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**“Paired” Literary Images of the Qur’anic Prophets in  
Persian Classical Poetry (10<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> centuries)**

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*Abstract.* Persian classical poetry (10<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> centuries) is characterised by a high degree of literary techniques. At the beginning of this period, a number of different images and motifs were formed and subsequently developed. Later on they became widely used by Persian-language poets and remain relevant up to the present day. Canonical images also include characters mentioned in the Holy Qur’an. The small size of the bayt on one hand and the requirements of the classical poetics regarding its semantic and grammatical completeness on the other, resulted in the reduction of many images and motifs to a single word. The term “conceptual word” used by the Russian scholar Natalia Prigarina is very appropriate when describing this phenomenon. The “conceptual words” that refer the reader to a whole set of connotations can also have a parallel or similar meaning in different contexts. This article examines three “paired literary images”: 1. the Qur’anic prophets Moses (Mūsā) and Jesus (ʿĪsā), 2. Jonah (Yūnus) and Joseph (Yūsuf), and 3. Jacob (Ya’qūb) and Job (Ayyūb). The author shows that they are interconnected by the themes of awakening and revival, rescue from imprisonment and obedience. Furthermore, the article demonstrates that not only the semantic similarity of these literary images brings them together, but also the phonetic consonance of the names of these characters, which allows the poets to use different kinds of puns as well as rhythmic and syntactic parallelism.

*Keywords:* Persian poetry; prophets; Islam; Qur’an; image; motif

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## «Парные» образы пророков в персидской классической поэзии (X–XV вв.)

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**Аннотация.** Персидская классическая поэзия (X–XV вв.) отличается высокой степенью канонизации своих фигур и приемов. На начальном этапе этого периода сформировался и был разработан целый ряд различных образов и мотивов, которые затем стали широко использоваться персоязычными поэтами и сохраняют свою актуальность вплоть до настоящего времени. В число каноничных образов входят и персонажи Корана. Малый размер бейта в совокупности с требованием классической поэтики к его семантической и грамматической завершенности привели к тому, что многие образы и мотивы сократились до одного слова — наиболее подходящим нам в данном случае представляется термин «слово-концепт», использованный Н.И. Пригариной. «Слова-концепты», таким образом, отсылая читателя к целому комплексу коннотаций, в различных контекстах могут иметь синонимичное значение. В данной статье рассматриваются три пары синонимов: это образы коранических пророков — Мусы и Исы, Йунуса и Йусуфа, Йакуба и Аййуба. Первых объединяет тематика пробуждения и оживления, реализуемая с помощью образов «белой руки» Мусы и живительного дыхания Исы. Истории Йунуса и Йусуфа обе включают освобождение из заточения (из чрева рыбы и из колодца), а также мотивы тоски по дому и разлуки с родными. Йакуб и Аййуб демонстрируют образец терпеливости в ниспосланных свыше невзгодах и упования на волю Бога. Кроме того, в статье показано, что не только семантическое сходство сближает данные образы, но также и фонетическое созвучие имен этих персонажей, которое позволяет поэтам использовать различные виды ритмико-синтаксического параллелизма.

**Ключевые слова:** персидская поэзия; пророки; ислам; Коран; образ; мотив

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## Introduction

In Persian literature of the 10<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> centuries a literary motif reveals a remarkable feature. The motif itself can frequently be introduced and even expressed by a single marker. This marker can be a single word, or a so-called “conceptual-word” (according to the Russian scholar Professor Prigarina [Prigarina, 2017, p. 225]). Along with nouns, according to the researcher the idea of the “conceptual word” also includes proper names. Among them — the names of historical or legendary persons, i.e., all those characters whose mere mention refers an educated reader to a whole set of connected stories and associations. Professor Prigarina used as an example a pair “hair—face” to illustrate how a motif can be described by its lexical-semantic cycle and also the classes of meanings. These classes provide a solid basis for comparing / juxtaposing various motifs. This results in inclusion of pairs of artificial synonyms or antonyms, which would be valid only within a given system of motifs [Prigarina, 1983, p. 91–100].

