

The Shāh and His Army Come to Fight Malekshāh Rostam, Who Pledges Obedience; Together They Go to Ḥovayzeh to Fight Malek Fayyāz

Malekshāh Rostam had been riding for three days when the defeated Lors came to him in a distressed state with many wounded men. The elders explained for him how the battle had turned out. Malekshāh Rostam bit the finger of amazement, saying, “Sometimes war turns out in victory, and sometimes in defeat.”

The Qezelbāsh army soon arrived, and the two sides arrayed their troops for battle. Malekshāh Rostam fretted about what to do; they had lost the mountain, and his army could not fight on the plain. At last, he was forced to decamp and gather all his tents and herds and flocks and troops and flee for the mountain of Ṣad Marreh.

When Ḥasan Beg heard the news of Malekshāh Rostam’s retreat, he passed it on to Shāh Esmā’īl. His Majesty brought his troops and settled them in the encampment with the vanguard. Ḥasan Beg kissed the royal foot and presented the Shāh with the booty that had been seized from the Lors. The Shāh praised him and gave gifts to those of the Qezelbāsh who had shown valor, to each according to his merit. Then they packed up and set off in pursuit of Malekshāh Rostam.

When they arrived at Khorrāmābād, the whole population came out to prostrate themselves and offer gifts and tribute. Shāh Esmā’īl asked about Malekshāh Rostam, and they told him that he had taken his following and gone to Ṣad Marreh Mountain. So the Shāh set off and went to the foot of Ṣad Marreh.

When His Majesty looked at it with his truth-perceiving gaze, he saw a mountain of lofty height. The Lors had taken their retinue and materiel up there without losing any of it. There were many rushing waters as well. Malekshāh Rostam had pitched his tents in such a fortress-like setting.

When the hour came to beat the war-drum and the sound of drums came from atop the mountain, the Shāh said, “This man is a Shi’i; why is he fleeing from us?”

His amirs told him that from the days of the Commander of the Faithful until their own time, the Lors had recognized no master, and that was why they were being so defiant. So the Shāh wrote a letter to Malekshāh thus:

“It has come to our attention that the protectors of these parts have been, since the time of the family of ‘Abbās until now, Shi’is and slaves of the holy

Commander of the Faithful, and that they have gloried in that servitude in the face of all kings, since it is unthinkable that a slave of ‘Ali should honor any other king. But it is evident and clear to you that my lineage culminates in that holy one. Given that lineage, why are you keeping aloof from us? We do not like fighting with another slave of the Commander of the Faithful and causing him harm. Up until now there has been no sovereign of that lineage for you to obey, so you have been in the right, since you are a Shi‘i and know no conciliation with non-Shi‘is. But according to reason and wisdom, when you heard the clarification call of the news of my emergence, you should have risen and come to my world-protecting court to fight with us on the path of the true religion of the Commander of the Faithful against its enemies, that the blessings of both worlds might revert to us. In addition, praise and gratitude be to God that we have been so successful as to take permission and guidance for our emergence from the Immaculate Emāms and their descendants, and we are rendering their enemies nonexistent. So do not let your Shi‘i zeal lead you to turn the Lors away from hospitality and toward war.”

Shāh Esmā‘il gave this letter to Farrokh Āqā, a slave of Solṭān Ḥaydar, and sent him off. When Farrokh Āqā arrived at the foot of Ṣad Marreh mountain, word was sent to Malekshāh Rostam that an emissary from the Qezelbāsh had arrived. “Let him come,” he said. Farrokh Āqā came in, said a greeting, and presented the letter. Malekshāh Rostam read the letter, then said, “Convey our blessing to the Shāh of Iran, and tell him this: You never heard of our Shi‘ism until you came here. Now you have done us the favor of learning of it and are asking for obedience. We shall obey you heart and soul, but as far as our money and property are concerned, let no one lay a hand on us. As it is said:

Go, cast this net at another bird
For the nest of the phoenix is lofty indeed.¹

“You are troubling yourself for naught!”

Upon hearing this response, Farrokh Āqā tried to talk sense into Malekshāh Rostam, but it was no use, and his answer remained war. Farrokh Āqā returned and delivered the responses of Malekshāh Rostam to the Shāh.

