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תשעה באב

SIDDUR TISHAH B'AV



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## ***Shomron Kol Titen— Samaria Give Voice***

שׁוֹמְרוֹן קוֹל תִּתֵּן

BY SHELOMO IBN GABIROL (1021–1056)

*This kinah, by one of the most important medieval Jewish poets, sets up a curious dialogue: The capital cities of the northern and southern kingdoms of ancient Israel, Samaria and Jerusalem, vie with each other over who has suffered the most. The kingdoms divided after the reign of the third of our kings, King Solomon. The two capitals refer, in their poetic debate, to the following historical events: The northern kingdom, known as Israel, was conquered by Assyria in 722 B.C.E., and its ten tribes were scattered. The southern kingdom, known as Judah, was attacked twice by Babylonia. The first time, the leaders, including Ezekiel, who was both a prophet and a Kohen (priest), were deported. The second time, in 586 B.C.E., followed a major uprising by the inhabitants of Judah and concluded with the destruction of Solomon's Temple. Nearly seven centuries later, in 70 C.E., the Romans destroyed the rebuilt Second Temple.*

*The lyrical argument between Samaria and Jerusalem is full of pathos. It is as if two aged survivors are so filled with anguish over the battles of the past that the only thing each can do is claim to be the more aggrieved. And indeed, Tishah B'Av is the occasion to give voice to unrestrained grief over the unimaginable losses the Jewish people had sustained over centuries of persecution.*

## שומרון קול תתן

שומרון קול תתן מצאוני עוני. לארץ אחרת יצאוני בני.

ואהליבה תזעק נשרפו ארמוני. ותאמר ציון עזבני יי:

לא לך אהליבה. חשוב ענגך כעניי. התמשילי [שברך ו]חלך לשברי ולחליי. אני אהלה, סורה בגדתי בקשוי. וקם עלי פחשי, וענה בי מריי. ולמקצת הימים שלמתי נשוי.

ותגלת פלאסר אכל את פריי. חמודותי הפשיט, והציל את עדיי. ולחלח ולחבור נשא את שבויי. דמי אהליבה, ואל תבכי כבכיי. [אני נדתי לרחוק, ודי לי דיי.] שנותיך ארכו, ולא ארכו שני.

ואהליבה תזעק נשרפו ארמוני. ותאמר ציון עזבני יי:

משיבה אהליבה, אני כן נעקשתי. ובאלוף נעורי כאהלה בגדתי. דמי אהלה, כי ינוני זכרתי. נדדת את אחת, ורבות נדדתי. אני ביד פשדים פעמים נלכדתי. ושביה עניה לבבל ירדתי. ונשרף ההיכל אשר בו נכבדתי. ולשבעים שנה בבבל נפקדתי. ושבתי לציון עוד, והיכל יסדתי. גם זאת הפעם, מעט לא עמדתי. עד לקחני אדום וכמעט אבדתי. ועל כל הארצות נפצו המוני.

ואהליבה תזעק נשרפו ארמוני. ותאמר ציון עזבני יי:

החומל על דל, חמול על דלותם. וראה שממותם וארץ גלותם. אל תקצוף עד מאד, וראה שפלותם. ואל לעד תזכור עונם וסכלותם. רפא נא את שברם ונחם אבלותם. כי אתה סברם ואתה אילותם.

חדש ימינו כימי קדמוני. כנאמך, בנה ירושלים יי:

*Samaria Give Voice*

Samaria gives voice, "My sins have found me out! My children have left me and gone to another land."

Oholivah cries, "My palaces are burned down,"  
and Zion says "God has forsaken me."<sup>1</sup>

"You, Oholivah, cannot think your pain is as mine;<sup>2</sup> can you compare your breach and sickness with mine? I, Oholah, stubbornly acted the traitor; my sin rose up against me and my rebelliousness testified against me. But, in the end, I paid my debts.

Tiglat Pileser<sup>3</sup> ate my fruits, stripped me of my precious possessions, and relieved me of my ornaments. He carried me in captivity to Chalah and Chabor. So, be silent, Oholivah, and do not echo my cry. I was driven far away. Enough! It is enough! Your years of life exceed mine."

Oholivah cries, "My palaces are burned down,"  
and Zion says "God has forsaken me."

Oholivah replies, "I too was stubborn, and like you, Oholah, I betrayed the lover of my young days. Be silent, Oholah, for I recall my distress. You wandered only once, I, many times. Twice I was captured by the Chaldees, and as a persecuted prisoner I went down to Babylonia. The Temple in which I was glorified was burned down. Only after seventy years was I remembered (by God) in Babylonia. I returned to Zion once more, and established the Temple again. I did not stay long before Edom<sup>4</sup> took me away, and I almost expired. My masses were scattered over all the lands."

Oholivah cries, "My palaces have burned down,"  
and Zion says "God has forsaken me."

You, You have compassion on the poor, have compassion on their poverty. See their desolation and their long exile. Do not be angry, but see their degradation; do not forever remember their sin and their foolishness. Heal their hurt, and console their mourning, for You are their hope and their strength.

Renew our days as the days of those who came before us, as You pledged, "God is the builder of Jerusalem."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Oholivah* means "my tent is in her," referring to God's Sanctuary which is in the midst of Jerusalem. Zion is another name for Jerusalem. This repeating chorus emphasizes the grief of Jerusalem itself.

<sup>2</sup>Samaria (*Oholah*, "her tent") is the speaker, as the next paragraph makes clear. Samaria was the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, and so the two capitals of Land of Israel, Samaria and Jerusalem, each claim to be the most pained. For both names, *Oholivah* and *Ohala*, see the shockingly graphic imagery in Ezekiel 23.

<sup>3</sup>The Assyrian leader who destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel.

<sup>4</sup>Edom is a rabbinic code-name for Rome.

<sup>5</sup>Psalms 147:2.

