

‘Ashara Mubaraka AH 1440
Majlis 1
English Reflections

As has become tradition over the past few years, al-Dai al-Ajal Syedna Aali Qadr Mufaddal Saifuddin ^{TUS} announced in today’s *wa‘az mubarak* the central theme of this year’s ‘Ashara Mubaraka, which is to be inspired by and related to the land of Yemen. In particular, each day’s *wa‘az mubarak* will be based on a town visited by al-Dai al-Ajal Syedna Mohammed Burhanuddin ^{RA} during his historic visit to Yemen in AH 1381 after which his father al-Dai al-Ajal Syedna Taher Saifuddin ^{RA} conferred upon him the title of Mansoor al-Yemen.

The first city Syedna al-Muqaddas Mansoor al-Yemen ^{RA} visited during his historic visit to Yemen was the city of Zi Jibla, the resting place of Maulatuna Hurra al-Malika ^{RA}. With Syedna al-Muqaddas’ lodging in Ib, a close-by city, he travelled to Zi Jibla every morning returning to Ib in the night. Every day Syedna Burhanuddin ^{RA} sought blessings with Maulatuna Hurra al-Malika’s ^{RA} *ziyarat* and by leading *namaz* in her masjid. While in Jibla, Syedna al-Muqaddas ^{RA} met with the people of the city, distributed sweetmeats amongst the children of a school and attended a gathering held in his honour.

Jibla was once the capital of the Sulayhi kingdom during Maulatuna Hurra al-Malika’s ^{RA} reign. This was brought about by her own request to her husband, al-Malik al-Mukarram, Syedna Ali b. Mohammed al-Sulayhi’s son. She suggested that the capital of the kingdom be shifted from Sana’a to Zi Jibla for its strategic, central location in the Sulayhi territories and its temperate climate. Al-Malik al-Mukarram summoned the people of Sana’a who presented themselves to the Sulayhi court carrying their swords and spears. Once in Zi Jiblah, al-Malik al-Mukarram summoned the people of Zi Jibla who arrived with presents and offerings in their hands. Syeda Hura al-Malika remarked that a life of comfort was only to be had amongst the people of Jibla.

Situated between two major rivers, Zi Jibla is known as Madina zu Nahrayn, ‘the city of two rivers’. At various points throughout the *wa‘az mubarak*, Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin ^{TUS} spoke of rivers, their importance in establishing major civilizations throughout history, the heavenly river of Kawthar and various allegorical references to rivers in Dawat theology and literature. Syedna al-Dai al-Ajal ^{TUS} mentioned a few major rivers of the world noted for their length, depth and other unique attributes. Syedna al-Dai al-Ajal ^{TUS} explained the various nuances in the meanings of the word Kawthar and pointed out — most poignantly — the rivers of blood and tears that drenched the sands of Karbala.

When The Tigris flooded at Kufa, the inhabitants turned to Amirul Mumineen Ali ^{AS}. He prayed at the bank, tapped his staff near the waters and they receded. The waters receded so far that the fish were seen, many of which bade ‘salaam’ upon Amirul Mumineen ^{AS} while others, such as the catfish, did not. Asked as to why some did and some did not, Amirul Mumineen ^{AS} told them that the ones that were halal bade the salaam and the ones that were not halal did not.

The Du‘āt Mutlaqeen have shed many tears on Imam Husain ^{AS}. Al-Dai al-Ajal Syedna Abdulqadir Najmuddin ^{RA}, whose blessed mausoleum in Ujjain is very near to Indore,

addressed the Mumineen of Hindustan specifically as he related to them the very special and focused gaze Rasul Allah ^{SAW} had upon this land. The narrative in question was that in which Rasul Allah ^{SAW} stood at Hajar-e-Aswad and, facing Hind and with copious tears, prayed for his 'brothers' who would one day be his most ardent followers. Rasul Allah's ^{SAW} tears alluded to the copious tears the Du'āt would cry and have cried upon Imam Husain ^{AS} in that coming time. In relaying this powerful moment in history, Syedna Najmuddin ^{RA} informed the Mumineen of his time, as Mufaddal Maula ^{TUS} did today, that by virtue of Rasul Allah's ^{SAW} gaze towards the land of Hind, they were more obligated to shed tears upon Imam Husain more than any other. In relating this address Syedna al-Dai al-Ajal ^{TUS}, broadened it to include all Mumineen wherever they may happen to be.

The Du'āt have brought forth twin rivers of the exoteric and esoteric knowledge within Dawat, the waters of which are so sweet that once tasted they dispel thirst forever. However, this water is not available nor accessible to everyone. Indeed, at times those closest to it are those bereft of it. This reality was demonstrated in the example of a stone behind the falls of Niagara. Even here, where the force of water is incomparable, the rocks near to where the water falls are seen to be utterly dry – no water touches them. It is a remarkable phenomenon of nature with profound philosophical connotations. Who, after all, was closest to Husain Imam ^{AS} on Aashura? The wretched Shimr, for all his hateful proximity, went away parched, failing to take even a sip of the blessed waters of Kawthar.

In imbibing the holy water one has to have 'zowq-e-saleem' – 'sound' or healthy taste. For a person who is in ill health even fresh water will taste salty – the problem lying not in the liquid itself but in the person taking it in. Rasul Allah ^{SAW} taught his young grandson Imam Husain ^{AS} the correct manner of drinking water: he would drink it in three sips, slowly supping the water while taking a breath between each sip, and ending with "Alhamdulillah". In doing so Rasul Allah ^{SAW} demonstrated the value placed on each sip of water which, in turn, establishes an invaluable lesson in the need for conservation and preservation of our natural resources.

The health benefit of taking water in sips is that it aids in digestion, and the stomach is the 'head of all maladies'. Good digestion is a vital first step in preventing illnesses. The three sips method of drinking water prevents illness and also aids in ridding one of an ailment if inflicted. Stated fourteen centuries ago, this is another example of the divine wisdom of Awliya' Allah ^{AS} and its superiority over human methods of scientific discovery. Science is beholden to hypotheses and yields results after months, years, and even decades of experimentation. Even then, its conclusions remain subject to modification or even being rejected altogether. The wisdom of the prophets, however, is both ahead of its time and also timeless.

The *bayān* of three sips, the 'sound' taste and the final '*hamd*' were to be seen in the *shahaadat* of Ahle Bayt ^{AS} in Karbala. Maulana al-Min'ām ^{TUS} related the meanings of Kawthar first to Maulana Ali Akber ^{AS}, who by virtue of the prophetic ring bestowed upon him by Imam Husain ^{AS} was able to witness and relay his vision of Khamsat At'haar receiving him in his final moments. For Maulana Abbas ^{AS} the 'soundness' of taste related to his desire to bring water to his Imam. The three sips of water were related to both his arms as they were severed and the final piercing of the water-skin he clenched in his mouth – the call to his Maula Imam Husain ^{AS} his culminating *hamd*.

Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin ^{TUS} concluded by calling upon Mumineen to express aloud *nawha* and *'aweel*. Acts that are obligated, *faridat*, are to be done openly, for all to see, and the lamentation upon Imam Husain ^{AS} is the *faridat* by which all others are made valid. May Allah Ta'ala bless Syedna al-Dai al-Ajal with a life of health and happiness until the Day of Qiyāma.

‘Ashara Mubarakah AH 1440
Majlis 2
English Reflections

Al-Dai al-Ajal Syedna Aali Qadr Mufaddal Saifuddin ^{TUS} continued his narration of al-Dai al-Ajal Syedna Mohammed Burhanuddin’s historic safr mubarak to Yemen in 1381 by recalling his visit to the city of Taiba, which was the topic of today’s *wa’az mubarak*. Taiba is the resting place of the first dai of Hind, 24th overall, al-Dai al-Ajal Syedna Yusuf Najmuddin ^{RA}. Originally of Sidhpur, Syedna Najmuddin ^{RA} accompanied his father to Yemen to the *hadrat imamiyah* of the then dai, al-Dai al-Ajal Syedna Mohammed Ezzuddin ^{RA}. During this trip, his noble father passed away, and Syedna Najmuddin ^{RA} stayed on in Yemen. While in Yemen, Syedna Najmuddin ^{RA} benefitted from Syedna Ezzuddin ^{RA} and his personal tutelage as he prepared him for the mantle of Dawat.

