

praying; I sacrifice myself to the muezzin.⁵² They are calling out the praise and glory of the Lord Almighty.⁵³ Oh people! Hear the call to prayer of my nephew who is as beautiful as Joseph.

25. 'Those fine accents, that reading of the Quran, the force and power of his speech! Indeed, his grandfather⁵⁴ was the greatest of orators. It sounds like the strains of wise King David.⁵⁵ Oh Lord, keep that voice in the world for all eternity. The melodious tones of his voice are like the petals of the flowers.⁵⁶ A nightingale is chirping in the garden of the Prophet.
26. Let someone bless him on my behalf. May God protect you, my child, from the evil-eye.⁵⁷ That fine speaker whose eloquence would please the hearts (of others). For two days he has not been able to drink even one drop of water. In strange lands⁵⁸ this misfortune has befallen Husain. This is the third (day of) hunger for my darling, the light of my eyes.
27. When the call of 'Make ready for worship,⁵⁹ was given in the ranks, the prayer was begun and the King of Creation (Husain) arose. Those ranks of light; the leader of the prayers who possessed the qualities of the angels! The path of salvation would have rubbed its eyes on his feet.⁶⁰ Husain's radiance went up to the empyrean on high. Was it a tablet of the Holy Quran⁶¹ or was it the prayer-mat of Husain?

52. I.e. Ali Akbar.

53. zwljēlal, lit. 'possessor of glory'.

54. jēd(d) - 'paternal grandfather' (dada), i.e. Ali.

55. David, the singer of the psalms, was renowned for his sweet voice.

56. ḡoba - a technical term of music meaning 'the different qualities and tones of the voice'.

57. ayn-wl kēmal - a euphemism - lit. 'the eye of excellence'. Praising someone excessively may bring the evil eye.

58. ywrbēt - here in its primary meaning 'foreign land', 'exile'.

59. qēd qamēt ws-salat - lit. 'the prayer is instituted'. These words mark the beginning of the service.

60. qēdmōḡ pēr ankh mālna - an act of great humility.

61. mwshef - 'a page', esp. of the Quran, hence the Quran itself, cf. v.28. lēwh refers to the ornamental title page of the Quran.

28. Was it an open Quran or was it the prayers of the company? The King of Hejaz (Husain) was (standing) in front like (the words) bismillah (at the top of the page). Were they lines (of writing on a page of the Quran) or ranks (of worshippers) behind the glorious king? The prayer put on airs before their proud manners (or their rendering).⁶² The dawn was sacrificed to the whiteness (which showed) between the lines.⁶³ All were verses of the light of the Quran.⁶⁴
29. The heart-pleasing voices of those magnifying God⁶⁵ in unison; all the angels of the empyrean were benefitted by them. The light of faith on their faces was twice as bright as the moon. All their limbs trembled in fear of God. All their necks were bent in submission and humility. In their prostrations they were like the moon; in bowing their bodies,⁶⁶ they were like the new moon.
30. In one line were all the relatives of Muhammad and Haidar.⁶⁷ If you counted them (you would find) eighteen brave young men. But all of them are peerless, righteous and humble. Followers of the Holy Imam, unrivalled in wisdom. The praise of God in every direction under the heavens was theirs. The dust on which they read a blessing was theirs (or alternatively - beads arranged (on a rosary) behind the central bead (inam)). The rosary...was theirs, the dust (of which

62. Throughout the whole verse the ranks of the worshippers are being compared to the lines of writing on a page of the Quran. Husain stands before them, leading the prayer, just as the words bismillah stand at the top of the page introducing the Quranic verse (ayet). eda means both 'airs' and 'rendering (of a passage)'. The play on words with naz and eda is a figure (senet) known as ayham-e tenaswb.

63. beyaz - lit. means 'whiteness', hence 'the whiteness of page in book'. For the connection with the dawn cf. xet-e ebyez in verse 22.