***B'leil Zeh Yivkayun—***  
**On This Night My Children Cry**

בְּלֵיל זֶה יִבְכּוּן

BY ELAZAR KALLIR (CA. 7TH CENTURY)

*The perspective of this kinah is daring and challenging: The paytan acknowledges that it was God who had punished Israel and caused us to “cry and wail.” As the first stanza says: “. . . on this night my Temple and palaces were burnt; let all the House of Israel join in my moaning, and cry over the blaze which God sparked.” He invites us to join him with the repeating line, “On this night my children cry and wail.” And yet, the paytan acknowledges too that Israel deserved the punishment, calling Israel “the disobedient daughter.” In chanting this kinah, we pour out our hearts before God in pain, as we recall the terrible alienation and isolation from God which our ancestors must have felt as they faced the destruction of the Temples. At the same time, we, like the paytan, express a muted protest at our Parent who has punished us so: “His [God’s] animosity for her [Israel] exceeds His love.”*

## בְּלִיל זֶה יִבְכְּיוּן

בְּלִיל זֶה יִבְכְּיוּן וַיִּלְלוּ בְּנֵי. בְּלִיל זֶה חָרַב בֵּיתִי וְנִשְׂרְפוּ אַרְמוֹנָי.  
 וְכָל בַּיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל יִהְיוּ בִּיגוֹנֵי. וַיִּבְכוּ הַשְּׂרָפָה אֲשֶׁר שָׂרַף יי:  
 בְּלִיל זֶה יִבְכְּיוּן וַיִּלְלוּ בְּנֵי:

בְּלִיל זֶה תִּילֵל מֵר עֲנִיָּה נִבְדָּלָת. וּמִבֵּית אֲבִיָּה כְּהִיּוֹם נִחְדָּלָת.  
 וַיִּצְאָה מִבֵּיתוֹ וְנִסְגַּר הַדָּלָת. וְהִלְכָה בַּשָּׁבִיָּה בְּכָל פֶּה נֶאֱכָלָת.  
 בְּיוֹם שְׁלָחָה בָּאֵשׁ בּוֹעֶרֶת וְאוֹכֵלָת. וַיִּצְאָה גַחֲלָת וְאֵשׁ מֵאֵת יי:  
 בְּלִיל זֶה יִבְכְּיוּן וַיִּלְלוּ בְּנֵי:

בְּלִיל זֶה הִגְלַגַּל סִבָּב הַחוּבָה. רֵאשׁוֹן גַּם שְׁנֵי בֵיתִי נִחְרָבָה. וְעוֹד  
 לֹא רַחֲמָה בַת הַשׁוֹבָבָה. הַשְּׁקֵתָה מִי רוּשׁ וְאֵת בִּטְנָה צָבָה.  
 וְשְׁלָחָה מִבֵּיתוֹ וְגַם נִשְׁתָּה טוֹבָה. גְּדוּלָה הַשְּׁנֵאָה מֵאֵת אֲשֶׁר  
 אָהַבָה. וּבְאֵלְמִנּוֹת חֵיוֹת כָּאֲשֶׁה נַעֲזָבָה. וְהֵאמֵר צִיּוֹן עֲזָבֵנִי יי:  
 בְּלִיל זֶה יִבְכְּיוּן וַיִּלְלוּ בְּנֵי:

בְּלִיל זֶה קִדְרָתִי וְחֹשְׁכוֹ הַמְּאוֹרוֹת. לְחֶרְבָן בַּיִת קִדְשִׁי וּבִטּוֹל  
 מִשְׁמֵרוֹת. בְּלִיל זֶה סְבוּנֵי אֶפְפוּנֵי צְרוֹת. וְגַם קָרָא מוֹעֵד בְּדִין  
 חֲמֵשׁ גְּזוֹרוֹת. בְּכִי חָנָם בָּכוּ וְנִקְבַּע לְדוֹרוֹת. יַעַן הָיְתָה סִבָּה  
 מֵאֵת יי:

בְּלִיל זֶה יִבְכְּיוּן וַיִּלְלוּ בְּנֵי:

בְּלִיל זֶה אָרְעוּ בּוֹ חֲמֵשׁ מְאָרְעוֹת. גְּזַר עַל אָבוֹת בְּפְרוּעַ פְּרָעוֹת.  
 וְדָבְקוּ בּוֹ צְרוֹת מְצִרוֹת וְגַם רָעוֹת. יוֹם מוֹכֵן הָיָה בְּפְגוּעַ פְּגָעוֹת.  
 וְהַעֲמִיד הָאוֹיֵב וְהָרִים קוֹל זְעוֹת. קוּם, כִּי זֶה הַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר אָמַר יי:

בְּלִיל זֶה יִבְכְּיוּן וַיִּלְלוּ בְּנֵי. בְּלִיל זֶה חָרַב בֵּיתִי וְנִשְׂרְפוּ אַרְמוֹנָי.  
 וְכָל בַּיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל יִהְיוּ בִּיגוֹנֵי. וַיִּבְכוּ הַשְּׂרָפָה אֲשֶׁר שָׂרַף יי:

*On This Night My Children Cry*

On this night my children cry and wail,  
on this night my Temple and palaces were burnt;  
let all the House of Israel join in my moaning,  
and cry over the blaze which God sparked.  
On this night my children cry and wail.  
On this night let her wail, the uniquely afflicted one,  
the one barred from her Father's house.  
When she left His house, the door was shut,  
and she went out into captivity devoured by every mouth.  
On this day she was sent forth in consuming fire set by an ember of God.  
On this night my children cry and wail.  
On this night the wheel of fortune spun disaster,  
the First and the Second Temples were destroyed,  
and the disobedient daughter was dis comforted.  
She was administered the bitter waters of the unfaithful wife and the sign  
of guilt, the swollen womb, appeared.  
She was expelled from His house and has forgotten what happiness is.  
His animosity for her exceeds His love.  
A forsaken woman, hers is a living widowhood;  
Zion says: "God has left me."  
On this night my children cry and wail.  
On this night I grew dark, my lights were dimmed  
because of the destruction of my holy House and ceasing of the (priests') rounds.  
On this night disasters surrounded and encircled me,  
and God convened the court which issued five sentences of guilt.<sup>1</sup>  
All because (on this night) God saw to it that the original causeless weeping  
was given a reason; it became a night for weeping throughout the  
generations.<sup>2</sup>  
On this night my children cry and wail.  
On this night five disasters occurred;<sup>3</sup> it was decreed on the day our ancestors  
threw off all restraint, and therefore, so many constricting and crushing  
disasters stuck to this day.  
It is a day destined for adversity.  
The enemy raised shouts of terror: "Arise, this is the day fixed by God!"  
On this night my children cry and wail,  
on this night my Temple and palaces were burnt;  
let all the House of Israel join in my moaning,  
and cry over the blaze which God sparked.

<sup>1</sup>See Mishnah Ta'anit 4:6. (1) God decreed that the generation that left Egypt would not enter the Land of Israel, (2) the First Temple was destroyed, (3) the Second Temple was destroyed, (4) the city of Betar, the scene of Bar Kokhba's defeat, was captured in 135 C.E., (5) the city of Jerusalem was ploughed up by the Romans.

<sup>2</sup>The Israelites in the desert participated in "causeless weeping" when they cried that they could never conquer the land of Israel on the day—it was the ninth of Av—when the spies delivered their report. God then said to them: "You have participated in causeless weeping today; therefore I will fix this day as a day with many legitimate causes for your weeping!" See Babylonian Talmud, Ta'anit 29a.

