

## **7- IMAM KAZIM (AS): THE IMAM OF PATIENCE**

This chapter reviews the historical events of the life of Imam Kazim (AS), and provides an overview of his social, scientific, and political achievements. This critical period of history coincides with the peak power of the Abbasid caliphate. This chapter also shows the excessive pressure and oppression on the Imam by the Abbasid government during his lifetime.

## **7-1-Before the Government of Mansur**

### **7-1-1-Birth**

Imam Musa ibn Ja'far, also known as Kazim, was born on the 7th of Safar in the year 128 Hijri. He was born at al-Abwa, located between Mecca and Medina. Al-Abwa is the gravesite of Aminah, the Prophet's mother. He was born as his parents were returning from Hajj. He was the third son of Imam Sadiq after his brothers, Isma'il and Abdullah. Imam Sadiq was very grateful for the birth of his son, Musa, and celebrated by throwing a feast for three consecutive days upon returning to Medina. Imam Kazim's mother was Hamideh, originating from Northern or North-Western Africa. She was captured as a slave and brought to Medina, where she married Imam Sadiq. Imam Sadiq had high regards for her. He had said, "Hamideh is purified from any impurity and was being protected by angels until I married her." She was very pious and knowledgeable, and Imam Sadiq had referred the women of the community to her to ask their questions regarding Islamic law.

### **7-1-2-The Umayyad's Downfall<sup>82</sup>**

Imam Kazim was about four years old when the Umayyad Caliphate was overthrown by the Abbasid Caliphate. The Umayyads, under the leadership of Abu-Sufyan, had been the main enemy of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) during his prophethood. They fought multiple wars against the Prophet, refusing to convert to Islam until the Muslims conquered their home city of Mecca. They converted to Islam in fear for their lives, but the light of guidance never touched their hearts. Surprisingly, these hateful enemies of the Prophet had a chance to control the rulership of the Prophet's followers during the government of Muawiyah, who turned the Islamic caliphate into the Umayyad's monarchy. The Umayyads ruled over the Islamic world for about 90 years, until their destruction by the Abbasids. During this long period, the Umayyad caliphs degraded Islam. They were not afraid to publicly

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<sup>82</sup> Jumada al-Thani, 132 AH (Imam's age: 4)

insult the Prophet, the Quran, or Islam, and would publicly indulge in sinful behavior.

Contrary to the Umayyads, the Abbasids, who were the descendants of Abbas, the Prophet's uncle, were proud of being from the Prophet's clan of Banu Hashim. They used their relationship with the Prophet to legitimize their government. They would respect the Prophet in their speech, and had an Islamic outlook for their government. However, the Abbasids' crimes and murders against the people and the Prophet's lineage outnumbered the Umayyad's crimes. The number of people they killed to stabilize their government was far more than the people killed by the Umayyads. The Shia Imams at the time of the Abbasids faced the challenge of disproving the caliphate's legitimacy and revealing the Abbasids' true intentions for the Muslims.

### **7-1-3-Childhood Years**

There are limited historical records about the life of Imam Kazim during his childhood. Despite that, the available records show the Imam's divine status and knowledge. Imam Kazim was the third oldest son of Imam Sadiq after his brothers, Isma'il and Abdullah. Imam Sadiq had a special love for Imam Kazim. When someone asked Imam Sadiq about how much he loved Imam Kazim, Imam Sadiq responded, "I love him to an extent that I wish I did not have any other children, so I could have my entire fatherly love for my son, Musa."

The divine knowledge, an intrinsic characteristic of the Shia Imams, manifested in Imam Kazim from his childhood. Abu-Hanifa, the founder of the Hanafi school of thought, once visited Medina and came to Imam Sadiq's house to ask him a question. While he was waiting for permission to see Imam Sadiq, he saw Imam Kazim, who was just a few years old. He wanted to mock Imam Kazim and asked him, "Where can a visitor go to the bathroom in your city?" The Imam precisely responded to him according to the Islamic laws by counting the places that are prohibited to be used as a bathroom. The Imam then said, "You can use any other place as a bathroom." Abu-Hanifa was shocked by the Imam's response, and asked him the question that he had prepared

to ask Imam Sadiq, “Does sin originate from God or from His servant?” Imam Kazim responded with such a logical and persuasive answer that Abu-Hanifa returned from Imam Sadiq’s house and said that this answer was enough for him.

## **7-2-During the Government of Mansur**

### **7-2-1-Mansur’s Cruel Government**

Mansur was the second caliph of the Abbasids after his brother, Saffah. During Saffah’s short government of less than five years, the main goal of the newly established Abbasid government had been to remove the remaining Umayyads and to suppress their potential uprising. After succeeding in this goal, the next Abbasid caliph, Mansur, implemented a tyrannical and oppressive regime to remove all other potential threats to the Abbasid government. He killed Abu Muslim and fought various battles with his opponents in Iran, Hijaz, and Iraq, including the uprisings of Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya and his brother, Ibrahim. He finally made himself the sole powerful ruler in the Islamic territory by murdering thousands of people. He also constructed the city of Baghdad as a capital for his government to show off his power.

Mansur was heartless, blood-thirsty, and very stingy. Mansur’s policy was to put excessive economical pressure on the people to keep them hungry and thus make them obedient to himself. These hungry people would focus only on the struggle to feed themselves, and would not have the opportunity for any political activities.

### **7-2-2-Demise of Isma’il<sup>83</sup>**

Isma’il was the oldest son of Imam Sadiq. He was very pious and respected by the Imam. Many thought that Isma’il would be the next Imam after Imam Sadiq, since Imamatus had passed down to the oldest son in the past, such as from Imam Sajjad (AS) to Imam Baqir (AS) and from Imam Baqir (AS) to Imam Sadiq (AS). While Imam Sadiq’s

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<sup>83</sup> 142 AH (Imam’s age: 14)

activities were under intense surveillance by Mansur's spies and his own life was in danger, the Imam couldn't publicly introduce the next Imam. Any public announcement of this news would have put the life of his successor in danger. The Imam had introduced his younger son, Imam Kazim, as his successor in the Imamate only to his very close companions.

