A FEW DAYS IN THE BLESSED LAND OF

SHAM



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THE BLESSED LAND OF SHAAM

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PREFACE

الحمد لله رب العلمين والصلوة والسلام على النبي محمد وعلى آله وأصحابه أجمعين

أما بعد

Allaah جَلَّجَلَالُهُ granted us the ability to go this year to the blessed land of Shaam. Whilst on the journey, I had penned down the following observations and details of our journey. Recently Brother Muhammad Mayet from Cape Town asked me if I had written anything regarding my journey. I had it sent to him. I then thought it appropriate to send it out to others so that it may be a means of benefit and maybe inspiration to others. We make du'aa that Allaah جَلَّجَلَالُهُ accepts this journey of ours, forgive our shortcomings, and make it a means of our journey to the Hereafter becoming easy.

Moosa Qaadhi

11th Jumadal-Ula/ 23 October 2026

Azaadville

30 ZUL QADAH 1447/17 MAY 2026 - YAUMUL ITHNAIN

Alhamdulillah 5 of us left (Muhammad Moolla from Ermelo, Faheem Modhien from Lenasia, Muhammad Moolla from Botswana, Mf Muhammad Ismail from Skeerport and myself) from OR Tambo airport to Istanbul after performing our Maghrib salaah. We had a two and a half hour transit where we performed our Fajr salaah and then boarded the plane to Damascus. On the way, I read two books. One was regarding the virtues of Shaam. The second was regarding the oppression in the prisons which took place under the Assad regime.

VIRTUES OF SHAAM

Allaah جَلَّ جَلَالُهُ refers to Shaam as the "the place whose surroundings We have blessed." (Israa verse 1) Ibn Rajab Hambali said, "It should be understood that the blessings in Shaam include blessings in both religious and worldly matters. Therefore, the land is called holy."

Many ahaadeeth refer to the virtues of Shaam. Hereunder are a few,

DIVINE PROTECTION THROUGH THE ANGELS OF MERCY

1.) Zayd ibn Thabit al-Ansaari رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ said, "I heard Rasulullaah صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ say, "Glad tidings for Shaam, glad tidings for Shaam, glad tidings for Shaam!" The Sahaabah asked, "O Rasulullaah! What is the reason for this?" He replied, "The angels of Allaah have spread their wings upon Shaam."[1] (Tirmidhi no. 3954, Mustadrak of Haakim no. 2900, Musnad Ahmad no. 21606)

BLESSED LAND

2.) Abdullah ibn Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ reports that Rasulullaah صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ "O Allaah! Bestow blessings on our Shaam, and bestow blessings on our Yemen."[2] The people said, "And also on our Najd." He said, "O Allaah! Bestow blessings on our Shaam, and bestow blessings on

[1] The spreading of wings upon Shaam means that the region and its people are blessed and protected from disbelief as well as calamity and harm.

[2] Modern Yemen and Syria are only pieces of their ancient empires. Ancient Yemen covered large parts of modern Southern Saudi Arabia, while the term Shaam referred to an area that now includes parts of modern Turkey, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Iraq and Saudi Arabia (Mu'jamul Buldan vol. 5, page 447 and vol. 3 page 312; Atlasul Quran page 114; Sharh Ibn Raslan hadeeth no. 2483)

our Yemen." The people said, "And also on our Najd." He said, "Earthquakes and afflictions will occur there," or he said, "From there the horn of Satan will come out." (Tirmidhi no. 3955)
Note: Najd refers to the highland region beyond Hijaz towards Iraq.

CHOSEN LAND

3.) Abu Umamah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ reports that Rasulullaah صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said, "The chosen land of Allaah is Shaam, and in it are his chosen people and servants. A group from my nation will certainly enter Jannah without any reckoning or punishment." (Al-Mu'jamul-Kabeer of Tabaraani no. 7796)

4.) Abdullah ibn Hawala al-Azdi رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ reports that he said, "O Rasulullaah! choose for me a place where I should be, for if I were to know that you would remain I would not have chosen any place over you." He صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said, "Go to Shaam!" (He said this thrice). When Rasulullaah صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ saw his indifference towards it, he said, "Do you know what Allaah says about Shaam? Verily, Allaah says, "O Shaam! My hand is over you. O Shaam! You are my chosen land and I place in you the best of My servants. You are the sword of My punishment and the scourge of My chastisement. You are My storehouse and to you is the gathering." On the night of Mi'raj, I saw a white pillar like a pearl carried by the angels. I asked, "What are you carrying?" They said, "We are carrying the pillar of Islam. We have been commanded to place it in Shaam." While I was sleeping, I saw a scripture being taken from beneath my pillow. I thought Allaah had forsaken the people of the Earth, but I followed it with my eyes and saw it as a radiant light before me until it was placed in Shaam. Whoever refuses to join Shaam, let him go to

Yemen and drink from its wells. For Allaah has guaranteed Shaam and its people for me." (Musnadush-Shaamiyyen no. 601)
A similar narration reads, "You will come across groups of armies. An army will be in Shaam, an army in Iraq, and an army in Yemen." 'Abdullah said, 'I stood up and said, "Choose for me, O Rasulullaah!" Rasulullaah ﷺ said, "Go to Shaam; and whoever refuses, let him go to Yemen, and let him drink from its water, for Allaah has assured (secured) Shaam and its people for me." (Abu Dawood no. 2483)

5.) Abu Darda' رضي الله عنه related that Rasulullaah ﷺ said, "The people of Shaam up until the furthest point of the peninsula, along with their spouses, children and servants, from Shaam, both men and women, are in *ribat* (guarding the frontiers) in the path of Allaah. Whoever occupies any land therein is in *ribat*. Whoever occupies any frontier therein from the many frontiers is in jihad."[3] (Fadhail Shaam wa Dimishq no. 19, Tareekh Dimishq of Ibn Asaakir vol. 1 page 282)

VIRTUE OF SHAAM OVER IRAQ

6.) Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه relates that a former maidservant of his approached him and said, "Life has become difficult (she was struggling to meet ends) and I intend to move to Iraq." He said, "Why not to Shaam, the land of resurrection? Bear patience O

[3] *Ribat* means standing in guard of the borderlines, at the places feared to be attacked by the enemies, and a *muraabit* is the person garrisoned there who has dedicated himself to defending Islam and the Muslims. So, it seems that the people of Shaam will continue defending Islam and the Muslims.

foolish one, for I heard Rasulullaah ﷺ say, "Whoever patiently bears the difficulties and hardships of Madinah, I will testify-or he said-intercede for him on the Day of Judgement." (Tirmidhi no. 3918)

ABDAALS ARE IN SHAAM

7.) Ali ibn Abi Talib رضي الله عنه narrates, "I heard Rasulullaah ﷺ say, "The Abdaal will be in Shaam. They are 40 men; whenever one of them passes away, Allaah replaces him with another man. It is through their du'aas that water will come through rain, enemies will be defeated, and punishment will be withheld from the people of Shaam." (Musnad Ahmad no. 896)

GOODNESS IS IN SHAAM

8.) Abdullaah ibn Mas'ood رضي الله عنه said, "Allaah divided goodness into ten parts, assigning nine parts to Shaam, and one part to the rest of the lands. And He divided evil into ten parts, assigning one part to Shaam, and nine parts to the rest of the lands." (Tareekh Dimishq of ibn Asaakir vol. 1 page 155)

9.) Mu'awiyah ibn Qurrah narrates from his father that Rasulullaah said, "When the people of Shaam are destroyed, there is no goodness in you. There will always be a group of my Ummah on the truth, who will be dominant over people till the Day of Judgement." (Musnad Bazzaar no. 3303)

IMAAN IS IN SHAAM

10.) Abdullah ibn Amr رضي الله عنه narrates that Rasulullaah ﷺ said, "I saw (in a dream) a pillar of the book (Islam) was taken from underneath my pillow and I looked and there was a light shining in

the direction toward Shaam. Verily faith at the time of turmoil is in Shaam." (Musnad Ahmad no. 17775)

11.) Salamah ibn Nufayl رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ relates that Rasulullaah صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said, "The heart (most secure) of the believer's lands is Shaam." (Nasai no. 3561)

THE LAND OF RESURRECTION

12.) Abu Dharr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ narrates that Rasulullaah صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said, "Shaam is the land of gathering and resurrection."[4] (Musnad Bazzaar no. 3965)

[4] Imam Munawi explains, "Shaam is the place where the people will be gathered for the reckoning. They will be resurrected from their graves then they will be driven to that land. It has been singled out for this because it is the land of which Allaah said, 'The land which We have blessed for the whole universe.'" Most of the Ambiya were sent to that land and their laws spread throughout the world, so it is appropriate that it should be the land of the gathering and the resurrection.""

TORTURE IN THE PRISONS

The second book I read was called “Just five minutes” in which an innocent lady writes how she was imprisoned and tortured for nine years in the prisons of the Alawite government. This was between 1980 to 1989. She was told she will be taken in for five minutes, but remained in jail in the most harrowing of conditions. Below are some extracts from the book. The object is to get an idea what oppression was meted out to people by the previous regime.

1. I hadn’t slept for days. I could no longer focus on the faces around me, on the sounds of the officers swearing, name calling and cursing, or on the sounds of pain that echoed throughout the prison. Sounds spun together in my head. Everything blurred. A couple of minutes later, they brought me back into the room. They wanted me to watch. They want to terrify me into confession. Khairbek and about four other men tortured the young prisoner with whips, sticks, cables, and electrocution devices. One of the men was called Abdul Aziz Thalja. Thalja was huge, monstrously huge. A young man probably still in his teens also participated in the torture. I later came to know that young man well. His name was Hussain. He was a soldier from the town of Daraa.

I never found out the name of the young prisoner they tortured that day or why they tortured him. I only remember that throughout his torture session he continued yelling the same thing over and over again: “I swear to God it wasn’t me. It wasn’t me.” But in the end, he gave in. He confessed to the murder of an officer, probably thinking his confession would end the torture. But the torture did not end. The torture not only continued, but became even more brutal. I could not stand to see or hear anymore.

“Why am I here?” I cried out to the guard beside me. “I don’t know. Why are you here? Why don’t you ask them?” He smiled.

“I don’t want to ask them. I have nothing to confess. Why are they making me watch this man’s torture?”

“I don’t know. I have nothing to do with any of this,” he shrugged casually.

The torture went on for another half hour. When they finished with the prisoner, they chained his wrists and ankles, picked up his bruised and bloody body and carried him out of the room. They made me follow to watch the grand finale. Officer Thalja dragged the man to the top of the stairs and with one powerful kick sent the young man tumbling down. The prisoner groaned as he bumped and banged against each step. “Put him in solitary confinement.”

2. Hajja Madeeha was a well-known lady from Aleppo and in her forties. She led many religion classes for women, although she herself couldn’t read or write. She harboured members of the Ikhwan on the government’s list of “wanted criminals”. One day, she stepped out of her house to deliver a letter. The Mukhabarat caught and arrested her. They had discovered her ties to the Ikhwan through a government informant who had infiltrated the Ikhwan. His name was Samih Kiyalee. The officers took her to the Mukhabarat’s security division. Hajja Madeeha infuriated the head of the division, Omar Hameeda.

She withstood severe and continuous torture to give the men time to escape from the hideout. She made a pact with the men that if she was ever arrested, she would hold off from confession for a certain period of time, long enough for them to escape.

Hameeda was on to her game. He decided to make her pay dearly for such criminal courage. Hameeda grabbed a pair of scissors and

snipped off the tip of Hajja Madeeha's tongue. But the tongue snipping was not the worst of Hameeda's plans for Hajja Madeeha. During her interrogation, Hameeda stripped Hajja Madeeha naked, tied her arms behind her back and hung her upside down from the ceiling. He hollered and cursed and beat her. When Hajja Madeeha thought that the Mukhabarat could do no more, Hameeda ordered an officer to bring in Hajja Madeeha's younger brother. They shoved him into the room where his sister hung naked and bloody.

"Do you know who this is?" Hameeda asked the young man.

"No. I can't tell. Who is it?"

"It's your sister, Madeeha."

Hajja Madeeha's brother blacked out and dropped to the ground.

Officers dragged him back to his cell and left him unconscious. Hajja Madeeha's torture continued for hours until she decided that she had given the men enough time to escape. She confessed and led the Mukhabarat to her house. The officers found remnants of the men's belongings in the hideout.

Hameeda dragged Hajja Madeeha back to the division in a fit of fury. He swore to cut off the tongue that deceived him. He did. Hajja Madeeha recovered quickly; her tongue grew back. Years later, Hajja Madeeha met the manager of civil prisons. He said to her, "We cut off your tongue so that you'd stop talking so much, but from what I see, you grew it back longer than ever."

After one month at the security division, the Mukhabarat transferred Hajja Madeeha to Kafar Suseh Prison, along with several other women. She wasn't lucky enough to be from the group they decided to release, the group they felt they no longer had use to detain. Among the lucky ones was Sana, a young girl who

was like a daughter to Hajja Madeeha and who had lived with her in an apartment with several other students.