<sup>3</sup>See footnote 1.

***Sha'ali S'rufah V'eish*— שְׂאֵלֵי שְׂרוּפָה בְּאֵשׁ**  
**Seek, (You) Who Have Been**  
**Consumed by Fire**

BY RABBI MEIR OF ROTHENBERG (c. 1215–1293)

*This is a kinah to mark the public burning of 24 cartloads of the Talmud and other Jewish holy books in Paris in June 1242. This, and other public burnings of Jewish holy books, were the result of papal inquiries based on charges against the Talmud brought by a Jewish apostate.<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>See *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 15:768f., for further historical background.

## שְׂאֵלֵי שְׁרוּפָה בְּאֵשׁ

שְׂאֵלֵי שְׁרוּפָה בְּאֵשׁ לְשָׁלוֹם אֲבִלְיָהּ. הַמִּתְאַוִּים שֹׁכֵן בְּחֶצֶר  
 זְבוּלְיָהּ: הַשְּׂאֵפִים בְּעֶפֶר אֶרֶץ, וְהַכְּאֲבִים הַמִּשְׁתוֹמְמִים עָלַי  
 מוֹקֵד גְּוִילְיָהּ: הוֹלְכִים חֲשָׁכִים וְאִין נִגְהָה. וְקוֹיִם לְאוֹר יוֹמָם,  
 עָלֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר יִזְרַח וְעָלְיָהּ: וְשָׁלוֹם אֲנוֹשׁ נֶאֱנַחַת, בּוֹכָה בְּלֵב נִשְׁפָּר.  
 תְּמִיד מְקוֹנֵן עָלַי צִירֵי חֲבָלְיָהּ: וַיִּתְאוּנֵן כְּתַנָּיִם וּבְנוֹת יַעֲנָה,  
 וַיִּקְרָא מִסֵּפֶד מֵרַב בְּגִלְיָהּ:

אֵיכָה נִתְּוֶנָה בְּאֵשׁ אוֹכְלָהּ, תֵּאֶפֶל בְּאֵשׁ בְּשָׂר, וְלֹא נִכּוּוּ זְרִים  
 בְּגִחְלֵיָהּ: עַד אֵן עֲדִינָהּ, תְּהִי שֹׁכְנָה בְּרַב הַשְּׂקֵט. וּפְנֵי פְּרָחֵי הַלֵּא  
 כְּסוּ חֲרָלְיָהּ: תִּשְׁבִּי בְּרַב גְּאֹהָה, לְשֹׁפּוֹט בְּנֵי אֵל בְּכָל-הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים,  
 וְתִבִּיא בְּפִלְיָהּ: עוֹד תִּגְזְרֵי, לְשָׁרוֹף דֵּת-אֵשׁ וְחֻקִּים. וְלִכֵּן אֲשֶׁרִי  
 שִׁישְׁלָם-לָךְ גְּמוּלְיָהּ:

צוּרֵי. בְּלִפְיֵד וְאֵשׁ, הִלְבַּעְבוּר זֶה נִתְּנָהּ. כִּי בְּאַחֲרִית תִּלְהֵט אֵשׁ  
 בְּשׁוּלְיָהּ: סִינִי. הִלְכֵן בְּךָ בְּחַר אֱלֹהִים, וּמֵאֵס בְּגִדוּלִים וְזָרַח  
 בְּגִבּוּלְיָהּ: לְהִיּוֹת לְמוֹפֵת, לְדֵת כִּי-תִתְמַעֵט וְתִרְדַּ מְכַבּוּדָהּ וְהֵן  
 אֲמִשַׁל מְשָׁלְיָהּ:

מִשַׁל לְמִלְךָ אֲשֶׁר בָּכָה לְמִשְׁתָּה בְּנוֹ, צָפָה אֲשֶׁר יִגּוּעַ, בֵּן אֶת  
 בְּמִלְיָהּ: תַּחַת מְעִיל, תִּתְפַּס סִינִי לְבוּשָׁךְ בְּשֵׁק, תַּעֲטָה לְבוּשׁ  
 אֲלִמְנוֹת, תַּחֲלִיף שְׂמִלְיָהּ: אוֹרִיד דְּמַעוֹת עֲדֵי יִהְיוּ כְּנַחַל, וַיִּגְיַעוּ  
 לְקַבְרוֹת שְׁנֵי שָׂרֵי אֲצִילְיָהּ: מִשָּׁה וְאַהֲרֹן בְּהַר הַהָר. וְאֲשָׁאֵל הַיֵּשׁ  
 תּוֹרָה חֲדָשָׁה, בְּכֵן נִשְׂרָפוּ גְּלִילְיָהּ:

*Seek, You (Who) Have Been  
Consumed by Fire*

Seek,<sup>2</sup> (you) who have been consumed by fire, the welfare of those who mourn you, of those who yearn to dwell in the court of your abode.<sup>3</sup> Of those who pant in the dust of the earth, who are pained and horrified over the burning of your parchments. Of those who walk in darkness, bereft of light. They wait for the light of day which will shine upon them and upon you. (Seek) the welfare of the person<sup>4</sup> who moans, who cries with a broken heart; who constantly laments the pains of your wounds. And who bewails like jackals and ostriches, and calls out in bitter dirge for your sake.

How was it that you, given in the consuming fire,<sup>5</sup> should be consumed by mortals' fire, and the trespassers are not singed by your coals? How long will you dwell in tranquility, pampered one,<sup>6</sup> while the faces of my young ones are covered with thorns? You sit in haughty pride, judging God's children in every case, bringing (them) before your tribunals. You go on to decree the burning of "the fiery law"<sup>7</sup> and statutes, and therefore, happy is he who would requite you.

Was it for this that you were given by my Rock in lightning and fire, that in the end fire should burn on your skirts? Sinai, was it for this that God chose you, rejected greater (peaks), and shone upon your bounds? (Was it for this), to become a harbinger that tradition would be humiliated and descend from its glory?

I will tell a parable: Of a king who wept at his son's wedding because he foresaw that he<sup>8</sup> would die. This is you, in your own words.<sup>9</sup> Instead of a mantle (of glory), wear, Sinai, sackcloth; change your garments and wear widows' clothes. I will drip tears until they become a stream, and reach the graves of your two noble masters. I will ask of Moses and Aaron on Mount Hor, "Is there to be a new Torah, is that why your columns were burnt?"

<sup>2</sup>The poet addresses the Torah, which is symbolized by the burnt holy books.

<sup>3</sup>This phrase may refer to halls where the Torah is studied.

