

Category: Miscellaneous  
Upload: 08/11/04

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

**Al Kawthar Academy**  
"the abundance of good"

## THE UMMAYYID CALIPH & ABU HAZIM

Imam al Qurtubi has, in his commentary, related a very illuminating story in this context, a story which has come down to us through a chain of reliable reporters, and has been taken from the *Musnad* of Darimi.

During one of his visits to the Holy town of Madinah, the Ummayyid Caliph Sulayman ibn ‘Abd al Malik wanted to meet someone who had lived with a Companion on of the Holy Prophet صلى الله وسلم عليه الله, if such a man was still alive. On being informed that Abu Hazim was the only man of this kind left in the town, he sent for him.

The Caliph said to him:

“Abu Hazim, why have you shown such discourtesy and disloyalty?”

“How have I been discourteous or disloyal to you?”

“Everybody who is anybody in Madinah has come to see me, but you haven’t,” complained the Caliph.

“Oh chief of the Muslims, may Allah protect you against saying something which is not true to the fact,” replied Abu Hazim. “You have not been familiar with my name before today, nor have I ever seen you. Things being what they are, how could I come to meet you? Is it disloyalty or discourtesy?”

The Caliph looked around questioningly. Imam Zuhri spoke up:

“Abu Hazim is right, and you are wrong.”

Changing the subject, the Caliph asked:

“Abu Hazim, how is it that I don't like to die?”

“The reason is simple,” Abu Hazim said: “You have made your world flourish, and turned your habitation in the other world into a desert. Naturally, you don’t like to leave a flourishing city for a desert.”

The Caliph admitted that it was true, and came out with another question:

“What would it be like when we have to appear before Allah tomorrow?”

Said Abu Hazim, “The man who has been doing good deeds will present himself before Allah like the man who returns from a travel to his loved ones, while the man who has been doing evil deeds will appear like the slave who had run away and has now been brought back to his master.”

The Caliph burst into tears, and said with a sigh:

“I wish we could know how Allah would deal with us.”

Abu Hazim replied, “Assess your deeds in the light of the Book of Allah, and you will know.”

“Which verse of the Holy Qur'an can help us to do so?”

“Here is the verse: *Surely the righteous shall be in bliss, and the transgressors shall be in a fiery furnace.*”<sup>1</sup>

The Caliph remarked:

“Allah’s mercy is great; it can cover even the wrong-doers.”

Abu Hazim recited another verse:

*‘Surely the Mercy of Allah is close to those who do good deeds.’*<sup>2</sup>

The Caliph advanced another question:

“Tell me, Abu Hazim, who is the most honourable among the servants of Allah?”

“Those who are mindful of their fellow-human beings, and possess the right kind of understanding to know the truth.”

“Which is best among good deeds?”

“Fulfilling the obligations laid down by Allah, and keeping away from what He

<sup>1</sup> al Infitar 82/13-14

<sup>2</sup> al A'raf 7/56

has forbidden.”

“Which is the prayer that is likely to be accepted by Allah?”

“The prayer of a man for him who has done him some good.”

“Which is the best form of charity?”

“Giving as much as one can, in spite of one’s own need, to a man in misery without trying to make him feel grateful and without causing him pain by trying to put him off.”

“Which is the best form of speech?”

“Speaking the truth plainly and unreservedly before the man who can harm you in some way or from whom you expect a favour.”

“What kind of man is the wisest among the Muslims?”

“He whose actions are governed by obedience to Allah, and who invites others as well to it.”

“What kind of man is the most stupid?”

“He who helps another man in committing some injustice, which comes to mean that he has been selling off his faith for serving the worldly interests of that man.”

The Caliph agreed with all this, and then asked him pointedly, “What do you think of me?” Abu Hazim wanted to be excused from replying to such a question, but the Caliph insisted that he should say a word of advice. Abu Hazim said:

“Oh chief of the Muslims, your forefathers established their rule over the people with the help of the sword and against their will, after killing hundreds of men. Having done all this, they departed from the world. I wish you could know what they themselves are saying after their death and what people are saying about them.”

Fearing that the Caliph would be displeased by such plain talk, one of his courtiers rebuked Abu Hazim for having spoken so rudely. He replied: “No, you are wrong. I have not said anything rude but only what Allah has commanded us to say. For Allah has enjoined upon the *Ulama* to speak the truth before the people and not to conceal it.” And he recited this verse of the Holy Qur’an: ***‘You shall make it clear to the people and not conceal it.’***<sup>3</sup>

The Caliph asked, “Alright how can we reform ourselves now?”

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<sup>3</sup> al 'Imran 3/187

Abu Hazim said:

“Give up your pride, acquire a spirit of fellow-feeling for the people, and give them justly what is due to them.”

“Abu Hazim, is it possible that you come to live with us?”

“May Allah protect me from it!”

“Why?”

“Because I am afraid that if I live with you, I might begin to like your wealth and your grandeur, and have to suffer a grievous punishment for it in the other world.”

“Well, is there anything you need? What can we do for you?”

“Yes, I have a need. Please help me to save myself from hell and to enter paradise.”

“This is not in my power.”

“Then, there is nothing you can do for me.”

The Caliph asked him to pray for him. Abu Hazim made this prayer:

“O Allah, if you approve of Sulayman, make the well-being of this world and the next easily accessible to him; but if he is your enemy, drag him by the hair towards the deeds you approve of.”

The Caliph then asked him for some special advice. Abu Hazim said:

“I shall make it short. You should have the fear of your Lord and reverence for Him to the degree that He never finds you present at the place He has forbidden, and never finds you absent from the place where He has commanded you to be.”

Later on, the Caliph sent one hundred gold *dinars* to him as a present. Abu Hazim sent the money back with a letter, saying: ‘If these *dinars* are the wages for my words, then blood and pork are, in my eyes, cleaner than this money. If you believe that this money is my due from the public exchequer, then there are hundreds of *Ulama* and servants of Islam. If you have sent the same amount to each one of them, I can accept the money, otherwise I do not need it.’

Abu Hazim’s refusal to accept the wages for giving advice clearly shows that taking wages for an act of worship or obedience to Allah is not permissible.

Extracted from:

Ma'ariful Qur'an Volume 1, Pages 193-196

by Maulana Mufti Muhammad Shafi رحمه الله عليهم.

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