Taiba is a small town located in the mountains northwest of Sana’a. When Syedna Burhanuddin ^{RA} visited Taiba in 1381 it was not accessible by vehicles. Undeterred, Syedna al-Muqaddas hiked much of the mountainous terrain. Upon reaching Taiba, he pinpointed the location of the *qabr mubarak* of Syedna Yusuf Najmuddin ^{RA}. In his subsequent trips to Yemen, Syedna al-Muqaddas ^{RA} repeatedly visited Taiba and sought *barakat* with the *ziyarat* of his predecessor Syedna Najmuddin ^{RA} and *namaz* at Syedi Hasan b. Nuh al-Bharouchi’s ^{QR} masjid, also in Taiba just across from the mausoleum. Between the masjid and *qubba mubarakah* lies a small reservoir built by Syedna Najmuddin ^{RA} along the lines of a similar reservoir which he had also built in his hometown of Sidhpur. The reservoir, referred to as the *wao*, collects rainwater and is made accessible by steps all around. These steps, as Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin ^{TUS} explained in today’s *wa’az mubarak* while linking Taiba within the overall discourse, allude to the degrees and ranks by which one ascends spiritually through knowledge and action.

What does it mean to elevate one’s own self? How does one go about doing it? What exactly is it that we are elevating ourselves towards? Syedna began by explaining that the loftiest status one can achieve is proximity to Awliya’ Allah ^{AS}, a proximity attained in this life through one’s adherence to their decrees. This adherence, and subsequent proximity, is not achieved through acts of show that are bereft of sincerity but through the dedicated following of all of Maula’s ^{TUS} stipulations, privately and publicly.

This proximity takes us closer to what it means to be human – to the realisation of humanity for, at the very heart of Ashara, the heart of the teachings of the Awliya’ Allah ^{AS}, the heart of the lessons taught in Karbala lies the very essence of ‘humanity’. Awliya’ Allah ^{AS} are the apogee of humanity; they epitomise and personify what it is. They and their humanity are looked up to by all of mankind and is what all people should aspire to. This epitomisation is for all of mankind at large, for Muslimeen more specifically and especially for their adherents, Mumineen. Regardless of the perspective from which they view it, all who observe Awliya Allah ^{AS} will testify to their humanity.

From the steps of the Taiba and Sidhpur reservoirs and the concept of progressing by degrees in elevation we come swiftly to a core theme of the *wa’az mubarak* – competition and the competitive spirit. Humans compete for all kinds of things in this world but too often the competitiveness becomes so consuming that the combatants seek the annihilation of their opponent. Although Maula’s ^{TUS} comments were without any specific examples we can see its profound presence in the world around us: the business world, in politics and in the very toxic way in which cultural clashes are erupting into violence, suspicion and hatred.

The purest form of competitive spirit, Mufaddal Maula ^{TUS} explained, is that in which you seek to better yourself: we become our own opponent. The highest ideals for which to compete are those that bring one closer to Awliya’ Allah ^{AS} and result in their happiness which Syedna al-Dai al-Ajal ^{TUS}

declared was *raheeq e makhtum*: the divine wine that neither intoxicates nor leaves a foul aftertaste in the mouth.

It is related in Surah al-Mutaffifeen:

• يسقون من رحيق مختوم • ختامه مسك و في ذلك فليتنافس المتنافسون

They will be slaked with pure wine, sealed. The seal of which is musk, and for this then let the competitors compete.

Competitive sports when pursued with the intent of enhancing mind, body and spirit are commendable pursuits. When competitive sports, however, become about ego, triumph, humiliation of the opponent and gloating in such victories — then they become spurious. This highest ideal can be found in a narrative which was placed in a whole new light for us in this *wa'az mubarak* – the competition between Imams Hasan and Husain ^{AS}. They came to Rasul Allah ^{SAW} having engaged in a bout of wrestling which had not produced a victor. Indeed, as Maula ^{TUS} later revealed, they had not wrestled with the intent of overcoming one another.

Rasul Allah ^{SAW} counselled them that this was not the way to establish who is the stronger but instead, he asked them to determine whose handwriting is the finer. When they brought their written sentences to him, Rasul Allah ^{SAW} sent them to Amirul Mumineen ^{AS} for appraisal and he in turn to Maulatuna Fatema ^{AS}. She chose to have their pearls of handwriting be judged by seeing who would take the most from the seven pearls of her necklace and as they quickly gathered them up one remained. Yet even now, the true competitive spirit in them made each desire that the other take it and in this spirit it happened that Jibraeel ^{AS} brought down his wing to make two pearls out of the one and leave the contest even.

What lessons are there for us in this new perspective of this story, and indeed of the entire concept of competitiveness portrayed in this *wa'az mubarak*? That competitiveness, whether in sport or in life, should not be gladiatorial. It is not necessary to win by vanquishing the opponent. True victory brings with it the 'seal of musk' – the sweet aftertaste of humility and thus, in defeat, the opponent is not left with the bitter taste that worldly losses can often leave behind. Winning needs to be together and the truest contests are those that bring out the best in each other and those that bring out the best in ourselves.

Syedna al-Dai al-Ajal ^{TUS} told of the young man and his mother who had the honour of accompanying Maulana al-Imam al-Husain ^{AS} to Karbala. The young man's father had given his life in a previous battle and he and his mother had only each other left. On the Day of 'Ashura, the mother called her son and instructed him to sacrifice his life for Imam Husain ^{AS}. Like the other martyrs of Karbala, the young man approached Imam Husain ^{AS} seeking his *razā mubāarak* to take to the battlefield. Imam Husain ^{SA} reminded him that his father had already been martyred, and that he was the only son; his mother would not approve. With utmost respect, the young man softly replied that it was *his* mother herself who had sent him to Imam Husain ^{AS}. The young man returned to his mother informing her of Imam Husain's ^{AS} consent and, as he proceeded into battle, she was greatly pleased. The young man fought valiantly but was ultimately felled by the foes.

Giving an insight into the mind of the young man's mother which only Maula can provide, Syedna al-Dai al-Ajal ^{TUS} explained that she had two options before her, both of which in a way, were competing for her selection. On the one hand, she had wished that her young son be married to begin a life of his own and on the other, she had desired that he sacrifice his life for Imam Husain ^{AS}. Ultimately, her desire for her son's shahādat prevailed and she and her son were rewarded with everlasting taste of 'raheeq e makhtoom' – that of Imam Husain's ^{AS} happiness.

May Allah Ta'ala grant us the *tawfeeq* and strength to always seek the *raheeq e makhtoom* of Maula's ^{TUS} happiness and may He grant Maula a life of health and happiness that knows no end.

‘Ashara Mubaraka AH 1440
Majlis 3
English Reflections

The third location al-Dai al-Ajal Syedna Mohammed Burhanuddin ^{RA} visited during his 1381 *safr mubarak* of Yemen, which formed the basis of today’s *wa’az mubarak*, was Hisne Af’ida. Across a small valley at approximately a kilometre’s distance from Taiba, Hisne Af’ida is a sheer sided, formidable mountaintop which has been the home to several of Yemen’s Duat Mutlaqeen ^{RA} and their final resting place as well. Af’ida is the plural for ‘heart’ in Arabic and this *hisn* – fort – is thus the Fort of Hearts. Over time, Hisne Af’ida has become inaccessible and there are no visible traces of the previous stately residences of the Du’āt. However, the *quboor mubarak* of the Du’at residing there have forever enshrined Hisne Af’ida’s *barakat* as has their successor, the Dai of each age, who is the true protector of the hearts of Mumineen.

In a verse of his, al-Dai al-Ajal Syedna Taher Saifuddin ^{RA} explained that the heart of Rasul Allah ^{SA}, and that of his progeny the Aimmat Tahireen ^{AS}, always remain awake even when they seem asleep. This lofty trait is also apparent in Imam’s du’at as Syedna al-Dai al-Ajal ^{TUS} explained by recounting an incident that took place during one of Syedna Abdulqadir Najmuddin’s ^{RA} *sabaqs*. One hot summer, Syedna Najmuddin ^{RA} was giving a *haqeeqat sabaq* in Sironj on a rooftop terrace. During the course of the *sabaq*, Maula briefly closed his eyes in repose, yet continued to explain the meaning of the text. When he awoke again he asked where they had stopped, then reiterated the meaning exactly as he

had done whilst asleep before continuing with the rest of the *sabaq*.

In his discussions pertaining to the heart, al-Dai al-Ajal Syedna Aali Qadr Mufaddal Saifuddin ^{TUS} referenced a phrase in description of Ibrahim Nabi ^{AS} which features in the Quran-e-Majeed (37:84): *qalbin saleem* - 'tranquil of heart'. When Nabi Ibrahim's ^{AS} foes placed him in a catapult and readied to hurl him into fire, his heart was tranquil and at peace with whatever Allah's decree was for him. Ibrahim ^{AS} declined Jibra'eel's ^{AS} offer for assistance, and even his offer to petition a request on his behalf to the Almighty Himself. He did not protest when he was placed in the catapult for to do so would have been to question why this was happening and in turn Allah ta'ālā's Will. The purity of his heart and in his trust in his Creator was such that the fire that he was cast into, by Allah's Will, transformed into verdant foliage.