The names of the prophets, which possess their own lexical-semantic cycle, can also constitute similar artificial pairs. One should not forget that some scholars have already mentioned this phenomenon. For example, it is well known about the contamination of the Biblical prophet Solomon and the Iranian King Jamshid. This contamination can be explained by a number of reasons. It could have been an intentional juxtaposition of these two characters. Also, it could be mistakes made by the authors. These mistakes are rooted in the obvious similarity between these kings. Indeed, both Solomon and King Jamshid are traditionally described as powerful and mighty kings who ruled over vast territories. Besides, the reign of both kings in folklore is considered a “golden age”, and they as people were devout believers [Dizfūliyān, Şuhrāyī, 2011, p. 77–88]. The Russian scholar M. Reisner believes that the starting point of the contamination of the two rulers is rooted in the image of the throne [Reisner, 2020, p. 395].

In the case of the King Solomon and King Jamshid, the basis of contamination is the semantic similarity between the two personalities. However, as I shall try to show below, the link between the pair of prophets is often not confined to their comparison at the semantic level. Phonetic consonance also frequently comes into play. For example, let us consider the interaction of the motifs as applied to the Qur’anic prophets, using three pairs of names.<sup>1</sup>

**Moses and Jesus.** In medieval Persian poetry the motifs of awakening and revival almost take pride of place. For example, they can be found both in secular and religious poetry. In the first case these motifs occur at the beginnings of qasidas, which describe the onset of spring [Reisner, 2010, p. 9], whereas in the second case they illustrate the spiritual path of the mystic, who awakens from the sleep of his earthly existence. In the stories about the prophets one of the most popular motif is the so-called Qur’anic miracle of the “white hand” of Moses (*yad-i baidā*). The Holy Qur’an says: “And he drew forth his hand, and lo, it was white to the

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<sup>1</sup> Another type of interaction between the images of the prophets in Persian poetry is discussed in our article “Lists of Prophets in Persian Poetry: Application, Classification, and Context”, which is currently in print.



beholders." [Qur'an 7:108, 26:33]<sup>2</sup>. Russian scholar Professor Piotrovsky points out that the Biblical text refers to leprosy. However, he also mentions that the commentators of the Islamic Scripture, who did not know about this source, believed that Moses was black, and that his hand could literally change its colour [Piotrovsky, 1991, p.110–111]. The metaphors of the Persian classical authors based on this image have been studied in great detail [Chalisova, 2001; 2004, p. 171–172]. In the context of the phenomenon of the so-called "paired" images discussed in this article, it is important to stress that the manifestation of the "white hand" was compared by poets to the beneficial effects of the "natural" beginnings, like, for example, the onset of morning, which is the beginning of the day:

بد بیضای آفتاب نگر  
زرفشان ز آستین معلم صبح

Behold the white hand of the sun:  
Glowing from the sleeve, [it is] an omen of the morning<sup>3</sup>.

[Khāqānī, Ganjoor]

In terms of the topics of awakening and revival, a parallel to the story of the Moses' "white hand" is the life-giving breath of Jesus. It is common in Muslim tradition to describe Jesus as the Spirit of God (*rūḥ Allah*) [Ayoub, 2005, p. 88]. This epithet should by no means be understood as a direct reference to The Trinity, which has always been considered in Islam as polytheism, similarly to the dogma of the Divine nature of Christ. On the contrary, the Qur'an emphasizes that all of Jesus' deeds were done only "with the permission of Allah". [Qur'an 3:49]. Therefore, Jesus' miracles, such as raising from the dead and giving life to clay birds, became possible only through the intercession of the same divine spirit that Gabriel inhaled into Mary's womb<sup>4</sup>. This idea, is also found in Sanā'ī *Ghaznavi* (c. 1081–1141):

پدر آدم اندرین عالم  
هست از آن دم که زاده مریم

Adam's father in this world  
It is of the same breath that [gave birth to] the Child of Mary.  
[Sanā'ī, 1993, p. 52]

Sanā'ī also uses the image of life-giving breath:

مرده را زنده کنی ز آوای خویش  
پس دم عیسی شدست آوای تو

Thou [canst] bring the dead to life with thy song,  
Thus, thy song has become the breath of Jesus.  
[Sanā'ī, 1983, p. 1001]

<sup>2</sup> The Qur'an is quoted in the translation by J. Arberry.

