

[Home](#) > [The Fourteen Luminaries of Islam](#) > [The Ninth Infallible, Hadhrat Imam Musa b. Ja'far, The Seventh Imam](#) > Imam al-Kazim (as) in the Bastion of Teaching Truths and Struggle

The Ninth Infallible, Hadhrat Imam Musa b. Ja'far, The Seventh Imam

The name of our seventh Imam is Musa and his nickname is Kazim; Abu al-Hasan and Abu Ibrahim are his patronymics. The Shi'as and advocates have named him *Bab al-Hawa'ij* (the gate to the fulfillment of needs). Imam Musa al-Kazim (as) was born on Sunday, Safar 7, 128/November 8, 745 in Abwa'. His period of Imamate was simultaneous with the later part of the caliphate of the Abbasid Mansur and in the period of Hadi's caliphate and thirteen years of Harun's caliphate, which was the most adverse time of his life.

At the age of around 21, Imam Musa al-Kazim (as) undertook the exalted position of Imamate by the will of his father and the command of the Almighty Allah. His Imamate lasted a short while more than thirty five years, which was longer than other Imams except for the twelfth Imam, the Lord of the Time (as).

[The Appearance, Traits, and Morals of Imam Musa al-Kazim \(as\)](#)

Imam al-Kazim (as) was of a medium stature. His countenance was radiant and his hair black and thick.

His noble body had become emaciated due to copious worship. However, he still enjoyed a powerful spirit and a resplendent heart. According to most of the historians Imam al-Kazim (as) was well-known for his asceticism and devotion. In worship and assiduity, he was known as 'Abd al-Salih (pious servant); in generosity and munificence, he was like his honorable ancestors. He would bring along bags of 300, 400, and 2000 *dinars* to give out to the needy and the disabled. Imam Musa b. Ja'far (as) is quoted as saying: "My father (Imam al-Sadiq – A.S.) would constantly enjoin me to be generous and gracious."

Despite his graciousness and generosity to others, he would always wear coarse clothes, being described as "coarse-clothed and simple-dressed", which is another indication of his lofty soul, purity of the heart, and detachment from the deceitful gaudiness of the world.

Imam Musa al-Kazim (as) was very affectionate and kind toward his wife and children and the inferior. He was always concerned with the poor and the desperate, helping them secretly or openly. Some of the poor people in Medina had recognized him, but others found out about his generosity and grandeur and realized who he was only after he was exiled to Baghdad.

Imam al-Kazim (as) was very fond of reciting the Holy Qur'an. He would recite it with such a doleful and fine voice that people would gather around his residence to listen to his recitation tearfully and earnestly. There were some malevolent people who would curse him and his noble ancestors and say rude words to him. Encountering them with patience and tolerance, however, he would guide them and draw their attention to the moral rectitude and virtue.

Some anecdotes in this respect have been historically recorded. The nickname Kazim, meaning the one who restrains [and suppresses] his anger, is rooted in these events. That was his treatment of those who, out of ignorance or being instigated by the enemies, committed indecent and vile actions toward him. His wise and tolerant behavior gradually made the rightfulness of the Infallible Ahl al-Bayt (as) clear and evident to them.

However, whenever it so happened that the word of Truth was to be expressed against a tyrant caliph or sultan, Imam Musa al-Kazim (as) would say: "Speak out the Truth even if it leads to your perishing." Truth is so highly valued that people could be sacrificed to preserve it. He was a paradigm of humbleness, as he was in his other competent traits. He would associate with poor, soothe and comfort the helpless, consider the slave and the free as equal, and would say: "We are children of Adam and created by the One God."

Abu Hanifa is quoted as saying: "I saw him in his childhood and asked him some questions to which he gave such answers as if he had been nurtured from the fountainhead of *Wilayat*. Imam Musa b. Ja'far (as) was indeed a learned and competent jurist and a skilful and authoritative orator." Similarly Muhammad b. Nu'man said: "I viewed Musa b. Ja'far as a vast and fathomless ocean that was effervescing and dispersing seeds of knowledge around."