Syedna Mohammed Burhanuddin ^{RA} gathered hundreds of thousands together in his heart, awakening them to the lament and grief upon Imam Husain ^{AS}. Zikr e Husain was at the heart of all that he called towards and that remembrance brought one and all to Maula's ^{RA} *janaza mubarakā*, whether in body or in spirit. During his life and even now after his departure from this world, Syedna al-Muqaddas is awake; no matter where one might be, far away in America or England, one only has to think of him and he is there for us.

The tranquillity of heart apparent in the actions of Ibrahim Nabi ^{AS} was also shown by Maulana Abdul-Muttalib ^{AS} when Abraha arrived in Makkah seeking to destroy the Kaaba. Unlike the rest of Quraysh who had fled in fear, Maulana Abdul-Muttalib ^{AS} remained near the Ka'aba, unintimidated.

When Abraha asked him, upon meeting him, if he had any requests, he replied that he desired the return of his camels which had been seized. Abraha's esteem for Maulana Abdul-Muttalib evaporated and he expressed astonishment that instead of asking for a reprieve for the sacred Ka'aba Abdul-Muttalib ^{AS} seemed more preoccupied with his camels. To this Maulana demonstrated the utter conviction that underpinned his tranquillity of heart; the camels were his property and so he asked for their return; the Kaaba had its own master who would protect it from any harm. And this is what came to pass as the small birds, the *abaabeel*, stoned the elephant divisions and put them to flight.

This tranquillity, purity and peace of heart is witnessed once more in Karbala in the actions of Imam Husain ^{AS}. Husain Imam ^{AS} had ridden into battle and was in full force, Zu al-Faqar was in full force; who could stand against him? How could martyrdom take place? He could not just lay down his sword without cause. The opportunity for *shahādat* had to be found. Whether through Jibra'eel's ^{AS} battalions of angels or Imam Husain's ^{AS} divine might, the foes would have been completely vanquished and the opportunity for *shahādat* and the fulfilment of a vow made to Rasul Allah ^{SAW} for the salvation of mankind lost. Hence, when Jibra'eel ^{AS} proffered the support of the angels it was a moment of supreme examination, Husain ^{AS} is banishing the enemy and yet he asks, "What is Allah's wish?"

Husain Imam's ^{AS} tranquillity and purity went further still. Whereas Nabi Ibrahim ^{AS} and Maulana Abd al-Muttalib ^{SA} remained unharmed at the moment of their test, Husain Imam ^{AS} had already seen indescribable torment in the martyrdoms of his Ahle Bayt ^{AS} and Ashaab Kiraam. He knew

full well that even after his *shahādat* that this was just the beginning of difficulties which the *sayyidāt*, children and Imam Ali Zain al-Abideen ^{AS} were yet to endure. Yet he submitted willingly, with tranquil heart, to Allah's wish and left them to His care.

During the Mumbai disturbances of 1415 AH, Syedna Burhanuddin Aqa ^{RA} was in Dubai. It was the month of Rajab al-Asab and the '*urs mubarak*' of Syedna Taher Saifuddin; a commemoration Maulana had never missed in Mumbai. The situation was tense, curfews were in place, yet Syedna did not flinch and returned to Mumbai. He came to give succour to Mumineen in this trying time and barely did he reach and the violence subsided.

Today, India's Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modiji visited Saifee Masjid to join Mufaddal Maula ^{TUS} and the community in their remembrance of Imam Husain ^{AS}. Following yesterday's *wa'az mubarak* in which Maulana spoke of how Allah's Awliyā' are held in high esteem by all, Mumineen, Muslimeen and mankind generally for their commitment to humanitarianism, Islam and for salvation, it was fascinating to see all these facets being expressed today. Both the PM and the Honourable Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh – Mr Shivraj Singh Chauhan – praised the various humanitarian efforts of Syedna and the community; the Faizul Mawaaid al-Burhaniyyah initiative to ensure no one sleeps hungry, Project Rise to dispel malnutrition in children, the community's attempts to provide a house for all that has so far seen 11,000 apartments handed over, cleanliness initiatives and even the Save Our Sparrow scheme that was launched to celebrate Syedna Burhanuddin's hundredth birthday. Shri Modiji highlighted this last one and expressed

some astonishment that even on his birthday Syedna chose to celebrate with an initiative to preserve this endangered city bird.

“Wherever I go around the world I am likely to have someone somewhere ask me, ‘Kem cho?’ (how are you?),” the PM said indicating the ubiquity of Bohras around the globe and their goodwill towards him. It was no surprise then that he addressed the gathered Bohras as his ‘family’. He further stated that the community was to be lauded for its role in keeping the peace throughout the country. Coming from the senior most Minister of the land, these were not to be taken as mere words but a genuine recognition of how the community’s outlook has been adopted into the nationwide efforts for universal care of the population.

Shri Modiji recalled the support of Syedna Taher Saifuddin ^{RA} for Mahatma Gandhi, the Dandi Salt March and the efforts to achieve independence. He heralded Syedna Burhanuddin’s ^{RA} contributions to his efforts as CM in Gujarat. After just a simple conversation Syedna helped kick-start a water distribution effort that the then CM went on to implement successfully in the state.

The CM was also generous in his praise of the community. Thanking Syedna for accepting the invitation to bless the land of MP with his visit the CM went on to say, “Truly, looking at this scene, if there is a well-disciplined, devoted, with love for all, love for the country, helpful to others community; then it is the Bohra community!”

Syedna al-Dai al-Ajal ^{TUS} in his inspired kalimaat for the occasion, spoke of how all faiths share a universal message of

love. This was Imam's statement to Ziyad: Religion is nothing but love. Mufaddal Maula ^{TUS} also spoke of the PM's love for Syedna Burhanuddin ^{RA} and prayed that by the *wasila* of Imam Husain ^{AS}, the PM sees success in all his initiatives for the betterment of the nation and her citizens. Concluding, Maula ^{TUS} informed the PM, and subsequently reminded Mumineen, of the reason the Bohra community exists so peacefully and prosperously in India after centuries in Yemen: because of sincerity and i and because of their compliance with '*Syedna's' farmaan*' as he demonstrated in the example of Ahmedabaad's *wali* Maulaya Ahmed ^{RA}. Today's events clearly illustrate that due to Wali Allah's ^{AS} sincerity and purity of heart, Allah Ta'ala always comes to his aid and always raises his standards across the world.

How pure and tranquil was the heart of Husain ^{AS}? He said to Jibra'eel ^{AS}, "But Jibra'eel I have one more requirement. That were I to be slain one lakh times for the will of Allah and be reborn and be slain again and this to happen seventy lakh times that this not be the end of it, for me never to say – let that be enough!"

May we as Mumineen, continuously increase our lament upon Imam Husain ^{AS} and never ever feel that our tears and *maatam*, our attendance in these *mawa'iz* and our expression of *nawha* and '*aweel*' are ever even remotely – 'enough'. May Allah grant our beloved Maula a life in good health and happiness, for the peace of heart of all those who encounter him, until Qiyamat.

‘Ashara Mubaraka AH 1440
Majlis 4
English Reflections

The fourth sacred location in Yemen is Zamarmar, also pronounced *Zimarmar*; a mountain rising some 2500m above sea level a little distance from the capital San’aa. Several dais stayed here or frequented it over the years. Three dais, the 14th dai al-Dai al-Ajal Syedna Abdul Muttalib Najmuddi ^{RA}, the 16th dai al-Dai al-Ajal Syedna Abd Allah Fakhruddin ^{RA} and the 17th dai al-Dai al-Ajal Syedna al-Hasan Badruddin ^{RA} as well as Mazoon al-Dawat Syedi Ahmed bin Syedna Ali bin Hanzala ^{QR} rest here. Despite being accessible only by narrow mountainside trails it was once a flourishing enclave. We are given some idea of how many people lived there by the fact that, when it had been besieged centuries ago, over a thousand remained in the care of the dai after a cholera epidemic had decimated the population.

Zā mir in Arabic means ‘person of valour’ and a core theme of today’s wa‘az mubārak was *shajā‘at* – courage. ‘Marmar’ itself means marble – a substance noted for its solidity and purity and these characteristics were given great attention today. Maulana ^{TUS} spoke of the miraculous escape that happened on Zamarmar when Maulana Burhanuddin ^{RA} climbed the mountain in his 1381AH visit. First of all there were those who advised against making the climb given the difficulties involved but Maulana responded by saying, “I am used to difficulty.” As the climb was underway an enormous boulder suddenly began to fall from directly above Maulana and the unthinkable seemed inevitable. Instead the rock stopped as suddenly as it had started, wedged into the mountainside where it still remains today. Burhanuddin

Maula's ^{RA} purity had repelled the evil inherent in the stone, a purity the like of which can not only move mountains but halt them as well.

