

# THE BURDAH

THE SINGABLE TRANSLATION  
OF BUSIRI'S CLASSIC POEM  
IN PRAISE OF THE PROPHET

صلى الله عليه وسلم



Mostafa Azzam

*Foreword by*  
Abdul Aziz Suraqah

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AL-MADINA  
INSTITUTE

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*Bismi Llahi l-Rahmani l-Rahim.*

*Al-hamdu liLlahi rabbi l-‘alamin.*

*Wa l-salatu wa l-salamu ‘ala ashrafi l-anbiya’i wa l-mursalin,*

*Wa ‘ala alihi l-tahirin wa sahbihi l-muhtadin,*

*Wa l-tabi‘ina lahum bi ihsanin ila Yawmi l-Din.*

Praise God, the bringer of all creation from nullity.

Then blessing be on the Chosen One from eternity.



## FOREWORD

Abdul Aziz Suraqah

IT HAS BEEN SAID that “Poetry is what gets lost in translation.” Exceptions, however, must be made for love poetry translated by lovers, such as this work before you. *Qasidat al-Burdah* of Imam Sharaf al-Din al-Busiri stands as an enduring testament to the power of poetry and its transformative effect on the soul. It is arguably the most famous poem ever written in praise of the Best of Creation, the Prophet Muhammad (Allah bless him and give him peace).

The *Burdah* is ultimately about two things: love and redemption. The secret behind its privileged position among prophetic praise-poetry is the brokenness and sincerity of the author when he composed it. As a young man, Busiri moved to Cairo where he earned his living writing calligraphy upon tombstones. He soon became famous in the region for his poetic prowess and lyrical skill, and was hired by some of Egypt’s government officials as a municipal clerk and court poet. His job was to write poetry in praise of the Sultan. He alludes to his early career in the end of the *Burdah*:



*I've served him with eulogy by which I seek to erase  
 The sins of life spent in poem and in servility.  
 For they have led me to things of horrible aftermath;  
 Akin to livestock decreed by them for the butchery.*

Busiri eventually clashed with the civil servants around him and used his poetic gifts to lampoon them and expose their faults. That resulted in a backlash from the political elite whose patronage he had enjoyed. Tired of politics and on the receiving end of gossip and what we call today “drama,” Busiri opened a primary school for children so he could teach them the Quran and literacy and live a simpler life, removed from intrigue. But the peace he was looking for continued to elude him, so he eventually left Cairo and travelled to Alexandria where he finally found the tranquility and guidance he was looking for. There in Alexandria, Busiri found his spiritual teacher and guide, Shaykh Abu al-‘Abbas al-Mursi (Allah have mercy upon him), and repented from his career as a court poet.

Many commentaries on the *Burdah* note that while in Alexandria, Busiri was stricken with a debilitating sickness—a stroke—that caused one half of his body to suffer paralysis. One day some of his colleagues paid him a visit, and after hearing his complaint about his incapacitating illness, one of them said, “You are a scholar of Arabic and poetry; why don’t you compose an ode in praise of the Messenger of Allah

(Allah bless him and give him peace) as a means of intercession through his exalted person?” Busiri asked his colleague, “Do you think it will help my illness?” His colleague replied, “No one who draws near the exalted Prophet and beloved intercessor (Allah bless him and give him peace) is ever disappointed, and no one seeks intercession through him except that he will attain what he sought after!” That very night Busiri composed his *Burdah* ode, and after he went to sleep he saw the Prophet Muhammad (Allah bless him and give him peace) in his dream. The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) came near him and covered him in his mantle—his *Burdah*, the poem’s namesake—and he was immediately cured of paralysis!

The *Burdah* of Busiri has gone on to become the quintessential praise-poem in the Islamic tradition. It has been memorized, transmitted and sung by countless lovers of the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) over the centuries; it has adorned the Prophet’s Mosque in Medina, has received numerous scholarly commentaries, and has been translated into nearly every major language, including English.

The earliest English translation appears to be one published in India in 1893 by Shaikh Faizullah-Bháí, entitled *The Poem of the Scarf*. Recent translations include:

- Shaykh Hamza Yusuf’s *The Burda of Al-Busiri: The Poem of the Cloak* (Hayward, California, Al-Hambra Productions, 2002);
- Shaykh Abdal Hakim Murad’s *The Mantle Adorned: Imam Bûsîrî’s Burda* (London, Quilliam Press, 2009);
- Aziza Spiker’s *The Burda* (Guidance Media, 2012);
- The first ever complete translation of a commentary, by this needy servant, *The Mainstay: Commentary on Qasida al-Burda* (Keighley, Abu Zahra Foundation, 2015);
- And now this translation, set in rhyming English meter that fits the meter of the original Arabic *Burdah*.

What sets this translation apart from other translations is its rhyming meter and its utility. This translation is meant to be engaged with: to be experienced not only by the eyes that read it, but also by the voices that sing it and the ears that hear it. Celebrating the Prophet Muhammad (Allah bless him and give him peace) is not a spectator sport or a performance to be watched and appreciated from afar. It is an expression of love, or a conscious effort to open one’s self up to love and receive it.

The Prophet Muhammad (Allah bless him and give him peace) tells us, “Certainly to Allah belong fresh breezes (*nafahat*), so expose yourselves to them.” The *nafahat* belong to

Allah; therefore, the fresh breezes of love are—like everything else—bestowed by Allah and not attainable through our personal efforts, strategies, or overanalyzing. Nevertheless, the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) instructs us to *open ourselves up* to those divine breezes: to *seek out* love and to be lovers, and have capacity to feel passion and longing in the deepest depths of our hearts and to express it openly.