<sup>4</sup>Possibly the poet himself, or the one who, in empathy with the poet's grief, chants these verses.

<sup>5</sup>A reference to the fire on Mount Sinai when the Torah was given. See Exodus 19:18.

<sup>6</sup>The persecutor.

<sup>7</sup>The poet uses the phrase *dat eish*, playing knowingly on *eish dat*, the difficult phrase for "fiery law" in Deuteronomy 33:2. The translation "fiery law" for the biblical idiom is by Harold Fisch in *The Holy Scriptures* (Jerusalem: Koren Publishers, 1969). This phrase connects with the image of the Torah given in "consuming fire" at the beginning of this paragraph.

<sup>8</sup>The son.

<sup>9</sup>The Torah prophesies in several places that Israel would suffer death and destruction if Israel would violate the covenant.

חֹדֶשׁ שְׁלִישִׁי, וְהִקְשֶׁר הֶרְבִּיעִי לְהִשְׁחִית חֲמֻדֹתָהּ, וְכָל־לִפִּי  
 כְּלִילֶיךָ: גִּדַע לְלוֹחֹת, וְעוֹד שָׁנָה בְּאֹלֹתוֹ, לְשָׂרוֹף בְּאֵשׁ דָּת. הַזֶּה  
 תְּשׁוּלֹם כְּפִלְיֶךָ:

אֶתְמָה לְנַפְשִׁי, וְאִיךָ יַעֲרֵב לְחִכִּי אָכֹל, אַחֲרֵי רְאוֹתַי אֲשֶׁר אָסְפוּ  
 שְׁלָלֶיךָ: אֵל תוֹף רְחוּבָה כְּנִדְחָת, וְשָׂרְפוּ שְׁלַל עֲלִיוֹן, אֲשֶׁר  
 תִּמְאַס לְבוֹא קְהֵלֶיךָ: לֹא־אֲדַעָה לְמִצּוֹא דֶרֶךְ סְלוּלֶיךָ, הֵיוּ  
 אֲבִלוֹת נְתִיב יִשְׂרָמֶסְלֶיךָ:

יִמְתַּק בְּפִי מִדְּבֶשׁ, לְמִסוֹף בְּמִשְׁקָה דְּמַעוֹת. וְלִרְגְלֵי הַיּוֹת כְּבוֹל  
 כְּכִילֶיךָ: יַעֲרֵב לְעֵינַי, שְׂאוֹב מִיַּמֵּי דְמַעֵי. עַדִּי כָלוּ, לְכָל מַחְזִיק  
 בְּכַנֶּף מְעִילֶיךָ: אַף יִחַרְבוּ בְּרִדְתָם עַל לְחַיִּי, עֲבוּר כִּי נִכְמְרוּ  
 רַחֲמֵי, לְנִדּוֹד בְּעֵלְיֶךָ: לְקַח צָרוֹר כְּסָפוֹ, הֶלֶף בְּדֶרֶךְ לְמַרְחוֹק  
 וְעַמּוֹ. הֲלֹא נָסוּ צִלְלֶיךָ:

וְאֲנִי כְּשָׂכוֹל וְגַלְמוֹד, נִשְׁאַרְתִּי לְבַד מֵהֶם, כְּתֹרֵן בְּרֹאשׁ הַר  
 מִגְדָּלֶיךָ: לֹא אֶשְׁמַע עוֹד לְקוֹל שָׁרִים וְשָׁרוֹת. עָלִי כִּי נִתְקוּ מִיַּתְרֵי  
 תַּפִּי חֲלָלֶיךָ: אֶלְבֶּשׂ וְאַתְכַּס בְּשֶׁק, כִּי לִי מְאֹד יִקְרוּ. עֲצַמּוּ כַּחוֹל  
 יִרְבִּיוֹן נַפְשׁוֹת, חֲלָלֶיךָ: אֶתְמָה מְאֹד עַל־מְאוֹר הַיּוֹם, אֲשֶׁר יִזְרַח  
 אֶל־כָּל. אֲבָל יַחֲשִׁיף אֵלַי וְאֵלֶיךָ:

וְעַקֵּי בְּקוֹל מַר לְצוֹר, עַל שְׁבְרוֹנָה וְעַל חֲלִינָה. וְלוֹ יִזְכּוֹר אֶהְבֵּת  
 כְּלוּלֶיךָ: חֲגִרֵי לְבוּשׁ שֶׁק, עָלִי הַהִבְעָרָה אֲשֶׁר יִצְאָה לְחֵלֶק,  
 וְסִפְתָּה אֶת־תְּלוּלֶיךָ:

In the third month (the Torah was given), and in the fourth, Israel turned betrayer to destroy your delight and perfect beauty.<sup>10</sup> (The enemy) broke the Tablets (of the Ten Commandments) and repeated his foolishness by burning the law in fire. Is this your double reward?<sup>11</sup>

My soul is in shock; how shall anything ever be savory to my palate again after seeing what your plunderers have gathered? As in a condemned city, those you have spurned from entering your assembly have burned the spoils of the Exalted in the main square. I do not know how to find the path you have paved. The course which led to your righteous way has become (clogged with) mourners.

(It would be) sweeter than honey to mingle (my) drink with tears. Would that *my* feet were tied in shackles. May my eyes delight to draw the water of my tears until they blot out (from my sight) all of those who held fast to the wings of your garments (and are no more). But they would dry up as they fall upon my cheeks; my heart yearns as your (divine) Master wanders (away from you). He has taken his valuables with Him far away; hasn't your covering shade<sup>12</sup> fled as well?

And as for me, I remain alone and bereaved, as a lookout at the top of your towering mountain. I will no longer listen to the voice of singers, for your stringed instruments, wind instruments, and rhythm instruments are all cut off.<sup>13</sup> I will dress and cover myself in sackcloth because they were so precious to me. The souls of your slain had increased like the sand. I am amazed at the light of day which shines upon all, because to me and to you,<sup>14</sup> it grows dark.

Cry out with a bitter voice to the Rock, for your brokenness and your wretchedness. If only God remembered the love of your betrothal.<sup>15</sup> Gird yourself with garments of sackcloth because of the fire which tore you apart and consumed that which you stored up.

<sup>10</sup>Namely, the Torah—Israel built the golden calf. This occurred, according to talmudic tradition, on the 17th of Tammuz, which was a hint of the beginning of the destruction of Jerusalem many centuries hence: On that same day in the year 586 B.C.E., the Romans breached the walls of the city (see Mishnah Ta'anit 4:6). According to this same tradition, a Roman officer burned a scroll of the Torah on the altar of the Temple, as is, perhaps, hinted in the next line of this poem.