Isma'il passed away during the life of Imam Sadiq, about six years before the Imam's martyrdom. The Imam, who knew that some might be misled about Isma'il's death in the future, showed Isma'il's body to as many as 30 of his companions and asked them to testify to his death. Also, when the Imam and the other Muslims were sorrowfully taking Isma'il's body for burial in the Baqi' cemetery, the Imam ordered the procession to stop several times to uncover Isma'il's face for the crowd, so they may witness his corpse. However, after Imam Sadiq's martyrdom, some rejected Isma'il's demise. They assumed that he was the promised Mahdi, who had disappeared from sight. Some others accepted Isma'il's demise, but believed in the continuation of Imamate from within his lineage. Thus, they did not follow Imam Kazim as the seventh Imam. These people are known as the Isma'ilis, which is one of the surviving sects of Shi'ism till today. The Isma'ilis initially had a small group of followers, so they began to spread their faith. Around two centuries later, they gained power by establishing the Fatimid government in Egypt and Northern Africa. Upon gaining power, they extensively propagated their beliefs all around the Islamic territory and managed to increase their followers.

### **7-2-3-Martyrdom of Imam Sadiq<sup>84</sup>**

Mansur, who had plotted to murder Imam Sadiq on several occasions, finally ordered Muhammad ibn Sulayman, his governor in Medina, to poison the Imam. Imam Sadiq's martyrdom filled the entire city of Medina with grief, and the people came in crowds to his funeral. Imam Kazim took care of his father's funeral and buried him in the Baqi'

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<sup>84</sup> 25 Shawwal, 148 AH (Imam's age: 20)

cemetery by his father, Imam Baqir (AS), his grandfather, Imam Sajjad (AS), and his great uncle, Imam Hasan (AS).

When Mansur received the news from his governor, Muhammad ibn Sulayman, that Imam Sadiq had been martyred, he expressed sorrow and admitted that no one would ever replace him. Despite this, Mansur wanted to terminate the chain of Imamate after Imam Sadiq. He sent a message to his governor to inquire about whom Imam Sadiq had selected as his successor in his will. Mansur had ordered his governor to capture the Imam's successor and behead him. Imam Sadiq, who had predicted such a situation, had named five people as his successors in his will: the Caliph Mansur; the governor of Medina, Muhammad ibn Sulayman, two of his sons, Abdullah and Imam Kazim, and Imam Sadiq's wife who was the mother of Imam Kazim, Hamideh. When Mansur heard about the Imam's will, he cancelled his initial order. Imam Sadiq, with this clever trick, not only saved his true successor, Imam Kazim, but also made it evident to his prominent followers to recognize him because his followers knew that the Abbasid caliph and governors were oppressors, and thus disqualified for Imamate. Also, a female could not become an Imam. His oldest son, Abdullah, could not qualify either, since he had a physical disability in his leg and had limited religious knowledge. He could not respond to the questions raised by the people and Imam Sadiq's companions. Abdullah passed away shortly within seventy days after Imam Sadiq's martyrdom. Thus, all indications for Imamate were towards the qualifications of Imam Kazim.

### **7-2-4-Confusion in Recognizing the Imam**

An unprecedented suppressive regime dominated society at the time of Imam Sadiq's martyrdom. Mansur's agents and spies were looking to identify and kill the Shia followers of Imam Sadiq. The Shias could not even hold a small gathering to discuss the next Imam. Imam Kazim could not directly call the people to his Imamate, as it could have led to his martyrdom. The claim of Imamate by the Imam's older brother, Abdullah, was also another reason for the people's confusion in finding the true Imam of the time. Mansur had provided freedom for Abdullah

to claim his Imamatus, as this had caused division among the Shia community and would benefit his government. Although Imam Sadiq had indirectly specified Imam Kazim as the next Imam in his will, there was still confusion among the Shias about the next Imam. This was to an extent that, even some of Imam Sadiq's loyal companions did not know the Imam of their time.

On one occasion, after the martyrdom of Imam Sadiq, two of his loyal companions, Hisham ibn Saalim and Mu'min al-Taaq, were looking to find their next Imam. They initially referred to Imam Sadiq's oldest son, Abdullah, and tested him with a question. However, Abdullah's response was quite different from the teachings of Imam Sadiq. They left Abdullah as they were confused about whom to follow, and which theological belief they should choose. Suddenly, an old man hinted to them to follow him. They became frightened, and thought that he might be one of Mansur's spies, whose intention was to kill them. To take precaution, only Hisham ibn Saalim followed the old man. The old man was Imam Kazim's envoy. He brought Hisham to Imam Kazim. The Imam greeted Hisham, and began his conversation by addressing Hisham's concern without him telling the Imam anything, which showed the Imam's knowledge of the unseen. The Imam told Hisham not to follow any theological belief, but to refer to him. Hisham then asked the Imam some questions, and found the Imam's response in accordance with the teachings of Imam Sadiq. Hisham, who witnessed the Imam as the ocean of knowledge, testified to his Imamatus. He then asked the Imam for permission to guide the Shias to him. The Imam only permitted him to guide the mature and trustworthy Shias to him, with the condition to promise to keep his Imamatus hidden. The Imam, while referring to his neck, told Hisham that if his Imamatus was revealed, it would certainly lead to his own beheading.

Although the notable companions of Imam Sadiq believed in the Imamatus of Imam Kazim, Abdullah was still able to gather groups of Shias around himself. However, Abdullah passed away after a short period of around 70 days after the martyrdom of Imam Sadiq. He did

not have any son to claim the Imamate after him. This caused the majority of his followers to return to Imam Kazim and accept his Imamate.

### **7-2-5-The Imam's Scientific Contribution**

Due to Imam Sadiq's martyrdom and extensive fear in society at the hands of Mansur, the Islamic university, which was established in Medina by Imam Baqir and expanded to its prosperity by Imam Sadiq, gradually closed. No one dared to share his identity as a Shia or associate himself with Imam Sadiq or Imam Kazim. However, during the long Imamate of Imam Kazim for around 34 years, there were times when the people could refer to the Imam and ask him questions. Depending on the political situation and the pressure of the government on the Imam, the people would refer to the Imam in various numbers to benefit from him. More than 3,000 of the Imam's narrations are currently collected and compiled in the book known as Musnad al-Imam al-Kazim. Furthermore, a famous statement about the importance of wisdom is narrated from the Imam to his companion and Shia scholar, Hisham ibn Hakam. Also, various supplications are narrated from the Imam, including the famous supplication of Jaushan Sagheer, which is recommended for protection from enemies and catastrophes.