Imam al-Kazim (as) in the Bastion of Teaching Truths and Struggle

The promulgation of the Ja'fari jurisprudence and ethics as well as exegesis and theology which had commenced since the time of Imam al-Sadiq (as) and throughout the era of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (as), was carried on in the time of Imam Musa al-Kazim (as), who followed the footsteps of his noble ancestors to make people more and more familiar with the straight line of Imamate and the truth of Ja'fari school of thought; and to hand over this glowing torch through ages to the coming generations.

The Abbasid caliphs were always, by way of oppression and over-indulgence in pleasure seeking, intending to wipe out the Hashemites so that they would put the progeny of 'Ali (as), away from the

political arena, and curtail their power over the Islamic states. To achieve this malicious purpose, they encouraged and sponsored some of the Ja'fari school disciples to establish another school against the Ja'fari School. In this way, different schools of Hanafites, Hanbalites, Shafi'ites, and Malikites were founded, each with its own juristic method. The governments of the time and the ones that followed them supported these schools in order to achieve power and considered their discrepancies to the benefits of their own ends.

Toward the end of Mansur Dawaniqi's caliphate, coinciding with the early years of the Imamate of Imam Musa al-Kazim (as), "many of the rebellious Sayyids who were typically from among the scholars and the brave and pious followers of the Holy Prophet (S)'s household and were closely related with the Imams (as), were killed as martyrs.

These noble figures would rise up to fend off oppression and to disseminate the charter of justice and to enjoin right and forbid wrong, and would finally give their lives for the essentials of the Islamic teachings; thus awakening the sleeping souls. They would sacrifice their own souls and let their own bloodshed in the Islamic cities and towns to keep the call to prayer (*adhan*) reverberating from the minarets of the mosques."¹

In Medina, the functionaries of Mahdi 'Abbasi, the son of Mansur Dawaniqi took up the same vile behavior as that of the evil dynasty of the Umayyad, and mistreated the progeny of Imam 'Ali (as) as harshly as they could. The tragic event of Fakh (a place about 7 kms from Mecca on the way to Medina) took place in the era of Hadi 'Abbasi.

The event started when Husayn b. 'Ali b. 'Abid, who was an honorable descendant of Imam al-Hasan (as) and a noble scholarly chief of a clan in Medina, revolted with the help of a number of the Sayyids and Shi'as against the cruelties of 'Abd al-'Aziz 'Umari, who was dominating Medina, and with utmost bravery killed many of the opponents in the land of Fakh. Eventually, the brutal enemies besieged this brave Sayyid and murdered him and a number of his companions and captured some others. Mas'udi wrote: "The bodies remained in the desert were eaten up by beasts of prey."

The wickedness of the Abbasid was not restricted to this event. These cruel caliphs literally plastered hundreds of Sayyids under the walls or inside the pillars, and incarcerated hundreds of others in the dark of the dungeons or murdered them. Surprisingly enough, all these crimes and murders were perpetrated under the guise of Islam, in order to quell the riots.

Imam Musa b. Ja'far (as) was never at peace and quiet in such critical situations, witnessing and hearing all those painful scenes and widespread outrages. The holy Imam (as) evidently witnessed that the tyrannical caliphs intended to ruin and wipe out the human and Islamic principles. For years he was chased and persecuted and spent, reportedly, between four to fourteen years of his life under arrest, in exile, in prison, or in solitary confinements in Baghdad dungeons in shackles.

Without being by any means apprehensive of the despotic ruling system of Harun, Imam Musa b. Ja'far

(as) would attend to the affairs of his household and those of the Sayyids who survived the genocide; and spared no time in gathering, protecting, and organizing their survivors.

When the Imam (as) was in Medina, Harun had assigned someone to spy on the movements in and out of Imam (as)'s house and to keep him posted on whatever happened there. Harun was extremely afraid of the Imam (as)'s popularity and spiritual influence. He is reported as saying about Imam Musa b. Ja'far (as): "I fear that he will set up a revolt and cause bloodshed."²

It was quite evident that even these "holy uprisings" led by the 'Alawi Sayyids and devoted Shi'ites, and sometimes attended directly themselves on the front line of the uprising and gallant ventures, were called *fitna* (sedition) by the rulers who were plunged in worldly pleasures and self-indulgence.

The above statement by Harun, on the other hand, shows that the Imam (as) had never been a single moment negligent of abolishing tyranny and pulling down the despotic regime. When Mahdi 'Abbasi asks the Imam (as): "Would you grant me security from your rebellion?"³, it proves the fear that the tyrannical Abbasid regime had of the Imam (as) and his companions and Shi'ites.

Actually, Imam Musa al-Kazim (as)'s spiritual influence on the ruling system was to such an extent that people like 'Ali b. Yaqtin, the chief minister of the Abbasid government, were among the advocates of Imam Musa b. Ja'far (as) and would follow his order.

The informers of the government took words to Harun about 'Ali b. Yaqtin and spoke ill behind him. The Imam (as), however, enjoined him to stay on in the Harun ruling system by way of skillful tactics and misleading strategies such as *taqiyya* (precautionary dissimulation) which, in some case, is necessary to fend off the enemies' treachery and is a kind of secret combat, and to persevere in propagating the Faith and improving the spiritual endeavors of truth-seekers with the help of the Shi'ites and the advocates of Imam 'Ali's progeny without letting the blood-thirsty enemy know about it.

Eventually, however, evil-speaking by Harun's courtiers about Imam al-Kazim (as) worked and in a Hajj pilgrimage in 179/795, Harun learned more and more about Imam (as)'s great spirituality and the respect the people showed for him. Thus, Harun was very perplexed in this respect. As he arrived in Medina, having visited and making a *ziyara* of the Holy Shrine of the Prophet (S), he made his decision to arrest the Imam (as), namely the grandson of the Prophet (S).

As the owner of fabulous palaces on the banks of the Dijla and the ruler of the empire of the Islamic lands, Harun was so afraid of the Imam (as) that when the Imam (as) was supposed to be taken from Medina to Basra, he ordered several other camel-litters be sent along with the Imam's litter and on the way several of them be diverted and sent other ways so that people would get confused about the real destination and exile place of the Holy Imam (as), be disappointed with him, gradually get accustomed to the absence of their true leader, and be prevented from revolting and rebellion.

All this indicates the regime's apprehension of the Imam (as) and his faithful companions who were

always under alert and ready to unsheathe their swords to help their Imam (as) return to Medina. That was why the companions of his Holiness were deprived of this opportunity due to the fraudulent dispatching of camel-litters to different directions by Harun's men who thereby carried out his exile very cautiously and cunningly.

That was, indeed, the way Harun exiled the seventh Imam (as) with such deceitful and wary plots.

Harun first had Imam Musa al-Kazim (as) shackled and taken to Basra and wrote to 'Isa b. Ja'far b. Mansur, governor of Basra, to incarcerate the Imam (as) for one year and then at the end of this period kill him. 'Isa refused to do so. Harun transferred the Holy Imam (as) to Baghdad surrendered him to Fadhl b. Rabi'. For a while, Imam Musa al-Kazim (as) was in Fadhl's prison, where he spent his time worshipping and praying to Allah Almighty. Harun also ordered Fadhl to murder the Imam (as), but he too declined.

Anyhow, the Imam (as) was for years transferred from one prison to another. In dark prisons and dreadful dungeons, the honorable Imam (as) would be engaged in supplication and pray to his real Beloved (Allah) and was thankful to Allah Almighty for having granted him this chance of Divine worship in solitary.

Finally, the honorable Imam (as) was poisoned to death by a tyrant called Sindi b. Shahak by the order of Harun at the age of 55 in 183/799. Surprisingly, being well aware of the high personality of Imam Musa b. Ja'far (as) and his popularity among people, Harun tried after Imam (as)'s martyrdom to convince people that he had died a natural death and not poisoned; however, the truth never remained veiled.

His sacred body was laid to rest in the Quraysh cemetery near Baghdad. Since that time, his resting place gained grandeur and magnificence and appealed to people of all classes; the city of Kazimayn was built up there and began to develop and flourish afterwards.[4](#)

Wives and Children of Imam Musa b. Ja'far (as):

The number of Imam Musa b. Ja'far (as)'s wives is not clear. Most of them were from among the captive retainers who were bought by the Imam (as) and either freed or married to him. His first wife was Tuktam, also known as Hamida and Najma, who was a pious, God-fearing, chaste, and honorable woman and was the mother of the eighth Imam, 'Ali b. Musa al-Ridha (as).