The police also released a woman, whom we knew as Abd Alqadir's wife, and her mother. Abd-Alqadir's wife was sixteen and a newlywed. The Mukhabarat arrested Abd-Alqadir after retrieving information against him from Samih Kiyalee, the informant. The interrogators tortured Abd-Alqadir for information on the location of the Ikhwan base he managed. Hameeda ordered for Abd-Alqadir's wife to be brought to the police division. Hameeda allowed officers to rape Abd-Alqadir's wife and forced Abd-Alqadir to watch. Hameeda ordered Abd-Alqadir's transfer to Tadmur Prison, where he was later murdered in a massacre. After his death, they released his wife. She was no longer of any use.

3. During that period of our imprisonment, the guards treated the men in horrifying ways. Everyday, they shipped a new group of men to Tadmur Prison. The person responsible for assembling the shipment to Tadmur was Abu Talal. He arrived at the men's cells before dawn everyday, pounded on the cell door like a lunatic and called out twenty to thirty names. The men lined up in the dark. Abu Talal handcuffed each two together from their hands and feet.

Some of the men faced their destinies with courage, but not every man could. Some screamed and pleaded. Some vomited. Some wet their pants. Others fell unconscious. The guards dragged the men across the prison floor, all the way to the vehicles that awaited them at the gates.

We heard everything that went on in the men's cells after dawn.

We listened and cried and prayed. We could do nothing but cry and pray. They replaced every group of men transferred to Tadmur Prison with three or four more groups of prisoners. During those

days, the guards stuffed the cells until the cells looked ready to explode with men. They did not care about cell capacity or breathing space and when they couldn't possibly fit another man into any of the cells, they resorted to stuffing men into the washrooms.

4. As time went by, my troubles continued to pile up. I began to feel deep pain in my back. The pain intensified day by day and just when I thought I could no longer bear it, the diarrhoea and vomiting began.

It all started one day when I felt as if I was slipping away, slowly dying. I slept next to the heating pipes, which blew in cool air. Water condensed on the pipes and added humidity to the cool air, but I had no choice in my place of sleep. By now, the cell was packed beyond any humane limits. Each woman's share consisted of half a tile. If one of us wanted to turn over, everyone had to turn over. I didn't notice the cold air that blew over my body at first, but one day I just found my back unable to budge and the diarrhoea and vomiting followed soon after. That day, the women all banged on the cell door and begged the guards to bring a doctor for me. The guards paid no attention. Aysha, who was a doctor, pleaded with them to at least bring us a plastic bowl. She pleaded and begged until they gave in and brought her one. After two days of continuous warm water baths, my pain began to ease.

5. Hajja Riyad told us what the Mukhabarat did to her in Aleppo. They did to her what they did to most of the women arrested in Aleppo. Officer Omar Hameeda stripped her down to her bare skin. He dragged her by her hair along the floor and banged her head on the floor and wall, breaking her nose and

causing her irreparable breathing difficulties. We realized that was why she snored so loudly at night. Hajja Riyad fainted, but Hameeda was not done with her. Hameeda brought a powerful hose and sprayed her face with cold water. The spray of the hose was so powerful that it got into her ears and burst one of her eardrums. Her burst eardrum brought a blessing. She slept on her good ear and couldn't hear her own snoring, the snoring that tormented the rest of us every night. Sometimes when we couldn't take it anymore, we woke her up and asked her to change her position so that maybe we could get an hour's worth of quiet. Hameeda also plied out Hajja Riyad's nails. Even after her transfer to Kafar Suseh Prison, Hajja Riyad's nails hadn't grown back. For a long time, her fingertips consisted of dark, purplish-blue bruises without nails. After plying out her nails, breaking her nose and bursting her eardrum, Hameeda positioned Hajja Riyad in the corner of a room and called to her, "Come here you cow, come here cow," and motioned to her with his hand to come. Hajja Riyad couldn't hear his words, but responded to his motioning and crawled to him. When she reached him, Hameeda along with the rest of the officers exploded into laughter. Hameeda leaned down and spoke into her good ear, "So, you know that your name is cow."

These are just a few glimpses. Young children as well as old people were not spared. Nearly every family has some close person who was arrested, killed or tortured. Till today, there are hundreds of thousands of people whose destiny is not known. Recently a mass grave was found by one of the prisons. Between sixty thousand to one hundred thousand bodies are estimated to be to therein.

ARRIVAL – DAY ONE

After arriving, we paid for our visa which was 75 dollars, and then proceeded to fetch our luggage, before leaving the airport. We were received by Abul Khair, a former South African brother, who migrated to Shaam and Malik Abu Hibban, a Syrian brother originally from Hama. They brought us to the hotel. On the way, we saw many construction projects which is being undertaken at the moment. The effects of destruction can be seen from the road, as the airport is in Ghootah which was severely affected.

Damascus is a highly populated city. Many scholars believe that, among the ancient cities of the world, Damascus is perhaps the oldest continuously inhabited. Located in the south-western corner of the country, it has been called the "pearl of the East," praised for its beauty and lushness; the 10th-century traveller and geographer Al-Maqdisi lauded the city as ranking among the four earthly paradises.

We reached our hotel room, ate and rested. Thereafter, we went to Jamiya Umayyad Dimishq (The Great Mosque of Damascus).

Before reaching there, we had to pass the Al-Hamidiyeh Souq. This is the largest and the central market place in Syria, located inside the old walled city of Damascus next to the Citadel. The souq is about 600 metres long and 15 metres wide, and is covered by a 10-metre (33 ft) tall metal arch. The souq starts at Al-Thawra Street and ends at the Umayyad Masjid plaza, and the ancient Roman Temple of Jupiter stands 40 feet tall in its entrance.

History

The souq dates back to the Ottoman era and was built along the axis of the Roman route to the Temple of Jupiter around 1780 during the reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid I, and later extended during the reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid II. Nowadays it is one of the most popular shopping districts in Syria, being lined with hundreds of clothes emporiums, shops selling traditional crafts and jewellery, cafés, grocery stores, food stalls, and ice cream parlours. Bakdash is a landmark ice cream parlour in this souq. It was established in 1885, and is famous for its mastic frozen dairy dessert called booza.

Just outside the wall of the masjid is the grave of Abu Darda[i] رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُ and some say of his wife. There is a masjid there, but it was closed. Nearby is the grave of Salaahuddin Ayyubi رَحِمَهُ ٱللَّهُ[ii], the great conqueror of Islam. Next to his grave is the grave of Shaikh Muhammad Said Ramadhan Al-Bouti, who was known to be a great Sunni scholar, but who backed the Alawite regime against the opposition. He was killed in a bomb blast in a masjid in 2013, but there is many views as to who would benefit by his assassination.

In one area of the souk, we were taken to the grave of Nuruddin Zengi رَحِمَهُ ٱللَّهُ.[iii] Nuruddin (1118–1174) was a visionary ruler of the Zengid dynasty who laid the groundwork for the eventual recapture of Jerusalem. Famous for his piety and military acumen, he united Muslim forces across Syria and established networks of hospitals, schools, and mosques before mentoring the legendary Saladin.

Nearby is a madrasah called Darul-Hadeeth An-Nuriyah, built by Nuruddin Zengi for Ibn Asaakir. Historians state that this was the first ever madrasah built especially for the lessons of Hadeeth.

Nuruddin himself would attend the lessons of Ibn Asaakir. Ibn Asaakir's son taught after him, and great other muhadditheen also taught here, like Allamah Mizzi, etc. The details mentioned in the books regarding this place shows that it was quite huge, but now it seems that it is incorporated in the adjoining buildings.

Thereafter, we went to perform Asr salaah at the Umayyad Masjid. This is one of the earliest surviving stone masjids, built between 705 and 715 by the Umayyad Caliph al-Waleed, who proclaimed to his citizens, "People of Damascus, four things give you a marked superiority over the rest of the world: your climate, your water, your fruits, and your baths. To these I add a fifth: this masjid."

An archaeologist said, "The Umayyad Mosque is among the most important Islamic landmarks in the world. It is, in fact, the only comprehensive monument that remains untouched from the era of Umayyad rule and the oldest Islamic building that is still conserved as is, without major modifications, since it was first erected centuries ago."
Built in the early eighth century, the Umayyad Mosque was the first mosque to include an alcove, reminiscent of its Christian origins. It features the first minaret in Islam, al-Arous, a square minaret, the model that became widespread in mosques in southern Spain and North Africa.

The spot where the mosque stands originally had a temple dedicated to the Aramaean idol Hadad about 3,000 years ago. When the Romans ruled Damascus, a temple was built for the worship of Jupiter. It became a Christian church dedicated to John the Baptist in the Byzantine era.

Before the construction of the mosque, Muslims and Christians shared the building for worship, each praying in different sections of the structure. The collective use was stopped under the reign of Walid, when the prayer space became inadequate both in terms of capacity and the need for an architectural monument to represent Islam.

The caliph negotiated with Christian leaders to take over the space and, in return, promised that all other churches in the city would be safe.

The mosque occupies a huge quadrangle 515 by 330 feet (157 by 100 metres) and contains a large open courtyard surrounded by an arcade of arches supported by slender columns. The hall of worship, running the length of the south side of the mosque, is divided into three long aisles by rows of columns and arches. The marble grilles that cover the windows in the south wall are the earliest example of geometric interlace in Islamic architecture. The walls of the mosque were once covered with more than an acre of mosaics depicting a fanciful landscape thought to be the Qur'aanic paradise, but only fragments survive.[5] The mosque was destroyed by Timur in 1401, rebuilt by the Arabs, and damaged by fire in 1893. Although it could not be restored to its original splendour, the mosque is still an impressive architectural monument.

[5] Still too, they are in the Guinness Book of Records for the biggest mosaics in the world.

Some amazing aspects of the masjid:

1. Double adhaan – At the time of Zuhr, we heard the adhaan being given with an echo after it. As Asr time, one of the guides of the masjid appointed by the government, took us into the adhaan room. Six muadhins sit before a loudspeaker inside the masjid to collectively call out the adhaan that can be heard across the ancient quarters of the Syrian capital. They are among 25 muadhins who take shifts intoning the adhaan in groups, using a technique of collective recital that is unique to the centuries-old mosque. The one muadhin starts the adhaan, with five other muadhins chanting along in unison, using the technique known as Al-Jawq. It yields a unique sound when it rises from the Umayyad Mosque, which sends out the adhaan from three towering minarets overlooking the capital.

2. Baitul Maal – This refers to the central public treasury in early Islamic history. In the courtyard of the Umayyad Mosque (Great Mosque) of Damascus, this historically manifests as the Qubbat al-Khazna (Dome
of the Treasury), a stunning, mosaic-decorated octagonal structure raised on eight Roman columns. Commissioned during the Umayyad Caliphate by Al-Walid I between 705 and 715 CE, the structure offers a fascinating look into early Islamic history and architecture:

- Architectural Marvel: It is an elevated, octagonal building supported by antique columns, making it a distinct landmark in the masjid's sprawling marble courtyard.
- Original Function: Historically, this dome was used as a secure, secondary vault within the masjid complex to house

the state's wealth, community endowments (*waqf*), and specific tax revenues.

- Decorative Elements: The exterior is covered in intricate, multi-coloured glass mosaics on a gold background—a hallmark of the Byzantine artisans commissioned by the Umayyads to beautify Damascus.

3. There are three minarets in this masjid.
    a) The Minaret of the Bride (Ma'dhanah –Al-Uroos), as seen from the courtyard of the masjid complex, with dome of the treasury to the left, is the oldest of the three minarets. On one of the slabs, it bears the replica of a Sundial built by Ibn Shattir, which was used to calculate salaah timings. It was most likely built during the reign of the Caliph Ma'moon in 831 CE.
    b) The Minaret of Isa (Ma'dhanah Isa) to the right and Quba an-Nisr to the left, reaching 253 feet (77 meters) in height, it is the tallest of the mosque's three minarets. The square-shaped main body of the minaret is crowned by an octagonal spire, tapering to a point and surmounted by a crescent. Some sources claim it was originally built by the Abbasids in the 9th century, while other sources attribute the original structure to the Umayyads. The main body of the current minaret was built by the Ayyubids in 1247, but the upper section was constructed by the Ottomans.
    c) The Western Minaret (Ma'dhanah al-Gharbiyya) is also known as the "Minaret of the Qaitbey" as it was built by Mamluk sultan Qaitbay in 1488. The Western Minaret displays strong Islamic-era Egyptian architectural influence typical of the Mamluk period. The minaret is octagonal in shape and is built in receding sections with three galleries.

It is generally believed that both the Minaret of Isa and the Western Minaret were built on the foundation of Ancient Roman towers (temenos), but some scholars find this to be questionable because of the absence of corner towers in other former Roman temples.

White minaret - According to some people, the white minaret upon which Isa عَلَيْهِ ٱلسَّلَامُ will descend is the eastern minaret of the Umayyad Masjid. However, looking at all the ahadeeth regarding the descent of Isa عَلَيْهِ ٱلسَّلَامُ, it is not mentioned that it will be the white minaret of the Jaami Masjid or any other masjid. The narrations merely mention that Isa will descend by the white minaret on the eastern side of Damascus.

Ibn Katheer in Al-Bidaayah Wan-Nihaayah states that he saw in some book that Isa will descend on the white minaret on the eastern side of the Umayyad Masjid. It is possible he took it from Ibnul-Arabi who wrote this in Futuhaate-Makkiyah, without giving any proof or reference. He also wrote that Isa will descend at the time of Asr whereas the ahaadeeth state it will be at the time of Fajr.

4.) Inside the masjid is the grave of the head of Yahya عَلَيْهِ ٱلسَّلَامُ or John the Baptist. There is a raised platform in which it is mentioned that Imam Ghazali رَحِمَهُ ٱللَّهُ and other great scholars taught. There is also a Qur'aan, which is regarded as the largest in the world. It took over 20 years to write. A piece of the ghilaaf of the Ka'bah is also here. It was gifted to the president after the recent revolution.
There are four mihraabs in the masjid. Before, the four imams of each mazhab would perform salaah there with his followers. There

is also a raised platform in the back, in which the caliph would sit, so that he would be protected from the attacks of enemies.

5.) In the western side of Jami Umayyad of Damascus, Imam Ghazali made itikaaf. Hafiz Hadeeth Allamah Ibn Asaakir used to make a khatm of Quran every week here during the year, and a complete khatm every day in Ramadhan. He used to make itikaaf in the eastern section of the Masjid. This was his practise for forty years. (Tadhkiratul Huffaaz vol. 4 page 1332, Mukhtasar Tareekh Dimishq vol. 1 page 10)

After performing Maghrib, we returned to our hotel, and after Esha, we rested.

DAY TWO

We had breakfast after Fajr and then rested.

In the morning, we went to Ghootah. Rasulullaah ﷺ has made mention of this area in some ahaadeeth.

Sayyiduna Abu Darda رضي الله عنه related that Rasulullaah ﷺ said, “Indeed the place of refuge/ stronghold of the Muslims on the day of massacre [during the fitnah of Dajjal etc.] is in Ghouta, near a city called Damascus, this from the best of the cities of Shaam.” (Abu Dawood no. 4298)

Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه relates that he heard Rasulullaah ﷺ say, “When the epic wars will erupt, Allaah will raise a group of servants from Damascus who will be the noblest of Arab horsemen, and the best equipped. Allaah will strengthen the religion through them.”

This area is right next to Damascus. In 2011 to 2016, for five years, it was under siege. Nothing could come in and out. Food had to be smuggled in.

Every three minutes, a bomb would hit the place. Barrel bombs would be thrown into the areas. It would have within it glass, shrapnel, etc. Many people would get injured. On one major street, a bomb was thrown which contained acid. Three thousand people, mainly children, passed away as a result of this bombing. They would suffocate to death. They could not breathe due to the acid. People would see them in the hospital gasping for air on the floor. We saw some buildings completely destroyed, others still standing, but not liveable. The freedom fighters had tunnels under the road where they would hide and conduct operations. Eventually after

five years, a truce was made and all the inhabitants were banished. They moved to other areas north.

After the liberation, many people are moving back to the liveable areas. Lots of restoration is taking place. It seems that every building was damaged in this siege.

The amazing thing is that at the end of Ghootah Damascus starts. It's just one road away. There people were living normal lives, as though nothing was happening.

Thereafter, we went to the graveyard called Babus-Sagheer.

Visiting of graves is for different reasons:

1.) The main objective is remembrance of death and the Hereafter – Seeing graves without knowing the inhabitants is sufficient for this purpose.

2.) Supplication for the deceased – This is sunnah for deceased Muslims only.

3.) Gaining blessings – This is from the graves of the pious, because they are engaged in certain works in the life of Barzakh which causes countless blessings to descend on their graves. However, one cannot make du'aa to them, or even ask them for du'aas, as this is not established for the deceased awliya.

4.) Fulfilment of rights – Visiting graves of parents, friends, teachers and those who are a cause of benefit for us are included here.

5.) Granting happiness to the deceased – This is when one visits someone he loved in this world. The person in the grave feels comfort and joy when the person visits him.

We saw the graves of:

1. Sayyidina Muawiya رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ[iv]
2. Ibn Asaakir just outside the graveyard

3. Walid ibn Abdul Malik and Abdul Malik ibn Marwaan, two Umayyad Caliphs

4. Ibn Qayyum Jawziyah رَحِمَهُ ٱللَّهُ

5. Abdullah ibn Umm Makhtoom رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُ[v] (muadhin of Rasulullaah صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ)

6. Bilal رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُ[vi]

7. Three wives of Nabi صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - Hafsah, Umme Habeeba and Umm Salamah رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ (This can be disputed as it is famous that they are buried in Baqi'.)

8. Allamah Shaami رَحِمَهُ ٱللَّهُ الثَّلَّاثَاء author of the famous book Raddul-Muhtaar or Shaami, which is used by Hanafi muftis throughout the world.

9. Allamah Haskafi رَحِمَهُ ٱللَّهُ (the author of Durrul-Mukhtaar, which is the text of Raddul-Muhtaar) and Abdul Hakeem Afgani رَحِمَهُ ٱللَّهُ, shaarih of Kanzud Daqaaiq

10. Son of Jafar Sadiq رَحِمَهُ ٱللَّهُ

11. Asma binte Umais, the wife of Jafar Tayyar, Abu Bakr and Ali رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ

12. Sayyida Maymoonah, daughter of Hasan رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ

13. Hameedah granddaughter of Muslim bin Aqeel

14. Martyrs' of Karbala - over 10 members

Outside of the graveyard is the grave of Abdullah ibn Zainul Aabideen, the great grandson of Rasulullaah صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ.

Allamah ibn Taymiyah رَحِمَهُ ٱللَّهُ is buried in the historical Sufi Cemetery (Maqbarat al-Sufiyyah) in Damascus, Syria. The cemetery is situated near Bab al-Nasr (Gate of Victory), adjacent to the old campus of the Syrian University (now Damascus University)

and the National Hospital. He was buried here alongside other prominent scholars, including Ibnus-Salah رَحِمَهُ ٱللَّهُ and later Ibn Katheer رَحِمَهُ ٱللَّهُ.

Every five years, graves are opened and people are reburied.

There is a madrasah across the road, named after a Moroccan Alim Muhammad Badruddeen Hussaini There are 1400 students from throughout the world boarding there and learning.

Thereafter, we proceeded to Mount Qasiyoon.

Mount Qasiyoon is a towering 1,151-meter-high mountain overlooking Damascus, Syria.

This is a very historical mountain. According to some famous historical reports, after coming to the earth, Adam and Hawwa عَلَيۡهِ ٱلسَّلَامُ lived here.

The first killing in the world where Qaabil killed Haabil took place here.

So the first human to die and the first corpse was of Haabil. At that time, man did not know what to do with the deceased body. Allaah جَلَّ جَلَالُهُ sent a crow with another dead crow. It dig a hole and buried the dead crow. So Qaabil learnt from this bird how to bury his brother. So the first grave in the world would also be in Qasiyoon. Check. Some say that Habeel is buried 40 kilometres away from here. And Allaah جَلَّ جَلَالُهُ knows best.

Others say that the incident of the killing took place near Makkah Mukarramah whilst others state it was in South Yemen.

Ibn Asaakir has mentioned many historical narrations in Tareekh Dimishq, which states that there is a cave called Magharatud Dam

(Cave of blood), since the incident of the killing took place a bit above this cave.

In the time of Muawiyah and Umar ibn Abdul Azeez, the clear signs of blood was there and this was famous. Kab Ahbar said, "The bright red found on the mountain is the sign of the blood of Haabil. Allaah جَلَّجَلَالُهُ has preserved it till today, as a sign of (the innocent and pious) Haabil. (Tareekh Dimishq vol. 2 page 329, 331 to 338.)

According to Ibn Asaakir, Ilyaas hid in this cave for ten years, to save himself from the oppressive king of that time. After that king died, Ilyaas went to the next ruler and invited him to Islam, which he accepted as well as the vast majority of his subjects.

He also states that at the cave where the blood is, Yahya عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ and his mother stayed there for forty years. Isa عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ and his hawariyyen (disciples) performed salaah there.

Another narration stated by him is that the residence of Ibrahim عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ was also somewhere on this mountain.

In the Qur'aan Kareem, Allaah جَلَّجَلَالُهُ states,

وَآوَيْنَاهُمَا إِلَى رَبْوَةٍ ذَاتِ قَرَارٍ وَمَعِينٍ

And We gave them refuge by a hillock, which was a place of staying and flowing water. (Ambiya verse 50)

Some state that this place is in Ramlah, and some state it is in Egypt. However, Ibn Abbaas رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ states with a saheeh sanad that Damascus is meant. Another narration states Ghutah. The beginning portion of this mountain is actually in Ghootah, which is right next to Damascus.

It is also the site of the Maqam al-Arba'in (Shrine of the Forty), a small masjid built over the cave featuring prayer niches for the 40 arch-saints (Abdaal) believed to spiritually guard Damascus.

Thereafter, we came back to hotel, read Zuhr and then rested after lunch. We went to see a maktab. Alhamdulillah this is one of ten maktabs run by Abul Khair, financed by different South Africans. This particular maktab had about 120 boys and more than 300 girls. The boys had a small Jalsah in the masjid for the guests. After Asr, we were taken downstairs to see the girls section. They also prepared for us a Jalsah, but we declined to enter. Some small girls were brought forward to recite Quraan. We were then requested to give advice to the girls and teachers, but we excused ourselves. This maktab is only running two months, but Alhamdulillah it pleased the heart to see the effort being made here. There is a need for many more such Makatib. The cost is minimal with an ustadh salary being 100 dollars a month. Brother Abul-Khair has intention to start an imam-khateeb course which will be for a year. It will cost about a million rands to run for one year, which is extremely cheap.

After Asr salaah, came back to hotel. An hour later, we went to a school which the old regime had created for the children of 'martyrs' (oppressors). Bashar had a special place in his heart for this school and came here a few times. Now Alhamdulillah it has become a school and madrasah for the children of the freedom fighters children who want to give their children a good deeni education. At the present moment, the government doesn't have enough resources for education, so the old educational system is still running, with few changes. In-sha Allaah, as time progresses, it will become more Islamically orientated.

We performed our Maghrib salaah there and had supper with some muhajireen. One was an American brother and there were

two U.K. brothers who were originally from Palestine. They had migrated to Syria to assist the freedom fighters.
In great detail, one of the brothers explained to us the history of Syria, and how eventually the oppressive regime was toppled leading to the present government.

A few points mentioned by him was:

- After the khilafat, the French ruled for a while, and then many military coups took place. Hafiz Asad was in charge of the army. Eventually he too made a coup and came into power. When he passed away, his son Bashar came into power. In the beginning, he made concessions. People thought he was better, but after some time, he started doing similar acts like his father. In 2011, there was an uprising. Some children wrote some graffiti against him. They were taken in and tortured. When the parents went to look for their children, they were told. “You won't see them again. Make other children. If you want, I can help you to make them.”
- Protests started in different places. In the beginning, people asked for concessions, but as time went on, it became more.
- The Alawites only controlled Damascus properly at that time, whilst over 80 percent of the country was held by the freedom fighters. The nizaam would take siege of one place. They would continue bombing the people and deprive them of good, etc, until eventually they would be forced to go to another area. The people would be put in green busses and send them away. It was a sign of humiliation. They would come and spit in their faces, remove the hijab from the women and send them away. They possessed extreme hatred for the Ahlus Sunnah.

- Isis played a major role in weakening the position of the liberation fighters. They would murder people and send out videos. This led to international condemnation of them. They were experts in media. They managed to encourage many foreigners to come and fight for them. Their view was that it was more important to fight against people who were not of their view than against the disbelievers. They would say that these people are murtad (renegades). The Americans and others attacked these groups and many were imprisoned, whilst others ran to some pockets to the east of Syria. The regime would actually allow some of these people to pass through their areas because they knew that they would blow themselves up on the freedom fighters and their areas. Many of these Isis people are so firm on their beliefs and views till now. Many of their men were killed or are in prison. The freedom fighters tried to assist the women folk and while helping them they still say, "You are kuffaar." They are a group of the Khawarij. Some of these people even left Islam.

- Iran, Russia and Hizbullah all helped the Assad regime to keep control. Hizbullah had one of the biggest forces. If the freedom fighters had forty thousand, the group from Hizbullah[6] had sixty thousand. This group came from Lebanon to secure the regime.

Lot of drugs were manufactured in Syria. This was one of the regime's biggest earning. The drugs reached Europe and America as well. The new leadership has Alhamdulillah destroyed all of this. Till now, they are still finding factories where this drugs were

[6] This person did not call them Hizbullaah, but Hizbullat (the army of Laat which was an idol) or Hizbush-Shaytaan, because of the harm they caused to the Sunni Muslims.

manufactured. It was such a level that a watermelon is being transported to Lebanon. When they open it, they find this drug in there. Even in children's toys, etc. these drugs were found. The local people were very affected by these drugs. Drugs were found even in the refugee camps. Soldiers on the front lines were given drugs so that they have no fear and attack the Muslim army.