64. mwsheb-e natyq - The Quran.

65. mwkabbyr - one who says 'allahw ekber' cf. tekbir.

66. rek'et - one of the movements in prayer consisting of bowing the back, (pl. rwku). Hence the comparison with the curved crescent of the new moon.

67. hayder - lit. 'a lion' - a title of 'Alī (cf. esed wllah - 'the Lion of God').

the beads were made...was theirs).⁶⁸

31. The standing and sitting (in prayer) has gone from the world. It was only they who had complete devotion to Him whose existence is undeniable (i.e. God).⁶⁹ That humility, those long rak'ats, those prostrations! In their obedience (to God) they considered their own being and existence of no account.⁷⁰ Their hands and feet possessed no power of movement. Falling down they prostrated themselves over and over in the shadow of the swords.
32. When their hands were uplifted in devotion to God, the gates of acceptance were flung open in the heavens. The sky trembled, the high empyrean shook. Their two hands acted as pinions for the bird of prayer.⁷¹ Those humble men were engrossed in earnest supplication on the ground. Their prayers were on the highest heaven like the pure spirit, Gabriel.⁷²

68. The last three lines of the verse can be interpreted in two ways. yman (leader, the title of Husain) also refers to the large bead in the rosary (tasbih), behind which other smaller beads (dana - دانه) are arranged. dana (دانه) means 'wise'. tasbih is (1) saying subhanallah; (2) the rosary. Rosaries were often made of the dust of the same holy place (xak-e pak) such as Mecca or Karbala. The two interpretations are: (1) 'the followers of Husain were wise; praise belonged to them; the dust (i.e. humility) belonged to them; (2) the men stood behind Husain like beads behind the central bead of a rosary; they were themselves a rosary (2) blessings could be read on the men who resembled beads made out of dust!

These lines are a good example of a figure known as ayham-e tanaswb.

69. vajyb wl vwjud - lit. 'whose existence is obligatory', i.e. from whose qualities existence is inseparable.
70. nist 'is not', hest 'is', bud 'was' - parts of the Persian verb buden 'to be'.
71. The two hands held open in supplication are likened to the wings of the bird that carries the prayer to heaven.
72. ruh wl qwds lit. 'holy spirit' is an epithet of Gabriel. Not, of course, what a Christian understands by Holy Spirit.

33. As soon as the King of mankind had finished the prayers, the thirsty young men came to shake his hands.⁷³ One kissed the hand of the Emperor of great and small, another rubbed his eyes in respect on his feet. What hearts they were, what an obedient and fortunate army. They clasped and embraced each other, for it was the festival of their death.⁷⁴
34. Here one of those pious men made a prostration of thanksgiving, there another read the Quran dolefully, another prayed. Here was the praise of the Prophet, there the glorification of the Almighty. Lifting up his hands, the master (Husain) made this plea: 'Have pity on our thirst and exile⁷⁵ in (this time of) hunger. Oh Lord, have mercy on this band of travellers.
35. On one side was lamentation, pleading and supplication; on the other was the marshalling of the ranks, oppression, cruelty, clamour and wickedness. Umar, the son of Sa'ad⁷⁶ was saying 'Keep going to the river. Beware of the quays, keep a watch on the watering-places. Husain has been kept thirsty for two days. Indeed, do not give water to Husain even when he is drawing his last breath.'
36. The king of the celestial throne was sitting on his prayer-mat, when all of a sudden several arrows fell near him. They all turned and looked towards the evil army. Abbas arose weighing his peerless sword. They were (like) moths around the light of the torch of the imamate (Husain), and protected the Lord of manifest clemency (Husain) with their shields.⁷⁷

73. After prayer, those who have been participating in the service come to shake hands (mwsafaha) and to embrace (mwanega) the leader of the prayers.