The Imam also trained many notable scholars. Today, six of Imam Kazim's companions, and 12 of Imam Baqir and Imam Sadiq's companions, are regarded as 'As-haab-e-Ejma' or 'Companions of the Consensus'. These 18 companions are the most verified companions of the Shia Imams, whose narrations are regarded with the highest level of trust by scholars in the seminaries.

## **7-3-During the Government of Mahdi**

### **7-3-1-Mahdi in Power<sup>85</sup>**

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<sup>85</sup> Zu al-Hijjah, 158 AH (Imam's age: 30)



After Mansur, his son, Muhammad, assumed power. Muhammad was given the title of 'Mahdi' by his father in order to draw more attention from the Muslims to the Abbasid government. This was due to a widely accepted narration from the Prophet, which promised the appearance of the Mahdi from his lineage, whose name would be the same as his own name, and would appear as the savior in a world filled with injustice and oppression. Mansur had followed the footsteps of Abdullah Mahz, who had also given the title of 'Mahdi' to his son, Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya. Mansur, whose original name was Abdullah, named his son Muhammad and called him with the title of 'Mahdi' to exploit the Prophet's narration in his favor.

Mahdi inherited a vast and stable government, which was the result of his father, Mansur's, brutal strategies. In one of his wills to Mahdi, Mansur mentioned that he had prepared the smooth transition of government to Mahdi by classifying people in three groups: the poor and needy who need him for help, the fugitives who are constantly looking for a shelter to save their lives, and the prisoners who request their freedom. During Mahdi's time, the Abbasids had some victories in expanding their territory into modern day Turkey.

### **7-3-2-Mahdi and the Imam**

At the beginning of Mahdi's government, he was lenient in his treatment of the people and the Prophet's lineage. Mahdi was looking to gather legitimacy for his new government after years of the tyranny and oppressive government of his father, Mansur. He distributed a large amount of the stored wealth in Bayt al-Mal (public treasury) among the people. He freed the prisoners and returned the properties that Mansur had forcefully confiscated from the people. He also returned the properties that Mansur had seized from Imam Sadiq to Imam Kazim. Imam Kazim knew that Mahdi's policy was solely to stabilize his government. Once, the Imam came to Mahdi while he was returning the unlawfully confiscated wealth to their owners. The Imam asked Mahdi, "Why don't you return the Land of Fadak (the Prophet's gift to Lady Fatimah (SA) which was confiscated by the first caliph) to us?"

He asked the Imam to define the boundaries of Fadak. The Imam defined the limits of Fadak as the four corners of the Islamic world of that time. With this response, the Imam implied that the entire Islamic kingdom belonged to him, and the Abbasid government was illegitimate. Mahdi, who was shocked and nervous by the Imam's response, left his place.

Mahdi once came to Medina and met the Imam. He decided to test the Imam's knowledge. He asked the Imam about consuming alcohol, which he himself indulged in. He asked the Imam if there was any Quranic evidence for why intoxication is Haram or prohibited, since the Quran only orders to maintain distance from it. The Imam said that God prohibits the sin in the Quran [7:33]: 'Say: My Lord has only prohibited indecencies, those of them that are apparent as well as those that are concealed, and sin and rebellion without justice....'. The Imam continued that one of the sins that God has prohibited is intoxication which is explicitly mentioned in the following verse of Quran [2:219]: 'They ask you about intoxicants and games of chance. Say: In both of them there is a great sin and means of profit for men, and their sin is greater than their profit'. Mahdi was completely convinced by the Imam's logic, and admitted that the Imam's answer had originated from the Prophetic source.

With the passing of time, Mahdi became suspicious of Imam Kazim, as more and more people were referred to him as the Imam. Mahdi summoned the Imam from Medina to his palace in Baghdad, and imprisoned him. After a short period, he decided to kill the Imam. However, Mahdi saw Imam Ali (AS) in his dream, who recited the following verse of the Quran [47:22]: "May it not be that if you were to wield authority you would cause corruption in the land and ill-treat your blood relations?" Mahdi was frightened by his dream. He understood that Imam Ali's addressee was Imam Kazim, as he was from the children of Imam Ali, and also had a familial relation with the Abbasids. Mahdi summoned Imam Kazim from the prison and greeted him with respect. He asked the Imam to pledge that he would not rise against

him, nor any of his children. The Imam responded that he did not have any intention for an uprising, and that was not his tradition. Mahdi then released the Imam respectfully, and the Imam returned to Medina. For the rest of Mahdi's government, there is no historical evidence of any action by Mahdi against the Imam.

### **7-3-3-The Imam's Divine Character**

Multiple titles are attributed to Imam Kazim that reflect his elevated character. He is known as al-Kazim, which means the one who harnesses his anger. This title has a Quranic origin, and is one of the characteristics of the pious people in the Quran [3:133,134]: “[Paradise] is prepared for the pious; who spend their property for the cause of God in prosperity as well as in adversity and who also harness their anger and forgive the people. God loves the righteous ones.” The Imam was given this title, as he was patient against all the difficult calamities that he endured during his lifetime. Whenever someone insulted, harassed, or spoke ill about the Imam, he would not retaliate. Instead, the Imam would treat him well and send him a generous gift to soften his heart towards the Imam. The Imam's gifts in Medina were famous among the people, though his lifestyle was simple. Also, despite the Imam being imprisoned multiple times in various locations, he did not curse his prisoners. He was patient with the calamities that befell him during his imprisonment.

Imam Kazim was also known as ‘Abd Saaleh’ or ‘Righteous Servant [of God]’ due to his long prayers and prostrations. The Imam was renowned among the Muslims for his long prayers and worship. During the suppressive government of the Abbasids, when no one dared to name the Imam in public, the Imam's Shia followers would use a cover name for the Imam, including ‘Abd Saaleh’ or ‘Abul-Hasan’, to refer to him, his narrations, or advice.