Sdf was used by Americans to fight Isis. Americans did not use their own forces.

- Jowlani was originally in Iraq fighting for a group called the Islamic State of Iraq. People were not too happy with this group. They were killing people unnecessarily. Then there was a need to send someone to Syria. Adnaani was sent, but he was too hard, so then Jowlani was sent in his place. 2012/2013. People liked him.

Baghdadi wasn't happy. He said that he is the Ameer. But Jowlani did not want the matter to go as it was in Iraq. He said that he would speak to their Ameer. When they spoke to him, he spoke in favour of Jowlani. Baghdadi was upset and said, “Both countries are one and I am the Ameer.” At that point, it seems Isis was formed. The mujaahideen were confused. Some didn't want to fight against them saying that they are our brothers, others left the war altogether. Until now, they are causing harm in Syria. They are small in number, but still cause great harm. They swear and speak ill of Jowlani till now.

- In 2019, the freedom fighters start losing more ground. Only had Idlib and surrounding areas. The Turks did not want the Kurds there. So they defended their land. Turkey made an offer to Syria, but Bashar did not accept due to his pride. If they accepted, it would have been difficult for the freedom fighters. The general Turkish people were against the Syrian people. This led to problems

in Turkey for Erdogan. Erdogan lost one of his big stronghold. That is why he was prepared to strike a deal with Bashaar.

- The takeover took lot of planning.

Mines were on the front line. For many months, the freedom fighters made effort to overcome them. There were mines all over. The freedom fighters had their engineers. At night or when there was foggy weather, they would go there, undo the mine and place another mine there which was a dud but looked exactly the same. When the regime would come and inspect it the next day, it would seem like nothing was touched.

Brothers were getting upset as to why the leadership was not allowing them to fight. The leadership said we have the ability to start the battle, but not the ability to defend ourselves.

We thought we will reach Halab in six months. We never expected to take over the whole country. Once we crossed the front-line, we just continued moving forward. There were a day force and night force. On group would rest during the day and continue moving forward at night. The other group would rest at night and continue during the day. There was no time for the regime forces to build up a line against us.

Some brothers were sent around the desert. There was fighting in some areas, but Damascus was a walkover.

- When the freedom fighters were taking over, the Russians asked us, “How long will it take to take over Damascus?” After consultation, we said, “One week.” However, the brother speaking on the phone said, “One day.” Allaah made it such. The Russians said, “We will leave our bases.” The Syrian regime brothers were told to return home.

- Allaah جَلَّجَلَالُهُ created awe in the hearts of the enemy forces. One brother did not know the road. He passed the checkpoint in Damascus. They were so overcome with awe that they left him even though he was alone.
- In one of speeches, Bashaar said, “A true leader will never abandon his country.” However, he left all his people. Had taken lots of money from before and left in the banks of Russia. He deceived his people. He told them to prepare a speech that everything is under control, and he will deliver it. When they went to look for him, he had already fled.
- Some of the other criminals of the regime are being caught at the moment.
- As soon as the army took over, Israel started bombing immediately. They were given the locations of the weapons, fighter jets by the previous regime. There was extremely intense bombing. All the weapons were destroyed. So the new regime started with no power at all.

The Syrian freedom fighters have no power to repel them. At the present moment, we are trying to get the country stable. We need investments from foreign countries so that there is force from outside countries that there must be no attacks from Israel, etc. We are now trying to rebuild. Israel wants a reaction. They aggravate us. If we respond, then they will bomb us.

- Many of the soldiers of the previous regime were forced into conscription. They were coerced that if they do not do so, their family will be harmed or locked up. That is why we forgave them and there was general amnesty.
- Many sincere brothers are not happy after the conquest because of fear of fitnah. There is competition for Dunya, and this is natural.

There is fear of falling into fitnah of status, wealth and women. Now we feel so different. In jihad, lot of patience was needed. Now, in ease, there is another test. Allaah says, “We will test you in difficult and easy conditions.”

We asked this brother if he had seen anything amazing during his years of preparing and fighting.
He mentioned,
a.) One brother was very sickly, suffering greatly. He had no family and was not married. After two years of suffering, decided to go and get martyrdom. He was eventually the only person fighting on the front. We brought his body to headquarters. We could get the smell of musk from him. One brother was actually taking the musk from him and putting in a bottle.
b.) Bombs were coming down. Three bombs came on the ceiling of the warehouse in which we were. We could see the army from the window. They were so close. Three bombs on the ceiling did not blow. All around us blew. If even one blew, we would be no more.
c.) We were so outnumbered in the early days. On a few occasions, rockets were blowing up around us. However, brothers were sitting with so much of contentment and peace, laughing and joking.
d.) A car exploded, when it went over a mine. A fighter was burnt completely. I was shocked by his Imaan. He was reciting the verse, “This is what Allaah and his Rasul promised us, and Allaah and His Rasul spoke the truth.” Then the vehicle transporting him to safety met in an accident and he as well as those assisting him passed away.
e.) Another miracle is that people earned so little but would still manage.
After performing Esha, we returned to our hotel.

DAY THREE

Performed Fajr, had a short program in the musallaah. Left about 10 o clock for Alleppo (Halab). At about 12 30 pm, we entered Homs.

The grave of Khalid bin Waleed[vii] is here.

We performed Zuhr at the Masjid and then went to his grave at the back of the Masjid where his son is buried next to him. He also participated in the battles with his father. Nearby is the grave of Ubaidullah ibn Umar, the son of Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ. He was a very brave person as well.

The whole area near and around the Masjid is badly bombed. The Alawite and Christian areas nearby is completely untouched. This area was under siege and the Sunnis had to leave. After the liberation, they are now returning. The area which was like a ghost town is now becoming alive.

The first place where effort is made is the Masjid. The Masjid of Khalid bin Walid was very badly bombed. It is still under construction.

Thereafter we went to the Kateeb graveyard, where approximately 70 Badri Sahabah are buried and many other Sahabah. However, it is only opened on Fridays.

Brief history: Nationwide anti-government protests began in March 2011, and clashes between security forces and protestors in Homs intensified in April. In early May 2011, the Syrian military conducted a crackdown against anti-government protesters in Homs, some of whom were armed and fired on security forces. Though government forces had succeeded in temporarily quelling

the March–April Daraa protests during a similar military operation, their early May operation in Homs failed in quickly subduing the civil resistance. By September, sectarian clashes and bloodshed in Homs between Alawites and Sunnis played a larger role in the Homs unrest than in the rest of Syria.

In late October 2011, a Free Syrian Army (FSA) brigade consisting of many defected army officers repeatedly ambushed government security forces around the Baba Amr neighbourhood of Homs and, through early November, successfully defended it from government counterattacks. In late December, an Arab mission was sent to monitor the situation following an Arab League plan to dissuade the government crackdown. Following the abortive mission, the Syrian Army in February 2012 launched an offensive against Baba Amr, shelling the entire district and blocking all supply routes. In early March, government forces launched a ground assault into Baba Amr, forcing the freedom fighters to withdraw from the neighbourhood. By early May 2012, following a United Nations-brokered ceasefire, only sporadic street fighting and shelling occurred. During this time, the government was in control of most of the city while the opposition held between 15% and 20% of it; fighting for control of a similar-sized area was still ongoing. In December 2012, the Syrian Army captured the district of Deir Baalba, leaving only the Old City, Khalidiya district, and a few other areas under the control of the freedom fighters. In early March 2013, government forces launched an assault into several opposition-controlled neighbourhoods, but the freedom fighters–reinforced by units that arrived from the nearby rebel-controlled town of al-Qusayr–repelled the attacks. In mid-March, the freedom fighters attempted to retake Baba Amr, but were forced to pull back later in the month. In late March and early April, the Lebanese

Hezbollah militia fully intervened in the siege, reinforcing Syrian government forces. In late July, government forces captured the Khalidiya district. In early May 2014, following an agreement reached between the government and the opposition, the freedom fighters were allowed to evacuate the city, leaving Homs under full government control.

On the way to Hama, we passed by so many areas all bombed. We passed by the River Aasi (disobedient). All rivers in the world generally flow from North to South. This rivers flows from South to North.

We then passed Hama, another city in Syria.

The Hama massacre occurred in February 1982 when the Syrian Arab Army and the Defense Companies paramilitary force, under the orders of President Hafez al-Assad, besieged the town of Hama for 27 days in order to quell an uprising by the Muslim Brotherhood against the Ba'athist government. The campaign that had begun in 1976 by Sunni Muslim groups, including the Muslim Brotherhood, was brutally crushed in an anti-Sunni massacre at Hama, carried out by the Syrian Arab Army and Alawite militias under the command of Major General Rifaat al-Assad.

Prior to the start of operations, Hafez al-Assad issued orders to seal off Hama from the outside world; effectively imposing a media blackout, total shut down of communications, electricity and food supplies to the city for months. Initial diplomatic dispatches released in Western media outlets assessed that 1,000 people were killed. Subsequent estimates vary, with the lower ones reporting at least 10,000 deaths, while other estimates put the number of deaths at 40,000.The massacre remains the "single

deadliest act" of violence perpetrated by an Arab state upon its own population in the modern history of the Middle East. Some suspect the Hafez al-Assad regime of using chemical weapons in the city. Nearly two-thirds of the city was destroyed in the Ba'athist military operation. Robert Fisk, who was present at Hama during the events of the massacre, reported that indiscriminate bombing had razed much of the city to the ground and that the vast majority of the victims were civilians.

Fisk later wrote in 2010 that at least 20,000 civilians were killed by Rifaat al-Assad's paramilitary companies in the "streets and underground tunnels of Hama". Patrick Seale, reporting in The Globe and Mail, described the operation as a "two-week orgy of killing, destruction and looting" which destroyed the city and killed a minimum of 25,000 inhabitants. The attack has been described as being motivated by sectarian animosities against the Sunni community of Hama. Memory of the massacre remains an important aspect of Syrian culture and as a result, it evokes strong emotions amongst Syrians to the present day. The Hama massacre was invoked by Syrian opposition leaders when Ba'athist government forces were driven out of the city following successful rebel offensives in December 2024 that ultimately ended the rule of the Assad family in Syria, with freedom fighters saying they have "come to cleanse the wound that has persisted in Syria for 40 years."

Continuing to Halab, we stopped at the grave of Umar ibn Abdul Aziz رَحِمَهُ ٱللَّهُ.[viii] He was the seventh khalifah of the Muslims.

We reached the hotel in Halab in the evening, performed Maghrib and Esha salaah and rested.

DAY FOUR

We performed Fajr at a masjid nearby. At 7 45 am met Ml Muhammad Motala from Al-Imdaad, and brother Muhammad Noor, who is a Lebanese brother, doing social work here.

He explained to us that the damage here is more than 1 trillion dollars. After the liberation, two barakaat are seen:

1. It is raining throughout the year, which never happened before.
2. Due to Hurmoz closing, all trucks are going through Syria. There are kilometres and kilometres of trucks going through. They have to pay some fee. This is helping the government.

There are thousands of refugee camps on the edge of Idlib and Turkey. Approximately 2 million refugees are living here. At the present moment, the government is trying to clean out these camps and send them back home. To help and assist these people is a great form of worship. Rasulullaah ﷺ said,

إِنَّ أَحَبَّ الْأَعْمَالِ إِلَى اللهِ بَعْدَ الْفَرَائِضِ إِدْخَالُ السُّرُورِ عَلَى الْمُسْلِمِ

The most beloved action in the sight of Allaah after the faraaidh (compulsory duties) is to grant happiness to a Muslim. (Al-Mu'jamul- Awsat no. 7911)

Hasan رضي الله عنه narrates that Rasulullaah ﷺ said,

إِنَّ مِنْ مُوجِبَاتِ الْمَغْفِرَةِ إِدْخَالَ السُّرُورِ عَلَى أَخِيكَ الْمُسْلِمِ

Amongst the actions which cause one to be definitely forgiven is to grant happiness to your Muslim brother. (Al-Mu'jamul-Kabeer no. 2731)

We went to approximately 6 camps today. These are as follows:

1. Basams Camp: 181 beneficiary families
2. Kansafra Camp: 257 beneficiary families
3. Tubi Camp: 162 beneficiary families
4. Al-Ansari Camp: 200 beneficiary families

Total 800 for Canned Food Parcels

There is a beautiful system of giving out. Each relief agency needs to report to the government. They are sent to a specific camp to do the distributions, so that there is no duplication. A person from the government is sent to check the distribution, so that everything is done correctly. Each person in the camp is given a card. When he brings the card, he is given his parcel. We made sure that every single person gets his parcel. If someone has not arrived, they wait for him or leave a message to come to the next camp.

We then distributed Hygiene kits at the Noor Al-Sabah Camp (150 families) Here there are no menfolk. It is only mothers with their orphan children.

Abu Hurayrah رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ narrates that Rasulullaah صَلَّىٱللَّهُعَلَيْهِوَسَلَّمَ said, "I will be the first to open the door of Jannah. I will see a woman trying to enter with me or just after me. I will ask her, "Who are you?" She will answer, "I am a woman who cared for my orphan children." (Musnad Abu Ya'la no.6651)

One child came there and hugged every one of us. She then went to one of our companions and played with his beard. Maybe, she does not have a fatherly figure over her, and was so excited just for the hug and to hold a man.