<sup>3</sup> All translations from Persian in this article are done by the author, except indicated otherwise.

<sup>4</sup> The idea that the life-giving breath of Jesus is similar to the spirit through which Mary became pregnant is mentioned in "Bezels of Wisdom" by Ibn 'Arabi [King, 1990, p. 87].



Usually, the motif of “beginning” and “revival” is used in the opening lines of *qasidas* and *ghazals*: the spring wind that wakes up nature after the winter slumber is compared to the breath of Jesus (a fine interpretation of the Qur’anic story of the resurrection). The morning breeze is also considered to be like the breath of Jesus, because it brings the life-giving moisture to the flowers [‘Aṭṭār, 1980–1981, p. 77]. The poet Anvarī (Anvarī, 1959, p. 1115–1191) does not mention the word “breath” itself, however, definitely uses the same motif:

نسیم باد در اعجاز زنده کردن خاک  
 ببرد آب همه معجزات عیسی را

The morning breeze by the wonder of reviving the earth  
 Has shamed all the miracles of Jesus.

[Anvarī, 1959, p. 1]

In Persian poetry the motif of awakening to life is further extended as a comparison of the breath of Jesus to the kiss of the beloved. Cf. here the very famous *bayt* by Rūmī in which this image is used:

گر ز مسیح پرسدت مرده چگونه زنده کرد  
 بوسه بده به پیش او بر لب ما که همچنین

When someone asks you: “How did Christ quicken the dead?”

Then give me a kiss in his presence: “Thus!”

[Schimmel, 1995, p. 147] (Tr. by A.-M. Schimmel)

Quite naturally, poets often use both of these images — the “white hand” of Moses and the “life-giving breath” of Jesus — on a parallel basis:

به شعر خاطر عطار را دم عیسی است  
 از آنکه هست چو موسی صد بد بیضا

‘Aṭṭār’s mind for verses is [like] the breath of Jesus,

For like Moses it has a hundred white hands.

[‘Aṭṭār, 1980, p. 48]

The *bayt* as above has a second, very important meaning, i.e., that the poet Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār possesses an outstanding talent. Therefore, his verses can virtually bring dead to life. Similar figures can be also found in poems by Sanā’ī:

هم حیات از لب نمودن هم شفا از رخ چو حور  
 با دم عیسی و دست موسی عمران تراست

[The ability] to give life with your lips and to heal with your face [which resembles] that of an houri,

Together with the breath of Jesus and the hand of Moses, are in your possession.

[Sanā’ī, 1983, p. 812]

The use of poetical figure called *taqābul* (collation) [Al-Rāzī, 1997, p. 255] in the above *bayt* indicates that Sanā’ī compares the resurrection to the breath of Jesus and the healing to the hand of Moses. Therefore, to the list of conventional connotations, which accompany the “white hand of Moses” can be added another one, i.e. the “power of healing”. In fact, Jesus himself often appears in Persian poet-



ry as a healer. For example, Rūmī often refers to him as a “doctor” (healer) (*tabīb*) [Schimmel, 1995, p. 148]. A not dissimilar use of this motif can be found in Jāmī (1414–1492) who writes that the cure for those who suffer from love is known to the one who “possesses the lips of the Messiah” (*ān masīḥālab*) [Jāmī, 1999, p. 718]. Remarkably, Jesus and Moses are so firmly associated with each other that they appear together even outside of the common context of ideas associated with awakening and revival. Such examples can be found in Naṣīr-i Khūsraṅ:

نه چون موسی بود هر کس که عمرانش پدر باشد  
نه چون عیسی بود هر کس که باشد مادرش مریم

Not everyone whose father is 'Imrān is like Moses,  
Not everyone whose mother is Mary is like Jesus.  
[Naṣīr Khūsraṅ, Ganjoor]

Apparently, in this case the similarity of the prosodic model (*wasn*) of the two names (*'Īsā* and *Mūsā*: CVV+CVV) and the rhyme letter (*ḥarf-i rawī*) cannot be neglected. This allows the poet to juxtapose the two *miṣra'* according to the same syntactic scheme, thus applying the figure of *tarṣī'* [Waṭwāt, 1985, p. 85, 227; al-Rāzī, 1997, p. 212].