### **7-4-During the Government of Hadi**

### **7-4-1-Hadi in Power<sup>86</sup>**

After Mahdi, his son, Hadi, who was just around 25 years old, assumed power. He was rude, harsh, heartless, and biased. He kept himself busy with amusement and musical parties. He gave huge amounts of wealth from the public Bayt al-Mal to the famous singers for his amusement.

Hadi put a substantial amount of pressure on the Prophet's lineage and the children of Imam Ali in Medina. He cut their allowances from the Bayt al-Mal. He chose someone from the descendants of the second caliph as the governor of Medina, who was known to be hostile toward the Prophet's lineage. The governor forced them to show up at a governmental facility every night to confirm their presence in Medina. If anyone was ever absent, he would summon the others and threaten their lives and wealth.

### **7-4-2-Tragedy of Fakh**

Hadi's harsh policies against the Prophet's lineage motivated them to pursue an uprising against the Abbasids and their unjust government. The Prophet's lineage came around Hossein ibn Ali, who was one of their elders with a great personality. Hossein ibn Ali was from the descendants of Imam Hasan, and had witnessed long-standing oppressions from the Abbasids against the Prophet's lineage. Some of his relatives were already imprisoned or had been killed by Mansur's orders when he was young, such as his father, his maternal grandfather, Abdullah Mahz, and his uncle, Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya. They encouraged him to initiate an uprising, which he finally accepted. He initiated his uprising in Medina, where he conquered the city. He freed the prisoners and imprisoned the Abbasid agents. He then moved his troops of about 300 soldiers to Mecca to use the upcoming Hajj season as an opportunity to recruit from the Muslims and expand his forces. He eventually engaged in a battle with the Abbasid army, composed of around 4,000 soldiers, at a valley named Fakh outside Mecca, where he

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<sup>86</sup> Muharram, 169 AH (Imam's age: 40)

was defeated and martyred<sup>87</sup>. Many of the Prophet's descendants within his troops were also martyred along with him. He was then named 'the martyr of Fakh' after the place he was martyred. This incident was the most difficult for the Prophet's lineage after the tragedy of Karbala.

Imam Kazim had confirmed the uprising of Hossein, the martyr of Fakh. The Imam had informed him about his fate of martyrdom in his uprising. The Imam, who had witnessed his strong will for uprising, advised him to be strong and persistent in his chosen destiny, and wished him a great reward from God. When the Imam received the news of the martyrdom of Hossein, he cried and expressed his sorrow by saying that Hossein was a righteous believer, and unique in his family. The Imam testified that Hossein was martyred while he was inviting the people to good and forbidding them from evil.

When the hostages and the heads of the martyrs arrived at Hadi's palace in Baghdad, he ordered the beheading of the hostages and hanged their bodies in the city. He angrily accused Imam Kazim of providing hidden authority and guidance for the uprising. Hadi claimed that Hossein, the martyr of Fakh, followed Imam Kazim's order for the uprising, as the Imam was the most well-known person in the Prophet's lineage. He then vowed firmly to kill and finish the Imam.

Ali ibn Yaqteen was a loyal companion of the Imam who held a high-ranking position in the Abbasid government. He sent a letter to the Imam informing him about Hadi's absolute decision to kill him. The Imam showed Ali's letter to his family and close companions. They urged him to hide or escape Hadi's prosecution. However, the Imam responded that he had sought refuge in God by reciting the Jaushan Sagheer supplication, and that the Prophet had foretold him in a dream about Hadi's death. The Imam told them that the news of Hadi's death would arrive in Medina through the first messenger who would come from Iraq, which happened exactly as the Imam had predicted. Hadi

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<sup>87</sup> 8 Zu al-Hijjah, 169 AH (Imam's age: 41)

passed away suddenly<sup>88</sup> before being able to martyr the Imam, leading a short government of just 14 months.

The Imam was aware of the animosity by the Abbasid family and the life threats that endangered him from their government. To decrease the sensitivity of the Abbasids and prohibit any potential life threats, the Imam, in his role in politics, sent a letter to Khayzuran, Hadi's mother. In the letter, the Imam expressed his condolences to her for the death of Hadi, and congratulated her for the selection of her other son, Haroon, as the next caliph. She was one of the most influential characters in the Abbasid family. However, she had been hostile towards her son, Hadi, for his rulership. She preferred her younger son, Haroon, for the caliphate. The Imam's action was effective in prohibiting the Abbasids from taking any action against him, especially because Haroon succeeded his brother, Hadi, as the Abbasid Caliph and Khayzuran's influence on the Abbasid government substantially increased.

After the Battle of Fakh, the Prophet's descendants lost hope in resisting the Abbasids in Hijaz. Idris ibn Abdullah, the brother of Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, was one of the survivors from the Battle of Fakh who escaped to the corner of the Abbasid government in northwestern Africa. With the aid of local tribes, Idris was able to establish the autonomous Idrisid government in present-day Morocco and some parts of Algeria<sup>89</sup>. Although the Idrisids became the first government established by the Prophet's descendants, there is no historical evidence of the Shia Imams approving their government. The Idrisid government lasted for around two centuries in that region. Thus, there were two autonomous governments in the western boundary of the Islamic territory that existed apart from the Abbasids: the Idrisids, and the remaining Umayyads in Andalusia (modern day Spain). The long distance between the Abbasid capital in Baghdad and the Idrisid territory limited their ability to defeat the Idrisid government by military

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<sup>88</sup> 14 Rabi' al-Awwal, 170 AH (Imam's age: 42)

<sup>89</sup> 172 AH (Imam's age: 44)

operation.

## **7-5-During the Government of Haroon**

### **7-5-1-Haroon in Power<sup>90</sup>**

After Hadi, his brother Haroon assumed power who was just 25 years old. He portrayed himself as a religious person, while in reality he was very heartless and cruel in his rulership. Haroon inherited a large, stable, and rich government from Northern Africa to India. Like his brother, Hadi, he had kept himself busy with amusement and music parties and would give huge sums of wealth from the public Bayt al-Mal to the famous singers for his amusement. Young Haroon's government was practically managed by his mother, Khayzuran, and his minister, Yahya ibn Khalid Barmaki.

