

Chapter 17: In Dark Prisons

Severe and tragic ordeals befell Imam Musa, peace be on him, who was similar to 'Isa b. Maryam in fear of Allah, piety, and righteousness. That is because he ended the bloom of his life in dark prisons; he was veiled from his household and his followers and was deprived of spreading his sciences.

Harun spared no effort to wrong and exhaust him. He went too far in punishing him though he knew that the Imam sought neither government nor authority. Rather he wanted to spread justice, truth, and ease among people. He criticizes those rulers for their oppression, their tyranny, and their possessing alone the affairs of the Muslims.

The ancient and modern history of mankind is full of the reformers who declared violent revolts against the oppressive and tyrannical rulers to make happy their homelands and their followers in faith; so, in this way, they suffer from all kinds of harm, persecution, and punishment. The Imams from among the members of the House (Ahl al-Bayt), peace be on them, were on top of those who struggled for man's dignity and defended it.

They sacrificed themselves and struggled in the way of Allah. They raised the word of the Muslims and saved them from political tyranny and dictatorship that appeared on the political arena of their 'Abbasi and Umayyad opponents, who followed an unjust policy aiming at playing with the fates of society, taking the properties of the Muslims and spending them generously on dissoluteness, prostitution, and their hirelings who supported it and regarded it as true and just.

The Imams from among the members of the House (Ahl al-Bayt), peace be on them, were responsible for taking care of religion and protecting the Muslims, so the religious duty made it incumbent on them to resist those governments, to revolt against oppression, and to save the society from the dictatorship and tyranny that befell it. So they actually carried out their humanitarian message, defended the dignity of Islam, and protected the Muslims.

Imam Musa, peace be on him, was the head of those who opposed Harun's policy. We have several times mentioned his negative attitude toward Harun. As for Harun, he spared no effort to exhaust the

Imam and to take vengeance on him. He imprisoned him in his prisons and veiled him from his Shi'ites (followers). Accordingly, the Imam spent a long time in prisons until he passed away. He was a stranger and martyr. He suffered from the bitterest pain and misfortunes. We shall in detail deal with his affairs in prisons:

1. Imam Musa is arrested

Imam Musa, peace be on him, troubled Harun, and he was unable to stand him. That is because the Imam's name and excellence spread. The people talked about his achievements and knowledge. As a result Harun, the tyrannical, who was then in Yethrib (Medina), went to the grave of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family.

He greeted the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, and addressed him, saying: "Apostle of Allah, I apologize to you for something I want to do. I want to imprison Musa b. Ja'far because he is intending to bring division into your community and to cause the shedding of its blood."¹

It is strange that Harun apologized to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, for violating his sacredness and punishing his grandson. He thought the apology for committing a crime would save him on the day when the wrongdoers would be losers. On the following day, Harun commanded his police to arrest the Imam.

The police arrested the Imam while he was standing and performing a prayer by the head of his grandfather the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family. They interrupted his prayer and did not give him a time to complete it. They chained him and took him from that Sacred Place. The Imam was weeping and complaining to his grandfather the Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, saying: "O Allah's Apostle, I complain to you!"²

Harun did not respect the Sacredness of the Holy Grave. He violated the Sacredness of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, and that of his grandsons, who were the most appropriate for care and affection of all things. He also did not respect the prayer which is the holiest worship in Islam.

He ordered his prayer to be interrupted and him to be chained. The Imam was carried to Harun while he was in chain. When he stood before him, he turned away from him and spoke rudely to him. The Imam was arrested in Shawwal 20, in the year 179.³

2. The Muslims fear for the Imam

When the Imam, peace be on him, was arrested, the Muslims became impatient and afraid. Sorrow and sadness melted their hearts. That is because the police veiled them from the Imam, who showed affection toward their poor, supported their orphans and widows, took care of them, had mercy on them, sympathized with them, and was their place of flight during disasters and misfortunes.

