



Hiru no Hoshi

No. 262

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*“Until a being
setteth his foot in the place of
sacrifice,
he is bereft of every favor and
grace;
and this plane of
sacrifice
is the realm of dying to the
self,
that the radiance of the living
God
may then shine forth.”*

‘Abdu’l-Baha

Sacrifice

The children were in front of the T.V. playing the video game Abe's Odyssey. They had been playing for weeks, trying to get the 'slave' Abe, free of his cruel captors, who were of a stronger species. The children had managed to have Abe go from the bottom of the dungeon, overpowering guard-monsters, to higher and higher levels. Every time the children got Abe out of one level, a few of the other slaves would sneak out too. Right now the children had all gathered around, they were so excited because they were on the last level...Abe was about to be leap to freedom, and they would win the game.



The moment had come...Abe sprang from the prison, triumphant! The children cheered! Then four angelic old men of Abe's species appeared in the clouds above the prison mountain and proclaimed..."Abe, you have escaped your captors, but you were unconcerned about your fellow citizens...you left them to suffer in the dungeon. Only a few managed to escape with you. We find that unacceptable! Return to the lowest level and treat your fellow slaves as you want to be treated!!" Abe was cast down to the lowest level, to start the game over at the beginning.



The children stared at the T.V. and then looked at each other in confusion. Mother stood behind them and started laughing. They looked at her in surprise.

"So, you didn't realize that the rules of the game were to free as many slaves as possible!"

"Yeah, they didn't say anything about that!" complained Riaz. "We thought we were just supposed to get Abe out!"

"Yeah!" put in Shahla, It is Abe's Odyssey after all! Not Everyone's Odyssey!"

"So, even if it endangers him, and makes his journey last longer, he needs to free as many slaves as possible?" Questioned Asma, thinking out loud. "We can do that, now that we know what the rules are!"

"That is just like real life." Mother laughed, "We go through life thinking that our goal in life is to make ourselves happy, but really, we are supposed to make as many people as possible, as happy as we can. Just like you guys, a lot of people don't figure that out until it is too late!"

Shahla tilted her head in thought, “Wow! We thought it was just a game, but it’s like a life’s lesson! We are only little kids and we have learned something I bet a lot of grownups don’t know!”

Mother went on to explain, “So Abe must give up something he wants, - to get free quickly and easily, for something he wants more, - the freedom and happiness of his fellow slaves.

That concept is called sacrifice. To give up something you want, for something you want more.”

“I know!” said Riaz, “If you have some spending money and you want to buy an ice cream, you sacrifice the money (that you want) for something you want more, the ice cream.”

“That’s right Riaz, that is a very good example of sacrifice on a physical level. Now, can you think of an example on a less physical and more spiritual level?” asked Mother.

“I know”, said Asma, “It’s fun to play the game all by myself, but I give that up, to share the controls with my brothers and sisters, because that makes it even more fun.”

“Or” suggested Mona, “if I have a really delicious sweet I have never tasted before, I want to show my friend how good it tastes by sharing it with her. I want the whole thing myself, but more than that, I want my friend to enjoy it too.”

“Very good! You all have a very good concept of sacrifice!” Praised Mother.

“Just like there are many levels to a game, there are many levels to a spiritual concept like sacrifice. ‘Abdu’ l-Baha explains the higher level of sacrifice, that of loving so

much that you would sacrifice anything for the one you love. He speaks of the moth that sacrifices itself for the flame, - it loves the fire so much that it gets closer and closer until it burns up. And the candle loves the flame so much that it melts its life away to give light.”

“Wow!” Said Riaz! That’s pretty extreme!”

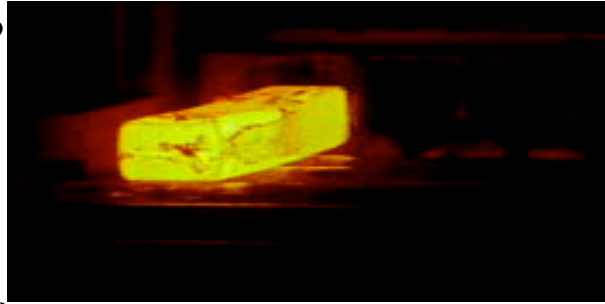
“We read stories of people sacrificing like that all the time,” said Mona, “mothers or fathers sacrificing for their children, or a friend for his friend’s life...”