### **7-5-2-Haroon and the Imam**

In the beginning of Haroon's government, he was lenient with the Imam. He knew that the Imam was the leader in people's hearts, and that he, himself, was just a ruler overcoming them by sword and force. The Imam tried not to give Haroon any excuse to harass or kill him, as he was the only source of guidance in society. The Imam also did not initiate any uprising against Haroon, as he had pledged to his father Mahdi in the years back to not rise against him or any of his children. However, the Imam did not accept Haroon as a righteous caliph. He stood against Haroon's conspiracies to deceive the people through his false portrayal of an Islamic lifestyle, and his undermining of the status of the Imam.

On one occasion, Haroon sent his messenger to call the Imam. The Imam told his near ones that if it was not because of Haroon's threats against his life, he would never visit him. On another occasion, Haroon came to Medina and the Imam went to him. Haroon respected the Imam and asked his sons to accompany the Imam on his way back.

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<sup>90</sup> Rabi' al-Awwal, 170 AH (Imam's age: 42)

Later, one of his sons (Ma'mun) asked him about his out-of-ordinary respect for the Imam. Haroon responded that the Imam has the heart of the people, and I am just a ruler by sword and fear. Haroon then said to his son that power does not recognize any family relationships. He continued to say to his son that even if it is you who stands against me and my government, I would eliminate you. When Haroon left Medina, he sent gifts for the elders of Medina. However, the gift he sent the Imam was negligible compared to the others. When his son inquired him about this difference, Haroon responded, "I am afraid that if I send him a large amount, he will prepare an army of around 100,000 soldiers from his family and followers to rise against me."

The Abbasids, who were proud of being related to the Prophet, exploited and abused this relation to deceive the people and legitimize their own government. However, this deception was not going to work against Imam Kazim and the other descendants of the Prophet, as they were more closely related to the Prophet than the Abbasids. There are multiple occasions when the Imam confronted Haroon, during which there were serious debates between them regarding their relationship to the Prophet.

During one of Haroon's visits to Medina, he was standing by the Prophet's tomb and saluted the Prophet by addressing him as his cousin. At this time, the Imam approached Haroon from within the crowd, and saluted the Prophet by addressing him as his father. Haroon was embarrassed and ashamed in front of the crowd of people, and did not have anything to add or claim. He said to the Imam, "Your relationship to the Prophet is indeed a pride for you."

On another occasion, Haroon asked the Imam why he had claimed to have a closer blood relation to the Prophet than the Abbasids. The Imam replied, "If the Prophet were to resurrect from his tomb and propose to your daughter, would you accept the proposal?" Haroon responded with excitement, "Absolutely." Haroon continued that he would feel proud among all the Muslims for such a marriage. The Imam then said, "The Prophet would not propose to marry my daughter as



he would be her grandfather and such a marriage is forbidden in Islam.” Haroon was shocked by the Imam’s logical answer, and admitted that the Imam was correct.

Haroon then asked the Imam why he claimed to be from the Prophet’s lineage while the Prophet had not left behind any sons. He said lineage applies for the children of a person from his sons, not from his daughters. Haroon explicitly asked the Imam to convince him using Quranic evidence. The Imam asked Haroon about the father of Prophet Jesus. Haroon responded that Prophet Jesus did not have a father. The Imam responded, “Prophet Jesus has been named as an offspring of Prophet Abraham and the other Prophets in the Quran through his mother, Lady Mary, by referring to these verses of the Quran [6:84,85]: ‘And We gave him (Abraham) Isaac and Jacob and guided each of them... and from his (Abraham’s) offspring, David and Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses and Aaron, and Zechariah, John, Jesus and Ilyas (Elijah)’. Similar to Prophet Jesus, we are the offspring of the Prophet and are related to him through our mother, Lady Fatimah.”

The Imam then asked Haroon if he was interested to hear more evidence from the Quran and Haroon accepted. The Imam referred to the verse of Mubahilah in the Quran [3:61]: “Tell those who dispute this with you even after the knowledge that has reached you: Come, let us gather our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves, and pray and solicit God to condemn those who lie’. No single Muslim has ever claimed that the Prophet took anyone else with himself for Mubahilah against the Christians other than Imam Ali, Lady Fatimah, Imam Hasan, and Imam Hossein. According to the verse of Mubahilah, Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein are the sons of the Prophet. Thus, the children of Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein are indeed the Prophet’s lineage.” Haroon was completely convinced by the Imam’s Quranic reasoning, and admitted that the Imam’s answer was correct.

### **7-5-3-Discovery of Imam Ali's Grave<sup>91</sup>**

An important event during the government of Haroon was the discovery of the hidden grave of Imam Ali (AS) in Najaf. The Shia Imams knew its hidden location and had kept it as a secret. They had only revealed it to their close companions. This location was hidden from the public for about 130 years until the government of Haroon. During this long period, the holy grave of Imam Ali was protected from the vengeful actions of the Khawarij and the Umayyads, who hated Imam Ali's justice. For example, during the government of Hajjaj in Kufa, around 3,000 graves were exhumed by his order in an attempt to find and disrespect Imam Ali's grave. At the time of Haroon, no serious threat was facing the unveiled grave of Imam Ali. The Khawarij ideology had been weakened and their activities were limited to the boundaries of the Islamic territory in Northern Iraq, Khorasan, and Sistan. Also, the Umayyads were overthrown by the Abbasids, who were proud of being related to the Prophet and Imam Ali. Thus, Haroon ordered the construction of a building upon the gravesite of Imam Ali.

### **7-5-4-The Imam's Leadership**

To meet the needs of the growing Shia community, Imam Sadiq had established a networking organization of his trusted companions as his representatives in various cities around the Islamic territory. Imam Kazim took advantage of this organization effectively during his Imamat. He began by proving himself as the next Imam for the representatives who had travelled to Medina to transfer the Muslims' charity dues (Zakat) and to ask their Islamic questions from him. At the time, the Abbasid spies were closely monitoring the Imam's activities. There were serious threats against his life and the Imam could not be the center of communication with his Shia followers. The Abbasid rulers were especially in great fear of allowing the transfer of the Muslims' charity dues to the Imam in Medina, as they thought this could

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<sup>91</sup> 171 AH (Imam's age: 43)

facilitate the Imam's potential for an uprising against them. Thus, the Imam expanded this organization as an effective method of leading the Shia community. The Imam would guide his representatives on how to spend the Muslims' charity dues and responded to their questions through letters. The Imam had also advised his representatives to avoid meeting him directly in Medina, and to instead contact his chosen representative in Medina, Mufazzal ibn Umar. Overall, many aspects of this organization have not been recorded in history due to its hidden nature.