So al-Rashid feared that discords and disorders would take place. Then he ordered two awnings to be brought. He ordered one of them to be carried to Kufa and the other to be carried to Basrah. He only did that to confuse the people about what had happened to the Imam and where he had been detained. He ordered the Imam, peace be on him, to be carried to Basrah in the dark night. The Imam was carried to it, while sorrow and sadness prevailed Yethrib (Medina).

3. The Imam is detained in Basrah

The Imam was transferred to Basrah; pain and worries accompanied him. Hasan al-Sarawi was entrusted with watching and guarding him.⁴ Before the Imam arrived in Basrah, 'Abd Allah b. Marhum al-Azdi visited him. The Imam gave him a letter and asked him to give it to his successor Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him. He made him know that al-Ridha' was the Imam after him.⁵

The caravan walked and covered the desert. It arrived in Basrah. That was a day before al-Tarwiya (the 8th day of Dhu al-Hijja).⁶ Hasan took the Imam and handed him over to 'Isa b. Ja'far. The latter threw the Imam in a prison and locked its door. He did not open the door except in two times: When the Imam went out to make an ablution and when food was brought to him.⁷

As for the Imam's affairs in Basrah prison, they are as follows:

A. His devoting himself to Worship

The Imam, peace be on him, devoted himself to worshiping Allah. He perplexed reasons and stunned intellects through his too much worship and his devoting himself to Allah. He fasted by day and performed prayers by night. He spent most his times in performing prayers. He was not tired of prison.

He regarded his free time as a great favor Allah bestowed on him. He thanked Allah for that and supplicated Him with this supplication: "O Allah, You know that I used to ask you to give me free time to worship you. O Allah, You have done that. To you be praise."

This supplication show us a great part of the patience of Imam Musa, peace be on him, and his satisfaction with Allah's decree. It also indicates that the Imam loved and yearned for worship and obedience.

B. Some Religious Scholars communicate with the Imam

That the Imam, peace be on him, was detained in Basrah became famous. So some religious scholars and narrators of traditions secretly visited him. They narrated from him some sciences and religious precepts. Yasin al-Zeyati communicated with him and reported traditions from him.⁸ Another group from among the prominent religious scholars contacted him and narrated from him many things relating to Islamic jurisprudence.

C. Harun commands 'Isa to assassinate the Imam

The news that the Imam, peace be on him, was detained in Basrah became famous. The people reported his traditions. They were sad and sorrowful. So Harun feared that discords and disorders would happen. Accordingly, he commanded 'Isa to assassinate the Imam, peace be on him, that he might get rid of him and to take a rest.

D. 'Isa asks Harun to exempt him from that

When al-Rashid's commands concerning assassinating the Imam, peace be on him, reached 'Isa, he was displeased. As a result he summoned some of his close associates and trusted colleagues. He presented the affair before them, and they warned him against committing a crime. He approved their opinion. So he wrote al-Rashid a letter in which he asked him to exempt him from that. The letter reads as follows:

The affair of Musa b. Ja'far and his stay under my detention has been going on for a long time. I have become well-acquainted with his situation. I have set spies on him throughout this period and I have not found him (do anything except) open his mouth in worship. I set someone to listen to what he said in his prayers.

He has never prayed against you or against me. He has never mentioned us in malice. He does not pray for himself except for forgiveness and mercy. Either you send someone whom I can hand him over to or I will let him free. I am troubled at detaining him.⁹

This letter indicates that 'Isa greatly admired and respected the Imam, peace be on him. That is because he watched him and set spies on him. He did not see him do anything except that he was busy remembering Allah and performing acts of obedience to him. He did not mention anyone with evil even those who wronged him.

For this reason 'Isa feared Allah in respect with assassinating him. The Imam, peace be on him, stayed in the detention of 'Isa for a year.¹⁰ He suffered from imprisonment and chains.