Esmā‘il ordered his men to ready their implements of attack. The next day he mounted up and led his army of footsoldiers to the mountain. Above them, the Lors hid behind huge rocks and prepared their bows and arrows. The battle got under way. The righteous Qezelbāsh leaped like panthers from one stone to another, fending off the onslaught of projectiles. They made their way up the

¹ From the *Divān* of Ḥāfeẓ (ghazal no. 428).

mountain in such a way that if a father were to fall, his son would step on him on the way up, and if the son were to fall, the father would do the same.

In short, both sides fought manfully, each dealing mighty blows to the other. Shāh Esmā'īl dismounted, hoisted his broad-rimmed shield over his head like the blazing sun, and with sword and shield fought his way toward that mountain fortress. He ascended, fighting the whole way, until he reached a place where he saw Malekshāh Rostam furiously shooting the last of his arrows. Seeing the Shāh coming, Malekshāh Rostam shot four or five arrows at him, but His Majesty fended them off and forged on until he reached the base of Malekshāh Rostam's rocky throne. Esmā'īl leaped up and, opening up his leopard-like hand, seized Malekshāh Rostam's boot-strap and pulled him down, then hoisted him up in the air.

Malekshāh Rostam, realizing that he was a prisoner, cried out, "O great and fortunate prince, who lifts something up does not throw it away; I have been testing you!"

Esmā'īl then put Malekshāh Rostam back down and allowed him to kiss the royal foot. He swore fealty to the Shāh, saying, "I will be your slave for as long as I am alive."

Thereupon the armies of the Lors and the Qezelbāsh ceased fighting, and the elders of the Lors came to kiss the dust of the royal court. Malekshāh Rostam said, "I entreat His Majesty and the Qezelbāsh to be my guests for three days." Shāh Esmā'īl accepted, and Malekshāh Rostam appointed a cook for each Qezelbāsh *qurchi*, as a host to fetch whatever was necessary for their guests.

Shāh Esmā'īl and Malekshāh Rostam now mounted up and went to the latter's home, where he organized a royal feast. At one point he presented his guest with a thoroughbred mare. "What sort of mare is this?" asked Esmā'īl.

"They call it Mosha'sha'i," replied Malekshāh Rostam.

"Is Mosha'sha' a tribe?" asked His Majesty.

"Yes. In the south there is a region called Ḥovayzeh. There is a group of Arabs there who used to adhere to the faith of divine 'Ali [*din-e 'Ali-Allāhi*]. Now a man has arisen among them whom they call Malek Fayyāz Mosha'sha'i; like Pharaoh, he claims to be divine, and they worship him. This breed of horse is found there, but if anyone goes there and asks for one, they will not sell him one for anything. Groups of Lors who travel in the area steal them and bring them back here. And now, since the Shāh has helped us, they have brought this mare to him."

Shāh Esmā'īl heard all this and grew angry. Without even looking at the mare, he berated Malekshāh Rostam, saying, "Why haven't you gone and waged war on that villain in order to punish him?"

“How can I?” Malekshāh Rostam replied. “Malek Fayyāz is a tyrant with a hundred thousand Arabs behind him, whereas I have no more than thirty thousand men.”

Esmā‘il said, “Since you are his neighbor, we will bring this enemy of God to punishment together.”

Then Malekshāh Rostam said, “His Majesty has promised me three days, honoring me greatly. There is much good hunting in this area. Whenever you give the order, the Lors will gather prey together in one place so that the Shāh may busy himself these three days with hunting.² It will be the epitome of favors, and on the fourth day this slave of yours will be in the vanguard of the army of victorious banners.”

After much importuning, Shāh Esmā‘il consented. Then gifts were brought under the alchemical gaze of the Shāh: jewels, horses, mules, camels, horse-trappings of gold and silver bedecked with jewels, saddles, ornamented bridles—all in quantities such as had never been found in the treasury of any ruler.

His Majesty praised Malekshāh Rostam greatly and treated him affectionately. Then almost a thousand plates of various kinds of food were brought in on silver and china plates. Esmā‘il was well pleased with his host’s manners. Two or three days were spent serving the Shāh in this way. Then, when the Lors had collected gazelles and other beasts for a hunt, they announced that everything was ready.