During Haroon's rulership, there was excessive pressure and surveillance on Imam Kazim and his Shia followers by the government. The Imam had introduced the Abbasids as an oppressive government, and had given strict advice to his followers to avoid any relationship with them. The Imam did not even allow simple business deals with the government. In one incident, the Imam confronted one of his companions who had rented his camels to Haroon for travelling to Mecca to perform Hajj. The Imam told him that by providing this rental, you expect Haroon to return safely from his travel to pay you and return your camel. The Imam then said that anyone who expects them to be alive is from them, and his eternal place in the hereafter is in the hellfire along with them. By this strict advice, the Imam's companion sold all of his camels to avoid doing business with the government.

Despite the general order of the Imam to boycott any relationship with the oppressive Abbasid government, the Imam allowed his pious companions to be involved in some sensitive positions in the government. This was one of the Imam's important strategies in leading the Shia community. The Imam's intention for this exception was to save the wealth and lives of his Shia followers from persecution and oppression of the government. Ali ibn Yaqteen was one of these pious companions. He became close to the government due to his father's loyalty and status to the Abbasid government. Ali ibn Yaqteen was unlike his father. He was a loyal companion of the Imam. With the

Imam's approval, Ali ibn Yaqteen held a high-ranking position in the Abbasid government, including Haroon's government. He had wanted to resign from his position on multiple occasions, but the Imam had asked him to stay in his position, and he obeyed. The Imam had guaranteed that he would not be killed by the sword of an enemy nor be imprisoned, and that he would never become poor. In return, the Imam had asked him to respect any of his Shia followers who came to him in the government. Ali ibn Yaqteen used his position to help the Shias and saved their lives and wealth from the oppression of the Abbasids. For example, he would secretly return illegitimate taxes that the government was taking forcefully from the Shias. He would also send his Islamic obligatory dues to the Imam in Medina, or spend it according to the Imam's guidance. He would donate a large amount of money by sending a few hundreds of Shias to Hajj annually, and would pay a large allowance to each of them. The Imam saved him on various occasions from the conspiracies and the plots of the Abbasids against him. The Imam would meet his representatives outside Medina, return his valuable gifts back to him, or send him specific instructions on performing religious rituals to save him from the Abbasids who were suspicious of him from time to time.

### **7-5-5-Arresting the Imam**

After years of being in power, Haroon began laying the groundwork to keep the Abbasid Caliphate within his own lineage. He selected his son, Amin, as his successor. He then selected his other son, Ma'mun, as Amin's successor. He was concerned about the social popularity of the Imam and its consequences upon his sons' future government. Any minor excuse was enough to trigger him to take action against the Imam. One such excuse was given to him by his minister, Yahya ibn Khalid Barmaki, who became jealous of Amin's selected private teacher. Yahya was afraid of losing influence in Amin's future government, especially since he had been Haroon's teacher during his childhood and knew the importance of the position. He frequently talked ill about the selected teacher to Haroon and labeled him as a Shia follower of Imam

Kazim. However, he failed to prove his accusation to Haroon. Yahya's conspiracy instead caused Haroon to investigate the Imam's whereabouts.

Yahya plotted with Muhammad ibn Isma'il, the Imam's nephew. Muhammad ibn Isma'il was poor and prone to bad decisions. Yahya brought him from Medina to Baghdad before Haroon. Muhammad ibn Isma'il, who was bribed by Yahya, said to Haroon, "I didn't think that the world has two Caliphs, you in Baghdad and my uncle, Musa ibn Ja'far (Imam Kazim), in Medina. The Muslims from all over the Islamic territory send their obligatory Islamic dues to him (the Imam) in Medina." He accused the Imam of collecting large sums of wealth and of establishing his own government by printing his name on the coins of his wealth. At the meeting, Haroon promised Muhammad ibn Isma'il a significant reward, but Muhammad ibn Isma'il died of sudden illness before receiving his reward.

Yahya's conspiracy triggered Haroon to act against the Imam. Haroon wanted to get the Muslims' allegiance for his son, Amin's, nomination as his successor. He called the Muslims to Mecca for Hajj. On his way to Hajj, he stopped in Medina to arrest the Imam. He decided to first justify his action against the Imam to the Muslims. To do this, while he was visiting the tomb of the Holy Prophet, he addressed the Prophet and said loudly, "I am sorry about my decision against Musa ibn Ja'far. I want to imprison him because I am afraid that he would make a riot that would perish the blood of your nation."

The following day, Haroon ordered the Imam's arrest. Haroon's soldiers captured the Imam in the Prophet's Mosque while he was praying next to the Prophet's tomb<sup>92</sup>. The soldiers interrupted the Imam's prayers, forcefully took him outside the mosque, and brought him before Haroon. Haroon insulted and disrespected the Imam. He ordered the preparation of two caravans towards Iraq, one to Basrah and the other to Kufa. His intention was to leave the Imam's destination

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<sup>92</sup> 20 Shawwal, 179 AH (Imam's age: 51)

unknown and to confront any attempt by the Imam's followers to have him released. The caravan's long travel time from Medina to Basrah of around 47 days also shows that the government feared attempts to save the Imam from captivity. They must have transported the Imam through obscure roads or have taken winding travel paths. When the Imam was finally brought to Basrah as a captive, he was received by Basrah's governor, Isa ibn Ja'far, who was Haroon's cousin<sup>93</sup>.

#### **7-5-6-Prison of Isa ibn Ja'far**

Isa ibn Ja'far imprisoned the Imam in a cell inside his own house. The Imam was kept in this prison for about a year. The door of his cell would open twice each day: once for delivering food and once to allow him to refresh his ablution. Isa ibn Ja'far was a corrupt character who would hold music and dance parties in his house. The Imam was harassed in this prison by the loud sounds of these parties. The Imam's activities and prayers remained under intense surveillance by Isa ibn Ja'far's agents. One of these agents had said that the Imam would repeatedly recite the following sentence in his prayers to God: "O' my Lord, I used to ask you constantly to bless me with a quiet corner to pray and now I am thankful to You for fulfilling my request."