Ustadh Mostafa Azzam is to be congratulated for his wonderful service to the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) and to the Prophet's *Ummah*. May Allah make this translation the quintessential English *Burdah* whose couplets are sung passionately by lovers throughout mosques and homes. May Allah accept it as a loving tribute to His Beloved Prophet whom He sent to people of all tongues, including English.

ABDUL AZIZ SURAQAH



## PREFACE

### A Journey in Love

THIS TEXT HAS been a lifetime in the making.

Like many of today's Muslims, I grew up with little more than a theoretical relationship with the Messenger of Allah, *salla Llahu 'alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*. And even though I came from an Arab background, my lack of fluency in Arabic made having a personal relationship with the Prophet, *salla Llahu 'alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*, even more distant.

And yet, a personal relationship with the Prophet, *salla Llahu 'alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*, is exactly what this ummah, this people, has always had—a deeply personal, emotional, spiritual relationship with him. *Salla Llahu 'alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*.

In 1998, I had the blessing of moving to Damascus, Syria, to learn Arabic and undertake some Islamic studies. One of the things that stands out for me about Damascus, Allah protect its people, is the city's continuous celebration of the Beloved of Allah, Muhammad, the one sent for no other reason but as a mercy to all the worlds. *Salla Llahu 'alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*.

The people would literally sing it from the rooftops. Literally. I remember evenings when I would be walking home and I would hear the most beautiful singing resonating through the air. I would stop and listen to the people gathered on the roof of their low-rise apartment building to celebrate the Prophet, *salla Llahu ‘alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*, singing for hours various tunes of *madih*, poetry eulogizing the Best of Creation, *salla Llahu ‘alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*.

And how could they not celebrate! How could *we* not celebrate, when we have been made the best of people simply because we were chosen to belong to the Best of Creation, *salla Llahu ‘alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*! As Allah says in the Holy Qur’an in Surat Yunus, “Say: In the bounty of Allah and in His mercy, in *that* let them rejoice” [10:58]. What greater bounty is there, what greater mercy, than Muhammad, our liege, our master! *Salla Llahu ‘alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*. In that let them rejoice. In that let them celebrate.

I remember how the people of Syria would call so many of their gatherings a “*mawlid*,” literally a birthday party—a celebration of the coming into this world of the seal of all messengers, *salla Llahu ‘alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*. They didn’t wait for his birth-month of Rabi‘ al-Awwal to celebrate this greatest of gifts. They didn’t celebrate the Prophet, *salla Llahu ‘alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*, just once a year; they celebrated continuously.

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Even their worldly celebrations were turned into celebrations of the Prophet, *salla Llahu ‘alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*. Once I was walking down the street and again I heard the beautiful sounds of people singing about the Prophet, *salla Llahu ‘alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*. So I stopped and listened outside the gate of the courtyard emanating such beauty. The hosts warmly approached me, and I was compelled to ask them what was going on in there; it was too beautiful not to ask. They told me it was a wedding. How beautiful is that! Even their weddings, a celebration of the union of bride and groom and their families, were made into celebration of the Prophet, *salla Llahu ‘alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*. Within seconds they insisted I join them, as they excitedly pulled me in for pistachio ice cream and the sweet taste of prophetic eulogy.

Among the most memorable celebrations of our prophet, *salla Llahu ‘alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*, in Damascus was the Wednesday morning *majlis salat ‘ala l-Nabiyy*, literally “gathering of prayer for the Prophet,” *salla Llahu ‘alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*: when every Wednesday morning after Fajr, people from all over the city, including shaykhs from every spiritual lineage and path, would gather to celebrate the Messenger of Allah, *salla Llahu ‘alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*, in unison. It didn’t matter who you were: scholar, non-scholar, religious, not-so-religious, adult, child, whoever. If you belong to Muhammad, then come celebrate. *Salla Llahu ‘alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*.



Many of the adults would be in the routine of praying Fajr, attending the gathering, and then going straight to work from there. But even more delightful than seeing all the adults was seeing all the children, as young as six years old—maybe even younger—in their little school uniforms and their backpacks, coming to celebrate their habib, their beloved, on their way to school. This is the kind of love that this ummah has for its prophet. And it continues to shout its love from the rooftops in celebration of the Best of Creation. Salla Llahu ‘alayhi wa alihi wa sallam.

When I moved to Jordan at the end of 1999, I found the same thing: gatherings celebrating the Prophet, salla Llahu ‘alayhi wa alihi wa sallam, throughout the year. In Yemen the same thing. In Egypt, the same thing. And so on throughout the Muslim world.

And yet, somehow, that personal connection with the Prophet, salla Llahu ‘alayhi wa alihi wa sallam, for years eluded me: even though I had spent time around such gatherings and definitely felt something, that deep love was, unfortunately, very missing.

Until I met a particular shaykh in Jordan in the Spring of 2010. This shaykh was a sharif (literally meaning, “nobleman”), a direct descendant of the Prophet, salla Llahu ‘alayhi wa alihi wa sallam. The personal connection that the Sharif has with the Prophet, salla Llahu ‘alayhi wa alihi wa sallam, is plain, and

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it only took being in his company for a short while before a certain love was planted in my heart and my life was changed forever. I can even remember the exact moment when the shift happened: I was reciting with him some verses of poetry that are part of the Sharif's daily morning remembrance, dhikr.

