Al-Dai al-Ajal Syedna Taher Saifuddin RA stated in the praise of Nabi Mohammed SA:

He is a divine light whose radiance has spread across both the East and the West.

Nabi Mohammed SA was sent forth as a guiding light for mankind. His progeny, the Fatemi Imams SA, and the Duat Mutlaqeen RA in their stead during the period of satr (seclusion), fulfill this imperative role in every era, for generation after generation of humanity. The power and potency of this divine light is such that it is not limited to any one quadrant or continent of the Earth: it engulfs the East and the West in its radiance.
Rasulullah SA foretold of the zuhoor (emergence from satr) of Imam Mahdi AS when he foretold that the sun would rise from the West ‘in 300’. This rising sun from the West was none other than Maulana al-Imam al-Mahdi billah AS, whose radiance and light would rid of the land of darkness.

In anticipation and preparation for this emergence, the 5th Imam, Maulana al-Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq AS sent duat (missionaries) from the Mashriq to the Maghrib, from the East to the West. Nearly a century and a half later, the 10th Imam, Maulana al-Imam al-Husain AS instructed Dai Abu Abdullah RA, known as the ‘Mashriqi’, or the one who hails from the East, to set forth to the Maghrib once more to lay the final groundwork for the onset of zuhoor. And in the manner prophesized by the Nabi Mohammed SA, the sun of imamate, Imam Mahdi SA rose as a shining light in the Maghrib and established the foundation of the Fatemi Dawlat (empire). ‘The Maghrib’ in the Islamic world refers to an area in North Africa that currently comprises of the countries of Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. It is named ‘Maghrib’ for it lies to the West of the center of the Islamic world, the holy lands of Makkah al-Mukaramah and Madinah Munawwarah. The Fatemi Dawlat spread from the Maghrib to the Mashriq where the city that would come to be known as the ‘Mother of the World’, the City Victorious, al-Mu’izziyah al-Qahirah, was established.

The 52nd Dai Mutlaq, al-Dai al-Ajal Syedna Mohammed Burhanuddin RA, holds an unparalleled place in the annals of Dawat’s history. He was the first dai mutlaq to travel to the Maghrib and visit the revered relics of the Fatemi Imams SA. In 1389 AH, 1968 AD, for over a period of two months, Syedna al-Muqadas RA voyaged throughout the Maghrib visiting the cities and sites where the Fatemi Imams SA had left their blessed mark. There, he meticulously studied their relics and rekindled the love and remembrance of the Fatemi kingdom in these areas.

During his travels in the Maghrib, he visited Jaami’ al-Zaytuna, in Tunis, Tunisia, where he led maghrib and ishaa’ namaaz. This masjid is one of the oldest in the Maghrib and is built in the typical Maghrabi style. Maghribi masjids are known for their transepts, where the roof of the aisle in front of the mihraab (prayer niche) is raised above the rest of the masjid’s roof. Further, Maghribi masjids are characterized by the presence of multiple domes along the mihraab wall, and specifically directly above the prayer niche. This style is apparent in the first masjid built by the Fatemi imams after their zuhoor, Jaami’ Mahdiyah, as well as the in later masjids of Qaahirah such as al-Jaami’ al-Azhar and al-Jaami’ al-Anwar.

In Jaami’ al-Zaytuna, there is a cupola or dome at the entrance of the transept from the sahen known as Qubbah al-Bahw. This Qubbah was built under the instructions of Maulana al-Imam al-Aziz billah AS at the hands of his governor in the Maghrib.
from the Zirids, Al-Mansur bin Buluggin, in 381 AH.