Solidity and purity go hand in hand and a unique example of their physical manifestation is in Raudat Tahera. Here, unlike anywhere else in the world at the time of its construction, is the only place where the entire Quran is engraved. The engraving is in marble and then overlaid with gold leaf and thus it combines the solidity of the marble with the purity of gold. The reverence held for the Quran-e-Majeed is evident and yet even this, in turn, is a testimony to the way in which the 52nd al-dai al-mutlaq, haafiz al-Quran, has engraved the Quran into the minds and hearts of Mumineen in their thousands with their commitment to memorization of the holy book. Similarly, he overlaid the engraving of knowledge upon their hearts with the gold leaf of the remembrance of Imam Husain ^{AS} to such an extent that a Mumin sees Husain, Husain, Husain in their every outlook.

Today Maulana ^{TUS} continued delving into the inner contests and conflicts that are the essence of mankind. Courage is a pre-requisite in any battle and courage is especially required in order to combat anger. To be slow to anger is in itself a good thing but to swallow one's anger when it rises takes a special strength – it can be alike to swallowing a mountain. A prophet once had a dream in which he was told that in the morning he would come across five things. The first he should swallow, the second - hide, the third - protect, fulfil a need of the fourth and flee from the fifth. What were these things? First a mountain, then a gold plate, a sparrow, a falcon and finally a reeking carcass. The first was anger which, if you control it goes from being the size of a

mountain to the size of a morsel and if you banish it, it tastes as sweet as honey. The others were to hide one's virtues, to protect those who are oppressed, to provide for those in need at any cost and finally to flee from back-biting and slander.

Maulana Ali ^{AS} had overcome an enemy in battle and was on the verge of slaying him when the foe spat at him. Ali let him go and when the man asked why he had done so he replied that he could not allow his anger to be any part of his intent in killing. His acts were for Allah alone. The foe who had done the ill deed was so taken by this act that he entered into the faith as a result. This is in fact the very essence of the actions of Awliya Allah ^{AS} for whom every act, regardless of how disparate they may outwardly appear, is aimed at bringing closeness to the Almighty. Maula gave a simple prescription to alleviate anger when it comes: bow your head and think of Buthanuddin Maula ^{RA} and it will dissipate.

It behoves us as Maulana Ali's dai's adherents to consider this in every act or word we speak. Does what I do, how I do it or who and what I am cause others to think well of me, my faith and my Maula? Conversely, is there any such thing that I do or say that might actually drive people away from Maula? Are my acts and words purely intent on bringing people to Maula, or is there self-interest or self-aggrandisement involved too? In the example of Syedi Najam Khan QR we see the total subversion of the self to the greater pleasure of Maula. He had been divested of the post of mazoon – outwardly this would appear a grave and public humiliation – but far from viewing it as such he instead maintained gratitude for being kept within the faith as an ordinary

Mumin. Such serenity at heart is the like of which we should be trying to emulate in our own lives.

Maulana ^{TUS} told us there were seven virtues to be attained and these could be harnessed by following the tenets of the Shariah. The seven virtues are humility, truthfulness, nearness to Allah, generosity, piety, valour and attraction to the angels. One example of how the Shariah engenders these virtues is through the halal and haraam of what we consume. As others also say, 'We are what we eat,' thus the purity or impurity of what we consume impacts upon our character.

The solidity and purity of Imam Husain ^{AS} was to be seen when he saw Yazid ^{LA} drinking wine in his court at which point he declared that if Yazid assumed the caliphate he would never give him allegiance, but would give him the sword instead. And so it came to be and on the eve of Aashura we saw Husain's supreme purity and firmness of spirit. Despite three days of being without food and water he asked for one more night before battle commenced. Surely that further time could only increase their weakness and prolong their pain? Yet Husain ^{AS} knew that the *shahadat* was for Aashura and, in this night's reprieve, the enemy who came to see what the sound of honeybees was that was emanating through the night; found the as-haab and Ahle Bayt ^{AS} spending it in prayer and seeking of forgiveness. It is related that the woman who tied a cat and prevented it from food and water for three days was punished by hellfire so what of those who denied food and water to Ahle Bayt ^{AS} for three days?!

In Karbala the extremes of humanity and inhumanity were pitted against one another and as much as we witnessed the

very worst evils of man we also saw his greatest virtues in the form of Husain ^{AS} and those who were with him.

On Aashura Husain Imam ^{AS} left the haram and rode into battle. As he waded through the enemy lines he thought of his steed who was also without water for three days and must be tiring. There was still much to be done and Husain Imam ^{AS} made to the river. Yet his noble mount refused to take any water whilst his rider remained parched. Imam Husain ^{AS} took some water in his hand and was just about to take a sip so that the horse would drink when a cry came, "While you drink water your camp is being looted!" Husain threw the water and hurried back to find all was well at the camp and no harm had yet befallen them. Nothing of the like could happen while he was still alive and indeed Husain continuously turned to check that the camp was safe even as he fought with the enemy.

In Karbala is a lesson of valour for everyone, from the horse, from the six month old infant Maulana Ali Asgher ^{AS}, the youth and the elderly, to the two sisters Zainab and Umme Kulsum ^{AS} who between them protected the entire haram after Husain Imam ^{AS} was slain.

May Allah Ta'ālā preserve Imam Husain's ^{AS} dai, Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin ^{TUS}, and the guardian of the valour and virtues of Karbala, until Qiyamat

‘Ashara Mubaraka AH 1440
Majlis 5
English Reflections

Continuing his historic travels in and around the mountains and hillsides of San’aa, Mansoor al-Yemen al-Dai al-Ajal Syedna Mohammed Burhanuddin ^{RA} set out to an outlying area known as Ghayl Bani Hamid on 17 Jumad al-Ukhra, 1381 AH. Road access was limited so Syedna al-Muqaddas’ vehicle stopped 7 miles (11km) short of the destination and he walked the remaining distance to reach Ghayl. After some hours of searching and having visited multiples locations, it was now evening and the *qabr mubarak* of al-Dai al-Ajal Syedna Ibrahim al-Hāmidī ^{RA}, the ziyarat of which Syedna al-Muqaddas had intended, had still not been found. They searched until a man told them he knew where they wished to go. It was another 2-3 miles before they came to a small hill but even here no one recognized the name of Syedna Ibrahim al-Hamidi. Then there came a man who claimed to know who they were looking for referring to Syedna Ibrahim as the sahib of Kanz al-Walad, an esoteric *haqeeqat* text of great sanctity he had authored. Syedna Mohammed Burhanuddin ^{RA} confirmed that the *qabr mubarak* in question was indeed that of Syedna Ibrahim and took *barakat* of his *ziyārat*.





Al-Dai al-Ajal Syedna Mohammed Burhanuddin ^{RA} in Goyl Bani Haamid.

In today's *wa'az mubarak* dedicated to Nabi Mohammed ^{SAW}, al-Dai al-Ajal Syedna Aali Qadr Mufaddal Saifuddin ^{TUS} explained the meanings of the name 'Mohammed' and two other derivatives of the root verb *ha mi da* similar to *mohammed*: *hamd* & *haamid*. *Hamd*, *haamid* and *mohammed* mean 'praise', 'the one who praises' and 'the one who is praised'. When Nabi Mohammed's ^{SAW} detractors sought to belittle him they would call him by the name *muzammam*, the opposite of *mohammed* meaning 'he that is disparaged'. Nabi Mohammed ^{SAW} gave thanks to Allah for the irony that those who wished to abuse him were instead aiming their barbs at someone named Muzammam, while his name was Mohammed!

Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin ^{TUS} explained that the meanings of all three words — *hamd*, *haamid*, *mohammed* — applied to Rasul Allah ^{SAW}. To demonstrate this, Syedna al-Dai al-Ajal ^{TUS} narrated what transpired between Nabi Mohammed ^{SAW} and a Jewish lady who would toss litter at him as he passed by

her house. One day Rasul Allah ^{SAW} passed and she did not do so. Immediately, Rasul Allah ^{SAW} inquired as to why and was informed that she was ill. Rasul Allah ^{SAW} went to her home to ask after her health and the woman was naturally astonished. All this time she had been trying to provoke a reaction, instil anger – never did she imagine that, far from any of that, he would instead come to ask after her health. The Jewish lady embraced Islam.

Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin ^{TUS} explained that Rasul Allah's ^{SAW} insisting to visit her despite her consistent maltreatment and abuse was beyond comprehension. His actions were so pure and praiseworthy that he became 'praise' or *hamd* personified. He is *haamid* because despite her constant abuse, he never complained and was always grateful and praiseworthy of his Creator. And he is *mohammed*, because for over 1400 years now, this incident has been narrated over and over and his angelic character continuously praised.

A similar situation transpired with a Jewish man. The day after the *mi'raaj* Rasul Allah ^{SAW} came across a slave-girl looking very distressed in the marketplace. She had been sent to purchase provisions but was very unwell and also anxious lest she be late in returning to her master and subsequently punished. Nabi Mohammed ^{SAW} assured her not to worry and lifted the two children into his arms as she finished her errand. He then returned home with her, although because of her age she was unable to keep pace with Rasul Allah ^{SAW} so he told her to hold tight of the trails of his clothing to keep her steady. They reached her home without delay. Recognizing Nabi Mohammed ^{SAW} and knowing that he never took the path outside his house, the master of the slave-girl, a Jewish man, was taken aback to see him. He then went inside and re-emerged carrying the Torah citing a passage that foretells of a prophet that would come to the house of a Jewish man carrying two children and escorting a slave-girl. Nabi Mohammed ^{SAW} fulfilled this prophecy and the Jewish man embraced Islam.

Having explained the meanings of *mohammed*, *hamd* and particularly *haamid*, Mufaddal Maula ^{TUS} transitioned to throwing light on the name of Ghayl Bani Haamid. Although, Bani Haamid refers to a branch of the Hamdan tribe in Yemen, he explained that it also refers to Rasul Allah's ^{SAW} progeny, the A'immat Tahireen since he is Haamid and they are his children. Ghayl refers to a flowing body of water. Maulana al-Min'aam ^{TUS} explained that the body of

water is the Du'at who during the Imam's seclusion are apparent, like the water, visible to all.

This year's historic *ayat shareefah* is from Surat al-Hijr (15:87):

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَاكَ سَبْعًا مِّنَ الْمَثَانِي وَالْقُرْآنَ الْعَظِيمَ

And indeed, We have bestowed upon you the seven repeatedly recited verses, and the Grand Quran.

The 'seven repeated verses' refer to Surat al-Fatiha, also known as Surat al-Hamd. It has seven verses which are repeated throughout the day and night in the 52 *rak'ats* of *namaaz*. The word al-Hamd also equates 52 according to the numeral system where letters are assigned numbers in Arabic. There have been seven dais named 'Mohammed' beginning with the twelfth dai and ending with Syedna Mohammed Burhanuddin ^{RA}.

Gratitude is truly *hamd* when it is practiced during both times of ease and bounty and times of difficulty and trouble. Mufaddal Maula ^{TUS} recalled two instances from history to explain the *barakat* of such *hamd*. Jabir bin Abdullah's children were imitating the slaughter of goats and in doing so one killed his brother. Distressed by his act, the living brother drew the knife on himself leaving them both slain. That very evening Jabir had given requested Rasul Allah ^{SAW} to grace his home for a *ziyaafat*. He and his wife decided they must continue as though nothing happened lest they compromise their *khidmat* for Rasul Allah ^{SAW}. Despite their efforts to conceal it, the tragedy came to light but soon turned to utter joy when Rasul Allah ^{SAW} brought them both back to life again. It was Jabir and his wife's focus on Rasul Allah ^{SAW} and their noble guests, their persistent *hamd* in happiness and difficulty that brought them joy once more. Had this not been the case then Rasul Allah ^{SAW} would not have graced their home and would not have brought their children back to life.

'Hamd', giving thanks and praise no matter what the circumstances is such a thing that in itself it dispels worries and difficulties. When one is always praising Allah then difficulties no longer seem difficult, trials no longer seem troubling; everything always appears good. Maula ^{TUS} spoke of a doctor who regularly had the honour of hosting *ziyafats* for Burhanuddin Maula ^{RA}.

Recently, he was troubled by a bout of depression so decided to request for the honour of a ziyafat to Maula with the hope that his depression would be cured. And so it was. In remembering and giving thanks for what one has one ceases to dwell on what one does not possess; this is a recipe for happiness. Happiness, then, comes from *hamd*.

As Rasul Allah ^{SAW} anticipated the Angel of Death's final act, he asked Jibra'eel ^{AS} what awaited him in the Hereafter. "The angels await you," said Jibra'eel ^{AS}. Rasul Allah ^{SAW} said in praise, "for the face of my Lord is *hamd*". He asked again and was told of the Hur al-'Een and that Allah was waiting for him and that no prophet or community would enter paradise before Nabi Mohammed ^{SAW} and his. And for each reply he stated again, 'For the face of my Lord is *hamd*.' With the last reply Rasul Allah ^{SAW} felt at peace and asked Jibra'eel ^{AS} to call forth the Angel of Death and take his spirit. He was in Maulana Ali's ^{AS} arms and Maula Ali ^{AS} felt it breeze past taking its feeling in his hands and gentling wiping his face. Emerging from the shroud Amirul Mumineen ^{AS} announced, 'O Ahle Bayt, your Nabi has departed this mortal world.'

May Allah Ta'ala grant our beloved Maula Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin ^{TUS} a life of health and happiness to the Day of Qiyaamat.

‘Ashara Mubāraka AH 1440
Majlis 6
English Reflections

On this seventh of Muharram al-Haraam we were taken to the iconic al-Hutaib al-Mubarak, undoubtedly the locale that is most representative of Yemen for a Mumin. It is from this mountain top that al-Dai al-Ajal Syedna Hatim b. Ibrahim ^{RA} solidified the Dawat and spread its knowledge. From this haven that boasts mountain cove of Kahf al-Na‘eem, he delivered discourses and wrote treatises on the life of Maulana Ali ^{AS} and the values and characters of a true Mumin.

Al-Hutaib al-Mubarak is located in the mountainous Haraaz region west of Sana’a. Haraaz comes from the word *ha ra za*, to protect, the root word for *hirz* as well, which means a fortified place or sanctuary. In today’s *wa‘az mubarak*, al-Dai al-Ajal Syedna Aali Qadr Mufaddal Saifuddin ^{TUS} explained how one can achieve protection, a personal *hirz* so to speak, through *taqwaa*. *Taqwa* is for an individual to do as they should and refrain from what they should not; this process is an armour and shield that protects one from malice and misfortune.

The *wa‘az mubarak* centred around the concepts of *taqwaa* and *karam*, god-fearingness and virtue and their superlatives, *atqaa* and *akram*; the most god-fearing and the most virtuous. The two words trace back to a statement made by Amirul Mumineen ^{SA} close to Maulatona Fatema’s ^{SA} *shahaadat* when she respectfully sought his exoneration for any shortcomings she may have committed during her life. In response, Amirul Mumineen ^{SA} said that she was *atqa* and *akram* – she was far too pious and dignified of committing such things.

Through the auspices of *taqwaa*, Awliya Allah ^{SA} have vouchsafed the protection and peace of their followers. They have done so through

the edifices of prayers, knowledge, philosophy and wisdom. They have done so by the founding of great cities such as Mahdiyya Mardiyya, Mansuriyya Mubarakā and al-Qahiraha al-Mu'izziyya. The Du'at Mutlaqeen ^{AS} have continued the preservation and protection of the dawat and its followers by keeping us true to *taqwaa* and *muhabbat* as a result of which our minds, bodies and spirits are protected.

One is able to achieve *taqwaa*, doing what should be done and refraining from what should not, by acknowledging that Allah Ta'ala sees and knows all. This means one will do the same whether one is in public or private. This notion is also inherently linked to one's self of shame. Amirul Mumineen Maulana Ali b. Abi Talib ^{AS} stated that 'the epitome of good character is for a person to be ashamed of his or her self'. What this means, as Mufaddal Maula ^{TUS} explained, is that it does not take a third party for one to recognize an act that is shameful. The measure of such an understanding is to think of an act that one would be ashamed of if seen by another and question whether if one were alone and without witnesses would he or she be just as embarrassed or ashamed.

Shame, then, is integral to *taqwaa*. To this effect, Maulana al-Min'aam ^{TUS} related the story of a man whose much beloved son had gone astray. He had forsaken faith and indulged himself in worldly vices. The man refused to believe this of those who came to speak of it to him until one day he set out to see for himself. They found him at the forecourt of a woman of ill repute who was combing his hair and when the son saw his father he shielded his face from him with his locks. The man turned back home, saying nothing to those who had accompanied him and when asked why he had not admonished the young man he told them it was because the boy showed shame. This meant he would one day return to the way he once was.