As I recited those verses, the realization surfaced to me how remote I was from the Prophet, *salla Llahu 'alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*, but the moment following that devastating realization, it was as if the remoteness was somehow removed in an instant, and I was falling in love. *Al-hamdu liLlah, al-hamdu liLlah, al-hamdu liLlah. Allahumma salli wa sallim wa barik 'ala Sayyidina Muhammadin wa 'ala alihi wa sahabihi ajma'in.* Such is the benefit in keeping the company of the lovers of the Prophet, *salla Llahu 'alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*.

Below is my English rendition of those verses that changed my life in a moment:

In Allah and the Loved One drawn so near is our majesty.  
Through them both is our glory, not prestige and celebrity.  
All who try to disgrace us, whether stranger or family,  
We wield against them our word, "God and  
Prophet suffices me."

The Sharif had planted a seed of love that would forever change my life. But it was another lover of the Prophet, *salla Llahu 'alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*, who would later come along and give that seed the most profound nurturing. For the next

few months, I continued to yearn for someone who would connect me in love to the Supreme Beloved, *salla Llahu ‘alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*. And so such a person is exactly what Allah, in His limitless mercy and wisdom, sent me. Right to my doorstep. This is how it happened...

A group of us used to regularly assemble for a weekly mawlid on Monday evenings, in which we would recite prayers for the Prophet, *salla Llahu ‘alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*, from *Dala’il al-Khayrat*, sing praise for the Prophet, *salla Llahu ‘alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*, from *Qasidat al-Burdah*, and read a section from a selected book on the life or qualities of the Prophet, *salla Llahu ‘alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*.

We had for some time been reading through the modern classic of prophetic love, *Our Master Muhammad the Messenger of Allah*, by Imam Abdallah Sirajuddin. One particular Monday in the Autumn of 2010, we were going to be completing our reading of the book. So when the organizer of our Monday mawlid heard that a particular shaykh known for his love of the Prophet, *salla Llahu ‘alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*, was visiting from overseas, he invited that lover to attend this special occasion with us and perhaps say a few words.

The organizer quickly realized that the regular location for our mawlid would not be ideal now that the Lover (and his students) would be attending the gathering. So he asked if we could hold it at my place. For various logistical reasons,

I was hesitant to have the mawlid at my place. But each time I resisted, the way was paved for us to have it at my home. After I had resisted perhaps three times, I prayed for guidance one last time, and Allah opened my heart to it, and we had the mawlid at my house. So Allah literally delivered the Lover right to my doorstep.

We held the gathering and the Lover said a few words. All he spoke about was the Prophet, *salla Llahu ‘alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*, and his love. I melted. It quickly became obvious that this was the person I had been looking for, and I continued to keep his company for the weeks and months to come. And he continued to instill in us one thing: the love of the Best of Creation, *salla Llahu ‘alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*.

When the Lover spoke about the Prophet, *salla Llahu ‘alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*, it was not like when others spoke. Rather, when he spoke, we got a glimpse of the Beloved, *salla Llahu ‘alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*, through a true lover’s eyes. And the more I heard from him about the Prophet, *salla Llahu ‘alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*, the more I ached to hear more.

So around the end of 2010, when I had the opportunity to study some of the characteristics, *shama’il*, of the Prophet, *salla Llahu ‘alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*, I seized the opportunity. The teacher was a *sayyid* (literally meaning “master,” “lord,” or “liege”), which like “*sharif*,” is the term traditionally designated to a direct descendant of the Prophet, *salla*

Llahu ‘alayhi wa alihi wa sallam. This sayyid is from southern Yemen, where if a sayyid is also a scholar, they give him the title, “Habib,” literally meaning “Beloved,” in honor of their forefather, the Ultimate Beloved, *salla Llahu ‘alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*.

As the Habib was teaching from the classic text on prophetic qualities, the *Shama’il* by Imam Tirmidhi, he mentioned the couplet that the Companion Hassan ibn Thabit, the famous poet of the Prophet, *salla Llahu ‘alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*, had composed in his praise:

*Wa ahsanu minka lam tara qattu ‘ayni  
 Wa ajmalu minka lam talidi l-nisa’u  
 Khuliqta mubarra’an min kulli ‘aybin  
 Ka’annaka qad khuliqta kama tasha’u*

After reciting the lines, the Habib said, “I wish someone would translate those lines into English...and I mean not just in prose, but in meter and rhyme.”

The Habib’s wish entered my heart, and I took on the challenge to render those lines into English verse. But it wasn’t easy. I spent the whole rest of the day ignoring everyone and everything around me as I tried to render those few words into English. Though I repeatedly got stuck, I eventually managed to compose something that worked, *al-hamdu liLlah*.

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I have since edited the lines slightly, and I provide you here with my English rendition of them:

More splendid than you my eye hasn't seen.  
No woman has mothered one oh so fine!  
You are created so free of flaw...  
As if made by your own design.

When I recited my rendition to the Habib, he was delighted with it. But another scholar who overheard it was over the moon with excitement. The Scholar kept mentioning my translation over the next few days until at one point, he said to me, "You should translate the Burdah like that." I really didn't understand his suggestion, because I had slaved just to translate that one couplet, and I knew that Imam Busiri's *Qasidat al-Burdah* was at least 160 verses.