4. The Imam is carried to Baghdad

Al-Rashid responded to 'Isa's request. He feared that 'Isa would release the Imam and let him free. So he ordered the Imam to be carried to Baghdad. 'Isa was delighted with that, for Allah saved him from committing a crime. Immediately he ordered the Imam to be carried to Baghdad. The police and some guards carried the Imam in chain to it. They quickly took him and headed for it. When they arrived in it, they informed al-Rashid of that, and he ordered him to be detained. The affairs of the Imam in Baghdad are as follows:

A. The Imam is detained in al-Fadhli's House

When the Imam, peace be on him, arrived in Baghdad, al-Rashid ordered him to be detained in al-Fadhli b. al-Rabi's house.¹¹ So al-Fadhli took him and imprisoned him in his house.

Harun ordered the Imam to be detained in a house of one of his ministers. He did not imprison him in the public prisons such as the underground prison. That is because the Imam, peace be on him, was an important figure and had a high social rank. The brilliant personalities were not imprisoned in public prisons.

For example, when al-Rashid was angry with 'Abd al-Malik b. Salih, he detained him in al-Fadhli b. al-Rabi's house.¹² Ibrahim b. al-Mehdi was imprisoned in the house of Ahmed b. Abi Khalid.¹³ For this reason the Imam was detained in the houses of the ministers and of high-ranking statesmen.

B. He busies himself with worship

The Imam, peace be on him, devoted himself to the acts of obedience to his Lord. He spent most of his times in performing prayers and supplicating Allah, to the extent that he surpassed all Allah's friends in his acts of obedience to Allah. Al-Fadhli was astonished with his worship, and he told the people about it. He admired and sanctified the Imam. 'Abd Allah al-Qezwini has narrated, saying: [I came in to al-Fadhli b. al-Rabi'. He was sitting on the top of his house.

He said to me: "Come nearer to me." I came nearer to him and was beside him. He said to me:]

-Look down upon the house.

'Abd Allah looked down upon the house, and al-Fadhli asked him:

-What can you see in the house?

-I can see a garment thrown down.

-Look well! 'Abd Allah carefully looked and said:

-A man prostrating himself in prayer.

-Can you recognize him?

-No, I cannot.

-He is your master.

-Who is my master?

-Do you ignore him?

-I do not ignore him, but I do not know that I have a master.

-He is Abu al-Hasan Musa b. Ja'far. Then al-Fadhli told 'Abd Allah about the worship of the Imam and about his acts of obedience to Allah, saying: "Surely, I always watch him by day and night. I always find him in the state about which I am telling you. He performs the dawn prayer. Then he says his personal supplications until the sun rises.

Then he prostrates himself in prayer and continues until the sun comes near to descending (from its midday zenith). He has entrusted someone with observing the declination of the sun. I do not know when the servant says that the sun has descended. For he jumps and begins performing prayer without renewing his ablution. So I come to know that he had not slept during his prostrating himself in prayer.

He continues in this way until he finishes the afternoon prayer. When he performs the afternoon prayer, he prostrates himself in prayer and goes on that until the sun sets. When the sun sets, he rises and performs the sunset prayer. Then he continues performing prayers and saying his personal supplication until he performs the evening prayer. When he has performed the evening prayer, he breaks the fast with little food brought to him.

Then he renews the ablution. Then he prostrates himself in prayer. Then he raises his head and slumbers. Then he gets up and renews his ablution. Then he performs and goes on performing prayer in the darkness of night until dawn rises. I do not know when the servant says that the dawn has risen. For he suddenly begins to perform the dawn prayer. This is his behavior since he has been handed over to me."

When 'Abd Allah heard al-Fadhli admiring the Imam, peace be on him, he warned him against responding to al-Rashid's mean desire through assassinating him. He said to him: "Fear Allah! Do not take in respect with his affair any measure through which your blessing is removed! You know that whoever does evil to someone his blessing is removed!"

Al-Fadhli believed in that, so he said to him: "Harun sent for me several times and commanded me to kill him (Musa). I have not responded to him in respect with this. I informed him that I would not do that. I will not respond to that which he requests from me even if he orders me to be killed!"¹⁴

In this manner the Imam, peace be on him, was the most wonderful model for piety and faith in Allah. The love for Allah was impressed in his heart and his feelings; his soul was fond of worshiping and obeying Allah.