“Or a fireman sacrificing his life to save someone in a fire,” put in Asma.

“Now there is also another ‘station’ or another



‘level’ of sacrifice.” Mother went on to explain. “ ‘Abdu’ l-Baha tells us that to really sacrifice, one gives up his own qualities and accepts the qualities of his beloved. ‘Abdu’ l-Baha’ s example is of a dark, black, cold, hard piece of iron that is put into the fire. Those qualities of iron are changed by the fire, and it becomes bright, red, hot and malleable (can change shape), - in other words it takes on the qualities of fire.”



“So if we sacrifice we become hot!” exclaimed little Anisa. Everyone looked at her in surprise and started laughing. “We forgot you were even here Anisa!” laughed Riaz. “I’ ve had it, Riaz!” little Anisa said, slapping her hand on her leg in anger. With that everyone laughed harder. “You sounded just like Mom when you said that, Anisa!” laughed Mona as she gave her a hug. “We are sorry we laughed, Anisa, Mom just means that if we love someone that is kind and gentle and generous, than we become like that too. Right, Mom?”



“Exactly. Thank you Mona.” Smiled Mother. “So, how do we use these different levels of sacrifice in daily life? One example would be, when we obey our parents by going to bed instead of staying up all night like we want to.”

“Yeah,” said Asma thoughtfully, “when you think about it, all the attributes we learn involve sacrifice, like Mom said with obedience: without sacrifice we wouldn’ t ever be kind or generous or forgiving, or any of the attributes that we need to learn. Every spiritual attribute needs sacrifice!”

“Wow!” put in Riaz, “it is like sacrifice is the beginning of all the other virtues!”

Mother looked surprised and said, “Very good guys! In fact ‘Abdu’ l-Baha talked about how a seed sacrifices itself for the plant...the seed has to crack open and be destroyed so that the plant can grow. So when we sacrifice to learn a virtue, we are giving up a piece of our ego so that our soul can grow. I am impressed! You guys are growing so much you really are becoming the New Race of Men that Baha’ u’ lllah talked about!”

The children all smiled brightly at the praise.

“What about the Japanese custom of giving back what you got. ‘Kuyo’ they call it. Does that have anything to do with sacrifice?” asked Asma.

“Yeah, I have seen that,” put in Riaz, “when the people who sell eels, once a year, give back to the ocean some of the little ones.”

“Hmmm, sounds like they are sacrificing some of the eels they could sell and make money from, as a way of saying ‘thank you’ to the spirit of the eels and the Creator of all.”

Said Mother as she thought out loud. “Kuyo is like us giving to the Fund. Since we have nothing to begin with and everything we have comes from God, we give back just a little, to say ‘thank you’ .”

“So it is sacrifice,” said Mona, “and we learned all this because of Abe’s lack of sacrifice!”

“I remember in children’s classes there was a story like this from Buddhism about lack of sacrifice.” Said Shahla, “Remember, the one about a spider’s web and the Buddha?”

“Oh, yeah,” added Riaz, “There was a really bad guy that once did one good thing by saving a spider from being stepped on. When he died and went to Hell, the Buddha looked down on him from Heaven, and to reward him for that one good deed, put down a thread from a spider’s web so he could crawl out.”

“Yeah!” Added Asma, “He grabbed hold of the thread and started climbing up to heaven, but then other people from Hell started climbing up after him, and he was afraid they would break the thread, so he started trying to kick them off.”

“And his kicking broke the thread!” finished Riaz, “And the Buddha was so sad that he hadn’t learned his lesson about sacrifice. Just like Abe!”

“You mean, just like us!” corrected Mona, “We are the ones that moved Abe!”

“There is one other aspect to sacrifice I want you children to think about.” continues Mother. “Think of a flute, what is made out of?”