I honestly thought that translating the Burdah in meter and rhyme was an impossibility. So for some time, I didn't make much of the Scholar's suggestion. But over the next few months, especially as I continued to keep company with the Lover, my love for Imam Busiri's Burdah continued to increase. Until one day, I felt a yearning to translate it. I still expected it to be impossible, but isn't love what makes the impossible possible?

So I decided that I would just try to translate the first verse. If I succeeded with that, I would try the second. And so on. So I gathered a number of commentaries on the Burdah, along with

the already existent English translations. And I did my best to understand with precision the meaning of that first verse. Then I endeavored to translate it into precise, concise English. Then I had to put that into the matching meter and rhyme. It was painstaking, but eventually I had verse #1 in English. I tried singing it to three of the tunes of the Burdah with which I was familiar, and it fit with all three, al-hamdu liLlah. So I prayed Istikharah on my rendition of verse #1 and finished.

Eventually I did the same for each of the 160 verses, also adding a few more verses of my own. I decided to commit to translating one verse a day, undertaking the same process each day for the next few months: understand the verse with precision, express it in English, make it rhyme, fit the meter, sing it three ways, pray Istikharah, settle on the verse...finally, prostrate in thanks for the completion of the verse. Next day, next verse. And so on.

As Rabi' al-Awwal approached, I wanted to try to complete the translation by its arrival. A sort of "birthday present" to the Beloved. Salla Llahu 'alayhi wa alihi wa sallam. Al-hamdu liLlah, with time, I was able to increase the pace of my translation, often completing two verses a day. And finally, on Thursday, the 25th of Safar, 1433 (January 19th, 2012), shortly before Maghrib, with just a few days left to Rabi' al-Awwal, my translation was complete. Al-hamdu liLlah. I knew in my heart that if I leave one thing behind when I die, this is it.

But the journey wasn't done yet. It was one thing to complete the text for myself; it was something else to get it out to the world. I hadn't yet decided that I would share it with the world. Even if no one else ever read it, after completing a project like that, my life would never be the same. I only shared my *Burdah* with a few of the closest people to me, the Lover being one of them.

I wasn't ready to share it with the world. Who am I to put out anything? These things usually receive a spiritual sign before they are shared. Imam Busiri, for example, after composing his poem was visited by the Prophet, *salla Llahu 'alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*, in his dream. Busiri had had a stroke paralyzing him, and the Prophet, *salla Llahu 'alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*, wrapped him in his coat, his "*burdah*," after which Imam Busiri awoke fully healed of his paralysis.

Imam Marzuqi, the author of the poem '*Aqidat al-'Awamm*, "*Islamic Theology for Average People*," was taught the first half of his poem by the Prophet, *salla Llahu 'alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*, himself, in a dream in which the Companions were also in attendance.

Imam Ibn Raslan, the author of the famous poem in Islamic law, *Safwat al-Zubad*, is reported to have thrown his manuscript into the depths of the sea, tying a rock to it to weigh it down. He then called out, "O Allah, if this is purely for You, then make it manifest. Otherwise, make it disappear."



It returned to the surface without a single letter damaged, and it continues to be studied to this day, six centuries later.

But I, on the other hand, am nothing like those people. I'm just a guy who knows a bit of English and who learned a bit of Arabic. I didn't receive any such miraculous sign. So I wasn't in a hurry to do anything with my text.

Then one day, as I was visiting Madinah, the Illumined City of the Prophet, *salla Llahu 'alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*, with the Lover, and as he was overlooking the Green Dome of the Prophetic Mosque from his hotel window, he turned to me and said, "Have you published your Burdah?" I answered no. He responded, "You should publish it." For me, that was permission enough to at least move forward with searching out a publisher and considering sharing the Burdah with the world.

But even after that, I went years without finding the right person to publish it. I came across a number of publishers who were a possibility, but I needed the right person. So it remained unpublished for over three years. In that time, I also edited it and re-edited it, never fully satisfied with my ability to do such a project justice. I'm still not satisfied. But how could I ever be satisfied presenting the Perfected One, *salla Llahu 'alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*, with the imperfect efforts of someone like me? But who knows—maybe it will be accepted not because of its perfection, but despite its imperfection...

and because of the perfection of the one receiving it. Salla Llahu ‘alayhi wa alihi wa sallam.

Finally, I came across a publisher that I thought might be the one. And when I met with the brother behind the publishing house, I quickly knew he was the person I had been awaiting for the past few years. I told him a bit of the back-story of how the Burdah began, and when I got to the part in the story about the verses from Sayyidna Hassan, radiya Llahu ‘anh, I saw his head drop upon hearing the verses. With his eyes closed, he simply stopped. He was just lost in, “You are created so free of flaw... As if made by your own design.” I stopped talking. Nothing left to say. He clearly wasn’t with me anymore. And he clearly was the one I was looking for. So in no time we agreed to work together to get the Burdah out to the English-speaking world.

I feel beyond blessed to present you with the first ever singable translation of the Burdah. And even though I recognize the uniqueness and specialness of the text you hold in your hands, and even though I recognize that I can never thank Allah enough for allowing this poor soul such a tremendous gift, I also recognize my unworthiness. I have no miracles to report to you. I am not a saint. I am not a scholar. I am not even a true lover. I am fully aware of my deficiencies and hypocrisy in love.