C. Harun watches the Imam

Harun was afraid of the Imam, peace be on him. So he had no confidence in the spies he set on him in prison. So he himself watched him and came to know of his affairs lest the people should communicate with him or that al-Fadhli might had mercy on him. As a result he looked down upon the prison and saw

a garment thrown down in a special place and did not change its place.

He asked al-Fadhli:

-What is that garment I see in that place every day?

-Commander of the faithful, that is not a garment; that is Musa b. Ja'far. Every day he prostrates himself in prayer from sunrise to the inclination of the sun. Harun was astonished at that and said:

-Surely he is among the Hashimite monks!

After al-Fadhli had heard Harun's admission in the Imam's asceticism, he turned to him and asked him:

-Commander of the faithful, why have you harassed him in prison? Harun answered him through evil and mercilessness his soul had, saying:

-How far! There is no escape from that!¹⁵ Certainly Harun came to know of the Imam's high position, his turning away from the world, and his devoting himself to Allah. However, his love for the world and his envy toward him moved him to do that.

D. The Imam is tired of Prison

The Imam, peace be on him, was tired of prison and was displeased with that long period of time. Exhausting pain and bitter misfortunes encompassed him. That is because he was veiled from his family and his children. He was transferred from one prison to another. The police and the spies watched him lest his Shi'ites should visit him. As a result he resorted to Allah, the Most High, to save him from that ordeal.

E. His Supplication

When the Imam, peace be on him, felt that the period of his imprisonment was long and he was hostage to prisons, he renewed his ablution and performed a four-ruk'a-prayer. Then he secretly talked to Allah and supplicated Him with this supplication:

"O My Master, save me from Harun's prison! Release me from Harun's hand! O You Who bring forth plants from sand and clay, O You Who bring forth fire from iron and stones, O You Who bring forth milk from blood, O You Who bring forth baby from placenta and womb, O You Who bring forth soul from bowels and intestines, release me from Harun's hand!"¹⁶

In this supplication we feel the bitter sorrow and deep sadness that encompassed the Imam, peace be on him.

F. The Imam is released

Allah granted the supplication of the righteous servant (Imam Musa). He saved him from the prison of Harun, the tyrannical. Harun let the Imam free in the dark night. He did that according to a dream. ‘Abd Allah b. Malik al-Khaza‘i, a responsible for al-Rashid’s house and police, narrated that, saying:

Al-Rashid’s messenger came to me for a thing for which he had not come. He took me from my place and prevented me from changing my clothes. That frightened me. When I reached the house, the messenger preceded me and informed al-Rashid of my arrival. Al-Rashid permitted me to enter, and I entered. I found him sitting on his bed. I greeted him, but he kept silent for an hour. So I lost my mind; and my impatience doubled. Then he asked me:

–‘Abd Allah, did you know why I summoned you at this time?

–No, by Allah, Commander of the faithful.

–In this hour of my sleep, I dreamt of an Abyssinian. The Abyssinian came to me carrying a sword. He ordered me: “Let Musa b. Ja‘far free or I will kill you with this sword! Go and release him!” ‘Abd Allah was not sure of al-Rashid’s command concerning releasing the Imam. So he asked him three times: “Shall I release Musa b. Ja‘far?” “Yes,” replied al-Rashid, “go now. Let Musa b. Ja‘far free.

Give to him thirty thousand dirhams. Say to him: ‘If you like to stay with us, that is up to you. If you like to go to Medina, that is up to you.’ ‘Abd Allah went to the prison quickly. He said: “When I came into the prison, the Imam, peace be on him, rose. He thought that I had been ordered to do a detested thing to him.

So I said to him: ‘Do not be afraid. The Commander of the faithful has commanded me to let you free and to give to you thirty thousand dirhams.¹⁷ He said to you: ‘If you like to stay with us, that is up to you. If you like to go to Medina, that is up to you.’ I gave to him the thirty thousand dirhams. I said to him: ‘I saw something strange in your affair.’”