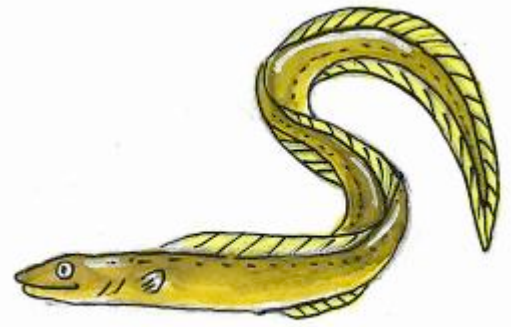
“Bamboo!”

“Different kinds of wood!” Mona and Asma answered together.

“Yes, and a flute has holes in it, right?” said Mother. “But what is inside a flute?”

“Duhhhh! Nothing!” shouted Riaz.

“That’s right, and that nothing is very important...because if it were full of bamboo, or wood, it would not make any beautiful music. It has to be cleared of all its ‘self’ so that



the master can blow His breath through it to make beautiful sounds. The same way, we cannot really attain the station of sacrifice unless we have pure motives. That means not doing anything for our own good, but for the good of the loved one. We do it because we really want the other person to be happy. The purer our motives, the more beautiful the results.” explained Mother.



“So,” said Mona, tilting her head and thinking hard. “It seems like the highest form of sacrifice is when there is no sacrifice...it is giving up something we want to give up, for something better, - making the other person happy, - without thinking of ourselves at all. If we think it is sacrifice...we aren't doing it right!”

“What smart children I have!” praised Mother.

“So what's going to happen to poor Abe?” asked Anisa.

“Well, I guess we just have to get busy and save him and all his friends!” shouted Riaz, as he turned back to

the T.V.

“I think you guys have spent enough time indoors for today!” smiled Mother.

“Go outside and play! You can start saving the little guys tomorrow!”

“OK! TAG! NOT IT!” shouted Riaz.

“NOT IT!”

“NOT IT!”

“NOT IT!” shouted Asma, Mona and Shahla.

“Ahhhh! Me again...” cried Anisa. “I am always too slow to say it in time!”

“Ok, Anisa, I will be IT!” said Riaz.

“Well, I guess you guys did learn about sacrifice.” laughed Mother, as the children put the game away and ran out outside.

“O God, make of me a hollow reed, from which the pith of self hath been blown, that I may become a pure channel through which Thy love may flow to others.”