Despite that, I am hopeful. I am hopeful because the Burdah is a poem of hope. One of the many beautiful things

about Imam Busiri's *Qasidat al-Burdah* is the broken state in which he presents it, making no claims to loftiness. Because the Burdah is not just for the saint and the scholar; the Burdah is for saint and sinner alike, for scholar and layman alike. It is a poem that allows every single one of us to say with our state:

Lord, my hope in You is not through my deeds;  
My hope in You is through the Chosen One.  
I come to You with grave sins on my back;  
But with Muhammad upon my tongue.

Salla Llahu 'alayhi wa alihi wa sahbihi  
wa sallama tasliman kathira.

## NOTE ABOUT THE TRANSLATION

This is not technically a translation. This Burdah can perhaps be more precisely referred to as an English rendition based on Imam Busiri's *Qasidat al-Burdah*. Some of the differences between this Burdah and Imam Busiri's are the following:

- Small liberties have been taken for the sake of the meter or rhyme, such as the adding of an adjective here or there.

- Some verses of the Arabic have been adjusted in the English to make them more accessible to English, such as in verse #130, which mentions dotting i's and crossing t's, even though i's and t's don't exist in Arabic.

- Some verses have been changed by the translator in hope of tightening the meaning, such as the omission of "then" ("thumma" in Arabic) from verse #41, since the matter is not actually sequential.

- Some verses have been added by the translator, such as for introduction to the text and for contextualization of Chapter 8. For the sake of referencing, all verses that have been added and that are not from Imam Busiri's original are between brackets and are lettered, instead of merely numbered.

That said, painstaking effort has been made to keep this Burdah close in both spirit and letter to Imam Busiri's original. And through Allah is success.





## Chorus

*“Mawlaya salli wa sallim da’iman abadan  
‘Ala habibika khayri l-khalqi kullihimi.”*

[My master, bless and salute always and for evermore  
Your most beloved, creation’s greatest entirely.]

*“Ya rabbi salli wa sallim da’iman abadan  
‘Ala l-habibi wa ahli l-bayti kullihimi.”*

[My keeper, bless and salute always and for evermore  
The most beloved and all the household entirely.]



## Prologue

- o A. [O, Master of First and Last, I beg of you to accept  
This little gift to Your Grace, from someone as low  
as me:
- o B. A token of love in hope of getting a glimpse of you,  
Then spending my days and nights with you for  
eternity;
- o C. A word of praise for the Praised, O you, the  
Praiseworthy One,  
  
A praise unfit for your highness, beauty, and  
majesty.
- o D. And even though it can never reach the height of  
your rank,  
It can be reached by your hand of limitless charity.]



## Chapter I

1. Is it from thinking of neighbors past in Dhu Selemi  
That you have mixed blood in tears that flow from  
eyes steadily?
2. Or blowing of wind from the direction of Kazimah,  
And lightning flashing from Idum in the dark that you see?
3. So what is wrong with your eyes: when you say  
“Stop!” they just weep?  
And with your heart: when you say, “Be sane!” it acts  
crazily?
4. Does one so lovestruck imagine love is concealable,  
Between a downpour from it and being so fiery?
5. If not for passion, you would have never burst into tears  
At the remains, nor lost sleep over the mount or the tree.



6. So how do you still deny a love to which testified  
Against you true witnesses of tears and infirmity;
7. When grief has fixed on your cheeks canals of tears and  
malaise  
Like branches of dogwood, red, and daffodils, yellowy?
8. Yes, sights of my love have come at night and kept me  
awake;  
How love repels all delights and comforts with agony!
9. You critic of love so passionate, an apology  
From me to you—but if you were true, you'd not  
censure me.
10. May you be spared what I bear—my secret isn't  
concealed  
From haters, nor is there any end to my malady.
11. You've offered me true advice, but simply, I hear it not;  
The lover is deaf to all of those who speak critically.
12. I've even doubted gray hair's advice when it censures me;  
Although gray hair with advice is less in dubiety.



## Chapter 2

13. My evil ego, in its stupidity, paid no heed  
To all the warning of graying hair and seniority.
14. And hasn't set out a spread of pleasing actions to host  
A guest who showed at my head, bereft of timidity.
15. And had I known that I'd fail to honor him, I'd have hid-  
Den using hair colorant his first appearance to me.
16. Who's there for me to control the fight of its wandering—  
Just as a bit bridles horses in their obstinacy?
17. So do not count on offenses to get rid of its lust;  
Food only intensifies the craving of gluttony.
18. The ego is like a baby: leave it and it grows up  
In love with suckling; but wean it, and it's weaned finally.

19. So fight its whim, and beware of giving power to it;  
When whim's empowered, it kills or damages markedly.
20. And shepherd it carefully as it is grazing in deeds;  
And if the pasture you find it fancies, don't let it be.
21. How many times it's convinced a man of killer  
delights—  
While blind to the poison in the gravy so savory!
22. Beware the ambush of being hungry and being full;  
Starvation at times is even worse than satiety.
23. And void of tears eyes that have been stuffed with  
forbidden things.  
Keep in the shelter of pure repentance unceasingly.
24. And contradict both the Self and Devil, and disobey!  
And if they give true advice to you, still look skeptically.
25. And do not settle with either as your lawyer or foe;  
You're well aware of a lawyer's and a foe's treachery.
26. I ask for pardon from God for empty word with no deed;  
I have ascribed by it to a sterile man progeny.