Other distributions of different items took place at:
Mohamed Morsi Camp (120 families)
Al-Omari Camp (84 families)
Ata'a Al-Rahma Camp, (240 families)

A few lessons we learnt after seeing these camps:

1. To be grateful for the bounties Allaah جَلَّجَلَالُهُ has blessed us with, deeni and worldly.

Many of them are living in small stone houses. However, some are still living in tents, with hygiene being a major problem. Around some of the tents, there were so many frogs jumping around. There are few jobs. Some of the women work in nearby farms, earning meagre amounts. Alhamdulillaah, despite this, in majority of the camps, there is school and madrasah for the children. We tested some of the children, who read certain surahs as well as salaah du'aas for us.

2. To make Dua for these people
3. To look after the wealth Allaah جَلَّجَلَالُهُ has granted and to use it to benefit mankind
4. Not to squander our wealth

DAY FIVE (YAUMUL-JUMUAH)

After breakfast, we left for the camps again. This morning, we were at the camp where 4000 loaves of bread were distributed. These areas are very poor.
Amazing incident: One lady came with children. The camp leader did not want to give her because she was not from the camp. One man who received two shares of bread handed it over to her, and went back with nothing.

After Jumuah salaah, we went to a field nearby where there was to be an Eid clothing distribution. 369 children from five orphanages came for this distribution. They are given clothing to the value of 50 dollars each. Together with this, we gave each one of them a packet of sweets as they left. You should see the joy on their faces when they received the sweets.

Great encouragement and virtues have been narrated regarding looking after orphans.

1.) It was narrated from Abu Bakr Siddiq رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ that Rasulullaah صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said, “No person who mistreats his slave will enter Jannah.” The Sahaabah said, “O Messenger of Allah, did you not tell us that this nation will have more slaves and orphans than any other nation?” He صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ replied, “Yes, so be as kind to them as you are to your own children, and feed them with the same food that you eat.” (Ahmad no. 75, Ibn Majah no. 3691)
2.) Ibn Abbaas رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ narrates that Rasulullaah صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said, “Whoever brings a Muslim orphan to join in his food and drink, Allaah will definitely enter him into Jannah unless he does a sin

which cannot be forgiven (i.e. shirk (associating partners with Allaah جَلَّ جَلَالُهُ)). (Tirmidhi no. 1917)

3.) Amr ibn Maalik Qushairi رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ narrates that he heard Rasulullaah صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ saying, "Whoever brings a Muslim orphan to join in his food and drink until the orphan becomes independent, Jannah is definite for him." (Ahmad no 19030, Abu Ya'la no. 2457, Al-Mu'jamul-Kabeer no. 668)

4.) Abu Moosa رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ narrates that Rasulullaah صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said, "Whenever an orphan sits with people, sharing with them in their plate, Shaytaan does not come close to their plate." (Al-Mu'jamul-Awsat no. 7165, Musnadul-Haarith no. 907)

5.) Ubaidah ibn Hayaat said, "I saw Suwaid ibn Hayaat in a dream and asked him, "What action did you find most virtuous?" He replied, "Feeding an orphan who is not a family member." (Ibn Abid-Dunya in Kitabul-Iyaal no. 623)

As the children collected their clothing which they themselves chose, they walked past us. We would give them a pack of sweets which our brothers had bought there, and ask them their names. We would pass our hands on the heads of some of them to gain the virtues mentioned by Rasulullaah صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ.

Abu Umaamah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ narrates that Rasulullaah صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said, "Whoever passes his hand over the head of an orphan, solely for Allaah's pleasure, rewards will be written for him for every strand of hair his hand touched. Whoever shows kindness to an orphan girl or boy in his care, I and him will be in Jannah like this. Nabi صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ then joined his index and middle finger." (Ahmad no. 22153, 22284)

Abu Darda رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ wrote to Salmaan رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ that a man complained to Rasulullaah صَلَّىٱللَّهُعَلَيْهِوَسَلَّمَ of his hard-heartedness. Rasulullaah صَلَّىٱللَّهُعَلَيْهِوَسَلَّمَ asked, "If you wish to soften your heart, then pass your hand over the head of an orphan and feed him." (Sunanun-Kubra of Bayhaqi no.7095)

Undoubtedly, as you pass your hand over their heads, tears fall from your eyes. It really softens the heart. I think all our brothers who were there shed tears as these children took their sweets, walked past outside, with their faces so excited. Some children were very serious with us, but as they walked outside, I would turn to look at them. As soon as they were with their friends, you could see the huge smile.

After Asr, we left for a place called Darkoush which literally means cradle, since it looks one between the huge mountain passes. It is on the border of Turkey. It is a very beautiful drive through the mountains. The roads are not the best and it is a very windy road.

The Syrian pound is not in use here. Either dollars or the Turkish Lira is used here till now, since this area was not controlled by the previous regime.

Before, there was unrestricted access to Turkey from here. People would go in and out. However, because of the ISIS threat, the Turkish government put a huge wall which is visible from Ml Yusuf's house.

Ml Yusuf Bachus is an Alim who qualified in Darul Uloom Zakariya. His family qualified from the girl's madrasah and she was a classmate of one aalimah who had migrated here many years ago and got married to a freedom fighter called Abu Maryam. This

aalimah runs a madrasah and school in this area, in which a lot of emphasis on tarbiyat of imaan is placed.

Moulana Yusuf and his family came here a while ago to help with relief work. When his wife met her friend, she encouraged her to come and teach with her. Masha-Allaah, they made the great sacrifice and left their comfortable home in Lenasia, and in January this year, the whole family of six migrated. Abdullah, the youngest son, gave us good company, and served us well. Moulana and his family went out of their way to host us, and make us comfortable as possible.

As we entered the area, we saw a Masjid being rebuilt. It had been bombed, and 80 people passed away.

During the liberation struggle, in most of the houses there were no men at that time. One third were fighting, one third were martyred and one third were in prison. The women say that despite those years of difficulty, there was so much of love and happiness that time amongst themselves.

Gift of the givers have built a hospital here about ten years ago, which can be seen as we entered the area.

As soon as we reached there, Moulana took us to a beautiful waterfalls area, which is about ten minutes from his house. There is a spring whose water is gushing out in the river which was flowing at the bottom of the waterfalls. The water flow was a bit low, compared to the winter. This was just before Maghrib. After Maghrib, we had supper, and after Esha, we met with a brother, Abu Ebrahim who spent a whole hour and a half explaining to us the conditions in Syria, and how the victory was attained.

DAY SIX

After breakfast at Ml Yusuf's house, before going to the school, we went with Ml Yusuf for some shopping. He bought four chickens, which were weighed and the price was given. As soon as we agreed to which were slaughtered before us in less than a minute and thrown into a drum. It was cleaned and cut and given to us in about 15 minutes. The weight of each chicken was about 3 kg live weight.

Thereafter we went to another shop in which beef was sold. The animals are cut and sold the same day as these shops do not have freezers.

We then went to a grocery shop for Ml Yusuf to buy some groceries. At the entrance was two signs:

"Fear Allaah! The blood of the martyrs was not shed so that the voices of music can be heard, so that women can walk around without hijab, and so that there can be intermingling of the sexes. The blood of the martyrs was shed so that the Shariah could be implemented."

The other sign read, "Fear Allaah, music is haraam. Abdullah ibn Masood said, "Music creates hypocrisy in the heart like how water gives rise to crops." (Shuabul Imaan no. 5127) The blood of the martyrs were not shed so that the sounds of music be raised, in fact their blood was shed so that the sounds of Qur'aan be raised."

The one thing which is visibly noticed is that the women are dressed very modestly. Most of the women are completely covered, and some women move around with faces uncovered. But you will never find women with any of the other parts exposed as is found in the western world. As Hadrat Hakeem Sahib used to say, "In our countries, there is lack of purdah, in the western

countries, there is nakedness." Here, you will very seldom find an illegitimate child or even much divorce cases. The other thing is that due to poverty, many men do not own cars but motorbikes. The women folk will never sit over the seat but sit sideways. At one place, we saw man, woman and three children moving on one bike.

Thereafter we proceeded to the school opened by Abu Maryam and his family. We saw camps of people from all over like Iraq, Turkmenistan, etc.
On the way, we stopped by the *Jamiat Aailah*, where food is daily prepared and given to poor people around.

We then proceeded to Sarmadiyyah, which is a Ribat point. On the way, we passed by Zerazor, in which Syrians and other muhaajirs from Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yeminis, Saudis, Maldives and even Germany, England, Morocco are living.
At this Ribat point, there were many houses around destroyed. However, building was taking place very quickly. A masjid had been completely destroyed. It was been built very fast. Construction only began a month ago and they were hoping for the shell to be completed in about three weeks. It can house about 900 musallis. This was being built by Khanqah Zakariyya from Lenasia.

We heard of the tunnels where the freedom fighters used to hide. There are all different types of tunnels. Some would take about one year to drill. Now many were dirty and damaged to some extent. There was a room for resting, a place for reading and studying Quraan and hadeeth. One portion of the rock was cold. This was used to make water cold. The tunnel had to be cleaned quite often. The people who lived in the tunnels say that the worst

thing of the tunnels is the rats. It's amazing to hear how much of sacrifice these freedom fighters made, living in these tunnels for years, merely to protect the borders of their state. This is referred by them as the frontline, which is the most important area to be guarded.

Great virtues are mentioned in the ahaadeeth for those protecting the frontline. This is referred to in the Qur'aan and hadeeth as ribaat.

Some of the virtues of ribaat as stated in ahaadeeth:

1.) The reward of performing salaah and fasting continuously. According to one narration, his salaah is equal to five hundred salaah in reward, and his one dirham spent is better than spending seven hundred in anything else.
2.) The fire of Jahannum is forbidden for those eyes which kept awake in the path of Allaah.
3.) Standing one moment in Allaah's path is better than standing in front of the Hajr Aswad on Laylatul-Qadr.
4.) By keeping watch for a day, Allaah جَلَّجَلَالُهُ makes seventy trenches between him and the Fire, each trench being the length of the seven earths and seven skies.
5.) The person standing guard will receive the reward of all those who perform salaah and fast. This is because due to his sacrifice, all the actions of worship can be fulfilled with composure.
6.) If the person passes away whilst guarding the Muslim territory, his good deeds will continue, he will receive sustenance in the grave, he will be protected from questioning in the grave by Munkar and Nakeer, and Allaah will raise him on the Day of Qiyaamah protected from the

adversity of that day. He will be married to seventy special Houris, and will be allowed to intercede for the people until the reckoning ends.

7.) The action of ribaat is much more than other acts of sadaqah jaariyah (continuous charity) because the reward for these deeds is only to be attained until people benefit from the charity like water, knowledge, books, etc. When people stop benefiting from the specific deed or it is not used, then the reward also stops, but the deeds of the person who guards the Islamic territory will not terminate until the Day of Qiyaamah.

As such, many righteous Muslims and ulama intentionally selected these specific locations as their places of residence to secure the promised reward of safeguarding the Muslim lands. Among those who relocated to Asqalaan for the sake of ribaat were the Sahaabi, Abu Rayhanah Al-Azdi and the great-grandson of Umar رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ, Umar ibn Muhammad ibn Zayd ibn Abdullaah ibn Umar, who passed away there during his ribaat, earning the appellation Asqalaani. Furthermore, the taab'iee and Makkah Mukarramah's Mufti Ataa ibn Abi Rabah devoted 40 days annually to ribaat in Asqalaan. Similarly, the renowned taabi'ee Sufyaan Thawri engaged in ribaat on the Asqalaan coast for a period of 40 days.

After returning, we performed Asr salaah at the masjid and proceeded to the madrasah which is about ten minutes away for Maghrib salaah. Here, a meal was arranged by some of our asaatizah who had arrived the day before in Shaam for many of the muhajiroon brothers. Here, we met brothers from many different countries, including U.S.A., U.K. Egypt, France, Maldives, Belgium,

Morocco, Algeria etc. who had sacrificed their homes and countries to come and protect their Muslim brothers and sisters. We had meals with them and individually sat and asked them for a brief summary of their lives. Some of these were well-to-do people, and living comfortable lives, but could not bear the oppression being meted out to their Muslim brothers and sisters. They therefore sacrificed everything and came over.

Amongst some of the incidents we heard,

1.) A Belgian brother explained that his wife was expecting when he left home to migrate. After the child was born, she refused to join him, on the insistence of her parents. She had six dreams during that period, and the interpretation given was taken she should migrate, but after seeing those clear signs, she refused to come. She then demanded a divorce, which he gave. He eventually got married to the wife of another freedom fighter who was martyred. Till now, he has not seen his daughter, but of recent, he started keeping contact with her.

2.) Another Belgian brother left his parents. He told his mother, but asked not to divulge it to his father until he was far away. After some time, when his brother asked where he was, his mother replied. That is only when the rest of the family came to know. Anyhow, ten months later, his brother also joined him, and later became a martyr.

