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The Significance of the Fast will be realized only at the moment of Death

One will know how well he observed the fast at the moment he dies; it is then that prayers will take a form and stand at his right, as he lies in his grave, and *zakat* on his left, while his benevolence and good treatment of his parents will look him in the eyes. Everything will be personified in the life hereafter, starting from the moment of death. The fast will then be personified as perseverance, the exercise in patience as one faces thirst and hunger; it will stand not far away, urging prayers and *zakat* to help the deceased person, telling them that if they did not, he would.

It is in such dire situation that the true value of fast is realized ___ when it is too late for many. And one will feel the profound pain of regret for not having observed the fast and the prayers as he should have when questions are put forth to him by the two angels Munkir and Nakeer who will come to him in the most horrific form, addressing him in a voice louder than thunder and looking at him with eyes emitting lightning, asking him one question after another. Nothing can compare with the agony of death for those with whom Allah is not pleased, absolutely nothing.

A dying person, as we are told in many books dealing with death and the hereafter, will encounter agonies the extent of which is known only by the Almighty. Life, real life, starts at the moment of death... A dying person is like one awakening from a brief dream. This brief dream is life as we know it here on earth.

Shaykh al-Ghazali had made a very terse statement in this regard when he said, on p. 445, Vol. 4, of his book *Al-Ahya*, "Had a servant of Allah had no more than the agony, the horror, and the torment of the moments of death, he would have found no joy in his life at all, and he would not have felt happy for a moment, and he would not have become indifferent or negligent [with regard to his obligations] in the least." Prophet Moses (as) was asked by the Almighty how he found death. "I found it," he said, "like a live bird being fried in a pan; it neither dies so it can rest, nor does it fly away and be saved."

He also is quoted saying that he found it like a live sheep being skinned by a butcher. It is during

moments like these that a servant of Allah wishes he had spent his entire life in fast and prayers. Abraham (Prophet Ibrahim, peace be upon him), as we are told on p. 79 of Ibrahim Muhammad al-Jamal's book on life after death, asked the angel of death (as) to show him how he takes away the soul of a good servant of Allah, one who has performed his prayers and observed the fast and all other obligations, so he told him to look the other way. He did, then he looked at the angel and saw a young man wearing good clothes, smelling good, and his complexion was radiant.

Ibrahim (as) said, "By Allah! Had a believer enjoyed nothing more than casting a look at your face, he would have felt contented." Then he asked him how he took the souls of the disbelievers away. "Look the other way," said the angel of death to Ibrahim (as). When Ibrahim (as) looked again, the angel of death appeared to him in human form: a person as dark as coal with his feet on earth and head in the skies, the ugliest the eyes can ever see; each hair on his body was a flame of fire. Ibrahim (as) then said, "By Allah! Had a disbeliever cast one look at you, it would have sufficed him."

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