*Chapter Two*

27. I've ordered you to do good, but have ignored it, myself;  
I'm not upstanding, so who am I to tell you to be?
28. I haven't packed extra deeds in preparation for death;  
I haven't prayed, haven't fasted, but the compulsory.



## Chapter 3

29. I've violated the way of him who livened the dark,  
Until his feet had complained of swelling up painfully;
30. And out of hunger, would bind his abdomen and  
would wrap  
Beneath a hard stone a waist whose skin is so velvety.
31. The lofty mountains made into gold for him tried to be  
A way to bait him, so he true loftiness let them see.
32. His "poverty" only strengthened his disinterest in them;  
For never are protectees assaulted by poverty.
33. How could it tempt to this world—the "poverty" of  
him who  
If not for him, the whole world would not have been  
made to be.

*Chapter Three*

34. Muhammad, the master of both worlds and both beings  
and  
Both groups: the Arabs and the non-Arab community;
35. Our prophet, who is commander and forbidder—there is  
No one more true in his saying no or yes than is he.
36. He is the loved one whose intercession we're hopeful of,  
At every horror to hit—yes, every calamity.
37. He has invited to God, so all who grip onto him  
Are gripping rope that will never fray for eternity.
38. He tops the prophets in both appearance and character;  
They don't approach him in knowledge or in gen'rosity.
39. And all of them are receiving from Allah's Messenger  
A sip from down-pouring rain or handful scooped from  
the sea.
40. And all are standing before him at their own limits fixed:  
A dot of knowledge or mark from words of sagacity.
41. He is the one with perfected essence and outward form;  
Picked as the love of the Maker of all humanity.

42. Beyond a partner in his so beautiful qualities;  
Yes, undivided in him is beauty's whole entity.
43. Avoid what Christians have claimed about their own  
messenger;  
And give to him any praise you wish, and praise sensibly.
44. Ascribe to his person what you wish of nobility;  
Ascribe to his stature what you wish of immensity.
45. Indeed, Allah's Messenger's perfection has no frontier  
That any speaker could ever verbalize orally.
46. And were his marvels to match his worth in greatness,  
his name,  
When called, would give life to bones decayed to nihilicity.
47. He tried us not, from concern, with things that boggle  
the mind;  
And so we haven't faced any doubt or perplexity.
48. Conceiving his meaning has exhausted the universe;  
So near or far, one not dumbstruck by it you will not see.
49. Much like the sun: from afar it does appear small to eyes,  
And would impair any vision when in proximity.

*Chapter Three*

50. And how could people asleep, distracted from him by  
dreams,  
Begin to grasp in the present world his reality!
51. The peak of knowledge about him is that he is a man  
And is the best of Allah's creation, entirely.
52. And all the marvels the noble messengers have conveyed  
Have come to them from the light of Ahmad exclusively.
53. He is the Sun of esteem, to which they are as if moons:  
Reflecting its lights in darkneses to humanity.
54. How grand the form of a Prophet brightened by character,  
Enveloped by handsomeness, distinguished by jollity!
55. Like flowers in fineness, the full moon in ascendancy,  
The ocean in giving, and all time in tenacity.
56. When he's alone and you meet him, he is like one amid  
An army and entourage, because of his majesty.
57. From treasure chests of his eloquence and his beaming  
grin  
Do seem to be pearls preserved within their shells  
preciously.



58. No scent compares to the earth embracing his blessed  
form;  
For him who sniffs it or kisses it what felicity!



## Chapter 4

59. His noble birth did reveal the purity of his roots.  
How pure the outset of them as well as finality!
60. A day the Persians perceived that they indeed had been  
warned  
Of the occurrence of suffering and adversity.
61. The Arch of Khosrau had passed the night while falling  
apart;  
Just like the status of Khosrau's peers: without unity.
62. The fire was short of breath out of regret over it.  
The river lost all its current out of despondency.
63. It saddened Sawa to find the drying up of its lake,  
And thirsty seekers returning from the place angrily.

64. As if the fire had gotten water's wetness from grief;  
And water had burnt up as a fire burns seethingly.
65. The jinn were speaking aloud, and lights were shining  
so bright;  
The Truth is made manifest in signal and verbally.
66. But blind and deaf they were so the happy news went  
unheard;  
And flashes of lightning as a warning they didn't see.
67. All after their fortune teller notified all the folk  
Their old religion so crooked soon would no longer be.
68. And after they eyed in the horizons the shooting stars  
All crashing like statues in the earth for idolatry.
69. Until from the source of revelation, up in the sky,  
One after the other, each retreating demon did flee.
70. They were when fleeing just like the heroes of Abrahah,  
Or like a pelted-with-pebbles-from-his-hands infantry.
71. Hurlled after having extolled while in the palms of his  
hands;  
Hurlled like the swallowed extoller from the gut cavity.



## Chapter 5

72. The trees had come for his call, prostrate in humility;  
They came to him on their trunks, like footless legs,  
walking free.
73. As if they had drawn along the way a straight line for  
what  
Their branches had written in the finest calligraphy.
74. Just like the cloud moving with him as he moved  
anywhere;  
From noon's intense oven heat protecting him constantly.
75. I swear an oath by the moon, which split in two, that it has  
A likeness to his pure heart—an oath of veracity.
76. And what the cave did contain of good and nobility;  
With every look from the disbelievers too blind to see.