<sup>11</sup>Possibly a reference to Isaiah 61:7—"Because your shame was double . . . Assuredly they shall have a double share in their land, joy shall be theirs for all time."

<sup>12</sup>God's "valuables" and Israel's "covering" are the teachings of the burned books.

<sup>13</sup>Likening the holy teachings to the sweet sounds of the instruments of the Temple. The poet mourns for the delights of both the burned holy books and the burned Temple at the same time.

<sup>14</sup>The poet, again, as at the very beginning, addresses the Torah, which is symbolized by the burnt holy books.

<sup>15</sup>The giving of the Ten Commandments at Sinai is often portrayed in rabbinic literature as the day when Israel became the eternal partner of God, as in a marriage.

כימות ענותך ינחמך צור. וישיב שבות שבטי ישראל, וירם  
את-שפלה: עוד תעדי בעדי שני. ותף תקחי, תלכי במחול  
וצהלי במחולך: ירום לבבי, בעת יאיר לך צור. ויגיה לחשף  
ויאירו אפלה:

May the Rock comfort you in equal measure to the days of your suffering. May God restore the captivity of the tribes of Yeshurun<sup>16</sup> and raise up your lowly ones. You will again adorn yourself with ornaments of scarlet. You will take up the tamborine and again dance and rejoice in your dancing. My heart will be uplifted at that time when the Rock shall cause light to shine upon you; when He shall brighten your darkness and illumine your dark mist.

<sup>16</sup>One of the names of Israel, meaning “the straight one,” i.e., the honest one.

***Mi Yiten Roshi Mayim—* מי יתן ראשי מים  
**Oh That My Head Were Water****

***(An Elegy for Communities Attacked  
During the Crusades)***

BY KALONYMUS BEN YEHUDAH (11TH CENTURY)

*The first Crusade commenced in 1095 with Pope Urban II's call to the faithful to liberate the Holy Land from the hands of the Moslems. As the Christian devoted massed in France, they could not wait until they arrived in the Land of Israel to avenge the blood of their Messiah. They began by threatening the Jews who lived in France. The Jewish communities along the Rhine in Germany, feeling secure under the protection of the political authorities, fasted and prayed for their compatriots in France. Not long afterward, however, the Crusader masses attacked three of the Jewish communities in Germany: Speyer, Mayence (or Mainz), and Worms. This kinah laments the assaults on the innocent Jews of those towns. The poet himself says that while these tragedies deserve their own day of commemoration, the tradition is to connect contemporary calamities with the ancient destruction marked by Tishah B'Av.*

*It is impossible, when reciting this kinah, not to think of German Jewry on the eve of the Holocaust. That German-Jewish community, too, felt secure as part of the political system.*

*When an individual suffers the loss of a family member, that original wound is often reopened any time the individual is exposed to additional loss. In a similar way perhaps, our poets have often tied grief over contemporary tragedies with mourning over the events of Tishah B'Av. That is certainly the theme of this kinah.*

### מי יתן ראשי מים

מי יתן ראשי מים, ועיני מקור נוזלי. ואבכה כל-ימותי ולילי.  
את חללי טפי ועוללי. וישישי קהלי. ואתם ענו, אוי ואבוי  
ואללי. ובכו בכה רב והרב

על-בית ישראל ועל-עם יי, כי נפלו בחרב:

ודמע תדמע עיני, ואלכה-לי שדה בכים. ואבכה עמי מרי לבב  
הנבוכים. על-בתולות היפות וילדים הרבים. בספריהם נכרכים  
ולטבח נמשכים. אדמו עצם מפנינים ספירים ונפכים. כמו טיט  
חוצות נדשים ונשלכים. סורו טמא, קראו למו מלקרב.

על-בית ישראל ועל-עם יי, כי נפלו בחרב:

ותרד עיני דמעה, ואילילה ואנודה. ולבכי ולחגר שק, אקרא  
להספידה. מפוז יקרה ומזהב חמודה. כבודה פנימה, כבוד כל-  
כלי חמדה. ראיתה קרועה שכולה וגלמודה. התורה והמקרא  
והמשנה והאגדה. ענו וקוננו זאת להגידה. אי תורה ותלמיד  
והלומדה. הלא המקום מאין יושב חרב.

על-בית ישראל ועל-עם יי, כי נפלו בחרב:

ועפעפי יזלו מים דמע להגירה. ואקונן מר על-הרוגי אשפירא.  
בשני בשמנה בו, ביום מרגוע הקרה. מרגועי לרגועי נחלפו  
להבעירה. נהרגו בחורי חמד וישישי הדרה. נאספו יחד, נפשמ  
השלימו במורא. על-יחוד שם המיחד, יחדו בגבורה. גברי כח,  
עשי דברו למהרה. וכהני ועלמי נגועו, פלהם עשרה.

על-בית ישראל ועל-עם יי, כי נפלו בחרב:

*Oh That My Head Were Water*

Oh that my head were water and my eye a fountain of tears<sup>1</sup>  
so that I could cry all of my days and my nights  
for my killed children, babies, and elderly of my communities.  
And you would answer: “Woe and alas,”  
and cry more and more.

For the House of Israel and for the people of God who are fallen by the  
sword.

My eye will drip tears,  
I will go to a field of weepers  
and I will make those who are upset and bitter of heart cry with me  
for the lovely young women and tender children  
who were enwrapped in their books and dragged to their slaughter.  
Ruddier<sup>2</sup> than gems, sapphires and rubies,  
they were trampled and thrown away like the mud of the gutter.  
(Their enemy) called out: “Stay away, unclean, do not come near!”

For the House of Israel and for the people of God who are fallen by the  
sword.

May my eye drop a tear, and let me yell and wander;  
I will cry and wear sackcloth to lament.  
More precious than gold, than fine gold;  
honored in an inner way, an honor worth all delight,  
but I have seen them torn, bereft and alone:  
The Torah, the holy writings, the Mishnah and the Aggadah.  
Where is the Torah and the disciple who studies it?  
Is not its place the one destroyed with no one dwelling there?

For the House of Israel and for the people of God who are fallen by the  
sword.

My eyelids stream water and tears as I mourn the slain of Speyer.<sup>3</sup>  
It happened on the eighth day, in the second month, on the day of rest.  
My serenity was replaced with panic and destruction.  
Precious youths and glorious elders were killed.  
They were gathered together and they gave up their souls in awe,  
(declaring) God’s unity. And so, they were united heroically.  
Powerful heroes, quick to fulfill God’s word,  
my priests and young men were killed—ten in all.

For the House of Israel and for the people of God who are fallen by the  
sword.

<sup>1</sup>Jeremiah 8:23.

