

Learn, God assist you, that ṣawm is abstaining and raising. One says, ṣāma (rises to reach) al-nahār (the highest point of midday) when the day has risen. Imrū'l-Qays¹ said,

When the day ṣāma (rises) and becomes noon.

- that is, rises. When the ṣawm *m* is raised up apart from the rest of the worship rituals - all of them, in step-level - this is called ṣawm. He *exalted beyond* lifts it up by negating any likeness to it among the rituals, as we shall discuss. He strips it from His creatures despite their worshipping Him thereby, and He attaches it to Himself. And He makes the recompense and the reward of the one who is described thereby as one fasting to be by His Hand from His rendering; and He attaches it to Himself in negating likeness.

In the true dimension it is a forgoing, not a doing, and negating likeness is a kind of stripping off - so the co-relation between fasting and God is strengthened. He *exalted* said, about Himself, *There is nothing that is His likeness*² - so He negated that there should be to Him a likeness. He *exalted beyond* is the one who has no likeness, based on proofs from intellect and from Law. And Nasā'ī published from Abū Umāmah that he said, 'I came to Messenger of God ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wasallam and I said, "Give me a command that I can take from you." He said, 'Due from you is ṣawm, because there is nothing that is his likeness.' Thus, he negated that any of the rituals be made a likeness to ṣawm - none of the rituals made Law for His creatures.

Whoever recognizes that it is a negative description - as it is a forgoing of things that would break the fast - knows with certainty that there is no likeness to Him (ṣawm) since He has no 'ayn described with any intelligible positive existence. This is why God said, 'The ṣawm is Mine'; it is in the true dimension neither a worship ritual nor an action. Now, it is acceptable for the word 'action' to be applied to fasting (as in, I am fasting), just as it is acceptable, according to us, to apply the phrase 'something with being' to the intelligible True. You see, with the One whose wujūd is exactly His dhāt, the co-relation of Being to Him is not the co-relation of being to us. Indeed, *There is nothing that is His likeness*.³

¹ Imrū'l-Qays (d. c. 565): considered by some to be the father of Arabic poetry; one of his poems was among the seven Mu'allaqāt (Suspended Odes) in the Ka'bah.

² al-shūrā 42:11

³ al-shūrā 42:11

A citation of a prophetic ḥadīth about the Divine

Muslim published in his Ṣaḥīḥ from Abū Hurayrah⁴ that he said, ‘Messenger of God ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wasallam said, “God said, ‘Every action of the children of Adam is theirs, except fasting (ṣawm *m*), because he is Mine and I recompense him; and the fast is a shield.’ When it is a day of fasting for one of you, do not be rude on that day and do not shout. If someone insults you or attacks you, you should say, ‘My situation is fasting; my situation is fasting.’ And I swear by the One in whose Hand is the soul of Muḥammad that the smell of the mouth of the one fasting is sweeter to God on the Day of Arising than the wafting of musk. The one fasting has two joys enjoyed: when one breaks fast, one enjoys one’s fiṭr (breaking the fast); and when one meets one’s Lord, one delights in one’s fast.”’

Learn that as he negates likeness from ṣawm, as was established in what preceded in the ḥadīth of Nasā’ī - and with the True nothing is His likeness - the one fasting meets one’s Lord with a description of ‘nothing is His likeness’. Thus, one sees Him by Him, and He is the Seer and the Seen. This is why he ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wasallam said, ‘one delights in one’s fast’, and he does not say, ‘one delights in a meeting with one’s Lord’. You see, delight does not delight in itself; no, one is delighted by something. And the one in whom the True is one’s sight when one sees and witnesses - such a person will see himself only by His seeing.

The delight of the one fasting is attached to a step-level of negating like things. Your delight in the fiṭr (nourishment breaking the fast) in this world is for conveying the right of the animal soul which seeks nourishment to the soul’s being. When the ‘arīfūn see the dependency of their animal soul (i.e. the animus, the animated aspect of the soul) and plant soul (i.e. growth and flowering, as Mary was raised as a beautiful flower, Āl-i-‘Imrān 3:37) on them, and they see their generosity in what they convey to her of nourishment to fulfill her right - which conveyance is obligated by God on them - such people are stand-ins at this place, having a quality of the True. So, you give by the Hand of God, just as the True is seen at the moment of your meeting by an eye of God. This is why you delight by means of your fiṭr, just as you delight by means of your ṣawm upon meeting your Lord.