77. The Truth and Truthful in Faith inside the cave hadn't  
moved;  
All while they were saying that inside the cave none  
could be.
78. They thought no dove hovered and no spider spun any  
web,  
For him, the Best of Creation—thinking its vacancy.
79. Protection from God made needless reinforced armature,  
Or towering citadels providing security.
80. No day has time gone to harm me and I have sought his  
care,  
But that I have gotten care from him, without mockery.
81. Nor have I asked of the riches of both worlds from his  
hand,  
Without largesse from the best of givers coming to me.
82. Do not deny revelation from his dreaming, because  
His heart, though his eyes may shut, is open wide and  
does see.
83. And that was so at the very start of his prophethood:  
So with that state of the dreaming no one can disagree.

*Chapter Five*

84. How blest is God: revelation isn't something attained;  
Nor is a prophet suspected in what we do not see.
85. How many times has his palm by touch relieved the  
unwell,  
And freed the helpless from in the noose of insanity.
86. His call gave life to a gray and barren year full of  
drought;  
Till it became like a star in ages of ebony;
87. With teeming clouds—you'd have thought the valleys  
had rivers flow  
In from the sea, or a flooded dam that gushed viciously.
88. Leave me alone to describe his miracles, which are plain  
As nightly fire on mountains, lit as a courtesy.
89. For pearls increase in their beauty when arranged on a  
string,  
But aren't less precious kept alone and separately.
90. What eulogizing has any hope of stretching to reach  
What he possesses in noble nature and quality?



## Chapter 6

91. True signs from the Merciful, originated in time,  
Beginningless, trait of Him Who is beginninglessly.
92. They aren't bound by constraints of time, as they tell  
us of  
The day to come, also Aad and Irum—past history.
93. They stayed among us, and so transcended all miracles  
From all the prophets, as they had come and then  
ceased to be.
94. So wise and clear, that they leave no room for a single  
doubt  
To an opponent and have no need for a referee.

*Chapter Six*

95. And never were they attacked except that from battle  
did  
Return to them with surrendered arms the worst  
enemy.
96. Their eloquence fought off their dissenters' claim, as a  
man  
That is protective fights off attack from his family.
97. Possessing meanings like waves upon the sea in support;  
Surpassing its treasures in allure and sublimity.
98. Such that their wonders are countless and beyond any  
bound,  
And never found to be tiresome in great quantity.
99. By them is soothed their reciter's eye, so I said to him,  
"You have indeed found the rope of God, so hold  
steadily."
100. If you recite them in worry of the fire of Hell,  
From their cool fountain you douse the burn of Hell  
utterly.



101. Just like the Basin, as it is whitening every face,  
Of sinners coming to it like coals as black as can be.
102. And like the straight Bridge and like the Balance in  
equity:  
Without them no justice is maintained in society.
103. Be not amazed by a hater in denial of them,  
Who acts unknowing despite full knowledge and mastery.
104. An eye may even reject the light of sun when inflamed;  
A mouth rejecting the taste of water from malady.



## Chapter 7

105. O best of those whose front yard is sought by those  
seeking good,  
On foot and on backs of camels treading vigorously!
106. And you who are sign supreme for one who does seek  
to know!  
And greatest blessing for one in search of prosperity!
107. From sanctum to sanctum you had made the trip  
overnight;  
Just as the moon makes the trip through darkness  
nocturnally.
108. You spent the night rising up until you had reached a  
place  
A length of two bows, not gained or sought in all  
history.

109. And all the prophets and messengers had put you ahead,  
Just as the served over servants has the priority.
110. As you proceeded through all the seven levels with  
them,  
In a procession, you were the banner bearer to see;
111. Until you had left no goal for the ambitious in hope  
Of closeness, nor height for someone seeking ascendancy.
112. You humbled all ranks by annexation: you were addressed,  
Like unannexed proper noun, with singular dignity.
113. So that you triumph with a connection oh so concealed  
From eyes, and a secret oh so shrouded in mystery!
114. So you obtained every glory, no one else joining you;  
And you surpassed all alone, unchallenged, every degree.
115. The measure of stations you were granted, what majesty!  
Attaining the blessings you were given, what rarity!
116. Great news for us, people of Islam! Indeed, we possess  
A pillar of special care erected unbreakably.
117. And since Allah called the one who called us to serving  
Him  
The Greatest Prophet, we are the greatest community.



## Chapter 8

- 117 A. [The gentlest of souls until the enemy forced the  
fight,  
Abusing him and all his companions so brutally.
- 117 B. The many years of their torture, murder, and tyranny  
He chose to bear and endure—and those with him—  
patiently.
- 117 C. Their only crime being that they called to God, Him  
alone;  
An invitation delivered by them all peacefully.
- 117 D. Until the order from God came down to him, the  
command:  
If they keep fighting your call, now fight them back  
physically.

- 117E. Though tenderness and compassion are your nature  
    We know,  
    The time has come you must stop their stopping  
    people from Me.
- 117F. And when it came to the rights of God, the Gentle  
    was fierce;  
    And struck all horror into the heart of each enemy.]
118. The news of his being sent alarmed the hearts of the  
    foes,  
    Just like a roar causing heedless sheep to startle and  
    flee.
119. He kept courageously facing them at each battlefield,  
    Till they were butchered by spears like meat in a  
    butchery.
120. They longed to flee so much that they watched the  
    parts carried off  
    By buzzards and vultures in a state of near jealousy.
121. The nights would pass with them unaware the number  
    of them,  
    Except the nights of the Sacred Months of tranquility.