Haroon frequently asked Isa ibn Ja'far to kill the Imam, but he would not accept Haroon's order. He did not want to take the responsibility and blame for killing the Imam. His friends also advised him to do the same. After a year, Isa ibn Ja'far sent a letter to Haroon complaining to him about the lengthy imprisonment of the Imam in his house<sup>94</sup>. He told Haroon that he would not kill the Imam, and if Haroon would not transfer the Imam, he would release him. He reminded Haroon that he was closely watching the Imam and had witnessed him in constant prayer. He stated that the Imam had never cursed nor said anything bad against anyone, including Haroon, in his prayers. When Haroon received the letter of Isa ibn Ja'far, he sent a delegate to transfer the

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<sup>93</sup> 7 Zu al-Hijjah, 179 AH (Imam's age: 51)

<sup>94</sup> 180 AH (Imam's age: 52)

Imam to Baghdad. The Imam was transferred to one of Haroon's loyal politicians, Fazl ibn Rabi', who was the son of Rabi', one of the most trusted individuals to the Abbasid caliphs.

#### **7-5-7-Prison of Fazl ibn Rabi'**

Fazl ibn Rabi' imprisoned the Imam in a cell in his house, secretly monitoring all of his activities. He witnessed the Imam fasting daily and that, except for a small part of the night, the Imam remained in constant prayers and long prostrations.

Haroon would frequently go to the roof of the Imam's cell to personally spy on him. From the opening of the roof, he would only see a part of the Imam's clothing on the ground. He would ask where the Imam was in the cell. He was told that the clothing was actually the Imam in long prostrations continuously from sunrise to noon. When Haroon was asked, "If you know the Imam's conditions, why do you still keep him in the prison?" Haroon responded, "I don't have any other choice and the Imam's imprisonment is better for my government."

After a while, Fazl ibn Rabi' was influenced by the Imam's character and prayers. He refused Haroon's orders to finish the Imam. Haroon, who was disappointed at Fazl ibn Rabi', ordered the transfer of the Imam within Baghdad to Fazl ibn Yahya's house. Fazl ibn Yahya was one of Haroon's loyal politicians and the son of his famous minister, Yahya ibn Khalid Barmaki.

#### **7-5-8-Prison of Fazl ibn Yahya**

The Imam's character and prayers had great influence on the hearts of his jailers. Although Yahya ibn Khalid Barmaki encouraged Haroon to imprison the Imam, his son, Fazl ibn Yahya, who was keeping the Imam in his custody, was influenced by the Imam's character. Fazl ibn Yahya witnessed the Imam in long prayers, prostration, and constant fasting. He changed his treatment of the Imam, giving him respect and comfort. When Haroon received the news that the Imam was in comfort, he became angry and ordered Fazl ibn Yahya be lashed. He ordered the transfer of the Imam in Baghdad to one of his most heartless and

obedient agents, Sendi ibn Shahak, who was the head of the guard forces (police) in Baghdad.

### **7-5-9-Prison of Sendi ibn Shahak**

The Imam's imprisonment in the house of Sendi ibn Shahak was the hardest among his other imprisonments. Sendi ibn Shahak was a heartless military leader who would obey Haroon's orders blindly. Despite the harsh treatment from Sendi ibn Shahak, the Imam's presence had influenced anyone who would meet him. Ironically, Sendi's own family members were among those who were influenced and guided by the Imam. In the years later, Sendi's grandson, Kashaajim, became a great Shia poet and scholar who publicly recited poetry to eulogize the Shia Imams.

After a few years of the Imam's imprisonment, Haroon was determined to do anything to defame the Imam in the eyes of the Muslims. One of his plots was to attract the Imam towards himself in order to legitimize his government. He sent a messenger to the Imam in the prison. The Imam completely ignored the presence of the messenger and continued his long prayers. After a while, the messenger worried that his long stay might make Haroon suspicious and angry, so he began talking immediately between the Imam's prayers. He told the Imam that Haroon had brought the Imam to Iraq because of ill-talks against him, but Haroon's investigations had found the Imam innocent, and all the rumors against the Imam to be lies. He said that Haroon preferred to keep the Imam near him because it gave peace to his heart, and that he liked to provide the Imam with any food that he desired. The Imam responded with just a concise sentence, "My wealth is not with me to benefit me and I am not created to ask." The Imam then immediately started his next prayer. The Imam's reaction showed Haroon that even after a few years of imprisonment, the Imam would not surrender to him.

On another occasion, Haroon forcefully sent a female slave into the Imam's cell. His intention was to have her as a witness to speak against the Imam's character in public. However, she was influenced by the



Imam's prayers and divine personality. After a while, Haroon was informed that she was now a different person, constantly in prostration and asking forgiveness from God. When she was brought to Haroon, he accused the Imam of placing a spell on her. However, she objected to Haroon, spoke highly of the Imam, and testified to the Imam's divine character. Haroon, who initially wanted to have her as a witness against the Imam, now had to ask someone from his close ones to hide her from the public. The lady remained a pious servant of God until her last breath.

The Imam once sent a letter to Haroon from prison. He told Haroon that each hard day that passes for him, that same day also passes from Haroon's happy days, and they all lead to a day when both of them will meet in the hereafter. On that day, the Imam wrote, the followers of falsehood will admit to their losses. The Imam's message showed Haroon that the Imam would not beg for his freedom and would resist against all of the inflicted calamities until his martyrdom.

### **7-5-10-Martyrdom**

After around four years of the Imam's imprisonment, Haroon had become completely hopeless to break the Imam's resistance against his government and decided to kill the Imam. He left Baghdad and went to Raqqa, a faraway city in modern day Syria, to portray himself as innocent in the Imam's martyrdom. He sent his minister, Yahya ibn Khalid Barmaki, to Baghdad with a secret mission to poison the Imam. Yahya was motivated to gain Haroon's trust because Haroon had been disappointed by Yahya's son, Fazl ibn Yahya, in how he had honored the Imam during the Imam's imprisonment in his house. Yahya delivered Haroon's order to Sendi ibn Shahak and gave him poisonous dates. Sendi served the poisonous dates to the Imam, which led to the Imam's martyrdom.

