Please analyze the poem by al-Dindan (see below), by taking any combination of the following questions into account.

a) At a literal level, what is this poem about? How does it document the life and times of al-Dindan?
b) What motifs and themes in this poem have you encountered before? What associations do they have in this and others poems that you’ve read? What do they add to the implicit meaning of this poem?
c) What similarities does this poem have to the pre-Islamic poems that we’ve read and how does it differ from them?
d) What similarities does this poem have to contemporary bedouin vernacular poems that we’ve read and how does it differ from them?
e) Does this poem resonate to the rite-of-passage paradigm that we’ve studied?
f) Does this poem utilize metaphors in a way that evokes the pre-Islamic qasida?

In short, based on everything that we’ve studied about the poetic traditions of the Arabian Peninsula, provide a close, text-based explication of the following poem.

The poem:

1. ‘Abdallah ad-Dindan climbed the high cliffs
   of a mountain soaked with rain by heavy clouds.
2. There I gave free reign to the feelings pent up between my ribs,
   and, disconsolate, I burst out in tears.
3. If only people knew what secrets I kept hidden:
   My attempts at restraint put me through the pains of death.
4. I moan and groan like a herd of camels standing with bent necks,
   Looking over the brink of the well for more than three days,
5. Their humps sagging, gone whatever remained from grazing on the khazarif-plants,
   And then, on the fourth day, heard the shouts of the herdsmen.
6. Once covered with fat, they now look like shriveled thongs:
   Cruel thirst robbed them of the strength they gained from spring’s pastures.
7. Like a bundle of dead acacia-wood they trudge along /
   At the time of Canopus’ eclipse when the great heat sets in.
8. Disgusted by the foul smell of the water poured through the trough,
   The animals groaned so pitifully as to make a happy fellow turn grey.
9. When he stirred the filth on the water with a ladle,
   The man scooping up the water inside the well fainted, overcome by the stench.
10. Or is it like the screeching of eight pulley-wheels
   Turning on their axles over a plenteous, never ceasing well,
11. Pulled with vehemence by black, young she-camels;
   Hairy on the spine, tails greyish and flanks bulging,
12. Animals with slender necks, bodies covered with layers of fat
   And quivering humps: they are perfection incarnate.
13. When they have walked down the sloping path and turn around,
   They give a furtive look to the black slave that drives them on.
14. The palm-trees irrigated by them carry fruits that are half-ripe,
   And firm branches supported by supple, curved stems.
15. My suffering is because of you and your sharp front teeth,
   Set in lips as soft as silk from Oman;
16. How fortunate is he who sucks her saliva
   That cools the flames of hearts burning with desire;
17. Yes, because of her whose cheeks are burnished as a sword’s blade,
   She glitters among the Bedouins like Canopus at the southern horizon.
18. Ah, the pull at my heart is like that felt by mounted men returning from a raid,
   As they plunge over the ridge of a low hill.
19. They heard the alarm cries and the sound of shots fired at them,
   And, no mistake, they saw clouds of dust thrown up by snorting steeds.
20. The horsemen overtook them, singing war songs,
   While vying for their kill, everyone saying ‘My quarry!’
21. The raiders kicked the necks of their fleet camels,
   And helter-skelter rushed down from the crest of the stony hill.
22. Were it not for the dark of night that covered the winding trails,
   None of them ever would have touched his camel’s belly girths again.
23. The pursuers outflanked the raiders, then took them in her horses’ breasts,
   And stabbed them with the points of their spears in the neck,
24. Until the fiery among them became as meek as lambs,
   And the intractable as tame as camels trained to draw water.

(Kurpershoek, Oral Poetry & Narratives from Central Arabia Volume I, 159-163)

Listen to the poem here: