

## A Historical Report on Natural Disasters during the Abbasid Era after the Destruction of the Holy Shrine of Imam Hussain (A.S.)

(An Explanation of the Narrations of Imam Reza (A.S.) regarding the Impact of Violating  
the Sanctity of the Soil of Karbala on the Reduction of Disasters)

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### Article info

### Abstract

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The teachings of Imam Reza (A.S.) are replete with precise and subtle points, attention to which can reveal the divine laws governing the universe for profound thinkers and researchers. One such law, inferable from the practical conduct of His Holiness, is the relationship between respecting the sacred soil of the Master of Martyrs (A.S.) and the reduction of natural disasters. This research, using a descriptive-analytical method and relying on primary historical data, seeks to answer whether the volume and intensity of natural disasters within the Abbasid Caliphate changed noticeably after the heinous destruction of the Holy Shrine of Imam Hussain (A.S.) by the Abbasid caliph Al-Mutawakkil in 236 AH. The findings of the research, based on a systematic examination and categorization of natural disasters during the early Abbasid period (from the beginning until the end of Al-Mutawakkil's rule), indicate that the greatest quantitative and qualitative volume of these disasters—characterized by diversity, vast geographical spread, very high human casualties, and unprecedented financial losses—occurred during the years of Al-Mutawakkil's rule, especially after the destruction of the Hussaini Shrine. This shows a remarkable concordance with the content of the narrations from Imam Reza (A.S.) concerning the role of desecrating the soil of Karbala in increasing calamities and disasters.

**Keywords:** Imam Reza (A.S.), The Soil of Imam Hussain (A.S.), Natural Disasters, Abbasid Caliphate.



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## 1. Introduction

This research examines one of the divine norms governing creation, which can be inferred from the practical conduct and narrations of Imam Reza (A.S.) concerning the relationship between respecting the sanctity of the sacred soil of the Master of Martyrs, Imam Hussain (A.S.), and the reduction of natural disasters. His teachings show special attention to the soil of Karbala as a symbol of Wilayah (divine guardianship) and a factor for repelling calamities. The historical turning point for testing this theory is the action of the Abbasid caliph Al-Mutawakkil in destroying the sacred shrine of Imam Hussain (A.S.) in 236 AH. This heinous event, which signaled the ruling regime's violation of the sanctity of a symbol of Wilayah, provides a suitable context for an empirical and historical examination of this divine norm. This research seeks to answer the fundamental question of whether, following this violation of sanctity, the volume and intensity of natural disasters within the Abbasid Caliphate underwent a noticeable change.

## 2. Research Objectives

The main objectives of this research were as follows:

- Historical Explanation: To provide a systematic and categorized report of natural disasters during the first Abbasid period (from 132 AH, the start of Al-Saffah's caliphate, until 247 AH, the end of Al-Mutawakkil's rule).
- Testing a Historical Hypothesis: To quantitatively and qualitatively examine and compare natural disasters during Al-Mutawakkil's reign, especially after 236 AH (the year of the shrine's destruction), with previous periods of the Abbasid Caliphate.
- Theological-Historical Explanation: To analyze the congruence of historical findings with the content of narrations attributed to Imam Reza (A.S.) regarding the role of respecting the soil of the Master of Martyrs (A.S.) in providing immunity from calamities.
- Filling a Research Gap: To conduct the first focused study on the statistical and historical relationship between the destruction of Imam Hussain's shrine and the increase in natural disasters, a topic not previously examined independently.

## 3. Methodology

This research was conducted using a descriptive-analytical method, relying on primary historical data. The theoretical framework of the study rests on three pillars:

1. The theory of divine norms in history based on Quranic verses.

2. The theory of the influence of rulers' actions on the natural environment, derived from narrations of the Ahl al-Bayt (A.S.).

3. The theory of the relationship between Wilayah and existential security, crystallized in the Hadith of the Golden Chain (Silsilat al-Dhahab).

Data Collection: Data related to natural disasters was extracted from reliable historical sources such as Tarikh al-Tabari, Al-Kamil by Ibn al-Athir, Muruj al-Dhahab by Al-Mas'udi, and Tarikh al-Ya'qubi. Hadith data was primarily gathered from the book Kamil al-Ziyarat by Ibn Qulawayh.

Data Classification: Information was organized into a systematic table based on criteria including year of occurrence, type of disaster, geographical region, and the caliph's name. Disasters were categorized into main groups: epidemics, climatic disasters (floods, droughts, storms), earthquakes, and other disasters (fires, famines, etc.).

Data Analysis: Three analytical methods were employed:

a) Quantitative Analysis: Examining the frequency and density of natural disasters in different periods.

b) Qualitative Analysis: Investigating historical connections between the event of the shrine's destruction and the increase in disasters.

c) Comparative Analysis: Measuring disaster statistics during Al-Mutawakkil's period compared to previous periods.

d) Validation: The validity of the findings was ensured using the principle of recurrent reporting (tawatur), cross-referencing data with multiple sources, and triangulation.

#### 4 .Findings

The systematic examination of historical data led to the following key findings:

-Unprecedented Quantitative and Qualitative Increase in Disasters during Al-Mutawakkil's Reign: Data indicates that the highest quantitative and qualitative volume of natural disasters in the first Abbasid period, characterized by high diversity, widespread geographical scope, very heavy human casualties, and unprecedented financial losses, occurred during the years of Al-Mutawakkil's rule (232-247 AH).

-Simultaneity of Peak Disasters with the Violation of Sanctity: This peak is particularly evident after 236 AH (the year of the shrine's destruction). Disasters of this period included destructive widespread earthquakes (such as the earthquake of 242

AH with at least 45,000 fatalities and the earthquake of 245 AH for which Al-Mutawakkil spent 3 million dirhams on reconstruction), catastrophic floods (like the Mosul flood of 232 AH with approximately 100,000 deaths), epidemics, severe droughts, scorching storms, deadly frosts, and rare phenomena such as widespread pollution of the Tigris River and the permanent sinking of 13 areas in the Maghreb underground.

-Description of Al-Mutawakkil's Era as an Age of Calamities: Historical sources describe this period, due to the multitude and severity of disasters, as "filled with horrors" and "a time of calamities and tribulations." Reports such as a bird crying out in the sky calling people to divine piety indicate the peak of public terror.

-Congruence with the Narrations of Imam Reza (A.S.): These historical findings show a remarkable congruence with the content of the narrations of Imam Reza (A.S.), who considered the soil of Karbala a "safety from calamity" and, based on the Hadith of the Golden Chain, introduced security from punishment (including worldly disasters) as conditional upon the acceptance of Wilayah (of which the soil of Karbala is a symbol). Al-Mutawakkil's violation of sanctity is interpreted as breaking the connection with this "divine secure fortress," consequently activating the norm of increased calamities.

## 5. Conclusion

This research, by presenting systematic historical evidence, demonstrates that the period of Al-Mutawakkil's rule, especially after the event of the destruction of Imam Hussain's (A.S.) shrine, witnessed a significant and unprecedented increase in the quantity, intensity, and diversity of natural disasters. This finding shows significant alignment with the theoretical framework based on divine norms and the narrations of Imam Reza (A.S.), indicating that violating the sanctity of symbols of Wilayah can act as a factor for activating natural disasters within the framework of divine laws governing history.

This research is a first step in historically explaining the narrations of the Infallibles (A.S.) and demonstrating their objective manifestation in the arena of history. This model can be applied to examine the connection between other religious events and natural phenomena in different periods of Islamic history.

**Keywords:** Imam Reza (A.S.), The Soil of Imam Hussain (A.S.), Natural Disasters, Abbasid Caliphate.