Quiz



1. What were the children doing at the beginning of the story?

2. What happened to Abe? And why?

3. How is that game like real life?

4. What is one level of sacrifice?

5. What attributes does iron have before it is put into the fire?

6. What attributes does iron have after it has been put into the fire?

7. What is inside of a flute?

8. How can we be like a flute?

9. What should the man crawling out of Hell on a spider's web have done when others started climbing up after him?

10. What is the highest form of sacrifice ?



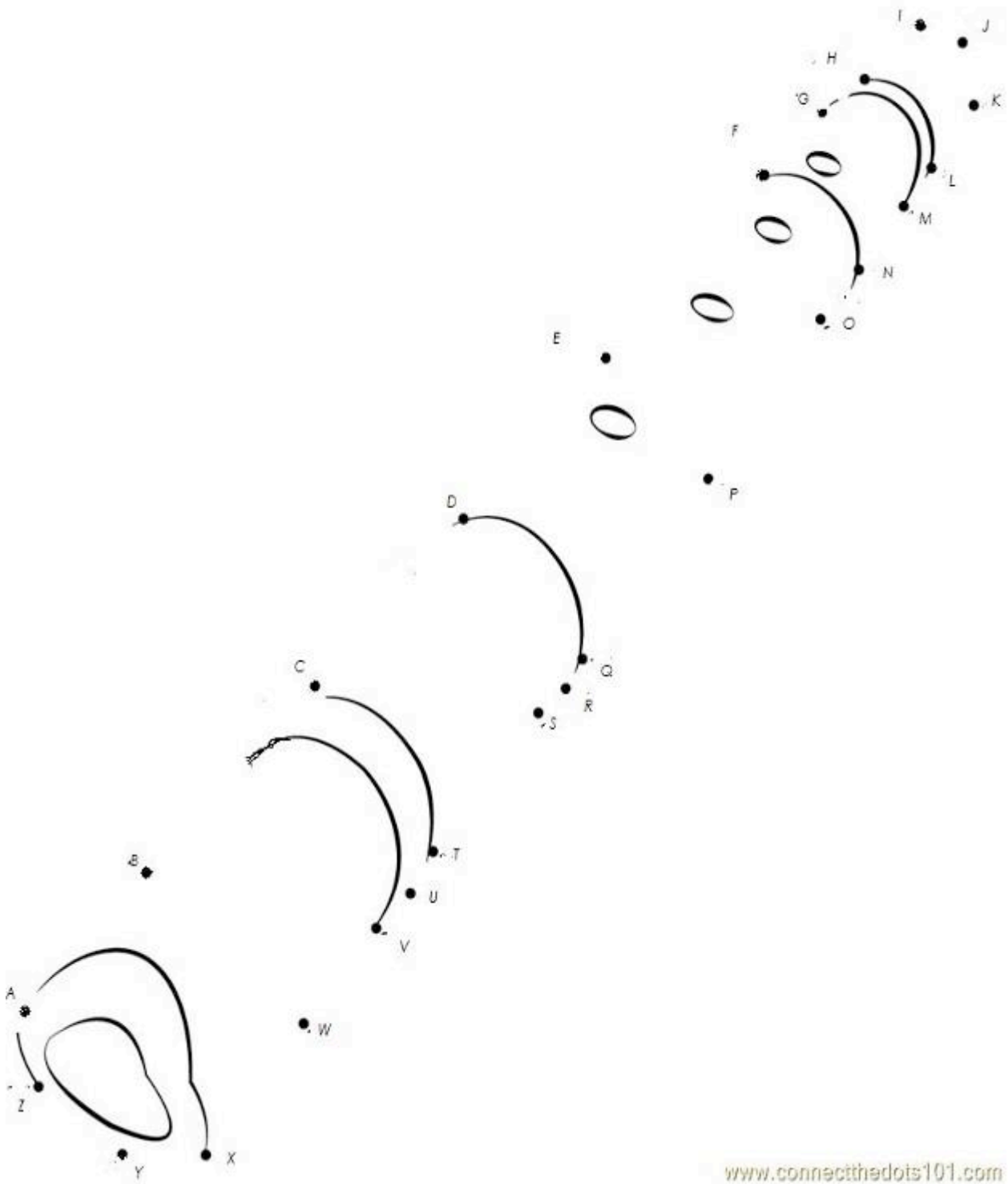
How did you do? Did you get them all right? The answers are on the Parents' Page.

From A to B...

Then from B to C...

Follow the dots...

And what do you see?



9-Pointed “Stained Glass” Star



A.

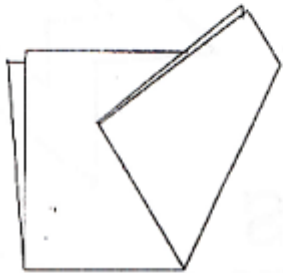
1. Take a piece of paper and fold it in half. Fig. A

2. At the midpoint of this first fold, fold again, twice, so that you have folded it into thirds. Fig. B and Fig. C

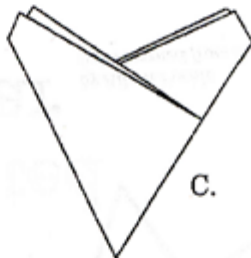
3. Fold into thirds again. It is easier if this time you fold one to the front and one to the back. Fig. D and Fig. E

4. Fig. F Shows the reverse side of Fig. E. Cut on the dotted line. The deeper the angle, the pointier the star will be.

5. Unfold...and marvel at your new skills.



B.



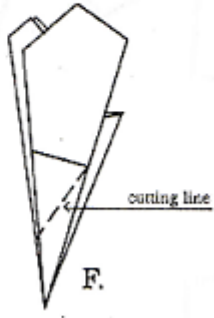
C.