**Jonah and Joseph.** Another known pair is that of Jonah and Joseph. The Qur'an does not elaborate on the story of Jonah. He, as it comes from the text, was sent to preach in the city of Nineveh. He failed and subsequently escaped and had to flee on a ship. Then Jonah was thrown into the sea and swallowed by a whale (or a large fish). However, his prayers were answered and the fish threw him ashore, whereupon he returned to his prophetic mission. His people became aware of the wrath of God, therefore they embraced Islam and subsequently escaped divine punishment.

It is not surprising that the fact that Jonah was swallowed by the fish became among the most popular poetic motifs. Remarkably, in the Arabic tradition Jonah is called as *Dhū-l-nūn* (i.e. the possessor the fish) or *ṣāḥib-i ḥūt* (with the similar meaning) in Persian. On the contrary, Jonah is not frequently referred to in the Persian poetry. One of the first mentions is that by Sanā'ī:

من ز بلخ آنچنان شدم به سرخس  
با بلا و عنا و حسرت و هم  
که گنهکار یونس بن متی  
به سوی نینوا به ساحل یم

So I left Balkh for Serakhs:  
With misfortune, misery, longing and sadness,  
Like the sinner Yunūs bin Mattā,  
Towards Nineveh, to the seashore.  
[Sanā'ī, 1983, p. 382]

By using the rare motif of Jonah's guilt for showing cowardice and abandoning his flock, the poet alludes to his feelings when he was forced to leave Balkh for Serakhs.

The greatest variety of interpretations of the Jonah's story and the ways of implementing the motifs associated with him are found in Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī's poet-



ry. Rūmī constructs an intricate wordplay by using the word *nūn* in its two meanings<sup>5</sup>: “fish” and the name of the letter *nūn* which in the system of Persian poetic conventions is applied to describe a twist or a curl (for instance, an eyebrow of a beloved or a black lock of her hair) [Chalisova, 2000, p. 102]. According to the traditional lore, it was through prayer and kneeling that Jonah was freed from his imprisonment in the stomach of the sea monster: he bowed so hard that his back became hunched and took the shape of the letter *nūn* [ن]:

یونسى دیدم نشسته بر لب دریای عشق  
گفتمش چونی جوابم داد بر قانون خویش  
گفت بودم اندر این دریا غذای ماهی  
پس چو حرف نون خمیدم تا شدم ذا النون خویش  
زین سپس ما را مگو چونی و از چون درگذر  
چون ز چونی دم زند آن کس که شد بی چون خویش

I once saw Jonah on the shore of the sea of love,  
I asked him, “What are you like?” He answered me in his usual way,  
He said, “In this sea I was food for the fish,  
Then like the letter *nūn* I bent to become the possessor of the fish / *nūn*.  
So don’t ask me what I am like and refrain from comparing,  
For [only] the one who has himself become incomparable [can] talk about quality”.

[Rūmī, 1999, т. 4, p. 98]

The fact that Jonah was swallowed by a fish is poetically interpreted as a sufi’s struggle on his way to obtain the mystical knowledge. The result of such a struggle is the forsaking of one’s self and total immersion in the divine essence, i.e. the renunciation of one’s own individual attributes.

In Persian and more generally Muslim literature, the literary image of Joseph is a universally recognised allegory of beauty. This allegory is applied to describe human’s and also divine beauty, which is manifested in the mundane world. In Persian literature, the story of Joseph became incredibly popular<sup>6</sup>. Therefore, almost every twist and turn of its plot was used as the basis for a separate poetic motif. Two elements which invite detailed attention in this context are “separation and homesickness” and “imprisonment and liberation”. These elements deal with Joseph’s betrayal by his brothers, his imprisonment in a well and his life away from his homeland.

Some of the earliest examples of the pair “Joseph – Jonah” can be found in Sanā’ī:

ای بسا یوسف رویان که درین مصر بدند  
که چو یعقوب پدرشان مگر از کنعان نیست

<sup>5</sup> The versatility of this metaphor lies in the fact that here we are not just talking about homonymy, but in fact about historically the same word. In the Proto-Semitic alphabet, which emerged in the middle of the 2nd millennium BCE, in accordance with the acrophonic principle, the wriggled sign used to denote the sound [n] was called *nūn*, which meant “snake” or “fish” (i.e. something wriggling). I am grateful to Serge A. Frantsouzoff for explaining this fact to me.