The Imam, peace be on him, told ‘Abd Allah about the reason for releasing him, saying: “While I was sleeping, Allah’s Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, came and said to me: ‘You have been unjustly imprisoned. Say these words and you will not spend the night in prison.’ So I asked him: ‘May my father and mother be your ransom, what shall I say?’

He replied: ‘Say: O He Who hears all voices, O He Who is Earlier in time than all that have passed away, O He Who clothes bones with flesh and resurrects them after death, I ask you by Your good attributes and by Your Name, the great, the big, the stored, the hidden about which no creature has come to know.

O Clement with patience the like of which none has, O Possessor of the favor which never ceases, nor

is counted in number! Relieve me!’ So what you have seen happened.”¹⁸ Allah relieved the Imam, so Harun let him free. The Imam remained in the prison of al-Fadhli for a long period of time the history has not specified to us.

After the Imam had been released, he stayed in Baghdad. He did not leave it for Yathrib (Medina). He came in to al-Rashid once a week, on Thursday.¹⁹ Al-Rashid welcomed him when he saw him. One day a man committed a crime. Harun was very angry with the man; he ordered him to be flogged three kinds of the prescribed punishments.

In the meantime the Imam, peace be on him, came in. He prohibited Harun from doing that, saying to him: “You must show anger for Allah; you must not show anger for Him more than He shows anger for Himself.”²⁰

Some debates took place between the Imam and Harun of which is the following:

-Do you say that the one-fifth (khums) belongs to you?

-Yes.

-Surely, it is too much.

-Surely the One Who has given it to us knows that it is not too much.²¹ Al-Rashid met the Imam in Baghdad. He asked him to write him a brief speech on the origins and branches of the religion. The Imam responded to him and wrote him the following letter:

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

The affairs of the world are two. There is no difference over one affair that is the consensus of the community on the necessity to which they are forced, and the traditions on which there is a unanimous agreement, with which vague errors are compared, from which concluded all events.

The other affair is that in which doubt and denial are possible. The way to it is to consult the men of proof of it. So if a proof is established to those who embrace it through a Book on whose interpretation there is an unanimous agreement or a tradition from the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, over which there is no difference or analogy whose justice intellects know, it is difficult for him who asks for an explanation of the proof to refute, it is incumbent on him to accept it, to acknowledge and to embrace it.

If a proof is not established for those who embrace it through a Book on whose interpretation there is an unanimous agreement or a tradition from the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, over which there is no difference or analogy whose justice intellects know, then the special group and the general one of the community have the right to doubt and deny it.

Similarly these two affairs are of the affairs of monotheism, those (affairs) less than it to wound money,

and those (affairs) less than it. So these are the shown (affairs) with which the affair of the religion is compared. So choose that of which there is a proof, and leave those vague things. There is no strength save through Allah. Allah is sufficient for us and most excellent is the Protector.

This letter was given to Harun, and he said: "It is a brief, comprehensive letter."²²

Other debates took place between them. We have mentioned them in the previous chapters. The Imam asked Harun to allow him to go to Yethrib (Medina) to see his family and children. In his book al-Bihar, al-Mejlisi has mentioned that Harun allowed the Imam to do that.²³ He has again mentioned that he said that he would think of that, but he did not give him an answer until he detained him in the house of al-Sindi b. Shahik.²⁴

The most likely think is that al-Rashid imposed a house-arrest on the Imam in Baghdad and did not permit him to go to his homeland. So the Imam, peace be on him, stayed in Baghdad for a period of time, but Harun did not treat him badly. Al-Sayyid Meer 'Ali al-Hindi has believed in this opinion when he said: "Surely al-Rashid permitted this meek Imam to return to al-Hijaz twice. However, in both times, his doubts overcame the goodness of his heart, and he made him stay in prison."²⁵

Any way, during that period the Imam, peace be on him, did his best to guide and direct the people to the way of the truth. Bishr al-Haafi was guided by him and repented at his hand. Then he was one of those righteous and Allah-fearing. We have in detail mentioned his speech in the previous chapters of the book. He also interceded with Harun for one of the Imam's Shi'ites, and he responded to him.