3.) One of our friends met a Chinese brother. Originally, he was in a university in Germany. He seemed to be highly qualified. He spoke English well. He had been shot in his leg during the war and was in hospital for three months. Thereafter he got married. Now he has three children.

He said he did not like that we said it was an honour to meet him, because he was merely doing a fardh of Deen. He said he knows that we have good intentions when saying so, but there is nothing honourable about him.

4.) Another brother met someone from Morocco. He asked him what was the happiest moment he had since he came here. He said that what he longs for is when a person is in the thick of a battle completely surrounded by the enemy. At that time, Allaah puts such peace in the heart on all the brothers around that some even doze off. He said that this is what he craves for.

One Sheikh from Egypt then gave some beautiful advices. Amongst the points he mentioned were,

1.) Respect the adhaan and reply to it, with the dua, so that we can get the intercession of Rasulullaah ﷺ. There is so much tests around us, we all need this intercession. It is shocking that Shaytaan runs away when adhaan is called out, but we continue talking.

2.) Do not make noise after the Fardh salaah, as people are still engaged in their sunnah salaah. We should not disturb them.

3.) The people of Thamud were shown the right path, but they chose falsehood over the truth. Similar were the Jews, who knew the truth, but did not follow it. Bal'am ibn Baura did the same and well as the person mentioned in Surah Tawbah who promised that if Allaah favours him, he will be amongst the righteous and pious. However, when he was blessed, he turned away. Qaroon was from the family of Moosa عليه السلام. He had so much wealth, but turned away from the truth.

4.) The eyes are not blind, but our hearts are blind. We need to get taqwa which is an internal quality.

5.) In Surah Faatihah, Allaah mentions three groups: The maghdoob alayhim (those on whom Allaah was angry) are those who knew, but did not practise; the dhaalloon (misguided) are those practised without knowledge. The munam alayhim (those who Allaah favoured) are those who had knowledge and then practised.

After Esha salaah, Ml. Muhammad and Ml. Ahmad Chothia thanked the brothers for coming, and appreciated their sacrifices on behalf of the Muslim ummah. These brothers were very humble, and said that they did nothing really, except their fardh duty.
Many of the brothers we met said that they are frightened for riya (show), and if a small amount creeps into their actions, all their sacrifices would be in vain.

After the program, some assistance was given to these brothers in the form of cash, as some of them are living in difficult circumstances.
We left back to Aleppo, which was about two hours away. We reached there after 12.

DAY SEVEN

After Fajr, we rested. We met Abul-Khair and spoke to him for about an hour. Then we checked out and left for the Citadel of Aleppo (Qil'atu-Halab). This is a large medieval fortified palace in the centre of the old city of Aleppo, northern Syria. It is considered to be one of the oldest and largest castles in the world. Usage of the Citadel hill dates back at least to the middle of the 3rd millennium BC. It has been occupied by many civilizations over time – including the Arameans, Assyrians, Greeks, Arabs, Armenians, Romans, Byzantines, Ayyubids, Mamluks and Ottomans – the majority of the construction as it stands today is thought to originate from the Ayyubid period. An extensive conservation work took place in the 2000s by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, in collaboration with Aleppo Archaeological Society. During the 2010s, the Citadel received significant damage during the lengthy Battle of Aleppo. It was reopened to the public in early 2018 with repairs to damaged parts underway, though some of the damage will be purposefully preserved as part of the history of the citadel. The citadel was also damaged by the 2023 Turkey–Syria earthquake.

We walked around for an hour seeing amongst other things the place where Khidr عَلَيْهِ ٱلسَّلَامُ is reported to have sat, the royal throne room, the amphitheatre, the secret tunnels in the palace, the huge brick structures, etc.

Thereafter, we proceeded to the Al-Madinah Souq. We proceeded for Zuhr salaah in a masjid in the Souk. After the salaah, the imam made an announcement that during the days of Zul-Hijjah, the takbeer should be recited in abundance, not only after the salaah

in congregation. He said that this was an abandoned sunnah.[7],[8] He then encouraged the brothers to go and call out the takbeer in the market place. Alhamdulillaah, we joined him for about ten minutes, walking around the market-place, chanting the takbeer aloud. Many of the brothers in their shops also started reciting the takbeer as we walked past them. It was an amazing experience to practise on this sunnah here in Shaam.

The soaps of Halab are famous, as well as the sweets and spices. We purchased some and rushed to our vehicle to leave for the airport. Next to the Souk is the Great Mosque of Aleppo known as the Great Umayyad Mosque of Aleppo (Al-Jaamiʿ al-Umawi al-Kabeer fee Halab). This was the largest and one of the oldest mosques in the city of Aleppo, Syria, first built during the Umayyad Caliphate. The former masjid, now in partial ruins, is being rebuilt. The masjid was purportedly home to the remains of Zakariyyah, the

[7] Abdullah ibn Umar and Abu Hurairah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ would go to the market place during these ten days, reciting takbeer, and the people would follow them in reciting. Imaam Tahaawi رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ says, "Our mashaayikh were of the opinion that takbeer be recited during the ten days." *(Fathul Baari)* Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmaani (hafizahullah) explains, "This takbeer is apart from the takbeer tashreeq which is waajib after the fardh salaah. Rather, it is mustahab that during the first ten days of Zul Hajjah, takbeer be recited excessively, while walking, standing, sitting, at home and in the market place. It seems as though, Allaah Ta'ala desires that His greatness be extoled during these days. It is permissible to recite this takbeer softly or aloud. In our era this has been abandoned, whereas this recitation has been reported from many Sahaabah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ. Hence, we should practice on this. *(In'aamul Baari)*

[8] Another thing which we noticed in Syria was that in the cities, about 10 minutes before adhaan, the takbeer would be recited a few times over the loudspeaker, to remind people of the greatness of Allaah and to also engage in reciting it.

father of Yahya عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ. It was built in the beginning of the 8th century CE during the reign of the Umayyad caliph Sulayman, but the current building dates from the 11th through 14th centuries.
We reached the airport two hours before departure, and with sorrowful hearts, left the beautiful and blessed lands of Shaam.
May Allaah جَلَّ جَلَالُهُ accept this journey of ours, and make it a source of reward in the Hereafter.

As we saw on the back of one vehicle,
"Yesterday was for lesson, today is for gaining experience and tomorrow is for correcting our steps.
This is the condition of this world, we live here and continue to learn."

جِئْنَا بِبِضَاعَةٍ مُزْجَاةٍ فَأَوْفِ لَنَا الْكَيْلَ وَتَصَدَّقْ عَلَيْنَا

رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا إِنَّكَ أَنتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ وَتُبْ عَلَيْنَآ إِنَّكَ أَنتَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ

الْحَمْدُ للهِ الَّذِي بِنِعْمَتِهِ تَتِمُّ الصَّالِحَاتُ

مَا شَاء اللهُ لَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللهِ

جَزَى اللهُ عَنَّا مُحَمَّدًا مَّا هُوَ اَهْلُهُ

سُبْحَانَ اللهِ وَبِحَمْدِهِ،سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ وَبِحَمْدِكَ،أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لاَ إِلَهَ إِلاَّ أَنْتَ أَسْتَغْفِرُكَ وَأَتُوبُ إِلَيْكَ

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّكَ رَبِّ الْعِزَّةِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ وَسَلَامٌ عَلَى الْمُرْسَلِينَ وَالْحَمْدُ للهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

[i] Abu Darda (Uwaymir ibn Zayd) was a prominent Ansaari Sahaabah of Rasulullaah ﷺ . A former merchant from Medina, he became one of the greatest Qur'aanic scholars of early Islam, the first judge (*qadi*) of Damascus, and a symbol of profound asceticism.

He belonged to the Banu Khazraj tribe in Medina. Initially a merchant, he embraced Islam shortly after the Battle of Badr. Rasulullaah ﷺ established a bond of brotherhood between him and the Persian companion Salman al-Farisi. He was one of the few who systematically collected the Quran. Students travelled across the Islamic empire to sit in his study circles. Following the Muslim conquests, Caliph Umar appointed him as the chief judge (*qadi*) of Damascus, an office he maintained under Uthman رضي الله عنه. Abu Darda was celebrated for his absolute detachment from worldly wealth. Despite his high status and authority, he lived as a pauper, opting to sleep on pebbles rather than amass luxuries. He famously viewed this worldly life as a fleeting loan and emphasized that deep contemplation (*tafakkur*) and knowledge were the only true currencies. Abu Darda passed away around 652 CE in Damascus.

FAMOUS QUOTES AND ATTRIBUTED WISDOM

His teachings primarily emphasized the fleeting nature of worldly wealth and the vital importance of knowledge, reflection, and quiet character. Some of his statements are:

On True Wealth: *"I love poverty because it makes me humble in front of my Lord, I love sickness because it expiates my sins, and I love death because I long to meet my Lord."*

On Self-Reflection: *"When you remember those who have passed away, consider yourself like one of them. And when you think of involving yourself in some worldly matter, consider first what it will lead to in the end."*

On Wisdom: *"Silence is a form of wisdom, yet few people practice it."*

On Patience and Advice: "*If any of your brothers changes and commits a sin, do not abandon him or cast him aside. Advise him in the best manner and be patient with him, for a brother may sometimes stray and at other times be upright."*
On Knowledge: "*Learn sacred knowledge before it is taken away... Verily, there are only two kinds of men in the world: the scholar and the student. There is no goodness in anything besides that."*

[ii] Salahuddin Ayyubi (Saladin) was a 12th-century Kurdish military leader who founded the Ayyubid dynasty and became the first Sultan of Egypt and Syria. He is most renowned for uniting the Muslim world and recapturing Jerusalem in 1187, as well as his chivalrous conduct during the Crusades.
A concise breakdown of his life and legacy highlights his most monumental achievements:
Early Life and Rise to Power
Background: Born Yusuf ibn Ayyub in 1137 in Tikrit (modern-day Iraq) into a prominent Kurdish military family.
Egypt: He rose to prominence as a military commander in the service of the Zengid dynasty. In 1169, he was appointed vizier of Egypt, where he dismantled the Fatimid Caliphate and restored Sunni rule.
The Crusades and Jerusalem
Unification: After the death of his former master, Nur ad-Din, Salahuddin united Egypt, Syria, and parts of Mesopotamia under his own Ayyubid banner.
Battle of Hattin (1187): He decisively defeated the Crusader armies in a landmark battle near the Sea of Galilee.
Reclaiming Jerusalem: Following Hattin, he recaptured Jerusalem (October 1187), ending 88 years of Crusader rule.
Chivalry and Legacy

The Third Crusade: His victory triggered the Third Crusade. He engaged in legendary military and diplomatic rivalries with Christian kings, most notably Richard the Lionheart of England.

Reputation: Both Muslim chroniclers and European Crusaders highly respected him. He was celebrated for his mercy, notably sparing the lives and property of Christian inhabitants in Jerusalem upon its surrender—a stark contrast to the brutal sack of the city during the First Crusade.

Death: He died of an illness (likely typhoid fever) in 1193 in Damascus, leaving behind a massive legacy as a symbol of just leadership and religious devotion.

[iii] Rise to Power - Born in 1118, Nuruddin was the second son of Imaduddin Zengi, the Turkic ruler of Mosul and Aleppo. Following his father's assassination in 1146, Nuruddin took control of Aleppo, while his brother claimed Mosul. Upon taking the throne, his primary focus was defending Muslim lands against the Crusaders.

Uniting the Muslim Front- Before Nuruddin's reign, the Crusaders succeeded largely due to the severe disunity of Muslim leaders in the region. Nuruddin successfully altered this by:

a.) **Defending Against the Crusaders:** He defeated the forces of the Second Crusade and secured major victories at the Siege of Edessa in 1146 and the Battle of Inab in 1149.

b.) **Unifying Syria:** He captured Damascus in 1154, unifying the Muslim territories of Syria for the first time in decades.

c.) Expanding to Egypt: He sent military expeditions that successfully annexed Egypt in the late 1160s, effectively trapping the Crusaders between two Muslim-controlled fronts.

Justice, Piety, and Patronage - Nuruddin was renowned for his austere lifestyle and deep personal faith. Despite his vast power, he lived modestly, refusing to spend state money on luxuries, and often donated the proceeds of military campaigns to the construction of public infrastructure. Under his rule, he built numerous universities (*madrasas*)

dedicated to the study of the Quran and Hadith, and established medieval hospitals (*bimaristans*) that offered free care.

Legacy - He passed away in Damascus in 1174. His dream of liberating Jerusalem was eventually realized by his protégé and general, Salaahuddin, who built upon the unified foundation Nur ad-Din had created.

Amazing incident: Some Christians planned to steal the body of Rasulullaah ﷺ in 557AH. It was during the time of the rule of Nuruddin. One night Nuruddin was blessed with a dream and he saw Rasulullaah ﷺ. The Holy Prophet pointed at two people of red colour hair (at their heads) and Said, "Mahmud, Save Me from them."

Nuruddin woke, offered prayer and slept. He saw the same dream again. He got up from the bed again, offered prayer and tried to sleep and saw the same dream for the third time. He then called his advisor Shaikh Jamalud Din, and discussed the matter with him.