Just then, though, a leopard from the mountain of Şad Marreh entered the hunting-ground and attacked those who were hunting, killing fifteen of them. Malekshāh Rostam told this to Shāh Esmā‘il, who said, “I promise to grant a horse to whoever brought this good news!” Leaping onto his horse, he added, “No one is to follow me except the one who brought the news.”

Malekshāh Rostam approached and said, “Grant this slave permission to be at your service.” But Esmā‘il refused and headed for the hunting-ground.

The leopard emerged from the midst of the valley and jumped up, roaring, onto a hillock; had any man approached, the leopard would have jumped on him and torn his head off. At that moment His Majesty arrived. When the leopard saw him coming, it gave a roar and leapt toward him. As it did so, the Shāh loosed an arrow that struck it in the forehead, shot out the other side, and stuck into the earth. The leopard hit the ground writhing.

Malekshāh Rostam and the Qezelbāsh amirs then entered the hunting-ground and joined the Shāh. His Majesty turned his attention to hunting and

² The text says “hunting *zangul*,” a term which appears several times in the text. It appears to be a shortening of *zanguleh-bāl*, “little bustard” (*Tetrax tetrax*), a gamebird native to West Asia.

hurled many beasts into the dust of annihilation. He then gave permission to Malekshāh Rostam and the Qezelbāsh officers to begin, and they too killed a great quantity of prey. When they left the hunting-ground, the royal encampment was packed up and set off on the Kohgiluyeh road in the direction of Ḥovayzeh.

The next day, Shāh Esmā'īl, along with his officers, Malekshāh Rostam, twelve thousand Qezelbāsh troops, and thirty thousand Lors mounted up in Khorrāmābād and set off to do battle with Malek Fayyāz the Arab.

Malek Fayyāz's spies reported to him, saying, "Shāh Esmā'īl and Malekshāh Rostam have united and are coming to attack you." Hearing this, Malek Fayyāz was seized with terror; he said, "Malekshāh Rostam has put Shaykh-oghli up to this!" He sent someone to alert his army.

When the troops had assembled, seventy thousand men passed in review, and this put Malek Fayyāz's mind at ease. He traveled one day's journey from Ḥovayzeh and appointed his brother Solṭān Mo'annā³ as general of the army. He also sent No'm b. No'mān, his commander-in-chief, with Solṭān Mo'annā, providing them with thirty thousand Arab troops. Then he sent them along, himself staying behind with forty thousand men.

No'm b. No'mān had gone one league ahead of Solṭān Mo'annā when he came to a waystation and asked the locals about the Qezelbāsh army.

"We hear that they will arrive tomorrow," they said.

Spies brought word to Shāh Esmā'īl that Malek Fayyāz had sent out his commander. Malekshāh Rostam said to His Majesty, "Since Malek Fayyāz has sent his attendants ahead, it would be best if I, who am one of the attendants of this court, raise an army and go out to meet them."

Shāh Esmā'īl liked this idea. He ordered that Malekshāh Rostam and twenty thousand Lors, along with Ḥosayn Beg Laleh and five thousand Qezelbāsh, go out to meet Solṭān Mo'annā and No'm b. No'mān. Malekshāh Rostam and Ḥosayn Beg Laleh traveled for one day before reaching the place where the Arab army was.

The next day, those two seas of soldiery arrayed their ranks against each other. Solṭān Mo'annā took his place at the center of the army, with No'm in the vanguard; Malekshāh Rostam entered the field, and the battle began. No'm was on the verge of defeat when Solṭān Mo'annā charged in from the center; then Ḥosayn Beg Laleh joined the fighting, and the battle became thick as the two sides poured into one another.

3 *Mo'annā*, "careworn, oppressed," seems more likely a reading of *m. 'n. ā.* than *ma'nā*, "meaning."

There was much striking and smiting, killing and slaughtering. Malekshāh Rostam, like a fierce lion, piled up bodies whichever way he turned. No'm blocked Ḥosayn Beg Laleh's path, drew his sword, and struck at him, but just then Malekshāh came up and hit No'm with his spear, and No'm had to abandon his attack. The Lors showed great devotion in that battle. Ḥosayn Beg Laleh knocked No'm's brother off his horse with a spear-blow, but at that moment Mo'annā arrived and rescued him. Ḥosayn Beg Laleh then knocked that Arab down and thrust his spear into his chest, killing him. Malekshāh Rostam also killed No'm, and the fighting became extremely hard.