74. Cf. verse 19.

75. Reading yrbet for yzzet (Rūh-e Anīs).

76. A general of Yazīd's army.

77. Lit. 'stopped their shields on....'.

37. Turning to Ali Akbar, the incomparable leader said to him, 'That wicked army is bent on treachery. Oh life of your father, go to the tent and order the women to take their children and move out of the fore-court. Let no child be killed by an arrow out of carelessness. I fear the neck of Ali Asghar may be a target.'
38. As the sky-throned king (Husain) was saying this to his son, Fazza⁷⁸ cried from the porch 'Oh Lord of mankind! Ah, where may the daughters of Ali take refuge? Arrows have fallen as far as the cradle of Asghar. Suffocating in this heat, the children have been crying all night. Now that a cool breeze is blowing, they have just gone to sleep.'
39. 'Baqir is lying in one place, in another Sakina has fainted. This feverish heat and this thirst is the harvest of the hot-season. The moon-like babies have cried themselves to sleep. Where can we, stricken by hunger, go with the children? What have we done wrong to deserve this continual hail of arrows (lit. 'for what fault do these arrows rain down one after the other'). The children are longing for a cool breeze.'
40. Hearing her voice, the Imam of celestial dignity (Husain) arose. His comrades guarding him with their shields escorted him to the porch. Turning, he said 'Now we are departing for battle. Gird up your loins for righteous-war. Call for horses. May you see the sky of Paradise. May your hearts be glad. Quickly dispose of the work of the community.'⁷⁹
41. Having said this, the king of sea and land went to the haram. Straightaway preparations began to be made in the ranks. Putting on his armlets,⁸⁰ the renowned Lord Abbas began to pace in front of the door like a male-lion. From the reflection of the light of his face, lightning flashed on the sand. His sword was in his hand, his shield on his holy shoulder.

78. Fazza - one of the women on Husain's side.

79. Husain is convinced that death is imminent.

80. jawshan - the part of the armour covering the upper arm. Cf. verse 51 below.

42. His helmet in its splendour was the envy of the crown of Solomon. The wings of Huma⁸¹ were sacrificed a hundred thousand times on his helmet-plumes. Both his gauntlets were the abode of conquest, the house of victory. God save us from his awesome strength, give us refuge from his fury.⁸² When such a brother gives protection from the swords of tyranny, then how should not the heart (lit. 'breast') of a brother be (like) a mountain?
43. The King (Husain) went into the tent and saw the state of the women. Their faces were pale, the hair on their heads was hanging loose.⁸³ Zainab uttered this prayer: 'Oh Lord Most Glorious (God), may the darling of Fatima be saved from this strife. May the crop of the renowned lady Bāno remain fresh and green. Let her parting be ever filled with sandal-paste,⁸⁴ and her womb with children.
44. 'The traveller of the wilderness of Karbala is in great difficulty. An assault is being made on a powerless man, cruelty inflicted upon a Sayyid.⁸⁵ What will become of us if the battle is determined in this foreign land? Oh God, have mercy on these darling little children. They are almost dying of hunger, they are being destroyed by thirst. Oh Lord, they are the holy family of Your Prophet.
45. 'Neither Ali nor the Prophet of celestial glory is here to lead us (lit. 'at the head'). Our house has been laid waste, the peerless Lady Fatima has passed away. After weeping for our mother, I wept in my grief for Hasan.⁸⁶ Only Husain is left in the world to represent them all. Now do me justice for he (alone) is the refuge of

81. hwma - a bird of Persian mythology.

82. elaman, elhezar - exclamations to avert danger and fear.

83. A sign of grief or panic.

84. Red coloured sandal paste is put in the parting of brides and newly married women to ensure fertility. The verse implies, 'may Husain return from battle safely and have more children by his wife, Bāno.

85. I.e. Husain. Those who claim direct descent from the Prophet are called Sayyids.

86. Fatima and Hasan were already dead by this time.

righteousness. If anything happened to him,⁸⁷ then the whole company is ruined.'