<sup>6</sup> Various aspects of the image of Joseph are discussed in [Schimmel, 1999; Reisner, 2014; 2018; Prigarina, 2017].



ای بسا یونس نامان که درین آب شدند  
که جگرشان همه جز سوخته و عطشان نیست

Oh, many are those with the face of Joseph who have been to this Egypt,  
Whose fathers are like Jacob, though they are not from Canaan.

Oh, many are those who bear the name of Jonah, who happened to be in these  
waters,

Who has nothing but heat and thirst in their hearts.

[Sanā'ī, 1983, p. 97]

Here becomes evident that the name of Jonah appears next to that of Joseph. This betrays the fact that Sanā'ī already considered these literary images on a parallel basis although this particular parallelism was not a common topic at his time. In later Persian poetic works, Jonah's abode in the womb of a fish did regularly correspond with the episode of Joseph's entrapment at the bottom of the well.

In the literary heritage of the poet *Khāqānī Shīrvānī* (1120–1190 AD) the motifs of the fish that swallowed Jonah and the well in which Joseph was imprisoned underlies an obvious astrological substrate.

The poet uses a pun: the word *dalv*, a bucket, which is dropped into the well refers to the constellation of Aquarius. Similarly, the word *hūt* does not only mean a "large fish" but is also the name of the zodiacal sign of Pisces. The presence of the Sun in these two zodiacal signs can be seen by astrologers in the last two winter months of the Iranian year — Bahman and Isfand. After the month of Isfand comes the first spring month of Farvardīn, when Nowrūz is celebrated. Thus, the story about Jonah leaving the womb of the fish alludes to the Sun leaving the zodiacal sign of Pisces, i.e. to the the onset of spring. The liberation of Joseph from the well is allegorically juxtaposed to the passage of the Sun from the constellation of Aquarius to that of Pisces, i.e. the end of the month of Bahman. The end of Bahman means that winter is almost over and spring is near.

از دلو یوسفی بجهد آفتاب و چشم  
بر حوت یونسی به تماشا بر افکند  
ماهی نهنگوار به حلقش فرو برد  
چون یونسش دوباره به صحرا بر افکند  
چشمه به ماهی آید و چون پشت ماهیان  
زیور به روی مرکز غیرا بر افکند  
آن آتشین صلیب در آن خانه مسیح  
بر خاک مرده باد مسیحا بر افکند

The Sun will leap out from the well of Joseph and  
Will cast its gaze in amazement upon the Jonah's fish.

The fish, like a sea monster, will swallow it.

Once again it (the fish — *A. M.*) will throw it (the sun — *A. M.*), like Jonah, out  
on dry land.

The Sun will move to Pisces, and

Will scatter jewels, like fish backs, over the heart of the land,

This burning cross in this house of Messiah

Will blow the breath of Messiah on this dead earth.

[*Khāqānī*, 1937, p. 144]





The language of *Khāqānī* is exceptionally figurative, complex and allegorical. This is why his poetry since at least the 15<sup>th</sup> century AD has been universally considered as rather difficult to interpret. The description of the arrival of spring as referred to above is more a riddle rather than a literary allegory. Indeed, by these verses the poet wants to say that after the Sun leaves the celestial house of Aquarius, it moves into the celestial house of Pisces. The spring begins and the Sun shines brightly thus resembling the shiny scales on the back of a fish. This example is also remarkable because in addition to the idea of Joseph's and Jonah's captivity it uses the motif of the life-giving breath of Jesus as discussed above.

Sometimes *Khāqānī* further elaborates on this metaphor and uses an additional comparison where the spring is alluded to as the "morning (of the year)":

دوش برون شد ز دلو یوسف زرین نقاب  
کرد بر آهنگ صبح جای به جای انقلاب  
یوسف رسته ز دلو مانده چو یونس به حوت  
صبح دم از هیبتش حوت بیفکند ناب

Last night Joseph, covered in a golden veil, emerged from the bucket,  
On purpose, he changed the time of morning.  
Joseph, freed from the bucket, remained, like Jonah, in the fish.  
At dawn, fish in its splendour scattered pure gold.