Then the Qezelbāsh and Lor reinforcements arrived, shouting "O 'Ali! O 'Ali!" They rushed onto the battlefield and killed almost five thousand Arabs. Defeated, the Arabs turned and fled. At that moment Malek Fayyāz arrived with a boundless army; when he heard of the deaths of his commanders and the defeat of his army, he let out a cry of anguish. He gathered up the remnants of the defeated troops and sent them together with the army he had brought onto the battlefield, where they crashed into the armies of the Qezelbāsh and the Lors and killed many of them.

The Qezelbāsh and Lors, though, exhibited great zeal and firmly planted the foot of bravery, and they did not yield the battlefield:

Come, O heartless one who has abandoned your work
And stayed behind the wall out of fear for your soul;
Be brave, for the battlefield belongs to the brave—
If a fox falls bravely, it is a lion.
How well have brave men said:
Put a foot forward and a hand out;
With the hand you become more than anyone else
And with the foot you leave everyone else behind.

As for the Arab army facing them, they had no fear of them, but were saying:

It is the day of battle, battle must be fought;
The struggle for fame or shame must be waged.
We must fight these fox-headed dogs
In the manner of lions and leopards.

Giving cries of manliness and virility, they sent a great number of those faithless ones to hell. Many Qezelbāsh, though, were wounded. Ḥosayn Beg Laleh looked heavenward and began to pray, asking for victory. His prayers were heard, for the breeze of triumph brought good news to the ears of the victori-

ous ghāzis from the direction of the plain as the banners of His Majesty Shāh Esmā‘il all at once became visible. When the eyes of those infidels caught sight of the flag inscribed “Help from God and speedy victory,”⁴ they understood the meaning of the verse “When the earth shakes,”⁵ and they were stricken with panic.

Shāh Esmā‘il surveyed the situation and realized that Ḥosayn Beg Laleh and Malekshāh Rostam were in dire straits. Spurring his horse, he grasped the handle of his well-watered sword and struck the heads of those ill-starred ones; he split that sea of soldiery in two with blows of his blade—indeed, you would have thought a fierce lion had fallen upon a group of foxes, utterly routing them.

Na‘im the Arab, the son-in-law of Malek Fayyāz, was knocking everyone who dared fight him out of their saddle and onto the ground. Seeing this young man splitting the heads of the Arabs with his sword, Na‘im approached him and tried to thrust his spear into His Majesty’s waist. Esmā‘il, though, swung his sword and split the spear in two like a reed. Na‘im tried to grab the handle of the sword, but Esmā‘il granted him no quarter and split him from skull to sternum with that very blade. He then turned to the Arab army and was displaying his virility when the champion Moḥsen the Arab, one of the bravest men in the land, blocked his path. Esmā‘il reached out with his leopard-like grasp and yanked him off his saddle, leaving him to one of the Shāmlu soldiers. He then busied himself again with combat.

Malekshāh Rostam and the renowned Qezelbāsh commanders, giving cries of manliness, inflicted defeat on those Arabs, dispatching many of them to the abode of perdition. Malek Fayyāz, seeing all too clearly what was happening, was stunned and panic-stricken. He gathered a group of those closest to him and turned tail toward Ḥovayzeh. His army, realizing that he had fled, turned to follow him and scattered in the desert.

When Shāh Esmā‘il learned of the retreat of Malek Fayyāz, he set out and followed him for almost two leagues, but since the latter’s horses were swift Moshā’sha‘i steeds, he got away. His Majesty returned, and the next day he set out for Ḥovayzeh in pursuit of that miserable band.

Malek Fayyāz, warned that Shāh Esmā‘il was coming, entered Ḥovayzeh. The Arab amirs said: “We, who are in command here, have to think that this pādeshāh will pursue us as well. The prudent thing to do is to raise an army and betake ourselves to the Arabian desert to wait until he has come to Ḥovayzeh, appointed a governor, and gone again. Then, when he has left these parts, we

4 Qorʿān 61:13.

5 Qorʿān 99:1.

will emerge from the desert and give our reply." Malek Fayyāz agreed to this, and they set off for the desert.