Architectural historians note that this Qubbah is one of the most elegant of those found in Tunisia because of its symmetry and the intricacy of its designs and patterns. Two different colored stones have been used in the arches of the dome; a feature not found elsewhere in this region and a possible influence of Egypt where the capital of the kingdom was now found. Historians further note that the Qubbah went on to influence many more in the region, even impacting those built further to the west in Andalusia, present-day Spain.
The Qubbah has four levels. The first level is part of the sahen façade and allows for entry into the transept and main prayer hall of the masjid. Essentially, it doubles as a gateway. The horseshoe arch and niches to the sides are reminiscent of the main portal to Jaami’ Mahdiyah. The second level is a square with three niches on each of its four sides. The two side niches are deeper than the central and also carry an intricate, checkered, diamond pattern. For transitioning from one level to the next, a system of cornices has been utilized. The third level of the Qubbah is circular. The façade of the circular level is split by twelve pilasters between which lie rectangular windows. These windows are topped by semi-domes in the form of a shell. This shape is also found in the mihraab of Jaami’ Mahdiyah. The final level of the Qubbah is that of the dome, which is fluted; a typical feature of Maghribi domes. It is clear from these various architectural aspects that the Qubbah design has been influenced by Jaami’ Mahdiyah and Misr, and therefore combines the barakaat of Fatemi artefacts in both the Maghrib and Mashriq.

Syedna Mohammed Burhanuddin RA was not only the first dai mutlaq to travel to the Maghrib; he was also the first dai to travel to the West. Syedna al-Muqaddas RA landed at O’Hare international airport in Chicago in 1398 AH (1978 AD) and made history as the first Fatemi dai to grace the United States. A little more than two decades later, in 1422 AH (2001 AD), he would make history once more by conducting the first Ashara Mubaraka in the Western hemisphere in the city of Houston, TX.

Fate would have it that in all these historic travels and voyages, Syedna al-Muqaddas’ mansoos and shahzada, al-Dai al-Ajal Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin TUS was by his side. The presence of both Maulas together ensured that barakaat would be multifold and plentiful.

This year, ‘The Year of Ubiquitous Barakaat’, Syedna al-Dai al-Ajal TUS has chosen the Western world, the land of America, and the city of Houston, as the location for the Ashara Mubaraka majaalis. Aimmat Fatemiyyeen AS ensured through their innovative architectural forms and designs, and more so through their Dawat, that the Mashriq and Maghrib would come together as one. Similarly, the Fatemi Duat, specifically the 52nd and 53rd dais, have ensured through their tireless travels and unyielding efforts in the eternal call towards Allah's guiding mission, that the barakaat of the Mashriq reaches those in the Maghrib. In fact, this endeavor was so successful that the Maghrib has ultimately become the Mashriq; the Mumineen of America are like those of Hindustan, and the majlis conducted within Mohammedi Masjid in the United States resembled the majalis of Ghurrat al-Masaajid in Mumbai or Masjid e Aazam in Surat. Burhanuddin Maula RA and Saifuddin Maula TUS have transplanted Fatemi culture to this land, yet simultaneously encouraged us to adopt and embrace the values and traditions of the land we live in. Like the beautiful structures built by the Fatemi Imams that harmoniously integrated the various architecture forms of different regions into one unified, unique style, the edifice of the Dawoodi Bohra
faith in the West stands tall and elegant as beautiful example of integration and identity. Qubbah al-Bahw then is the apt backdrop for this year’s Ashara Mubaraka for it, too, symbolizes the coming together of the East and the West; their unification at the hands of the Fatemi imams and their Duat Mutlaqeen.

The *ayat sharifah* dedicated to this year, 1437, is also uniquely associated to the Qubbah and the theme of this year’s *tazyeen* (decoration).

(O Mohammed) say: Allah sufficeth me. There is no god save Him. In Him I have placed my trust.

This *ayat shareefah* embodies the core message of the *tazyeen*: that the only one worthy of placing our trust in is the one who is the representative of the Creator of the East, the West and that in between. It demonstrates that in the manner by which the lofty Qubbah Bahw finds it elevated position in the Tunisian firmament through the support of its columns and remains standing despite the vicissitudes of time, similarly, a Mumin, when he or she relies on Maula TUS and places his trust in him, he, too, will reach the heights of his worldly and spiritual aspirations and remain protected from the difficulties brought about by Time.

May Allah Ta’ala grant our beloved Maula, Syedna Abu Ja’far us Sadiq Aali Qadr Mufaddal Saifuddin a long life in happiness and mirth. And may we remain in the benevolent shade of his glorious *qubbah*, our eyes full of tears, our hands upon our chest in *maatam*, and upon our lips the cry of ‘Ya Husain’.