*Chapter Eight*

122. As if religion had been a guest arrived at their yard,  
With every nobleman craving meat of the enemy.
123. It brought an ocean of troops on gracefully-floating  
steeds,  
Advancing waves made of heroes, surging successively.
124. Each in response to the call of God, in hope of reward,  
Attacking armed to uproot and shatter idolatry.
125. Until the Faith of Islam, with them among it, became—  
Once having been foreign—now a unified family.
126. Protected forever from them by the best father and  
Best husband, so not an orphan or a widow is she.
127. They are the mountains, so ask about them their  
battle-foe,  
At every battle, the things from them that he used to see.
128. And ask Hunayn, question Badr, and even ask Uhud,  
too—  
Events of death for them, worse than plague in  
catastrophe.

129. Returning white blades now turned to crimson after  
they reached  
The fighters with flowing hair of black from the  
enemy.
130. Inscribing with spears of Lettering, their pens didn't  
leave  
A body line with undotted i, and crossed every t.
131. With sharpened weapons they had a mark to set them  
apart;  
A rose is set by its mark apart from a thorny tree.
132. The victory winds convey to you the sweet news of  
them;  
So flowers in bloom you'd reckon every soldier to be.
133. They were in horseback like firmly-rooted plants up on  
hills—  
From grit so solid, not girth of saddle held solidly.
134. The enemies' hearts were fluttering in fear of their  
force,  
Unable to tell a lamb apart from brave cavalry.

*Chapter Eight*

135. Whoever is aided by the Messenger of Allah,  
If lions meet him inside their woods, they bow silently.
136. You will not see any saint that isn't victorious  
Through him, nor any opponent not destroyed utterly.
137. He put his nation to dwell inside the fort of his faith;  
Like lion dwelling inside the forest with progeny.
138. How often the words of God refuted the quarrelsome  
About him! How often proof defeated the enemy!
139. Enlightenment in the one unread is wonder enough,  
In Age of Darkness; and good upbringing in orphanage.





## Chapter 9

140. I've served him with eulogy by which I seek to erase  
The sins of life spent in poem and in servility.
141. For they have led me to things of horrible aftermath;  
Akin to livestock decreed by them for the butchery.
142. I have obeyed the deceit of youth in both cases and  
Got nothing but sins and then regret, oh, what misery!
143. Oh, what a loss for my soul, the awful deal that it  
made!  
Not buying faith with this world, not even browsing to  
see.
144. Whoever sells off his future for his present will come  
To see the loss in his sale and future delivery.

*Chapter Nine*

145. If I engage in a sin, my covenant isn't void  
With him, the Prophet; nor is the rope dis severed from  
me.
146. By naming my son Muhammad I am in pledge to him;  
And none is more faithful in fulfilling pledges than he.
147. At my appointment, if he's not holding onto my  
hand—  
In graciousness—say, “Oh, what a fall into tragedy!”
148. Far be it from him to bar the aspirant of his gifts,  
Or send away in dishonor from him a refugee.
149. And since committing my thoughts to singing praises  
of him,  
I've found him to be the most committed to saving me.
150. The riches from him will not neglect a poor, dusty  
hand;  
Indeed, the rain causes even hills to be flowery.
151. I sought no bloom of the lower world the hands of  
Zuhayr  
Had picked for having presented Herim with flattery.



## Chapter 10

- 151 A. [O my beloved, I beg of you in life and in death,  
To wrap your Burdah of special care and love over me.]
152. Most Noble of All Creation, what refuge do I have  
But you at the coming of the global emergency?
153. O Messenger of Allah, your rank won't shrink from me  
when  
The Generous manifests His punishing quality.
154. Yes, from your grace is indeed the world as well as its  
mate;  
And of your knowledge the Tablet and the Pen of decree.
155. O soul, despair not because of a mistake that is grave;  
Enormities are like slips compared to His clemency.

*Chapter Ten*

156. And hopefully, mercy from my Lord when He gives it  
out  
Will come according to sinfulness in its quantity.
157. My Lord, and make not my hope a hope that is  
overturned  
With you; and make my expectance with no  
deficiency.
158. Be kind to Your slave in both abodes; for his fortitude  
Whenever terrors call out to it will turn tail and flee.
159. Let clouds of blessing from You, unending, rain down  
upon  
The Prophet, with pouring rain so heavily, steadily.
160. For longer than willow branches by the east wind are  
swayed;  
And camel drivers excite the camels with melody.



## Epilogue

- 160 A. [Then pleasure with Abu Bakr, the greatest of  
company,  
And Umar, bearer of Truth, and then Uthman, and Ali,
- 160 B. The Family and Companions and all the Followers,  
The people of purity and patience and piety.
- 160 C. My Lord, by the Chosen One, make our hopes come  
to be,  
And pardon us what has gone, O Vast in Gen'rosity.
- 160 D. And please, my God, do forgive all of the Muslims  
by what  
They all recite at the Holy Mosque and the Sanctity.

*Epilogue*

- 160 E. Especially the composer and the translator and  
All the reciters with passion and in sincerity.
- 160 F. By the prestige of him who the Goodly Land is his  
home;  
Whose very name is an oath of greatest immensity.
- 160 G. This is the Burdah of the Selected One, now  
complete;  
And praise Allah at the start and finish, eternally!
- 160 H. The number of verses in it is one sixty or more;  
Relieve by them our woes, O Vast in Gen'rosity!]