[*Khāqānī*, 1937, p. 48]

The radiant beauty of Joseph, which has become a commonplace in Persian poetry ever since, in this context alludes to the sunrise. The arrival of spring in this case is metaphorically described as the release of the beautiful Joseph from the dark well.

The associations of the images of Jonah in the fish and Joseph in the well with the movement of the Sun from one celestial house to another continues to be used in the poetry of the Safavid era. A poet *Muḥtasham Kāshānī* (d. 1588), for example also uses these motifs, however, in a more simple version if compared to that of *Khāqānī*:

سحر ز یوسف گمگشته پیرهن چو نمود  
ز مهر دیده یعقوب دهر شد بینا  
ز صبح سینه صافی نمود ماهی شب  
که روی یونس خورشید بود ازو پیدا

When dawn revealed the shirt [brought] from Joseph the Lost,  
Because of the Sun/love, Jacob-world regained its sight.  
The fish of the night cleared its throat in the morning,  
For out of it Jonah-Sun has manifested his face.

[*Muḥtasham Kāshānī*, 2001, p. 257]

Another meeting point of the literary images of Joseph and Jonah in Persian poetry is found among the motifs used in mystical context. *Rūmī* as well as his followers and authors of the subsequent period reveal the inseparable connection between "the spiritual" and "the physical" in human beings by using the motifs of Joseph being in the well and Jonah living in the fish belly:



منم فانی و غرقه در ثبوتی  
به دریاهاى حى لايموتی  
مگر من يوسفم در قعر چاهى  
مگر من يونسم در بطن حوتی

I have annihilated myself and immersed in the permanence [of God]

In the seas of the Living Deathless One,  
As if I were Joseph at the bottom of a well,  
As if I were Jonah in the belly of the fish.

[Rūmī, 1999, vol. 6, p. 22]

A century later the poet Sayf Farghānī (d. 1348) also wrote:

يوسف عقل ترا نفس تو چون زندانست  
يونس روح ترا جسم تو بطن الحوتست

To the Joseph of your mind, your *nafs* is like a prison,  
To the Jonah of your soul, your body is the belly of the fish.

[Sayf Farghānī, 1962–1965, vol. 2, p. 42]

The motifs of the imprisonment of Jonah and Joseph remain relevant in later centuries. Poet Fayḍ Kāshānī (1598–1680) compares them to the “prison” of mystical love:

بس يونس روشن دلی کورا نهنگ عشق خورد  
بس يوسف گل پيرهن در چاه در زندان عشق

There are many Jonahs of bright heart who have been devoured by this sea monster of love,

There are many Josephs in the shirts of flowers, [fallen] into a well in the prison of love.

[Fayḍ Kāshānī, 1987, p. 228]

Similarly to the names of Moses and Jesus (in Persian *Mūsā* and *ʿĪsā*), the names of Joseph and Jonah (in Persian *Yūsuf* and *Yūnus*) coincide in their prosodic models (CVV+CVC). In both cases, the similarity influences the structure of the *bayt*. However, contrary to the first pair of names, the names of Joseph and Jonah have different rhyme letters in termination. This influences the fact that the figures produced by the symmetrical arrangement of these words in *bayt* are different. This figure is called the *saj' mutāwazin* (also called *muwāzina*) and, according to Rashid ad-Din Waṭwāt (d. c. 1177–78), it is described as the use of words equal in rhythmic pattern at the beginning or at the end of a hemistich [Waṭwāt, 1985, p. 101; 240]. Another Persian 13<sup>th</sup>-century philologist, Shams-i Qays b. Muḥammad Al-Rāzī singles out this type of *saj'* as a separate figure [al-Rāzī, 1997, p. 213].

**Jacob and Job.** Another set of “paired” literary images of Biblical prophets in Persian poetry is that of Job and Jacob. In Qur'an they both are portrayed as humble and patient individuals in spite of calamities and trials sent down to them by the God.