Any way, history has not mentioned the period of time when Harun released the Imam. We think that the period was so short that most historians have not mentioned it. However, they have mentioned that the Imam was moved from the prison of al-Fadhli b. al-Rabi' to the prison of al-Fadhli b. Yehya. They have neglected his release.

5. Harun decides to kill the Imam

When the Imam's renowned spread, his merits and achievements were famous in Baghdad, al-Rashid became displeased with him. He was afraid of him, so he decided to kill him. That is because he saw a proof from his Lord, and he pardoned the Imam. Al-Fadhli narrated, saying: "I was the chamberlain of al-Rashid. One day he came towards me angrily. There was a sword in his hand, and he was turning the sword.

He said to me: 'By my kinship to Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, if you do not bring me my cousin, I will cut off your head.'"

Al-Fadhli was afraid and shook all over, so he asked al-Rashid:

-Whom shall I bring to you?

-Al-Hijazi.

-Which Hijazi?

-Musa b. Ja'far b. Muhammad b. 'Ali b. al-Husayn b. 'Ali b. Abi Talib. Al-Fadh'l was afraid of Allah lest evil should be at his hand. However, he thought of Harun's vengeance and violence, so he responded to him. Al-Rashid asked al-Fadh'l to bring him two whips and two headsmen, and he brought them.

Al-Fadh'l said: [I went to the house of Abu Ibrahim (Musa). I arrived at ruins where was a hut built of palm branches stripped of their leaves. Suddenly I found a black servant. I said to the servant: "Ask you master to give me permission (to enter his house), may Allah have mercy on you." He said to me: "Come in. He has neither a chamberlain nor a door." I came in. Suddenly, I found a black man. There were scissors in his hand. He was cutting the flesh of his forehead and his nose due to his too much prostration. I greeted him and said:]

-Respond to al-Rashid.

-What does al-Rashid want from me? Has his comfort not distracted him from me? The Imam quickly prepared himself and said: "Were it not for that I heard a tradition from my grandfather Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, who said, 'Obeying the supreme ruler for precautionary dissimulation is a must,' I would not go." He, peace be on him, went with al-Fadh'l, and he said to him:

-Be ready for the punishment, O Abu Ibrahim!

-Is He Who owns the world and the hereafter not with me? Al-Rashid will do no evil to me today, Allah willing. Al-Fadh'l said: "I saw the Imam waving his hand over his holy head three times." When al-Fadh'l reached al-Rashid, he received him while he was astonished, frightened, and terrified. So al-Fadh'l said to him:

-Here I am!

-Have you brought me my cousin?

-Yes.

-Did you bother him?

-No.

-Do not let him know that I am angry with him. For I have excited against myself something I did not want. Let him come in. The Imam, peace be on him, came in. When al-Rashid saw him, he rose for him, embraced him, and said to him:

-Welcome to my cousin, my brother, and inheritor! What has prevented you from visiting us? The Imam,

peace be on him, answered him paying no attention to him, saying to him: “Your wide kingdom, and your love for the world.” Al-Rashid ordered al-ghaliya²⁶. It was brought to him, and he perfumed the Imam with his hand.

Then he ordered some money to be given to the Imam, who said: “Were it not for that I wanted to marry the singles from among the family of Abu Talib lest his progeny should cease, I would never accept it.” Then the Imam, peace be on him, went away saying: “Praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the worlds!”

Harun turned to al-Fadhli and said to him: “O al-Fadhli, when you went to bring him to me, I saw some people surrounding my house. There were swords in their hands, and they inserted them in the foundation of the house. They said: ‘If he harmed the grandson of Allah’s Apostle, we would make the earth to swallow him up and his abode! If he treated him well, we would leave him and go away!’”