An explanation for what is included in this report

As the creature is described as being the one who is fasting, and the noun ‘one fasting’ is merited based on this description, then after the affirmation that you are someone fasting, the True strips it away and affixes it to Himself and says, ‘except the fasting, because it is Mine’. That is, there is a quality of ṣamadānīyah (everlastingness, needing no nourishment), and this is being free from need for nourishment: ‘It is

⁴ Abū Hurayrah (d. 678): one of the Companions and a prolific transmitter of aḥadīth

only Mine; and if I describe you thereby, I am describing you with an expression of some definition which is part of the definition of transcendence (being free of the need for nourishment), not describing you by the absolute transcendence which is appropriate only to My Majesty. Therefore, I said, “I am the recompense of him”.⁵ Thus, the True is a recompense of fasting for the one fasting, when you shift instantly to your Lord from this world to the other world and you meet Him by means of a description of *nothing is his likeness*; and hu (in the pronoun ‘his’) is ṣawm. Indeed, one who *nothing is His likeness* sees only one who nothing is His likeness. This is how Abū Ṭalib, one of the masters of the people of tasting, defined the text, *man wujida (who, what) is found in his saddlebag, he is its (his) recompense*⁵ - and what this verse requires for this state of fasting.

‘Then, when he had equipped them with their equipment, he put his drinking-cup into the saddlebag of his brother. Then a herald proclaimed, “Ho, cameleers, you are robbers!” The syntax of the verse as Abū Ṭalib reads it is, ‘Who is found, He is his recompense.’

Then, his word ‘*fasting is a shield*’ (and it is a protection) is like His word, *Protect yourselves by God*⁶ - that is: Take Him as a protection, and be for Him also a protection - as the ṣawm takes the place of Him in being a protection. He is *nothing is His likeness*;⁷ and the ṣawm with regard to the worship rituals is, there is no likeness to him (the fast). One does not say about the fast, ‘Nothing is his likeness’ - because the thing (in no-thing) is a stable entity or existence, while the fast is a leaving off. The fast is an intelligible absence and a negative description; so the fast *m* is, ‘There is no likeness to him.’ He (the fast) is not, ‘Nothing is His likeness.’ This is the difference between a categorization of the True in negating likeness, and a description of the fasting by negating likeness.

Then, the Lawgiver⁸ stops the one fasting - and stopping is a leaving off and a negative description - saying, ‘*Do not be rude on that day and do not shout.*’ So, he did not command you to do something; no, he stopped you from being described as doing something - and fasting is a leaving off. Therefore, the co-relation is validated between the fast and what the one fasting is stopped from. Then you are told to say to the one who is insulting or fighting you, ‘My situation is fasting’ - that is, ‘I have left off doing this kind of activity which you are doing, you who are fighting or insulting, from my side.’ So you clear and transcend yourself by order of your Lord from this activity, and you are reporting that you are leaving it off - that is, you do not have a description of insulting or of fighting against anyone who insults you or fights you.

⁵ Yūsuf 12:75

⁶ al-baqarah 2:189, *attaqū Allāha, by taqwā of God be protected.*

⁷ al-shūrā 42:11

⁸ The *shār‘* is either the Divine or His Messenger ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wasallam.

Then he said, ‘and by the One in whose Hand is the soul of Muḥammad’ - he ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wasallam is making an oath - ‘the smell of the mouth of the one fasting’, and that is the change in the smell of the mouth of the one fasting which is not found except during respiration. Then you breathe out with this pure speech which you were told to speak; and that is your word, ‘My situation is fasting.’ So, this sentence, and every breath of the one fasting, is ‘sweeter to God on the Day of Arising’ - that is, a day when the people will arise before the Lord of the worlds,⁹ to God - ‘than the wafting of musk’. He uses the all-comprehensive name Allāh, which is a *dhāt* accompanied by attributes of the Divine names - all of them; he is therefore using a name which *has no likeness*, since no one is named with this name except God.

/block That is, no one takes the name God for oneself, whereas the creation may have the name Most Kind (raḥīm, shared by the Divine and Messenger of God ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wasallam). Also, the sound of the sentence is lā mithl la-hu - that is, hu has no likeness, and that is the name, the dhāt, which accepts no names except the One (waḥdat).

So he is putting the name in the same relationship as the fast which ‘has no likeness’.

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⁹ *al-muṭaffifīn* 83:6