A Talk between Hajjaj and a Fasting Shepherd

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They say: Once Hajjaj bin Yusuf Thaqafı was on a journey to Yemen to rule from there. He had all the royal facilities with him. Wherever he camped, his servants erected tents and his cooks got busy in preparing royal dishes. At one of such halts, the climate was very hot. Arrangements were made for cooling and ventilation and they spread the dinner-cloth and put various kinds of food and sweets. As he was about to begin, his eye fell on a shepherd busy grazing his two or three sheep in a terribly hot atmosphere.

The sun was extremely hot and the poor young shepherd was hiding his head beneath the belly of one of his sheep to ward off the heat to some extent. Thus all other parts of his body were being badly burnt by the scorching sun. Hajjaj was very much impressed by this. He ordered his slaves, "Go and bring that shepherd here." So they asked him to come to Hajjaj.

The shepherd said, "I have nothing to do with the ruler, why should he call me?" The slaves replied, "It is his order." They brought him to Hajjaj and he said to the shepherd, "I saw you from a long distance that you are hit by the sun; that you are restless. It moves me. Come and rest in the shade of this tent." The shepherd replied, "I cannot do that." "Why?" asked Hajjaj.

The shepherd replied, "I am duty bound. I have been appointed for grazing these sheep. How can I come and sit in a tent? I must go back to my duty." Hajjaj said, "Well, then just sit here for a little while, take some food and then go." The shepherded said, "I cannot eat." Hajjaj asked, "Why? Why can you not eat?" The shepherd said, "I have been given a promise from another place." Hajjaj asked, "From where?

Is there any place better than this?" The shepherd replied, "Yes." Hajjaj asked, "Can there be any food better than this royal one?" The shepherd replied, "Yes, of course. It is both better and higher." Hajjaj asked, "Whose guest are you today? Who has given you a better promise and appointment?" The shepherd replied, "I am the guest of Allah, The Lord of the Worlds. I am fasting for Him. One who fasts for God is His guest."

Now, the shepherd is a man of wilderness but God has given him divine recognition and Faith. He observes fast in this terribly hot place and says, "I am a guest of God. My breakfast is with Almighty Allah which is both better and higher than all other foods." This stunned Hajjaj. How could he compete with God? The shepherd gave such a reply that Hajjaj fell silent and he could not utter a word. He said, "All right. There are many days ahead. Break your fast today and exchange it for tomorrow."

The shepherd replied, "Very well, provided you give me surety that I will live tomorrow to observe a fast; that I would be alive tomorrow." Do you see? How aware is this truly wise youth? He has full faith in God. How wisely he speaks! On the other hand is a tower of ignorance. Hajjaj is a totally ignorant and unaware fellow.

Finally, when he saw that he has no reply to this, he said, "Well, let us give up this dialogue, from where are you going to get such delicious and nice foods? Why are you kicking your provision like this? How mad you are!" The shepherd replied, "O Hajjaj, Have you made it nice? O Hajjaj! If God makes one of your teeth painful, all these sweet meats become useless. If you are healthy, a loaf of barely is sweet. It can give taste and delight. If there is no health, all food is useless. It would have to be swallowed like poison!"

I am also saying the same thing: May God gives us health and safety. Appreciate the safety, which God has given. That is best for you.