46. Coming near to her, the Lord of the court of heaven spoke: 'Do not be troubled, for all your prayers are answered. Those cursed ones (i.e. the army of Yazid) are arrogant, they are at fault. I shall go myself and show them the road of justice. This is not the time, my sister, for lamentation and grief. Bring me the blessed relics⁸⁸ of the refuge of the prophethood.

47. The garments which the Prophet had worn when he ascended to heaven,⁸⁹ Zainab brought them on tray and set them before the King of the faith (Husain). On his head he placed the turban of the righteous leader (Muhammad), he put on the holy cloak of the celestial Prophet. The clothes of the Prophet fitted perfectly on his body. The scarf of Fatima and the turban of the Prophet.

48. The two ends of the turban flap hung down magnificently (lit. 'with a hundred glories'). It seemed as if four locks of hair fell onto his shoulders. The strands of his jasmine-perfumed ringlets curled and twisted. On every single hair Cathay and Khotan were sacrificed. Musk, ambergris and aloes are nothing (in comparison). Could the curls of his locks be found on the spikenard?⁹⁰

49. From his clothes came the fragrance of the Prophet of the world. No bridegroom would have ever smelt such perfume on his bride. The fragrance of Haidar, Fatima, Husain and Hasan. In every direction drifted the fragrance of the five holy ones.⁹¹ Perfume was squandered on the valley which shed the fragrance of ambergris. The flowers swayed in the garden, and Rizvan⁹² in Paradise.

87. ben jana - to befall. The verb is feminine agreeing a word like mwsibat which must be understood.

88. Note tabarrwkat is plural, treated as singular for the sake of the rhyme.

89. meraj - the Prophet's ascent to heaven from Jerusalem.

90. Curly hair is often compared to the swnbwl - 'spikenard', 'hyacinth'.

91. panjtan = Muhammad, Ali, Fatima, Hasan and Husain. They are especially revered by Shi'as.

92. The name of the gate-keeper of Paradise.

50. As soon as the King of the time had put on his clothes, his sister, blessing her brother, began to weep. She cried: 'Ah, Haidar and Husan are not (alive) this day. From where can this poor exile bring you our mother now? Now the darling of the Prophet, he who is as beautiful as Joseph, is about to depart. I am sacrificed, bless your darling'.
51. When the King asked for the box of weapons to be opened, Zainab, the refuge of chasity, beat her face. The Imam of the court of heaven put on his armour. Grandeur and glory read the prayers of safety on his arm.⁹³ All the jewels⁹⁴ of his body shone out in beauty. Every link (of his armour) shone like stars.
52. When Zulfiqar⁹⁵ appeared, Ali was remembered. The King of the faith, kissing its hilt, wept piteously. When he poised in his hands the lustrous sword, glory itself cried out, 'I am sacrificed to your magnificence. May victory and conquest be near, may triumph be at hand. May it (i.e. the sword) profit you; may its strike cut down the enemy.' (lit. 'may its strike fall to the lot of...').
53. When the darling of Zahra had attached the sword to his waist. The crescent moon upon the sky tore its collar.⁹⁶ The leader of divine qualities put on his gloves, and the shield of Hamza ascended onto his shoulder.⁹⁷ The dignity (of the shield) increased, for it was a mark of prosperity. On the whole shield was the glory of the mark of the Prophethood.⁹⁸

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93. Two prayers (jew'an-e sevir, jew'an-e kabir) which are bound to the arm of a warrior for safety.
94. jewhar is also used in the sense of 'innate qualities'.
95. The name of the sword of Ali.
96. A sign of distraction as the result of love or admiration.
97. Hamza was an uncle of the Prophet. The shield went up onto his shoulder like the Prophet ascending to Heaven.
98. The Prophet had a birth-mark on his shoulder which was considered to be the mark of his prophethood. The shield gains dignity by ascending to the shoulder of Husain.