Esmā'īl, moved by divine inspiration, said: "God forbid that the faithless Malek Fayyāz should escape into the desert!"

"If you give the order," Malekshāh Rostam said, "this slave will scout out the desert road for Your Majesty."

Esmā'īl ordered him to go. Thus, in the middle of the night, Malekshāh Rostam gathered his Lor troops and, along with five thousand Qezelbāsh, set off with a local guide on the road to the Ḥovayzeh desert. When they got within six leagues of the city, he stopped and ordered five thousand Lors to scatter left and right.

When Malek Fayyāz's spies informed him of this, he exclaimed, "It is Malekshāh Rostam who brought the Qezelbāsh against us; it was not enough for him to have cut us off again! Very well; now that he has Shaykh-oghli for a protector, Malekshāh has become like Rostam himself. Whoever brings him to me shall receive from me whatever he wants!"

The Arab nobles replied, "Send the spy to find out whether this report is true. It will be easy to bring him in."

The spy returned with word that it was indeed true. So Malek Fayyāz set off with a great army in the direction of Malekshāh Rostam.

Now when Shāh Esmā'īl had sent Malekshāh Rostam into the desert, he had placed Ḥosayn Beg in the vanguard and ordered him to take five thousand men ahead, saying that his own royal banners would bring up the rear.

Soon Malek Fayyāz encountered Malekshāh Rostam, and both sides arrayed their troops for battle. The Lor and Qezelbāsh forces poured into the midst of the Arabs and branded them with defeat. They did not spare themselves, but kept smashing and slashing in all directions; they were so mixed together that no one knew who was who, and they would even strike each other. A great many were killed or wounded. In the battle, Malekshāh Rostam performed such deeds as even the Rostam of legend had not done fighting the demons of Māzandarān. But the Arabs were mounted on Mosha'sha'i mares and wielded armor-piercing spears, and with great injustice they inflicted many wounds on him. He feared that the Lors would choose to flee while he was so badly wounded, so to give heart to them he cried out, "Be brave, for the Shāh is coming with the Qezelbāsh!"

Just as things were at their worst, and it looked as if the evil eye would fall on them, at that moment God Almighty sent aid, and Ḥosayn Beg and his five thousand Qezelbāsh arrived. Invoking blessings upon Moḥammad and his Family, they leapt into the fray, killing and wounding many. In their wake the banner of "Help from God" appeared, and Shāh Esmā'īl, with the sword-handle

of the Lord of the Age in his hand and “O ‘Ali!” on his lips, turned to that odious group. With his jewel-like blade he beat them down, slashing and killing and striking. He was making his way toward the center of the enemy army when this thought occurred to his blessed mind: “God forbid that Malek Fayyāz should again slip off into the desert!” So he changed the direction of his attack and made his way to the base of the enemy battle-standard.

Malek Fayyāz saw Shāh Esmā‘il coming, but he did not recognize him; he just saw a Qezelbāsh youth unceremoniously dispatching Arabs with his sword. He approached him and aimed his spear at the royal chest. Esmā‘il parried it and sent his own spear into Malek Fayyāz’s belly such that the point went through that unbeliever’s backbone and knocked him out of his saddle. He hit the ground so hard that he broke all his bones.

Seeing what had just happened, the Arabs turned tail and fled. Solṭān Moḥsen, the son of Malek Fayyāz, learned of the death of his father and led a group of his men and the Arab officers in flight toward Ḥovayzeh. Some of the remaining Arabs received security by converting to Shi‘ism and kissing the royal foot. Flush with victory, Shāh Esmā‘il set off for Ḥovayzeh, where the victorious ghāzis plundered the goods of the Arabs and distributed them as prizes. Malek Fayyāz’s treasury and possessions were seized for supervision.

His Majesty was then told that one Solṭān Vahhāb, a relative of Malek Fayyāz, was in town; he was a Shi‘i and a dyed-in-the-wool follower of the holy Commander of the Faithful. Esmā‘il sought this man out, and when he had kissed the royal foot, he was granted the governorship of Ḥovayzeh and dignified with a robe of honor.

His Majesty spent a few days there and then headed back to Tabriz and Diyārbakr.