He Left for Madinah Immediately

Shaikh advised him to go to Madinah immediately and asked him to not to relate the dream to anyone else. Nuruddin took his advisor with him and a Historian Majd al Din. The caravan comprised thousands of camels carrying expensive gifts on them.

Nuruddin reached Madinah from Syria in sixteen days. He directly went to Masjid al Nabawi where he offered prayers.

He Arranged a Feast for Everyone

With the consultation of his advisor, he summoned all the people of Madinah in order to present them with alms. Nuruddin looked carefully at each of the visitors but could not see those he saw in a dream. He inquired if all the residents have received the alms.

The people replied in Yes. He asked them again and some people told him that there are two pious people who don't accept any alms. They feed the needy people generously, observe fast on regular basis, perform tahajjud and offer salaah day and night and once a week they visit Masjid al Nabawi.

He Recognized them Immediately

Nuruddin ordered the two to be presented to him. They were exactly the two people he saw in the dream. He recognized them immediately and asked them why they are here.

They replied that they are Moroccans, came for hajj and wish to stay in Madina as neighbours of Rasulullaah ﷺ.

Nuruddin insisted them, to tell the truth, but they kept quiet.

There was a Tunnel directing to Rasulullaah ﷺ's Sacred Chamber

He asked about their residence and went there. He inspected their residence near the sacred chamber and when an old rug was lifted, a wooden board was found and under that a newly dug tunnel.

The tunnel was approaching the Sacred Chamber. They got terrified and confessed that they are Christians and the king of Iberia sent them with a huge sum of money to steal the body of Rasulullaah ﷺ.

They rented the house nearest to the Holy Chamber and used to dig the tunnel in the night and throw out the soil in the day.

He Ordered the Execution of Both

They also told that when they got near to the sacred chamber an earthquake shook the earth and a fearful thunder was observed. Nuruddin ordered the immediate execution of the culprits and thanked Allah who blessed him with the honour of saving the sacred chamber.

Arrangements made to protect the Holy Body of Rasulullaah ﷺ:

After this attempt, Nuruddin رَحِمَهُ ٱللَّهُ ordered a deep trench to be dug around the Holy Chamber and then filled it with melt lead so that nobody could ever reach the sacred chamber again.

[iv] Once Abdul Malik Ibn Marwan رَحِمَهُ ٱللَّهُ passed by the grave of Sayyidina Muawiya رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُ. He stopped and for a long while he beseeched Allaah on behalf of its dweller. A person asked, "Whose grave is this?" Abdul Malik Ibn Marwan replied: "It is the grave of such a person whose speech was filled with knowledge and wisdom. If he chose to remain silent, it was due

to his tolerance and patience. When he donated, he conferred with his donation independence, and when he engaged in battle, he threw his enemies into annihilation."

Sayyiduna Muawiya رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ was from amongst the few people, whose favours upon this Ummah cannot be ignored. He was of those Sahaabah who were in the constant companionship of Nabi صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ , and had the honour of writing down the revelations (wahi).

Muawiyah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ was born five years before nubuwwah (prophethood) in the year 608 (Gregorian). During his childhood, he exposed aristocratic and authoritative qualities. His parents educated and nurtured him in the most excellent manner. He studied different branches of knowledge and enjoyed being literate whilst illiteracy was rife. Muawiyah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ was also counted from amongst the few who were beautified with diverse aspects of knowledge.

A celebrated historian, Muhammad Ibn Sa'd, mentions in his book, 'Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd' regarding Muawiyah's acceptance of Islam. He writes, "Muawiyah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ had said, "I accepted Islam before the Umratul Qadha, but I was afraid to leave for Madinah, due to the insistence of my mother, that if I leave for Madinah, the door of wealth and affluence will be closed upon us. He remained in this condition until both he and his father accepted Islam simultaneously on the occasion of the conquest of Makkah. This is the reason why Muawiyah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ was absent from the battle of Uhud and Badr, and did not fight on behalf of the disbelievers even though these battles took place whilst he was enjoying the prime of his youth. His not being present is a clear indication that the truth of Islam was embedded deep within his heart right from the very beginning.

In the era of Rasulullaah صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ, the considerable care and precaution in penning the divine revelation and the tremendous responsibility along with reliability, righteousness and piety need not be mentioned. Due to his intellectual capacity, he held a position of distinction in the blessed audience of Rasulullaah صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ, and within a short period of time, he was honoured to be reckoned from amongst those illustrious

companions whose responsibility was to write down divine revelations. Besides this, he was also afforded the estimable task of preparing letters and recording the ordinances of Rasulullaah ﷺ. The supplications on his behalf by Nabi ﷺ are an open declaration of his piety and reliability. Accordingly, Nabi ﷺ said,

اللهم اجعله هاديا مهديا واهد به

O Allaah, make him (Muawiyah) a guide towards righteousness, a person who is guided and make him a means of guidance for others.
(Tirmidhi no. 3842)

Muawiyah رضي الله عنه himself says: "Once I presented water to Nabi ﷺ for his ablution, Nabi ﷺ completed his wudhu, looked towards me and said: "O Muawiyah! If the reins of government are handed over to you, then fear Allaah and be just."

Following the demise of Nabi ﷺ, Sayyiduna Muawiyah رضي الله عنه and his father pledged allegiance at the hands of Sayyiduna Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه and during his khilaafat, Muawiyah رضي الله عنه held a station of prominence. When the hypocrites began fanning the flames of insurrection, till it reached dangerous proportions, the first to raise his sword in opposition was Muawiyah رضي الله عنه's uncle, Khaalid Ibn Sa'eed, and after him Khaalid Ibn Waleed رضي الله عنه, but their leader in battle, Muawiyah رضي الله عنه magnificently displayed incomparable heroism and valour.

It is the opinion of some historians that Muawiyah رضي الله عنه was the slayer of the false prophet, Musailama Ibn Kazzaab, but the most acceptable view is that he was injured by the spear of Wahshi رضي الله عنه and was helped by Muawiyah رضي الله عنه to complete the task.

With the passing away of Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه, the era of Umar رضي الله عنه arrived, in which the conquest of Kaysariyah occurred, another accomplishment of Muawiyah رضي الله عنه. This battle transpired in the 19th year of Hijrah. Kaysariyah was a renowned city within Rome, whence a magnificent army

was stationed. A 100 000 from amongst them were deputed to stand guard at night.

The command of Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ arrived, directing the governor of Sham (Syria), Muawiyah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ's brother, Yazeed Ibn Abi Sufyan to proclaim the jihad against Kaysariyah, hence Yazeed رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ besieged the city, but this girdle prolonged, causing Yazeed رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ to entrust Muawiyah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ with this task, whilst setting out for Damascus. Muawiyah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ still encircling the city, in the 19th year of Hijrah, in the month of Shawwal, captured the city. One month after the victory, in Zul-Qa'dah, the death of Yazeed رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ occurred. A plague had caused his death, causing great distress to Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ. Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ then made Muawiyah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ the governor of Sham (Syria) and Jordan, granting him the highest salary from amongst all his contemporaries, reaching 1000 dirhams on a monthly basis. He governed Syria for four years continuously conquering other cities.

After the martyrdom of Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, Uthman رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ not only retained him, but due to his foresight and ingenious administrative qualities, he also placed Hims, Kansaryn and Palestine under his authority.

In the 36th year of Hijri, the cold blooded, merciless murder of Uthman رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ occurred. After this, the notorious battles of Siffeen and Jaml took place. Muawiyah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ deduced that Uthman رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ was oppressively martyred and no form of negligence or slackness should be displayed in bringing the oppressors to justice.

During his insurrection, the Caesar of Rome decided to take full opportunity of this condition. Leading his forces against Syria, he camped on the outskirts of the boundary. The news had reached the ears of Muawiyah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ. Hence he conveyed a letter to Caesar containing this admonishment. "It has reached me that you intend to march upon my boundary. Let me remind you, if you have done so, I will effect an armistice with my associate (Ali رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ), and we shall join forces and turn

Constantinople into a burnt heap of coal." When Caesar received this, he was taken aback and immediately dissolved all his plans.

Umar رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ used to say, "You praise Caesar and Kisra and their governments whilst Muawiyah is amongst you." On another occasion he had mentioned, "O people! Save yourselves from tribalism, but if you do fall within its precincts, then remember that Muawiyah is stationed in Syria."

Ibn Katheer has narrated that when Ali رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ was returning from the battle of Siffeen, he announced, "O people! Do not exhibit animosity towards the government of Muawiyah, because if you have ostracized him, you will find heads falling from shoulders, like how wild gourd falls from its tree.

Abdullah Ibn Abbaas رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ once said, "I never observed anyone in administration of a higher calibre than Muawiyah."

Khubaisa Ibn Jaabir says, "I never laid eyes on such a person who could surpass Muawiyah in patience, and was more entitled to leadership than him, modest, tolerant and ever-ready to practice good.

During the golden era of Muawiyah رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ, the strength of the Muslims was enhanced and intensified. With the coastal towns of Egypt and Syria under his rulership, he established ship-manufacturing factories, hence 1700 battleships were ever-ready to confront the Romans.

The postal service which existed during the khilaafat of Umar رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ was further expanded by Muawiyah رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ. Ibn Katheer, reviewing the time of Muawiyah رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ's leadership says, "During his time, jihad was upheld, the kalima was ascending and the spoils of war were arriving at the Bait-ul-Maal from all corners of the state, the Muslims experienced ease and comfort and passed their lives enjoying equity and justice."

Sa'd Ibn Abi Waqqaas رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ who was one of the ten to be given the glad tidings of Jannah in this world used to say, "After Uthman, I did not discover a person more precise in judgement than Muawiyah."

Mas'oodi, the famous historian writes that Muawiyah رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ used to listen to the reports of those areas under his rule after the completion of his Fajr prayer. These public gatherings would transpire five times a day, then he would depart towards his residence where he would recite a portion of the Noble Qur'aan. After this, he would return and commence with the administration of his government. Thereafter he would perform a prayer of four raka'ats, he would then consort with his special associates. His consultants would then avail themselves and receive their orders for the day. After this consultation, Muawiyah رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ would partake of his breakfast. On the completion of his breakfast, he used to enter his house, then he would return. A chair used to be placed for him in the masjid, where the weak, the villagers, children, women and the helpless used to present themselves. Muawiyah رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ used to say, "Consider them and honour them." When each one was asked for his needs and necessities, Muawiyah رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ would proclaim, "Respected friends, inform us of the necessities and needs of those people who cannot notify us thereof, this is the reason why Allaah has honoured you." This was his usual practice.

It is sad that we have forgotten this golden era of Islam whilst the heart shivers to know, that it has become so common to ravage and deface the honour of such a great personality. After numerous years of internal rife, none had the capability to gather the believers under one banner except Muawiyah رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ. Napoleon once said, "The Muslims ruled half the world for half a century." This statement could only refer to the reign of Muawiyah رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ.

Muawiyah رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ remained the Ameer for forty one years domineering over 6 465 000 square miles of uninterrupted tracts of land, allowing the flag of Islam to flutter gloriously.

In the year 60 A.H, on the 22nd of Rajab, at the age of 78, he left this world. Dahhaak Ibn Qais رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ performed his janazah salaah (prayer for the deceased). He is buried in Babus-Sagheer in Damascus. Another opinion is that he passed away at the age of 105.

May Allaah جَلَّجَلَالُهُ create within us love for Muawiyah رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ, and confidence upon him. Aameen. (Abridged translation from the Monthly Journal of Al Farooq, Rajab 1421)

[v] Ibn Umm Maktoom was his agnomen. He was famously known by this that his actual name is not certainly known as Imam Nawawi has mentioned. He accepted Islam in Makkah Mukarramah. Even though he was blind, he would remain engaged in the service of Rasulullaah صَلَّىٱللَّهُعَلَيْهِوَسَلَّمَ. He migrated to Madinah Munawwarah after taking permission from Rasulullaah صَلَّىٱللَّهُعَلَيْهِوَسَلَّمَ. He remained one of the muadhins of Nabi صَلَّىٱللَّهُعَلَيْهِوَسَلَّمَ. Due to being blind, he was unable to participate generally in battles. When Rasulullaah صَلَّىٱللَّهُعَلَيْهِوَسَلَّمَ went out on journey, then on approximately 13 occasions, he was placed as his vicegerent. Being a hafiz of the Qur'aan, he would teach those who came to Madinah Munawwarah. He passed away during the era of Umar رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ. According to most scholars, he was martyred in the Battle of Qadisiyya. 2 or 3 ahaadeeth have been narrated from him.