Immediately after poisoning the Imam and before his martyrdom, Sendi wanted to portray the Imam's martyrdom as a natural death to the public. He moved the Imam to a comfortable setting with nice carpets. He then gathered a group of around 80 people from the scholars and

the elders of Baghdad in his house. He brought them face to face with the Imam and asked them to testify that the Imam was physically safe and unharmed. He told them, “The people think we are hurting Musa ibn Ja’far but as you see, he is healthy and in comfort, and we have only kept him here until Haroon returns to Baghdad to speak and debate with him.” The Imam unexpectedly began to talk and told them that he had just been poisoned and would pass away in three days. By the Imam’s words, Sendi became nervous and his plot failed.

Three days after the Imam’s poisoning, his soul ascended. He was martyred on the 25th of Rajab, in the year 183 of Hijri, in Baghdad, at the age of 55.

### **7-5-11-Burial**

After the Imam’s martyrdom, Sendi still wanted to complete his previously unsuccessful plot of portraying a natural death for the Imam to the people. He gathered more than 50 people who knew the Imam to his house. He showed them the Imam’s body, and asked them to testify that there was no sign of injury or suffocation on his body.

In order to insult the Imam and his Shia followers, Sendi then ordered only four of his soldiers to take the Imam’s corpse to the streets of Baghdad. He asked his soldiers to loudly announce in the streets of Baghdad, “Anyone who wants to see the body of the vicious, son of the vicious, come to us as we are carrying the body of the Imam of the Rafidhi.” Rafidhi was a derogatory term used against the Shias. They then placed the Imam’s corpse on the bridge over the Tigris River for part of a day. The people came to see the Imam’s corpse and witnessed that his body did not have any sign of torture or injury.

Haroon’s uncle, Sulayman ibn Abi-Ja’far, was one of the most influential members of the Abbasid royal family. He was in his palace by the Tigris River when he heard the turmoil and the people’s voices. When he was informed about Sendi insulting the Imam’s corpse, he condemned Sendi’s action, and found it politically unwise and dangerous for Haroon’s government. Though he did not believe in the

Imamat of Imam Kazim, he was afraid that Sendi's action could trigger the Shias, who were large in numbers in Baghdad and the other cities, to rise against the government. He sent his agents to take the Imam's corpse from Sendi's soldiers, and even advised them to use force if necessary. He then attended the Imam's burial while barefoot. He told his agents to announce in the city that anyone who wants to look at the face of the blessed, son of the blessed, should come and look at the face of Musa ibn Ja'far. Crowds of Muslims then came for the Imam's burial, and a respectful burial ceremony was performed for the Imam. The crowd carried the Imam's corpse towards one of the city's graveyards that belonged to the Quraysh, the tribe that the Imam, the Abbasids, and Banu Hashim belonged to, where they respectfully buried the Imam.

While in Raqqa, Haroon received the news about the Imam's martyrdom and burial. To pretend that he was innocent, he sent a letter to his uncle, Sulayman ibn Abi-Ja'far, and praised his actions of burying the Imam respectfully. In his letter, Haroon cursed Sendi ibn Shahak for his actions during the Imam's burial and said that Sendi had acted based on his own decision without any approval from him.

## **7-6-Conclusion**

The Imamat of Imam Kazim coincides with one of the most difficult periods in Islamic history. During this period, the Abbasid government was stable and at its peak of power. Mansur stabilized the Abbasid government by applying his iron-fist policy and eliminating his opponents brutally. The Imamat of Imam Kazim began at the time of Mansur, when the Imam could not even publicly declare his Imamat, as Mansur's spies were looking to find the Shia Imam after Imam Sadiq to behead him. The Imamat of Imam Kazim continued to the government of Mahdi, who initiated his government by declaring public amnesty. However, as time passed, Mahdi became suspicious of the Imam and brought him to Baghdad and imprisoned him. He decided to kill the Imam, but his dream changed his mind and he released the Imam.

When Hadi assumed power, he put an extensive amount of pressure on the Prophet's lineage in Medina. This pressure eventually led to the uprising of the Prophet's lineage under the leadership of Hossein, the martyr of Fakh. Hadi attributed this uprising to Imam Kazim and vowed firmly to kill him, but God saved the Imam through Hadi's sudden death. When Haroon assumed power, he was initially lenient towards the Imam. Later, however, he imprisoned the Imam in various locations for about four years and ordered the poisoning and martyrdom of the Imam. The Imam was martyred and buried in Baghdad, far from his family in Medina.

With the unprecedented oppressive regime of the Abbasid government dominating the society, the Imam had a critical role to lead the Shia community, guide them in their religious beliefs, and save them from division. The Imam expanded the organization of his representatives as an effective method of communication between himself and his Shia followers who were spread across the Islamic territory. This hidden organization allowed the Imam to indirectly connect to his followers, guide them, answer their questions, and ultimately grow the Shia community as a primary sect among the other factions of Islam. Despite serious threats against his life, the Imam never accepted the Abbasids as a righteous and legitimate government. He introduced the Abbasids as an unjust government to his Shia followers and asked them to distance themselves from it. In certain circumstances, the Imam allowed his pious companions to take sensitive governmental positions to save the wealth and lives of his Shia followers from the persecutions of the Abbasids. The Imam strongly confronted the Abbasid propagandas, such as their claim to their relationship with the Prophet in order to deceive the people and legitimize their government.

The life of Imam Kazim was full of oppression, calamities, imprisonments, and life threats, which he endured from multiple Abbasid caliphs. The lack of historical records and information about the condition of the Imam during his imprisonment is another proof for his oppression. The Abbasids hid the Imam's condition in prison to

avoid reactions from the Muslims. During the Imam's life, he manifested the true meaning of his title, 'Kazim', the one who controls his anger. The Imam remained patient despite all of the calamities he was inflicted with by the government and the ignorant people. He was blessed by God with a special status known by the people of Iraq as 'Bab al-Hawaij Ilallah', which means 'the door of fulfillment of requests from God'. Even today, many Muslims of various sects visit Imam Kazim's holy shrine in Baghdad, and their requests from God are fulfilled through the Imam.

**IMAM KAZIM (AS):**

**Whoever wishes to be the strongest of people  
should put his trust in God.**