden their breasts with the verses of oneness. Call Thou to life those who dwell in their tombs, warn Thou the prideful, make happiness worldwide, send down thy crystal waters, and in the assemblage of manifest splendors, pass round that cup which is “tempered at the camphor fountain.”

Verily, art Thou the Giving, the Forgiving, the Ever-Bestowing. Verily, art Thou the Merciful, the Compassionate.

Abdu’l Baha