We know that Jacob did not trust his sons who told him that their younger brother Joseph was killed by a wolf. He preferred to wait and rely on the Mercy of the Almighty [Qur'an 12:18]. He wept so bitterly, longing for his missing son, that



he eventually became blind. His patience was rewarded, and his sight was restored with the help of Joseph's shirt, which was brought to him from Egypt.

The story of Job is reflected in the Holy Qur'an in considerably less detail than the narrative of Jacob and Joseph. We learn the details of that story mostly from the later commentators. They write that Job was very wealthy, and one day Satan decided to test his faith by taking from him everything he possessed. First, he took away his cattle, then his sons, and then his health by inflicting on him a leprosy. This was a reason that all his tribesmen but not his wife abandoned him. In spite of all this Job remained faithful and patient. Eventually, in response to his prayers, the Lord gave him back all that he had lost.

The image of Job has not gained much popularity among Persian-speaking poets, and is rarely found on its own, separately from the image of Jacob. Even the earliest uses of the image of Job also include motifs drawn from the Qur'anic story of Jacob:

آن کس که مر ایوب ترا گرم غم آورد  
تو دیده یعقوب ورا بوی پسر باش

The one who brings the suffering of sorrow to your Job,  
You be the fragrance of [his] son for the eyes of his Jacob!  
[Sanā'ī, 1983, p. 313]

Sanā'ī uses the name of Job as a synonym for patience. A meeting with the beloved brings relief like the fragrance of Joseph's shirt for his father.

By the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the motif of Job's miraculous healing had entered the system of Persian poetic motifs as a parallel to the motif of recovery of Jacob's sight:

باز درآمد طبیب از در ایوب خویش  
یوسف کنعان رسید جانب یعقوب خویش

Here came the doctor through the doors of his Job,  
Joseph of Canaan came to his Jacob.  
[Rūmī, 1999, vol. 3, p. 114]

The further development of this motif is in harness with other motifs, like the "white hand" of Moses and the life-giving breath of Jesus. Altogether, these motifs stay in context of the *topoi*, which deal with "return to life" and "healing". One of the ghazals by Khādjū Kirmānī (1290–1349) ends up with such words, thus implicitly indicating that his poems positively influence his reader's soul just like the "white hand" and the "breath" of Jesus:

صبر ایوبی نکرده درد را درمان چه خواهی  
حزن یعقوبی ندیده بیت احزانرا چه دانی  
چون دم عیسی ندیدی گفته خواجه چه خوانی  
چون ید بیضا ندیدی پور عمرانرا چه دانی

Not having known the patience of Job, what kind of cure for pain do you want?  
Not having seen the sorrow of Jacob, what do you know about the house of grief?

If you have not felt the breath of Jesus, what will you read in the sayings of Khādjū?



If you have not seen the white hand, how do you know the son of 'Imrān?

[Khādījū Kirmānī, 1990, p. 498]

The names of Jacob and Job, as well as those of Jesus and Moses, coincide in rhythmic pattern and the reference consonant in the last syllable. The two examples as above therefore demonstrate the use of the *tarsi'* figure<sup>7</sup>.

**Conclusion.** The study has shown that the use of names of some Qur'anic prophets in pairs is a common feature in Persian poetry. This phenomenon is primarily due to the semantic similarity of certain literary images. The themes, which constitute both lexical and semantic contexts of these images, make it possible to contrast or compare them by combining them into pairs. Thus, the idea of awakening (in the morning, in spring, from the sleep of earthly existence, etc.) can be based both on the story of the "white hand" of Moses and on the motif of life-giving breath of Jesus. Joseph, freed from the well, is put in contrast to Jonah, who managed to escape from the belly of the fish. Both motifs in their turn can be considered as allusions to the coming of spring and the movement of the zodiacal houses. Both famous for their patience, humble Jacob and Job receive trials sent down to them by God. Thus, the literary images within these pairs in certain contexts appear to have similar synonymic content.

Besides, in some cases the semantic proximity of the literary images can be supplemented by the same of the rhythmic models of the prophets' names, which additionally allows the poet to use various types of rhythmic-syntactic parallelism.

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<sup>7</sup> For more on rhetorical figures in Persian poetry see: [Chalisova, 2009].



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