The aforementioned qualities are imbibed by *muhabbat* and *ta'at* – a vital combination that doesn't survive being kept apart. Both love and obedience are needed together. To truly observe these things together we follow the *shar'iah*, Nabi Mohammed's ^{SA} *shari'ah* is the seal of the creeds of the previous prophets and in describing it as a seal it follows that there has to be some secrets that are to be sealed. These secrets are the beauties of the past creeds that the *shari'ah* encompasses. The *shari'ah*, creed, ensures protection and peace for all.

Taqwaa and *karam* and *atqaa* and *akram* were both exemplified by the life of Maulatena Fatema ^{AS}. On the one hand she demonstrated the utmost *taqwaa* in the manner in which she preserved her modesty, retreating from a room where a blind man sat lest he take in her scent. On the other hand, she demonstrated the utmost *taqwaa* in the manner in which she arrived at the gathering after Rasul Allah's ^{SAW} *wafaat* to argue for the divinely ordained rights of Maulana Ali ^{AS} as Nabi Mohammed's ^{SAW} Wasi and successor.

This same modesty and remarkable strength of will were to be later demonstrated by her *shahzadis* after Karbala. Where they stood able to cover their faces only by the hair on their heads. Despite these conditions, when the enemy threatened to execute Imam Ali Zain al-Abideen ^{AS}, Maulatuna Zainab ^{AS} stood afore him and not only defended him but indeed stated that to slay him they would have to slay her first. This Maulatena Fatema ^{AS} and her *shahzadis* taught their female followers the true meaning of modesty and dignity for a woman. This modesty is essential in all aspects of life and is a boon, not a hindrance or encumbrance, to rendering service to one's family and others.

With Rasul Allah's ^{SAW} statement of *baka*, *abkaa* and *tabaakaa*, the process of *taqwaa*, *atqaa*, *karam* and *akram* unfolds before us. To cry

oneself is one stage - *taqwaa*, to make someone else cry is a stage above - *atqaa*. But for those unable to cry, Rasul Allah ^{SAW} has preserved their *karam* and dignity as well. Ultimately, *akram*, is that each one of these individuals is bestowed with Jannat.

Taqwaa means to do what should be done when it should be done. It is taught that the things we keep in trust – *amaanat* – should be returned to their owner even if that owner happens to be *qaatil Husain*^{AS}, one of those who slew Imam Husain^{AS}. Rasul Allah^{SA} gave his family as an *amaanat* to the Ummah. It was the Ummah's duty to ensure that the love that he had asked of for them was offered. Instead it came to the stage that Maulatuna Fatema^{AS} willed that none but the true followers should pray in her *janaaza namaaz*, that she be buried at night and forty additional graves be made so that none of the usurpers should know which was hers.

Maulatuna Zainab^{AS} had a dream in which she saw a woman clearing the ground of Karbala, brushing away the rocks and stones. She would come to know that this was her mother Fatema, clearing away these stones lest they cause any discomfort to her son when he would lie there ravaged by injury upon injury. Maulatuna Fatema^{AS} kissed her *shahzadi* on the hair and stroked her arms. Zainab asked why she had done this where normally she would kiss her cheeks and gently touch her face? Maulatuna Fatema replied, "Tomorrow with this hair you will cover your face and these arms will be lashed together!" When Imam Husain^{AS} heard of this dream he cried copious tears. Why was his mother taking this trouble, when he was gladly and willingly making the sacrifice? And from beyond came his mother's voice, "How can your mother not grieve when even the angels weep upon the enormity of your burden? When even the prophet and the *wasi* are in grief, when even the Lord himself laments your torment."

We are here to weep upon Husain along side the angels. It might be within the majlis among the throngs of Mumineen right in front of Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin ^{TUS}. It might be in the side venues or at the ends of the vast tent. It might be in another masjid or eating hall, in the environs of a *mazaar* next to resting Awliya Allah ^{AS}. It might be in a village, town or city far and wide across the nation and the globe. It might be in a masjid or a *markaz* or a town hall or simply in one's home. Yet the *maatam* and the *buka* can be no less. The lament upon Imam Husain ^{AS} is to be expressed the same as if it was directly in front of Maula ^{TUS}. For the true meaning of *taqwaa* is that he is watching over us, no matter where we are. May Allah Ta'ala grant our beloved Maula good health and long life until Qiyaamat.

‘Ashara Mubaraka AH 1440
Majlis 7
English Reflections

On the 8th of Muharram al-Haraam we were blessed with the barakat of three Du’at Mutlaqeen in the day of ‘Ashara Mubaraka dedicated to Amirul Mumineen AS. Al-Dai al-Ajal Syedna Taher Saifuddin ^{RA} invoked Imam Husain AS to intercede for those who have yet to be blessed with children. Zakariyyah Nabi ^{AS} was instructed to fast on the second of Muharram and by the intercession of *barakat* of Imam Husain, Allah Ta’ala answered his prayer for a child. Syedna Saifuddin ^{RA} recalled that his father Syedna Mohammed Burhanuddin ^{RA} also fasted on this day and was bless with children at a late age. In the brief bayan mubarak we had the honour of listening to, Maulana al-Muqaddas ^{RA} directed us to always remember one thing: remain true to your dai.

We were then blessed with the *wa’az mubarak* delivered by Syedna Mohammed Burhanuddin ^{RA} 33 years ago in Indore affront a gathering of nearly 1,20,000 at the same location where al-Dai al-Ajal Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin ^{TUS} addresses us today. In his wa’az mubarak, Syedna al-Muqaddas explained that Imam Husain AS chose to sacrifice his life in order to preserve truth, to preserve the faith. In this context Maulana Burhanuddin ^{RA} counselled Mumineen to always be truthful, to continuously remember Husain ^{AS} as do people of other communities who even take vows in his name. We should stay true to the Shariah, prayer and fasting and be brotherly both with Mumineen and with people of other beliefs. To follow the directives and also be loyal citizens of one’s nation.

Maulana al-Muqaddas ^{RA} related the origin and virtues of rice which was created from the radiance of Nabi Mohammed ^{AS} and his Ahle Bayt ^{AS} some part of which fell to the face of the earth as Jibra’eel ^{AS} was carrying it. Rice is both potent and light: it sates the famished

and is easily accommodated by those that who have had their fill. It is a treatment for illness and the cure for 72 serious conditions including vitiligo and leprosy. Rice dispels worry and anxiety and gives staunchness to the heart. If rice was human it would have been a Mumin. Had it been a Mumin it would have been of the knowledgeable and had it been of the knowledgeable it would have been of the pious.

A traditional serving of rice in our community is *sodannu* or *choba* which traces back to a recipe given by Imam Ja'far us Sadiq to a disciple of his named Mufaddal. The sweet dish made as an starter on joyous occasions. The proper way to prepare it, which is not always followed correctly, is to have a layer of sugar, then a layer of rice followed finally by a second layer of sugar.

In the *wa'az mubarak* dedicated to Maulana Ali ^{AS}, Syedna Mohammed Burhanuddin ^{RA} narrated an incident that occurred during Mu'awiya's reign in Syria. One day, he asked Dhirar al-Nashali to describe Amirul Mumineen Ali b. Abi Talib ^{AS}. Dhirar tried to excuse himself since he well knew of Mu'awiya's enmity of Ali ^{AS} — but he insisted. Dirar relented and began his description of Maulana Ali ^{AS}.

By Allah, His strength was formidable, his persistence boundless. Knowledge sprang forth from all his sides and wisdom flowed from his tongue. He held the material world in disdain; and in the darkness of night was where he found his greatest respite. I swear by Allah, I have seen him and heard that he shed many tears. Deep was his contemplation. By Allah, if we entreated him, he responded to us as if he was one of us. However, despite our closeness, we were so awestruck by his eminence that we could never broach conversation unless he spoke to us first. His smile was like a string of pearls. He brought forward men of faith, and promoted the humble. The powerful could not access

him through falsehood, and the weak were never disparaged by his justice.

Syedna Mohammed Burhanuddin ^{RA} reminded us that this is Amirul Mumineen ^{AS}; he always delivered justice. Continuing, Dhirar said

I have witnessed him on certain nights, when the curtains of darkness drape the skies and stars vanish from sight, standing in his mihrab, his hands clasped upon his beard and endless tears flowing from his eyes, trembling as if bitten by a serpent. In this state, he would say: O world! Is it me you have come to entice? *Hayhāt!* How preposterous! I have divorced you three times over and there is no chance of reconciliation. The life you offer is miserable, its duration meagre and its value insignificant. Alas! The journey is long, provisions insufficient and the route treacherous.