[vi] Bilal ibn Raba رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ was one of the most trusted and loyal companions of Rasulullaah . He was born into slavery and had no other option but to work for his master, Umayyah ibn Khalaf. When he accepted Islam, he was brutally tortured and persecuted until he was emancipated by Abu Bakr رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ. He migrated to Madinah and became the first treasurer of Islam. He was also appointed as the first Muezzin because of his deep, melodious, and resonant voice. It was only fitting that the one who uttered the word Ahad, Ahad, affirming the oneness of Allaah under the harshest of torture, should utter the words of Tawhid during the adhaan. After the liberation of Makkah, Bilal ascended to the top of the Kaaba to call the believers to salaah. This was the first time the adhaan was heard within Islam's holiest city. During the caliphate of Abu Bakr, he moved to Shaam for Jihad and spent the rest of his life there. When Umar رَضِيَٱللَّهُعَنْهُ came to Shaam, he requested Bilal to call the adhaan. This was the only time he called the adhaan after the passing of Rasulullaah . Upon hearing

his voice, people began to cry for it reminded them of the days of the Prophet On his deathbed, Bilal's last words were, "Tomorrow I will meet my loved ones, Muhammad and his Companions." He passed away in Aleppo or Damascus at the age of 63 or 64 in approximately 20 AH (642). Abu Burayda رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ narrates that one morning, Rasulullaah called for Bilaal and asked him, “O Billal! How did you surpass me to Jannah? I heard your footsteps ahead of me whenever I entered Jannah. I entered Jannah last night and I heard your footsteps before me.” He replied, “O Rasulullaah! I never give adhaan except that I perform two rak'at of salaah, and whenever I enter into a state of minor impurity, I perform wudhu and I feel that I need to perform two rak'at of salaah for Allaah.” Rasulullaah said, “It is because of these two actions.” (Tirmidhi no. 3689)

Zayd ibn Arqam رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ said that Rasulullaah said, “Bilaal will be the leader of the Mu'adhins on the Day of Judgement, and none will follow him except believers. Those who call out for salaah will have the longest necks on the Day of Judgement.” (Al-Mu’jamul-Kabeer no. 5119)

[vii] Abu Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ said, “Women will no longer be able to give birth to the likes of Khalid ibn al-Walid.” Khalid ibn al-Walid رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ is one of the greatest military commanders of all time. Known as the 'Sword of Allaah', he is noted for his military tactics and prowess. He accepted Islam after the treaty of Hudaybiyyah and participated in battles thereafter. Under his military leadership, Arabia was united under a single political entity for the first time in history. His strategic achievements include the conquest of Arabia, Persian Mesopotamia and Roman Syria within a few years from 632 CE to 636 CE He is also remembered for his decisive victories at Yamamah, Ullais, Firaz, and his tactical marvels at the Walaja and Yarmouk. He is one of three military generals in history to remain undefeated in battle. He has the distinction of being undefeated in over a hundred battles. Khalid passed away in 21 AH (642 CE) and was buried in Homs. His old tombstone (which has been destroyed) depicts a list of over 50 victorious battles that he commanded without defeat (not including small battles). It is well known that Khalid had wanted to die as

a martyr in the battlefield, and was upset when he realised that he would die in bed. He expressed this through one last, anguished sentence: "I have fought in so many battles seeking martyrdom that there is no spot in my body without a scar or a wound made by a spear or sword. And yet here I am, dying on my bed like an old camel. May the eyes of the cowards never rest!" His wife replied, "You were given the title of the sword of Allaah and, the sword of Allaah cannot be broken and hence, it is not your destiny to be a martyr but to die as a conqueror."

[viii] His great-great grandfather was Umar Ibn Al-Khattab رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ. One day, during his night patrols he passed a house where a mother and daughter quarrelled. The mother wanted to add water to milk to increase the quantity. This couldn't be done since the caliph outlawed the mixing of water into milk in order to cheat people. When the mother replied the caliph isn't around the daughter responded that the Lord of Umar is around. Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ was listening and marked the house. He later asked his son Asim to marry the girl, hoping she would give birth to a righteous leader who would rule over Arabia. His supplication was answered through Umar ibn Abdul Aziz.

Upbringing and Early Life

Umar ibn Abdul Aziz رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ was born in Madinah in 682 A.D (61 AH). He grew up wealthy in the Ummayid caliphate which came into power in 616 AD. Umar ibn Abdul Aziz's father, Abdul Aziz, was governor of Egypt and his uncle, Abdul Malik was the current caliph. One day, the caliph summoned Umar ibn Abdul Aziz to Damascus where he married him to his daughter, Fatima. After the passing of Abdul Malik, his son Al-Walid took over as caliph and Umar was sent to be governor of Madinah in 87AH and Taif later on. In Madinah he set up a Shurah council to solve problems. He was so effective that complaints to the main capital in Damascus ceased. Eventually al-Hajjaj, an oppressive ruler in Iraq complained to the Caliph that people would flee to Madinah to escape his rule. This led to Umar's removal and return to Damascus. He became

close to Caliph Al Walid and pushed for reforms in the administration. He successfully lobbied for death sentences to be ratified by a court. At every opportunity he strived to establish justice.

During the reign of his cousin, Caliph Sulayman ibn Abdal al Malik, Umar ibn Abdul Aziz acted as his close advisor. He convinced him to remove corrupt governors appointed by al-Hajjaj. Umar رَحِمَهُ ٱللَّهُ also ordered salaah to be performed during their fixed times, reversing a previous policy. He was described during this period as a 'truthful minister.' When Caliph Sulayman was on his death bed he made Banu Ummayah pledge to agree to his next successor - later revealed to be Umar ibn Abdul Aziz. By this point he'd served as the governor of Egypt and Madinah for more than 22 years. After the announcement, Umar ibn Abdul Aziz gave a famous address in the Masjid, returning to Shura (consultation), by asking the people to decide. "O people! The responsibilities of the Caliphate have been thrust upon me without my desire or your consent. If you choose to select someone else as the Caliph, I will immediately step aside and will support your decision."

The audience shouted out with one voice that they wanted him. Therefore the Caliph accepted. He told them, "If I do the right thing follow me, if I don't then guide me to the right path." It was similar to the words of Abu Bakr رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُ during his inaugural speech. After Umar رَحِمَهُ ٱللَّهُ was appointed, he was provided with the finest riding animals—horses, steeds, and mules—for official use. The caliph responded with, 'My animal is more suitable for me.' And he remained on his own smaller mule. When he was shown his new palace he refused, and decided to stay in a small house near the masjid.

After becoming caliph, Umar ibn Abdul Aziz lived a simple lifestyle. He became very frugal and embraced aestheticism, which was a rejection of any luxuries. He even sold his belongings and used the money to support the Muslims. Ali ibn Muhammad said, 'I heard when Umar ibn Abdul Aziz was appointed he looked at the slaves, clothes, perfumes and superfluous things he had and sold everything which he could do

without. That went for 23,000 dinars which he spent in the way of Allaah.' (Ibn Saʿd page 211-5)

He once confiscated the jewellery and gold of his wife Fatimah bint Abdul Malik gifted to her by her caliph father. He informed her that he'd decided to live a life of hardship, putting others above himself.

He told her, "Either return your jewellery to Baytul al-Mal or allow me to separate from you.' She responded, "I choose you, O Amir al Mu'minin, over that and I would happily give away more of it."

Similarly, when he heard one of his sons bought an expensive ring, he wrote to him saying, 'I was told you have bought a ring that costs a thousand dirham. So when you receive this letter, sell the ring and fill a thousand hungry stomachs.' (Al-Qahtani, 1997, 106)

He did not even have enough money to go for Hajj. He would sometimes be late for Friday prayer waiting for his only shirt to dry. He never abused the Treasury of the Muslims. He had a state lantern which he used to discuss any work matters. If anyone wished to discuss private affairs, he would replace it with his own.

Once, he received apples as a gift from a foreign ministry. He put them in a bag and handed them out to poor families. When the caliph was distributing them, his young son took an apple. Caliph Umar grabbed it and returned it to the pile.

When he returned home he saw his son with another apple and asked his wife Fatima where it came from. She said she'd bought it at the market because the baby was crying. Caliph Umar ibn Abdul Aziz said, "I swear to Allaah that when I snatched the apple from my son's mouth I felt like I was snatching my own heart. But how could I have pilfered (steal) from the assets of the rightful." (Abdul Hai, 2010, 56)

Umar ibn Abdul Aziz رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ instilled piety, steadfastness and Islamic ethics into the general population by abolishing drinking, eliminating mixed bathrooms and overseeing the fair transferring of money given in charity. He outlawed corruption by banning gifts to governors. He

also abolished the corrupt practice of forcing new Muslims to pay jizyah in Cyprus. This had been done by unjust rulers who complained their revenue had declined due to the rate of Islamic conversions. Caliph Umar used his position to protect the rights and responsibilities of his subjects according to the Qur'aan and Sunnah. He freed the slaves of the royal household and removed extravagances from the royal court. Properties which were taken unlawfully were returned, he cancelled oppressive taxes and made taxes equal between Arab and non-Arab. He reinstated stipends for all citizens, including non-Muslims. He would give out charity and it would come back untouched because he made everyone rich. There was so much wealth from his justice it would fund marriages and even provide food for the birds.

Caliph Umar loved knowledge. He appointed learned men into positions of authority and dismissed unjust ones. He funded scholars to teach Islam to the youth. On Fridays, he would sit and read Qur'aan with his own children. He instructed his children's teachers to keep them away from music and close to the Qur'aan. He surrounded himself with great scholars like Muhammad ibn Ka'b and Maimun ibn Mehran. He would always be sat in the company of scholars seeking their advice.

He advised people to seek knowledge through any means, telling them, "Become a scholar if you are able to. If you are not able, then be a student. If you cannot then love them. If you are unable to do that also, then [at least] do not hate them."

He used to gather seven scholars in his council. They met daily after Isha and talked about death. This would remind them to fear Allaah. When the caliph remembered death, his limbs would tremble. He used to cry until he passed out. It used to be said that Umar ibn Abdul Aziz was among the men who greatly feared death. In one meeting they gathered to discuss the Hereafter. A person got up to give a speech, when he recited the verse about the Hellfire, "And when they are thrown into a

narrow place therein, bound together." (Al-Furqan verse 13) Caliph Umar wept bitterly. This led to the talk being cancelled and the people dispersed.

Yazid ibn Haushab once said that Umar had so great a fear of Allaah that it seemed as if the Heaven and Hell had been created by Allaah only for him and Hasan al-Basri.

His wife testified that at night, when most would be resting or spending time with their spouses, he would stand in prayer and cry in his du'as to Allaah.

Umar ibn Abdul Aziz used to stay up from Isha to Fajr crying over one verse of the Quran. Once he woke up weeping because he remembered the Muslims under the control of the disbelievers. He used to stress over the widows and orphans in his land.

Umar ibn Abdul Aziz once sent an emissary to the head of Byzantium. As he was leaving, he overheard a voice reciting the Qur'aan. The emissary was surprised to know there was a Muslim in the land of the Romans. When he investigated, he found a blind man milling wheat. He greeted him with salaam, but the blind man didn't reply. The emissary greeted him three or four times until he said, 'How weak is the greeting of Salaam in this land!' The emissary then explained he worked for Umar ibn Abdul Aziz and asked, 'What is the matter with you?" The blind man explained he was a Muslim captive taken by the Christians and transferred to Byzantine lands. He was told to renounce Islam and he refused, to which the Byzantine emperor threatened to gouge out his eyes. The man said, "I chose my religion over my eye sight and consequently he gouged out my eyes and put me in this position whereby he sends wheat for me to mill daily and a loaf of bread for me to eat." The emissary immediately returned to the Caliph and told him about the man. He described, 'I had not finished telling Umar about the man but tears from his eyes had wet his front.' Caliph Umar ordered the following message to be sent to the Emperor of Byzantium, 'I have been informed about so-and so (and he described him) I swear by Allaah, if you do not send him to me, I will

dispatch army upon army against you until the first detachment is at your end and the last is at mine.' The threat terrified the Byzantines, who then dispatched the blind man back to the lands of the Muslims. (Ibn Abd al-Hakam 1984, 383)

During Umar ibn Abdul Aziz's rule, corruption among the Umayyad family was challenged, and he even stood up against the wrongdoing of his own relatives. He cancelled grants which they took from the treasury. He also confiscated land which rulers had repossessed from others. His family complained about this to his aunt who went to him and said, "Your relatives are complaining about you and claiming that you have taken away the blessings bestowed by others.' Umar رَحِمَهُ ٱللَّهُ replied, "I have not denied them any right or anything that is theirs, nor have I taken from them any right or anything which is theirs.' She said, "I see them talking together and I fear that one day they will attack you in a group.' He replied, "Any day I fear is less than the Day of Resurrection." (Ibn Saʿd, 2000, p. 232)

Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz رَحِمَهُ ٱللَّهُ was poisoned by his slave who was paid by his own family. He forgave his killer and told him to run because Bani Umayyah would kill him. He ruled for 2 years and 5 months which is the same duration as the caliphate of Abu Bakr رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُ. He passed away in 720 (101 A.H) near Aleppo, Syria. He was 38 years old.

At his death bed he asked to see the widows and orphans before his own children. He left 17 children behind. He was asked to leave a will, but Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz refused, saying if they're righteous, Allaah will provide for them. After he passed away, his children became the wealthiest. The relatives who protested the loss of their grants, became beggars on the streets. The Christians and Jews cried when he died. The Roman emperor described him as a righteous man. This was the legacy of Umar ibn Abdul Aziz, a just and rightly guided caliph.