<sup>2</sup>A ruddy complexion is an image of vigor and health.

<sup>3</sup>The specific communities mentioned suffered attacks during the Crusades.

ובמר יגוני ועצבי ילל אחבירה. קהלות הקדש הריגתם היום  
 בזכרה. קהל וורמיזא בחונה ובחורה. גאוני ארץ ונקיי טהרה.  
 פעמים קדשו שם המיחד במורא. בעשרים ושלשה בחדש זיו  
 לטהרה. ובחדש השלישי בקריאת הלל לשורה. השלימו  
 נפשם באהבה קשורה. אהימה עליהם בבכי יליל לחשורה.  
 כלולי כתר על ראשם לעטרה.

על-בית ישראל ועל-עם יי, כי נפלו בקרב:

ועל-אדירי קהל מגנצא ההדורה. מנשרים קלו, מאריות  
 להתגברה. השלימו נפשם על יחוד שם הנורא. ועליהם  
 זעקת שבר אזעק, בנפש מרה. על-שני מקדשי יסודם, כהיום  
 ערעה. ועל-חרבות מעט מקדשי, ומדרשי התורה.

על-בית ישראל ועל-עם יי, כי נפלו בקרב:

בחדש השלישי בשלישי, נוסף לדאבון ומארה. החדש אשר  
 נהפך ליגון וצרה. ביום מתן דת, שבתי להתאשרה. וביום  
 נתינתה, כמו-כן אז חורה. עלתה-לה למרום למקום מדורה.  
 עם תיקה ונרתקה והדורשה וחוקרה. לומדיה ושוניה באישון,  
 כמו באורה.

על-בית ישראל ועל-עם יי, כי נפלו בקרב:

In the bitterness of my anguish and sorrow, I choose to shout.  
I recall this day the killing in the holy communities.  
The community of Worms, tested and chosen, the sages of the land,  
completely pure. Twice did they suffer martyrdom in awe.  
Once, on the twenty-third of the month Ziv<sup>4</sup> in purity,  
and in the third month during the recitation and singing of Hallel.  
They gave up their souls in love bound (to God).  
I moan over them crying, shouting, and wailing.  
They were adorned with a crown of glory.

For the House of Israel and for the people of God who are fallen by the  
sword.

For the noble ones of the renowned community of Mayence,  
who were quicker than eagles and stronger than lions (to do God's will).  
They gave up their souls declaring the unity of the awesome name.  
I scream a shattered scream with a bitter soul for them.  
For the foundations of both of my Temples which were today laid bare,  
and for the destruction of my synagogues and schools of Torah.

For the House of Israel and for the people of God who are fallen by the  
sword.

On the third day of the third month, more grief and destruction were  
added.

This month was turned into sorrow and distress.

On the day of the giving of the Torah<sup>5</sup> I had hoped to find cause for  
happiness.

However, on the day (the Torah) was given, so it returned.

It ascended on high to its place of dwelling.

It went up with its case and covering and with those who interpreted  
and elucidated it,<sup>6</sup> those who studied it in night's darkness as they  
did in the light.

For the House of Israel and for the people of God who are fallen by the  
sword.

<sup>4</sup>A biblical name for the month of Iyar.

<sup>5</sup>It was the holiday of Shavuot.

<sup>6</sup>They were all consumed.

שִׁימוּנָא עַל-לִבְבְּכֶם, מִסְפֹּד מֵר לְקִשְׁרָה. כִּי שְׁקוּלָה הִרִיגְתֶּם  
 לְהִתְאַבֵּל וּלְהִתְעַפְּרָה. כְּשֶׁרַפַּת בֵּית אֱלֹהֵינוּ הָאוֹלָם וְהַבִּירָה. וְכִי  
 אִין לְהוֹסִיף מוֹעֵד, שֶׁבֶר וְתַבְעֵרָה. וְאִין לְהַקְדִּים, זוּלְתִי לְאַחֲרָה.  
 תַּחַת בֶּן, הַיּוֹם לוֹיְתִי אַעֲוֹרְרָה. וְאַסְפְּדָה וְאִילִילָה, וְאַבְכָּה בְּנַפְשׁ  
 מְרָה. וְאַנְחֲתִי כְּבָדָה מִבְּקָר וְעַד עָרֵב.

עַל-בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל-עַם יִי, כִּי נָפְלוּ בְּחָרֵב:

עַל-אַלְהָה אָנִי בּוֹכֶיָה, וְלִפִּי נוֹהֵם נְהִימוֹת. וְאַקְרָא לְמִקּוֹנְנוֹת וְאַל-  
 הֶחֱכַמּוֹת. אֱלִי וְאַלְיָה כָּלֵן הַמּוֹת. הֵיִשׁ מְכַאוֹב לְמְכַאוֹבֵי לְדַמּוֹת.  
 מַחוּץ תִּשְׁכַּל-חָרֵב, וּמְחַדְרִים אֵימוֹת. חֲלָלִי חֲלָלֵי-חָרֵב, מוֹטְלִים  
 עֲרוּמִים וְעֲרוּמוֹת. נִבְלָתָם כְּסוּחָה, לְחַיִּת אֶרֶץ וְלִבְהַמּוֹת. יוֹנֵק  
 עַם-אִישׁ שִׁיבָה, עֲלָמִים וְעֲלָמוֹת.

עַל-בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל-עַם יִי, כִּי נָפְלוּ בְּחָרֵב:

מִתְעַתְעִים בְּמוֹ מוֹנֵי, וּמְרַבִּים כְּלָמוֹת. אִי אֱלֹהֵימוֹ אָמְרוּ, צוּר  
 חֲסִיוֹ בּוֹ עַד-מוֹת. יָבוֹא וְיִוָּשִׁיעַ וְיַחְזִיר נְשָׁמוֹת. חֲסִין יְהִי, מִי-  
 כְּמוֹךָ, נוֹשֵׂא אֲלָמוֹת. תִּחְשָׁה וְתִתְאַפֵּק, וְלֹא-תִחְגַּר חַמּוֹת.  
 בְּאֲמֹר אֱלִי מִלְעִיגִי, אִם-אֱלֹהִים הוּא יָרֵב.

עַל-בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל-עַם יִי, כִּי נָפְלוּ בְּחָרֵב:

Take this to your hearts, a bitter eulogy prepare.  
For their killing demands mourning and rolling in the dust  
just as much as the burning of God's House, its hall and edifice.  
We're not to add an additional day of observance for destruction and  
burning.

Nor may we observe (Tishah B'Av) early (when it falls on Shabbat),  
but only put it off (til the next day).