The children of Imam Musa b. Ja'far (as) are reported to have been 37, including 19 sons and 18 daughters, the eldest of whom was Imam 'Ali b. Musa al-Ridha (as), the spiritual heir and successor to his honorable father.

Among his other sons are:

Ahmad b. Musa (Shah Chiragh) who is buried in Shiraz;

Muhammad b. Musa who is also buried in Shiraz;

Hamzat b. Musa whose mausoleum is in Rey, near Tehran.

Among his daughters is *Hadhrat* Fatimah Ma'suma, who is buried in Qum where her magnificent mausoleum is a cynosure to the devotees of *Wilayat*. The Imam (as)'s other children (who are known as *Sadat-i Musawi*) were all the torch-bearers of knowledge and piety of their time, whose resting places have been dispersed all over Iran and other Islamic lands. May their pure souls rest in peace!

Traits and Dispositions of Imam Musa b. Ja'far (as):

Imam Musa b. Ja'far (as) was incarcerated for speaking the truth and because of his piety and people's love for him. He was imprisoned for his virtuousness and his superiority over Harun al-Rashid in all traits and dispositions and spiritual virtues. Shaykh al-Mufid has said about him: "He was the most devoted, knowledgeable, generous, and honorable man of his time and would make earnest supplications and submissive prayers to the Exalted Allah."

He used to repeat the following very much: "O Allah! Grant me comfort when death comes to me and bestow forgiveness on me when You summon me on the judgment Day." Imam Musa b. Ja'far (as) would most often attend to the poor people's problems. At night, he would put money and some dates and flour in a container and deliver it to the poor without being known by them.

He was the best qualified memorizer of the Qur'an and its most melodious reciter; when he recited the Qur'an, his voice would stir a pleasant melancholy in the hearts, and cause the listeners to weep. He was named Zayn al-Mujtahidin (the ornament of the legal experts) by the Medinans. The day they were informed of their Imam's exile to Iraq, they broke into tears and wailing. It was just then that the poor and needy of Medina found out who had been calling on their houses to offer them comfort and relief day and night.

Some Sayings of Imam Musa b. Ja'far (as):

1. Try to divide your day and night into four parts: one part for worship to Allah, another for earning a living, the third part for associating with brothers in faith, whom you trust and those who can remind you of your slips and are benevolent to you, and the last part for engaging in harmless entertainment and legitimate pleasures, in light of which you can carry out your duties in the other three parts quite efficiently.
2. Never be apprehensive of your poverty, and never think of a long life, for anyone who deems himself poor or concerns himself with poverty in future is in fact exercising parsimony, and whoever thinks of a long life, he will become covetous. Enjoy lawful pleasures and whatever that will not disgrace you and is not considered extravagance, and take advantage of all this in performing your religious duties, for, whoever gives up his world for his faith or leaves his faith in favor of his world is not a true follower of

ours.

3. Beware of Allah's wrath and speak the truth intrepidly, even if it leads to your destruction. However, you should know that the truth is not destructive, rather, it is liberating. Always beware of falsehood even if your liberation is in it; though there is never any salvation in falsehood, it will eventually be destructive.

4. Honor a scholar for his knowledge and avoid debating with him, and look down on an ignorant for his ignorance; however do not reject him, instead, draw him near and teach him knowledge.

[1.](#) Imam dar 'Ayniyat-i Jami'a, p. 57.

[2.](#) Imam dar 'Ayniyat-i Jami'a, p. 59, (quoted from Shaykh 'Abbas Qumi's Muntahi al-Amal.)

[3.](#) Wafiyat al-A'yan wa Inba' Abna' al-Zaman, vol.2, p.256.

[4.](#) Majmu'a-yi Zindigi-yi Chahardah Ma'sum 'Alayhim al-Salam, p. 145.

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/fourteen-luminaries-islam-ahmad-ahmadi-birjandi/ninth-infallible-hadhrat-imam-musa-b-jafar-seventh#comment-0>