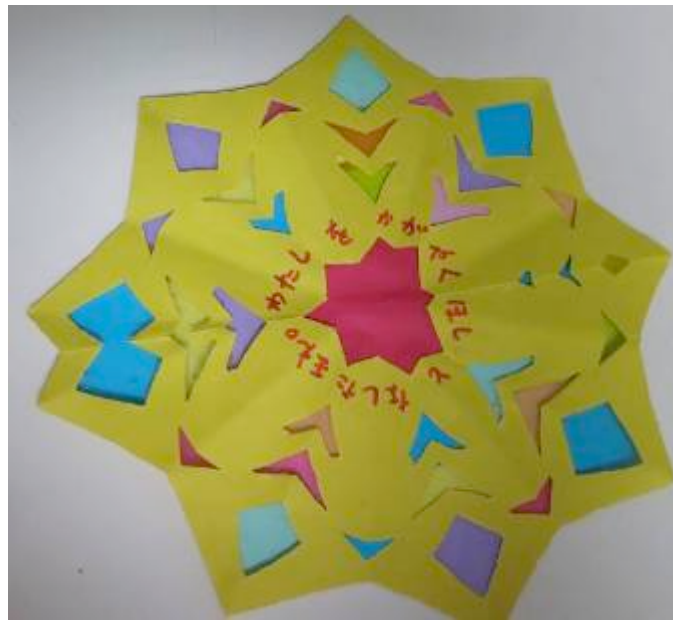
D.



E.



F.



Star as seen from the back side.

1. Follow instructions for making a 9-pointed origami star shown on Youtube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HIvNEIOBjzE>

2. Cut out slots while the star is still folded.

3. Write “Make me a brilliant star” around the middle.

4. On the back, paste colored cellophane across the openings in the star.

5. Hang the star in a window to get the “stained glass” effect.

Tips: We used construction paper, so it was hard to cut the star and slots. If you can get large origami paper or colored paper of similar thinness, it will be easier to make.





Parents Page

Let's study this tablet by Abdul-Baha on sacrifice to better understand how to talk to our children about this important concept.

“Ye have asked regarding the word of the “Ransomed Ones.” The mystery of “Ransom” (or Sacrifice) is a most great subject and is inexhaustible. Briefly it is as follows: The moth is a sacrifice to the candle. The spring is a sacrifice to the thirsty one. The sincere lover is a sacrifice to the loved one and the longing one is a sacrifice to the beloved. The point lies in this: He must wholly forget himself, become a wanderer (in the Abode of the Beloved) enamoured with His Tresses. He must consign to oblivion the body and soul, the life, comfort and existence. He must seek the good pleasure of the True One; desire the Face of the True One; and walk in the Path of the True One. He must become intoxicated with His Cup, resigned in His Hand and close the eyes to life and living, in order that he may shine like unto the Light of Truth from the Horizon of Eternity. This is the first station of sacrifice.

The second station of sacrifice is as follows:

Man must become severed from the human world, be delivered from the contingent gloominess, the illumination of mercifulness must shine and radiate in him, the nether world become as non-existent and the Kingdom become manifest. He must become like unto the iron thrown within the furnace of fire. The qualities of iron, such as blackness, coldness and solidity which belong to the earth disappear and vanish while the characteristics of fire, such as redness, glowing and heat, which belong to the Kingdom become apparent and visible. Therefore, iron hath sacrificed its qualities and grades to the fire, acquiring the virtues of that element.

(‘Abdu’l-Bah □, Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bah □ v2, p. 354)

Answers to the Quiz

1) Playing a video game. 2) He was sent back to the lowest level to begin over again. Because he didn't save enough of his friends. 3) We are suppose to help others and not just think of ourselves. 4) To give up something we want for something we want more. 5) Black, dark, hard, solid. 6) The attributes of the fire, hot, red, soft. 7) Nothing. 8) Not think of ourselves. 9) Let them be saved too. 10) To not think it is sacrifice to just do it for the one we love, without thinking of ourselves.



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