

## Most Reverred Zainab (‘a) Returns to Karbala Chehlum

("Chehlum jo Karbala mein bahattar ka ho chuka")

The Chehlum<sup>1</sup> for seventy two martyrs was done  
And the bodies and the heads had finally become one  
And Husain's slain army was remembered by all  
And the children of Muhammad lamented His son  
For three days and nights in the desert they mourned  
Embracing His tomb as though never to be torn  
Hearts lit like candles, their love for Him bloomed  
Their sons, like flowers, scattered around His tomb  
Remembering those killed, they cried out in grief  
And clutched at their hearts and in pain swooned  
"Where are those who would protect us?" they cried  
"Now we wander, heads bare in broad daylight"  
The air fraught with sobs as the widows wept  
And the Noble Sister's face on His tomb did rest  
And cried "Oh my beloved brother dear Husain  
For three days and nights I've been Your guest"  
"Heartbroken and forlorn is this Prophet's grandchild  
For my services You didn't accept, what a plight"  
"The will of the imam, I will gladly accept  
But the bruises on my arms I haven't shown You yet  
I am alone today, no friend in sight  
Without You I am nothing, how can You forget?"  
"I've lost sons and brothers and You in this war  
my back is bruised with the tip of the spear"  
"I cared for the orphans, the fathers lay dead  
Their frail ages and captivity, the pain and the dread

To divert them from their misery, I narrated your tale  
I was their mother, their aunt, or their father instead"  
"And I will live on to see them suffer and die  
For it is not my destiny to see beloveds thrive"  
" I had imagined pilgrims surrounding Your tomb  
And the throng of the angels had lifted the gloom  
And in Your memorial, we would all gather here  
Yet I see not a soul, I am here alone"  
" By your graveside I sit my Brother, and weep  
And console my heart though my pain is deep"  
Saying this, Zainab inconsolable, sobbed  
And the tomb of the Prince shuddered and rocked  
And Basheer approached the Prince's son and said  
"Oh Imam shall we leaves Your aunt is distraught"  
And Abid toward His Aunt did turn  
And asked "Dear Aunt shall we return."  
And Zainab replied, "As you wish dear Imam"  
The preparations to leave for Medina began  
The tents were untied and the camels lined up  
And around the graves gathered Ali's clan  
Bidding farewell to those who slept in their graves  
The old and the young stood around in a daze  
At the thought of leaving her Brother's tomb  
Distraught, Zainab cried " How can I leave You along  
In this forsaken desert away from us all  
This empty, desolate city now Your home"  
"where nothing grows and nothing lives  
Such a place You've chosen to gather and rest"  
"Oh Noble Lord of Karbala, farewell  
Oh the sands that cradle His shroud, farewell  
Dear grave of the noble, lofty Prince, farewell  
My Brother Your sister departs now, farewell"  
"This Prophet's grandchild is unfortunate indeed  
For You're not pleased with her deeds"  
"How do I face Medina having left You herd  
What if the Prophet questions, how can I bear?  
If I go to Najaf, the same question I will face  
'Where is Husain?' That is all I will hear"  
"You've asked me to leave, so how can I stay?"

But where must I go, where must I stay?"  
"won't You come, hold my hand as I alight?  
Won't You shelter me from strangers' sights?  
Won't Abbas or Alder come to bid me farewell?  
Won't You bring Asghar for whom Banu cries?"  
"You're our leader come lead us ahead  
we're ready, yet You sleep, the grave Your bed"  
"Although I weep and call out Your name  
You do not answer Oh Prince, I'm amazed  
if only You would embrace me now  
I will leave for Medina, though never the same"  
The Prince then answered "My dear Zainab farewell  
Give my love to Soghra, my daughter who is ill"

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1. The word "Chehlum" or "Arba'in" in Arabic, denotes the traditional memorial held on the 40th day after death.

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