Upon hearing this description of Ali ^{AS}, Mu'awiya was in tears and said, 'He was indeed as you say.' He then asked Dhirar how he felt after Amirul Mumineen's ^{AS} passing. Dhirar responded with a distressing analogy stating that he and Amirul Mumineen's ^{AS} Shi'a are like a mother whose child has been killed in her arms; "would her broken heart ever heal or her tears ever cease?" Mu'awiya complained that when he died no one would remember him in this way.

In the *wa'az mubarak*, Maulana al-Hayy al-Muqaddas spoke of Maulatuna Khadija ^{AS} *khidmat* of the Prophet ^{SAW}. Maulatuna Khadija ^{AS} would receive Nabi Mohammed ^{SAW} at the door of the house and wash his *haath mubarak*. This simple act eased the worries of the Nabi ^{SAW} when he returned home. It made the home a place of refuge and solace when his detractors were imposing all manner of torment after he declared his prophecy. Imam Ali Zain al-Abideen ^{AS} was shielded from Ubaydullah bin Ziyaad by Maulatuna Zainab ^{AS}. In being taken as captives through the towns

from Karbala to Shaam the populace came to know of the oppression of Yazid's armies and the cruelty that had taken place in Karbala. The people of Syria were able to see the manner in which Rasul Allah's ^{SAW} Ahle Bayt ^{AS} were mistreated. Although there were those at the time who consented to Yazid's actions there were far more who were on the side of Imam Husain ^{AS}. During his visit to Shaam Syedna Taher Saifuddin ^{RA} met many a person whose love for Husain has reached them down the centuries as a result and they continue to remember him.

Today, we witnessed first-hand the manner by which two dais have nurtured the souls of Mumineen with the *zikh* of Imam Husain ^{AS}. We saw and heard, as did Dhirar in Ali, their devotion to this *zikh* and their ability to put the material world into proper perspective to all those who have the honour of hearing their words and embracing their counsel. Most of all, we see and hear their words and counsel today in our Maula, Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin ^{TUS}, and our faith is renewed and our dedication to Imam Husain ^{AS} rejuvenated. May Allah Ta'ala grant our Maula a life of health and happiness that knows no end.

‘Ashara Mubāraka AH 1440
Majlis 8
English Reflections
09/01/1440 AH

Al-Dai al-Ajal Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin ^{TUS} bestowed us the honour of listening to the *kalimaat nooraniyah* of al-Dai al-Ajal Syedna Taher Saifuddin ^{RA} and al-Dai al-Ajal Syedna Mohammed Burhanuddin ^{RA} yesterday, the 8th of Muharram al-Haraam. Mufaddal Maula ^{TUS} explained, that Syedna Burhanuddin ^{RA} emanated radiance in his words and his actions like the sun. The Arabic word for sun is *shariqa* and keeping with this year’s thematic discourse, Syedna ^{TUS} stated that yesterday’s *wa‘az mubarak* alluded to the mountain village of Shariqa in Haraaz, Yemen where the 18th dai, al-Dai al-Ajal Syedna Ali Shamsuddin ^{RA} and other *hudoos kiraam* are laid to rest.

In his Mansoor al-Yemen travels of 1381, the next mountain location Syedna Burhanuddin ^{RA} visited after Shariqa was the fort of Shibaam, the resting place of Syedna Idris Imaduddin ^{RA}. Syedna Imaduddin ^{RA} was a prolific author and is renowned for an array of writings such as *Nuzhat al-Afkaar* and most famously the *Uyun al-Akhbar*, a seven volume work tracing the history of Islam from the time of Nabi Mohammed ^{SAW} all the way to the early dais of Yemen. Nearly 3000m above sea level in his mountain dwelling in Shibaam, Syedna Imaduddin ^{RA} authored this seminal work and was able to include facts and precise details of distant places that he had not physically visited and might escape the notice of someone who was actually there.

Syedna Imaduddin ^{RA} is also the author of an esoteric text of great importance and eminence known as *Zahr al-Ma‘ānī*, which translates to The Flowers of Meanings. Expanding on flowers, Syedna ^{TUS} explained that they must be pollinated for plants to reproduce. They facilitate the process of pollination by attracting animals, insects, birds, honey bees and even humans, with their unique colours and fragrances. Honey bees in particular are attracted to a variety of flowers, and after drinking their nectar they produce two primary products: honey and beeswax, one providing cure and the other

providing light. The Quran states that honey is endowed with *shifa*, cure, and beeswax is used in candles to provide light. Cure and illumination; these are the two primary benefits of honey bees pollinating flowers. In a similar manner, the title of Syedna Idris' ^{RA} text, *Zahr al-Ma'ānī*, attracts seekers of knowledge, and its contents — when imbibed and properly digested with the *raza* and *barakat* of *sahib al-zaman* — provide cure and illumination.

Continuing the concept of flowers and their benefits, Syedna al-Dai al-Ajal ^{TUS} referenced the *hadeeth shareef* where Rasul Allah ^{SAW} states that Imam Hasan ^{AS} and Husain ^{AS} are his *rayhānat*. A fragrant tree known in English as myrtle, it is not just the flowers that give off scent but also the leaves and even the branches. This *hadeeth shareef* and the myrtle tree happen to be this year's Tazyeen theme as well. The word *rayhān* appears in the Quran in two *suras*, al-Rahman and al-Waq'ia, similar to the two respected grandsons of the Nabi Mohammed ^{SAW} whom he called his two *rayhānat*. Syedna al-Dai al-Ajal ^{TUS} explained that al-Rahman means to be merciful to the extent of causing permanent change. Like the sura's name, Imam Hasan's ^{AS} mercy was so potent that it had the capacity to completely change the course of one's life.

To illustrate this, Syedna Saifuddin ^{TUS} narrated an incident that occurred in Mu'awiya's reign as caliph. In a conversation with his son Yazeed, he told his father that you have given me all of the world's material pleasures and riches yet there is one thing that I still covet: the wife of Abd Allah b. Aamir. Mu'awiya told Yazeed that forcefully taking a married woman will not sit well with the Arabs; I will have to contrive something to get her for you. Mu'awiya summoned Abd Allah b. Aamir to his court and showed him favour over others. He then asked to speak with him in private where he revealed his intent to give him position and power within his court and kingdom and to give him his daughter's hand in marriage. Upon hearing Mu'awiya's proposition, Abd Allah accepted. At this point, Mu'awiya's daughter who had been made aware of this entire ruse, interjected saying that she would only marry Abd Allah if he divorced his current wife, the one who was the object of Yazeed's desire. Abd Allah said that that was

difficult; he loved his wife deeply and could not part with her. Members of Yazeed's courts began pressuring him, telling that that he would become part ruler of the Kingdom as Mu'awiya's son in law. The pressure and circumstances were such that he felt that he had no option but to concede and accepted Mu'awiya's proposition. Abd Allah divorced his wife. Immediately, Mu'awiya began to dawdle with regards to the marriage with his daughter and she made increasing demands that he was unable to meet.

Meanwhile, Mu'awiya sent Abu Huraira with Yazeed's marriage proposal to Medina where Abd Allah's wife was living. On his way, Abu Huraira visited Maulana al-Imam al-Hasan ^{AS} and presented the entire situation to Imam ^{AS}. Imam told Abu Huraira to continue as he had intended but instructed him to offer his marriage proposal to her as well and allow her to choose. Abu Huraira went to Abd Allah's wife and informed her that her husband had divorced her and offered her both proposals. Unsure, she asked Abu Huraira for counsel and to help her with the decision. Abu Huraira had the following to say: if you desire the material world, choose Yazeed; if it is the Hereafter that you prefer, choose Imam Hasan ^{AS} for there is no person more pious than him and his good repute is known by all. With her options before her, the woman chose Imam Hasan ^{AS}.

A short time later, Abd Allah b. Amir returned to Madina and visited his ex-wife to collect some money he had left with her. Imam Hasan ^{AS} instructed his wife to deliver Abd Allah's entrusted deposit. Recognizing that both still had feelings for each other, Imam Hasan ^{AS} asked Abd Allah if he wished to remarry his ex-wife. Abd Allah acknowledged that he did, saying that his life was now bitter without her, but that it was Imam Hasan's prerogative. In a gesture redolent with his fragrant mercy, Imam Hasan ^{AS} divorced her so that she and Abd Allah could re-marry.

Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin ^{TUS} explained that Abu Huraira's statement that if Abd Allah's wife wanted the Hereafter, she should choose Imam Hasan ^{AS} was inaccurate. By choosing Imam Hasan ^{AS} over Yazeed, she not only received Imam's *barakat* and bettered her prospects for the

Hereafter, she and her husband were ultimately reunited in this temporal world despite Mu'awiya's scheming. As Rasul Allah's ^{SAW} *rayhānat* flower, Imam Hasan ^{AS} drew the woman towards him. After divorcing her and reuniting her with her former husband, he cured him of his ailment and enlightened them both with the knowledge that Imam ^{AS} can provide both *deen* and *dunya*.