Therefore *this* day<sup>7</sup> my cry will arise,  
and I will eulogize, wail and weep with a bitter spirit.  
My grief is heavy from morning til evening.

For the House of Israel and for the people of God who are fallen by the  
sword.

For these do I weep, and my heart moans.  
I call for those who know how to wail:  
let them all shout and shriek and lament.  
Is there any pain which can be compared to my pain?  
"The sword without and terror within."<sup>8</sup>

My slain, my slain of the sword, strewn naked.  
Their corpses like carrion for the wild beasts and animals of the land:  
nurslings, with old men, young men and women.

For the House of Israel and for the people of God who are fallen by the  
sword.

My oppressors mock and reproach:  
"Where is their God," they say,  
"the Rock in whom they trusted til death?  
Let Him come and save them and restore their souls."  
You, who are mighty, who is like You, the One who bears our burdens?  
Will You be silent and restrain Yourself, and not gird Yourself in anger,  
while the scoffers say to me,  
"If He is God, let Him come and fight."

For the House of Israel and for the people of God who are fallen by the  
sword.

<sup>7</sup>Therefore, I will join my grief over the current Crusaders' attacks to my grief over the ancient destruction marked by Tishah B'Av.

<sup>8</sup>The exact prophecy of disaster which Moses predicted just before his death, in Deuteronomy 32:25.

עֵינַי עֵינַי יִרְדָּה מַיִם, כִּי־נִהַפֵּךְ לְאָבֶל מְשׁוֹרֵר. וְעַגְבֵי לְקוֹל בּוֹכִים,  
מִלְהַפֵּג וּלְקָרָר. מִי יִנּוּד לִי, וְאֵין מִחֲזִיק לְהִתְעוֹרֵר. חֲמָה בִּי יִצְאָה  
וְסָעַר מִתְגוֹרֵר. אֲכַלְנִי הַמָּמְנִי הַצֵּר הַצּוֹרֵר. שֶׁבֶר עֲצָמוֹתַי זוֹרֵר  
וּמְפָרָר. סֵלָה כָּל־אֲבִירֵי, הַטְּבוּר וְהַשֶּׁרֶר. רְטִיָּה וּמְזוּר אֵין לְזוֹרֵר.  
מִפְתִּי אָנוּשָׁה, בְּאֵין מִתְעִיל וּמְזוֹרֵר. עַל־כֵּן אָמַרְתִּי שְׁעוּ מִנִּי  
אָמַרְרָ. בְּבִכֵי דַמְעָתַי עַל לְחֵזִי לְצָרָב.

עַל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל־עַם יְיָ, כִּי נִפְלוּ בְּחָרָב:

My eye, my eye, runs down with water,  
for the poet has turned to mourning.  
My flute has turned to the sound of crying, without pause or comfort.  
Who will lament for me?  
There is no one to take hold of me and rouse me.  
Anger has gone out against me and a growing storm.  
The oppressing enemy has devoured and crushed me.  
He has broken my bones, scattered and ground them.  
He has scoffed at all my glorified ones, the center and backbone.  
There is no medicine or bandage I can take because my wound is so  
severe,  
beyond healing or cleansing.  
Therefore I said, "Turn away from me, I will weep and burn my cheeks  
with tears."  
  
For the House of Israel and for the people of God who are fallen by the  
sword.

## ***Tziyon Halo Tishali— Elegy on Zion***

צִיּוֹן, הָלֵא תִשָּׁאֲלֵי

JUDAH HALEVI (c. 1075–1141)

TRANSLATED BY RAYMOND P. SCHEINDLIN

*This is among the most famous of all the kinot. It was composed by one of the most well-known personages in Jewish history: Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi, who was born in Spain circa 1075. He flourished as a Jewish poet and philosopher during the “Golden Age of Spain” (in terms of Jewish creativity there). His literary artistry is recognizable even in his masterpiece of philosophy, the Kuzari. Many works of philosophy, Jewish and general, are characterized by the dry and tedious style of logical argument. Not so, the Kuzari. It reads like an early version of a novel, with Jewish, Christian, and Muslim personalities in dialogue with the king of the Khazars. His work is lively and passionate.*

*So, too, the kinah before us. In this kinah, written a thousand years after the destruction of the Second Temple and the dispersion of the Jews from the land of Israel, the poet reminds Zion (Jerusalem—representing the Land of Israel in general), of the ardent, almost burning, connection her exiled people feel for the land. Mostly written in the first person, the soulful love the poet feels for the land is palpable as he expresses his longing to visit each site made famous by biblical mention. He celebrates the wonder of each site as the supreme place of awe and wonder, before lavishing similar praise on the next one. Nevertheless, a bittersweet sense pervades the whole of the poem, because the destruction of holy places and holy people is hinted at throughout.*

*The poem, as a whole, is the romantic memoir of a person for a beloved homeland made all the more poignant because this was written without the poet’s ever having visited the land of Israel. He did, at the end of his life, leave on a difficult and treacherous pilgrimage to the land of Israel, which was then ruled by the Crusaders. Apparently, he got as far as Egypt, but despite his great longing to continue on, he died before reaching Israel. (A legend in Shalsholet HaKabbalah<sup>1</sup>, however, relates that he managed to reach Jerusalem, but as he kissed the dust and stones of the holy city, an Arab horseman trampled him to death. According to the legend, this kinah, Tziyon Halo Tishali, was on his lips as he died.)*

*For the many Jews who know the land of Israel from personal experience there, this poem can serve to express the deep attachment we feel to that land. Reciting it on Tishah B’Av, it can help us imagine the desolate and alienated sense our ancestors felt during the long Diaspora. It can also touch the fear that Jews have when we contemplate the vulnerability of the modern State of Israel: We do not want to ever have to recite Tziyon Halo Tishali out of a similar sense of loss and destruction of the land of Israel.*

<sup>1</sup>*Shalsholet HaKabbalah* (“Chain of Tradition”), by Gedaliah ben Yosef Ibn Yahya of Italy (1515–1587) is one of the most famous Hebrew chronicles of the Middle Ages.

