

In The Name of Allaah, The Most Merciful, The Bestower of Mercy.

The Abbasid Caliph Al-Mutawakkil and Hunayn Ibn Ishaq [The Christian Doctor]

The Abbasid Caliph Al-Mutawakkil heard about Hunayn Ibn Ishaq's medical knowledge, but did not take his word in relation to medication he prescribed until he consulted others. He wanted to test Hunayn in order to remove some doubt because of the suspicion that the Roman king might have hatched a plot through Hunayn. So he summoned Hunayn and said to him: "I want you to describe to me a medicine that can kill an enemy we want to kill". Hunayn said, "I do not prescribe except beneficial medicine and I did not know that the chief of the believers would seek other than that from me; but if you want me to go and learn, I will do so". Mutawakkil said, "This will take a long time". However, Hunayn did not add anything to what he said until Al-Mutawakkil gave orders that he should be imprisoned and someone was given the task to inform Al-Mutawakkil about him from time to time.

Hunayn was imprisoned for a year and during this time he used to transmit, explain and write, and he never went beyond what he held (with regards to his knowledge of medicine). Then after a year, Al-Mutawakkil ordered that Hunayn brought to his presence as well as a sword, various instruments of punishment and wealth that one would desire to have. When he came, Al-Mutawakkil said to him, "This affair has been going on for a long time, so what I tell you has to be. If you are blessed, you will have this money and twice the value; but if not, I will punish and kill you". Hunayn said, "Indeed, I did say to the chief of the believers that neither do I know how to produce other than beneficial medicine nor have I learnt other than it". Al-Mutawakkil said, "Then indeed I am going to kill you". Hunayn said, "I will take my rights from you in the presence of my Lord on the day of that great standing (i.e. day of judgment) if the chief of the believers chooses to oppress himself". Al-Mutawakkil smiled and said, "O Hunayn! Our heart is at ease and we trust you. This deed of ours was a test because we were being careful of the plots of the Kings, so we wished that our hearts are at ease regarding your affair and to trust you in order to benefit from your occupation". Hunayn kissed the ground and thanked the Caliph.

Then the Caliph said to him, "What prevented you from answering on both occasions (i.e. the answer he was being forced to give)?" He said, "O chief of the believers! Two affairs prevented me". He said, "What are they?" He said, "The Religion and the occupation". He said, "How is that the case?" He said, "The religion commands us to do what is good and beautiful when dealing with our enemies, then how about when dealing with our friends? The

occupation forbids us from causing harm to our fellow human beings because it is designed to benefit them, and with this it has laid down a covenant for the doctors by way of a solemn oath that they will not give medicine that causes death; therefore, I could not oppose these two noble affairs and then commit murder, because indeed Allaah [The Exalted] will not cause my affair to be lost when I embark upon obedience to Him". The Caliph said to him, "These are two lofty divine legislated deeds". Hunayn was released and he took the wealth with him, and he became one of those with the loftiest social status. **[An Excerpt from Akhbaarul Ulamaa Bi-Akhbaaril Hukamaa. page 121. By Ibnul Qiftee. slightly paraphrased]**

Biography of Ibnul Qiftee in Siyar of Imaam Dhahabi [23/227]

القاضي الأكرم الوزير الأوحى جمال الدين أبو الحسين علي بن يوسف بن إبراهيم الشيباني القفطي المصري صاحب " تاريخ النجاة
وله " أخبار المصنفين وما صنّفوه " و " أخبار السلجوقية " ، و " تاريخ مصر
وكان عالما متفنا ، جمع من الكتب شيئا كثيرا يتجاوز الوصف . ووزر بحلب
مات في رمضان سنة ست وأربعين وستمائة