Al-Fadhli hurried to the Imam and asked him:

–What did you say and were saved from al-Rashid’s punishment?

–The supplication of my grandfather ‘Ai b. Abi Talib, peace be on him. When he recited it, he defeated all those horsemen and troops who advanced against him. This supplication is called Kifayat al-Bela’. It is as follows:

“O Allah, through You I rush upon (my enemy), through You I try, through You I neighbor, through You I attack, through You I win a victory, through You I die, and through You I live. I have submitted my soul to You and entrusted my affair to You. There is neither force neither strength save through Allah, the Exalted, the Great.

O Allah, You created me, provided me, and veiled me from people. You have freed me from need through the favor of that which You entrusted to me. So when I fall, You return me. When I stumble, You release me from my stumble. When I become ill, you heal me. When I supplicate you, You grant my supplication. O my Master, be pleased with me, for You have pleased me!”²⁷

However, Harun did not believe in the signs and miracles that appeared for the sake of the Imam, peace be on him. That is because the love for power and authority made him blind, and he insisted on punishing the Imam, peace be on him, severely, and then to kill him.

6. The Imam is detained in al-Fadhli’s House

Harun ordered the Imam to be arrested again. Then he ordered him to be detain in the house of al-Fadhli b. Yehya. We will deal with some of his affairs during his detention in al-Fadhli’s house:

A. Al-Fadhli entertains the Imam

When al-Fadhli saw the Imam’s worship, his devotion himself to Allah, and his being busy remembering

Allah, he admired the Imam, entertained him, and did not harass him. He sent him an excellent meal every day. The Imam, peace be on him, found in the prison of al-Fadhli a kind of comfort he had not found in the rest of the prisons.

B. Harun commands al-Fadhli to assassinate the Imam

Al-Rashid commanded al-Fadhli to assassinate the Imam, peace be on him. However, al-Fadhli refrained from carrying that out, did not respond to him, and was afraid of Allah.

Al-Fadhli was among those who believed in the Imamate. This is why al-Beramika were accused of Shi'ism. Al-Fadhli strongly refrained from carrying out al-Rashid's desire for killing the Imam.

C. Harun severely punishes al-Fadhli

A rogue went to Harun and informed him that al-Fadhli entertained the Imam, peace be on him. When he Harun heard of that, he boiled with anger and rage. He was then at al-Riqqa. He immediately sent Mesrur al-Khadim to Baghdad. He told him that if the news was true, he had to go al-'Abbas b. Muhammad. He sent him a letter in which he commanded him to flog al-Fadhli.

He also commanded him to go to al-Sindi b. Shahik, the commander of his police that he might carry out his orders. Mesrur went to Baghdad. He secretly entered al-Fadhli's house. Then he came in to Imam Musa. He found him lead a life of comfort just as al-Rashid had been informed. Immediately, he went to al-'Abbas and asked him to carry out al-Rashid's orders.

He also went to al-Sindi and asked him to obey al-'Abbas. Soon al-'Abbas sent the police to al-Fadhli, and they took him out of his house. Al-Fadhli was running, and the people were around him. He came in to al-'Abbas, and he ordered his clothes to be taken off. Then he flogged him a hundred times.

Al-Fadhli went out in a bad mood. His strength and his nerves collapsed. He greeted the people to the right and to the left, while he did not feel that.

As for Mesrur, he wrote al-Rashid a letter about what he had done. So al-Rashid commanded him to take the Imam, peace be on him, and to detain him in the house of al-Sindi b. Shahik. Then he had a large assembly. He said at the top of his voice: "O People, surely al-Fadhli b. Yehya has disobeyed me and opposed (giving) the obedience due to me. You have seen me curse him so you curse him."

The people cursed him from every side until the room and the building shook with the sound of cursing him. The news reached Yehya b. Khalid. He rode to al-Rashid and entered by another door from that which the people used so that he came to him from behind without him being aware. Then he said: "Commander of the faithful, al-Fadhli is only a young man and I will take care of him in the way you would wish."

