

Malik Meets Abu Ja`far al-Mansour

This narrative, provided by the great historian Ibn Qutaybah in his book *Tarikh al-Khulafaa* (history of the caliphs), is a quotation of what Malik himself had said; so, we have to first and foremost point out to this fact and take it into consideration.

Malik has said:

“When I arrived at Mina [during the next pilgrimage season], I came to the pavilions and sought permission [to meet al-Mansour], and permission was granted to me. The doorman came out to escort me after having obtained permission to let me in. I said to him, ‘Let me know when you reach the dome in which the commander of the faithful is.’

He kept passing by one dome after another. Each dome contained different men with swords unsheathed and knives raised. Then he said to me, ‘He is inside that dome,’ leaving me after having said so. He kept watching me from a distance.

I walked till I reached the dome where he [al-Mansour] was, and I saw how he descended from his seat to the rug underneath it. He was wearing very simple clothes which did not suit people of his stature out of his own humbleness because of my visiting him, and nobody was in that dome except one guard standing with a raised unsheathed sword.

“When I came near him, he welcomed me and kept pointing to me to come closer and closer to him till my knees touched his. The first thing he said was, ‘By Allah Who is the One and only God, O father of Abdullah! What happened was something which I never ordered. I never knew about it before it actually happened, nor did I ever accept it after it had happened.’”

Then Malik continued to say:

“So I praised Allah with regard to every condition and blessed the Messenger, then I told him that he was far from doing any such sort of thing or be pleased with it. Then he said to me, ‘O father of Abdullah! The people of the two holy shrines will continue to be blessed so long as you are among them. And I think you are for them a security against Allah's torment and might. Allah did, indeed, shun through

your own person a momentous calamity, for they are, as far as I know, the most swift people to dissenting and the weakest to bear the consequences; may Allah fight them whenever they plan a scheme. And I have already issued an order to bring the enemy of Allah¹ from Medina on a bare hump, and I have ordered him to be humiliated and insulted to the extremes, and I shall most certainly afflict many times as much pain as he had inflicted upon you.' I said to him, 'May Allah grant good health to the commander of the faithful and be generous to him! I have forgiven him due to his kinship to the Messenger of Allah and to you.' Abu Ja`far said, 'And may He forgive you, too, and reward you.'"

Malik went on to say, "Then he discussed with me what happened to the predecessors and the scholars, and I found him to be the most knowledgeable person of them. Then he discussed knowledge and jurisprudence with me, and I found him the most knowledgeable of all people about what they agreed upon and the most informed of their disagreements. He had learned by heart many narrations and was fully comprehending all what he had heard. Then he said to me, 'O father of Abdullah!

Organize your knowledge and write it down, and arrange what you write in book form, and avoid the extremism of Abdullah ibn Umar and the tolerance of Abdullah ibn Abbas and the oddities of Abdullah ibn Mas`ud, then seek common grounds, and record whatever the Imams and the *sahaba*, may Allah be pleased with them, had all agreed upon, so that we may oblige people, *Insha-Allah*, to follow your knowledge, and we will disseminate your books in all lands and make sure that nobody disagrees with their contents nor judge except according to them.'

I said to him, 'May Allah keep the *ameer* (ruler) on the path of righteousness, but the people of Iraq disagree with our knowledge, and they do not feel obligated to do what we do.' Abu Ja`far al-Mansour said, 'The people of Iraq will be made to do it, and we will strike their heads with the sword and split their spines with our whips; so, hurry to do it, for Muhammad al-Mahdi, my son, will meet you next year, *Insha-Allah*, and I hope he will find out that you have finished this task, *Insha-Allah*.'"

Malik said after that, "While we were thus sitting, a small child came out from the back side of the dome underneath which we were, and when he saw him, he was frightened and went back. Abu Ja`far said to him, 'Come, my loved one! This is the father of Abdullah, the *faqih* of the people of Hijaz!' Then he turned to me and said, 'O Abu Abdullah! Do you know why the child was frightened and did not come here?' I said, 'No.' He said, 'By Allah, he was shocked to see how closely you have been sitting to me, for he has never seen anyone besides you doing so; this is why he retreated.'"

Malik went on to say, "Then he ordered for me a thousand gold dinars, a great outfit, and another thousand for my son. I sought his permission to depart, which he granted. I stood up, whereupon he bade me farewell and prayed for me, then I hurried out.

The eunuch caught up with me, bringing me the outfit which he put on my shoulder as was their custom upon giving someone of great importance a present so that he might be seen by people carrying it then handing it over to his servant. When the eunuch put that outfit on my shoulder, I leaned to avoid it, trying

to disclaim it, whereupon Abu Ja`far ordered him to carry it to where my camel was tied.”²

¹. He is referring to his cousin Ja`far ibn Sulayman ibn al-Abbas, then his governor over Medina.

². Ibn Qutaybah, Tarikh al-Khulafa, Vol. 2, p. 150.

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