On one occasion Rasul Allah ^{SAW} set down at the tent of Umme Saeed. After resting he did *wudhu* and the water rinsed from his mouth nourished a plant which upon receiving the blessed water immediately bloomed into a fragrant tree. The fruits of this tree would sate the hungry, quench the thirsty and give copious milk to breeding animals. One day several of the fruits fell to the ground and it came to be known that that was the day Nabi Mohammed ^{SAW} had passed away. Thirty years on the tree shrivelled when Maulana Ali ^{AS} was slain and it stopped bearing fruit but its leaves continued to give benefit. That was until the day Husain was martyred when the leaves dried up and blood welled up from its roots.

Just as a plant attracts pollinators towards it so too do humans attract others and their way to do this is to smile – Smiling is the snare of love. Syedna Burhanuddin ^{RA} had such a radiant smile that all were pulled towards him. Beholding his beaming countenance gave their hearts peace and energy. Maula Burhanuddin ^{RA} brought freshness to the faces of Mumineen with his tears upon Imam Husain ^{AS}. A Mumin is someone whose happiness is on his face and his worries are in his heart. The tears shed in the lamentation of Imam Husain ^{AS} bring happiness to the face and rid the heart of its worldly grief. This was the erudition in Syedna al-Muqaddas' oft-repeated statement, "May a Mumin always remain in mirth and happiness. May he see no sorrow apart from sorrow in the lamentation of Imam Husain!"

May generation after generation of Mumineen find themselves basking in Maula's ^{TUS} beaming countenance. The smile that cures us of our ailments and illuminates our paths in this world and the next. May Allah Ta'ala extend Maula's blessed life until the Day of Qiyāmat.

‘Ashara Mubāraka AH 1440
Majlis 9/10
English Reflections

During majlis 9 of this year’s ‘Ashara Mubāraka, ‘Āshūra’ morning, al-Dai al-Ajal Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin ^{TUS} revisited the mountaintop site of Masār, the second highest in the Haraaz at 2760m above sea level. It was originally conquered by Syedna Ali b. Mohammed al-Sulayhi ^{RA} and from here he eventually came to rule most of Yemen as the dai of the Fatimi imam in Misr.

Masaar is the plural of the word *masarrat* which means happiness and Maulana al-Min‘ām ^{TUS} spent much of the morning explaining the idea of happiness. Worldly happiness is fleeting and temporary. For instance, one is extremely happy after passing an exam, yet the happiness vanishes instantly when one fails the next exam. Doing good for others and bringing them happiness is a type of happiness that is eternal. It will take the form of a beautiful spirit in the grave and declare to all, ‘I am the happiness you brought to others and today I am here to watch over and safeguard you.’

In the era of Imam Mu‘izz ^{AS} one of his Aamil’s arrived with a huge quantity of valuables. At the same time it was brought to the imam’s notice that the people he was governing had many grievances against him. The Imam stated that even if the Aamil had brought wealth and material gifts that spanned the distance between Imam’s palace and the Aamil’s town, that would not justify the grievances against him.

A narrative in this vein of pleasing others was given wherein a young man stood after the *‘ishā* prayer and stated that he had nothing and was hungry. Rasul Allah ^{SAW} turned to those around him and asked who would take him to give him something to eat. No one answered except Maulana Ali ^{AS}. Maulana Ali ^{AS} took him home where the only foodstuff in the house was a mere 400g of flour. He instructed Maulatona

Fatema ^{AS} to make *roti* from it and, knowing that the amount of flour was insufficient to feed them all, said not bring the candle even if he called for it. This way the guest would not see how little there was. Fizza, a housemaid in the service of the Ahle Bayt AS, brought the single roti that was made and presented to Amirul Mumineen AS and the guest. So as to encourage his guest to eat, Amirul Mumineen AS moved his hand back and forth from the plate to his face, not actually partaking from the roti. After the meal, when the man had eaten his fill, a candle was brought forth and the single roti was completely intact as if not a single bite had been taken. It was in praise of Ali's abovementioned virtue that the following *āyat sharīfah* was sent down:

وَيُؤْتِرُونَ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ

They give them (others) preference over themselves, even if they too are poor.

Maulana ^{TUS} spoke in a completely new light of the seven children Husain Imam ^{AS} bestowed to the man who was destined to have none. Maula ^{TUS} revealed, that despite what might *seem* the contrary, Husain's ^{AS} actions were exactly in keeping with the will of Allah Ta'ala. This act by Imam Husain ^{AS} was one of giving joy to another and the reasons he did so were set out. First Imam Husain ^{AS} was pleased by the fact that this man, for whom some transgression had meant he was bereft of children, had come to Rasul Allah ^{SAW} in order to have this sin forgiven and his wish granted. This was in keeping with Allah's Ta'ala's instruction in the Quran for those that commit a sin to come to the prophet and seek forgiveness. By pleasing Husain in this way and giving joy to him the man had thus secured his forgiveness at Imam Husain's ^{AS} hand.

Imam Husain ^{AS} had noted the Nabi's ^{SAW} own despair, that Jibra'eel ^{AS} had brought instruction not to pray for the man due to the fact that he

was not destined to have children. But since the man had come in accordance with Allah's wish to the prophet the way was open for Imam Husain^{AS} to intervene and pray for the man since this act would please the prophet. Rasul Allah^{SAW} saw Husain's insistence of giving one and then two and then three and more children inappropriate, but Husain knew full well that Allah's anger could never fall upon him. In the end he pleased the man, he pleased Rasul Allah^{SAW} and by virtue of the prayer being answered it is a given that he pleased Allah Ta'ala as well.

When we talk of pleasing others this does not entail allowing them to do what they want. Imam Moiz^{AS} explained that it would be all too easy to please people by allowing them to do as they wanted, taking up any vices they chose and indulging themselves however they wished. It has been and still is the way that kings and political leaders of the world seek popularity. Imam's AS wish for his subjects and especially Mumineen is to bring them to higher plateau of existence, one that guarantees eternal happiness, and that often entails deeds and directives that are not always received happily or openly.

The final location of these 'Ashara *mawā'iz*, declared during the *maqatal bayan* after 'asr prayers, was Zabīd – the resting place of the final dai of Yemen, Syedna Mohammed Ezzuddin^{RA}. Zabid is a historic city. It was conquered by Syedna Ali b. al-Maula Mohammed al-Sulayhi. It was in this city where his severed head was placed in front of his consort, Asma binte Shihab, where she and other women from his household had been imprisoned. Syedna Idris described this tragedy with great angst, one that is similar to the difficulties our *mawālī* faced in Kerbala. The word *zabīd* comes from the same root as the word *zubdat*, which means essence. Imam Husain's^{AS} *maatam* and *buka*, as Syedna al-Dai al-Ajal^{TUS} explained, is the essence of all knowledge and deeds.

It seemed barely yesterday, on the 2nd of Muharram, when Imam Husain's^{AS} horse reached Karbala and then stopped, refusing to go further. Husain Imam^{AS}, we are told, mounted another horse – but that one didn't move either. He tried another and then another until he had tried seven times but none of them moved; of course, Husain knew they would not.

And then, in what seems merely a blink of an eye, in just a drop of a tear; the companions and Ahle Bayt^{AS} were gone. Hurr^{AS} had taken redemption, alone among the opposing army to answer Husain Imam's^{AS} call. Habib b. Mazahir had told Muslim, both companions of Imam Husain^{AS}, that were it not for the fact that he was to follow shortly after Muslim into battle, Habib would have asked Muslim his last will and testament. With a single gesture Muslim expressed his last will. "Stay true to him", he said, pointing to Imam Husain^{AS}.

Qasim^{AS}, the radiant, moon-like Shahzada had given the last of his eleven years. Abdullah, married, now awaited his beloved at the entrance of paradise. The water skin lay pierced and drained near the parched lips of Maulana Abbas^{AS}, Ali Akber had told us how Khamsat At-haar^{AS} would greet each Mumin at his or her death. Most tragically, even the 6 month old Maulana Ali Asghar^{AS} had given his final smile in his father's arms when no-one would give him a sip of water.

Finally we had seen the *sajda* of Imam Husain^{AS} in Karbala and Ashara had ended. And the preparation for the next one has begun. May Allah Ta'ala grant our beloved Maula a life of health and happiness. May we find ourselves in his radiant presence, our hands at our chests, tears in our eyes, enlightened by his words and counsel and transformed by his divine gaze during next year's 'Ashara and for every 'Ashara to come.