Al-Rashid was delighted at that, his face brightened, and he removed the malice he had harbored

against al-Fadhli. Yehya wanted to regain the entity of his son and to return to him his dignity. So he said to al-Rashid: "You have defamed al-Fadhli through your cursing him; therefore, honor him through removing that from him." Harun went forward the people, saying to them at the top of his voice:

"Surely al-Fadhli disobeyed me in something and I have cursed him. Now he has repented and returned to obeying me. Therefore now take him as a friend." The people shouted from every side. They declared their inclusive support to that contradictory policy. Those people who did not believe in values and idles confirmed that policy in one voice, saying: "Commander of the faithful, we are the friends of those you befriend and the enemies of those whom you are against. We have made him our friend."²⁸

This attitude shows that the Muslim masses in that time were unconscious and deviated from the genuine doctrines. If they had had any religious feeling, the Imam would not have been imprisoned and punished severely. The reason for the whole of that is the crooked policy that plaid with the social circles, spread corruption and neglect among the areas of that society, and showed dispraised attitudes.

This attitude also displays that al-Rashid harbored malice and hatred against the Imam, peace be on him. That is because he severely punished al-Fadhli b. Yehya, while he was the dearest of the people to him and the nearest of them to him. He openly cursed him, for he entertained the Imam and did not harass him during his eating and drinking. As for the period of time the Imam, peace be on him, spent in the detention of al-Fadhli, it was very short.

The narrators have mentioned that it was for some days. Before we end our speech about this chapter, we have to mention that it is famous that the Imam was imprisoned in Wasit for one full year. However, our sources have not mentioned that. This may have been mentioned, but we have not found it.

¹. Ibid., p. 17, p. 296.

². Al-Menaqib, vol. 2, p. 385.

³. Al-Bihar, vol. 11, p. 296.

⁴. Ibid., p. 298.

⁵. Tanqeeh al-Maqal.

⁶. Al-Bihar. Muntekhab al-Tawarikh, p. 518.

⁷. Al-Menaqib, vol. 2, p. 379.

⁸. Al-Nejashi, Rijal, p. 352.

⁹. Al-Bihar. Al-Fusool al-Muhimma.

¹⁰. Al-Bihar.

¹¹. Al-Fadhli b. al-Rabi' b. Yunus was given the kunya of Abu al-'Abbas. He was the chamberlain of Harun al-Rashid and Muhammad al-Ameen. His father was the chamberlain of al-Mansur and al-Mehdi. He died in the year 207 A. H. This has been mentioned in the book Tarikh Baghdad, vol. 12, pp. 343-344.

¹². Al-Teberi, Tarikh.

¹³. Tayfur, Tarikh Baghdad, p. 185.

¹⁴. 'Uyun Akhbar al-Ridha'. Al-Bihar.

¹⁵. Al-Bihar, vol. 11, p. 298.

¹⁶. Al-Menaqib, vol. 2, p. 370. 'Uyun Akhbar al-Ridha'.

¹⁷. Al-Mas'udi, Murujj al-Dhahab, vol. 3, p. 265. In the book al-Menaqib, vol. 2, p. 370, it has been mentioned: "The Imam, peace be on him, refused to take the gifts."

- [18.](#) Wafayat al-A'yan, vol. 4, p. 394. Shedherat al-Dheheb, vol. 1, p. 304.
- [19.](#) Al-Bihar.
- [20.](#) Al-Wesa'il, Chapter on Enjoining Good and Forbidding Evil.
- [21.](#) Al-Bihar, vol. 11, p. 280.
- [22.](#) Al-Bihar, vol. 11, p. 270.
- [23.](#) Ibid., p. 269.
- [24.](#) Ibid.
- [25.](#) Mukhteser Tarikh al-'Arab, p. 209.
- [26.](#) Al-ghaliya is a perfume of musk and ambergris.
- [27.](#) 'Uyun Akhbar al-Ridha'. Al-Bihar.
- [28.](#) Maqatil al-Talibiyin, pp. 503–504.

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