## ציון, הלא תשאלי

ציון, הלא תשאלי לשלום אַסִירֶיךָ. דורשי שלומך, והם יתר  
עֲרִיךָ:

מִים וּמִזֶּרֶחַ וּמִצָּפוֹן וְתִימָן, שְׁלוֹם רְחוֹק וְקָרוֹב, שְׂאֵי מְכַל־עֲבָרֶיךָ:  
וְשְׁלוֹם אַסִיר תִּקְוָה, נוֹתֵן דְּמָעָיו בְּטִל־חֶרְמוֹן, וְנִכְסֵף לְרַדְתָּם  
עַל־הָרָרֶיךָ:

לְכַבּוֹת עֲנוּתֶךָ אֲנִי תָנִים, וְעַת אֲחַלּוֹם שְׂיִבַת שְׁבוּתֶךָ, אֲנִי  
כְּנוֹר לְשִׁירֶיךָ:

לְבֵי לְבֵית־אֵל, וְלִפְנֵי־אֵל מְאֹד יִהְיֶה וּלְמַחְנֵימִים, וְכָל־פְּגַעֵי טְהוּרֶיךָ:  
שָׁם הַשְׂכִּינָה שְׂכָנָה לָךְ, וְהִיוּצֶרְךָ פָּתַח לְמוֹל שְׁעָרֵי־שַׁחַק,  
שְׁעָרֶיךָ:

וּכְבוֹד יְיָ לְבַד הָיָה מְאוּרָךְ, וְאִין שִׁמְשׁ וְסִהַר וְכוֹכָבִים מְאִירֶיךָ:  
אֲבַחֵר לְנַפְשִׁי לְהַשְׁתַּפֵּף, בְּמָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים שְׁפוּכָה,  
עַל בְּחִירֶיךָ:

אֶת בֵּית מְלוּכָה, וְאֶת כֶּסֶף יְיָ. וְאִיךָ יִשְׁבוּ עֲבָדִים עָלַי כְּסָאוֹת  
גְּבִירֶיךָ:

מִי־תִנְגְּנִי מְשׁוּטֵט, בְּמָקוֹמוֹת אֲשֶׁר נָגְלוּ אֱלֹהִים לְחַוִּזְךָ וְצִירֶיךָ:  
מִי יַעֲשֶׂה־לִּי כְּנַפִּים וְאַרְחִיק נְדוּד, אֲנִיד לְבַתְּרִי לְבָבִי בֵּין בְּתָרֶיךָ:  
אֶפּוֹל לְאִפֵּי עָלִי אֶרְצֶךָ, וְאַרְצָה אֲבַנֶּיךָ מְאוּד, וְאַחֲוִנְךָ אֶת־עַפְרֶיךָ:  
אֶף כִּי־בְעַמְדִי עָלִי קְבָרוֹת אֲבוֹתַי, וְאַשְׁתוּמִם בְּחֶבְרוֹן עָלִי מִבְּחַר  
קְבָרֶיךָ:

אֶעֱבֹר בְּיַעַרְךָ וּבְכַרְמְלֶךָ, וְאֶעֱמֹד בְּגִלְעָדֶךָ, וְאַשְׁתוּמָּה עַל־הַר  
עֲבָרֶיךָ] הַר הָעֲבָרִים וְהַר הָהָר, אֲשֶׁר־שָׁם שְׁנֵי אוֹרִים גְּדוֹלִים,  
מְאִירֶיךָ וּמְאוּרָךְ:

*Elegy on Zion*

Jerusalem! Don't you have some greeting to return  
to your last remaining flocks, your captive hearts,  
who send you messages of love?  
Here are greetings from the west and east,  
from north and south,  
from near and far, from every side;  
greetings also from a certain man,  
a captive of your love, who pours his tears like dew on Mount Hermon,  
and longs to shed them on your slopes.  
My voice is like a jackal's when I mourn your suffering,  
but when I dream of how your exiles will return,  
I turn into a lyre.  
My heart is aching for Bethel, Peniel, Maḥanayim,  
every place where saints encountered messengers from God,  
where the Shekhinah is your neighbor,  
where your Maker  
made you gates that face the gates of heaven;  
where the Glory of the Lord serves you for light,  
not merely luminescent bodies—  
sun and moon and stars.  
You are the house of kings, the throne of David's God,  
though slaves are sitting on your nobles' thrones.

I wish my soul could overflow  
where once the holy spirit poured out  
over your elect. I wish that I could wander  
where the Lord revealed Himself  
to visionaries, prophets,  
wish that somebody would make me wings  
so I could fly away to you, so far,  
and set the fragments of my broken heart  
among your jagged mountains,  
throw my face down to your ground,  
to fondle your gravel, caress your soil.  
Even more would I delight  
to stand beside the tombs  
of ancestors and patriarchs,  
gaze at your choice graves,  
cross your fields and forests,  
stand at Gilead, gaze at Avarim—  
Hor and Avarim—the graves of two great lights,  
two men who were your luminaries and your teachers.

חַיֵּי נְשָׁמוֹת אֲוִיר אֶרְצָה, וּמִמְרֵד־דְּרוֹר אֲבַקֶּת עֲפָרָה, וְנֹפֶת צוּף  
נִדְהָרֶיךָ:

יִנְעַם לְנַפְשִׁי, הֶלֶךְ עָרֹם וַיִּחַף, עָלַי חַרְבוֹת שְׁמָמָה. אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ  
דְּבִירֶיךָ:

בְּמָקוֹם אַרְוִיךָ אֲשֶׁר נִגְנַז, וּבְמָקוֹם כְּרוּבֶיךָ. אֲשֶׁר שָׁכְנוּ חֲדָרֵי  
חֲדָרֶיךָ:

אָגַז וְאֲשַׁלִּיךְ פָּאֵר נֹזְרִי, וְאֶקֶב זְמַן, חֲלַל בְּאֶרֶץ טְמֵאָה. אֶת־נְזִירֶיךָ:  
אֵיךְ יַעֲרֹב לִי אֶכֶל וְשִׁתוֹת. בְּעַת אַחְזָה, כִּי יִסְחָבוּ הַכְּלָבִים  
אֶת־כַּפֵּירֶיךָ:

אוּ אֵיךְ מְאֹר יוֹם, יִהְיֶה מְתוֹק לְעֵינַי. בְּעוֹד אֶרְאֶה בְּפִי עוֹרְבִים,  
פְּגָרֵי נְשָׁרֶיךָ:

כּוֹס הַיְגוֹנִים, לְאֵט הֶרְפִּי מְעַט. כִּי כָּבֵד מְלֵאוֹ כֶּסֶלִי וְנַפְשִׁי,  
מִמְרוֹרֶיךָ:

עַת אֲזַכְּרָה אֱהֵלָה, אֲשֶׁתָּה חֲמָרָה, וְאֲזַכֵּר אֱהֵלִיבָה. וְאֶמְצָה  
אֶת־שְׁמֵרֶיךָ:

צִיּוֹן כְּלִילַת יָפִי, אֶהְבֶּה וְחַן תִּקְשְׁרֵי מֵאֵז. וּבָךְ נִקְשְׁרוּ נַפְשוֹת  
חַבְרֶיךָ:

הֵם הַשְּׂמִחִים לְשִׁלּוֹתָהּ, וְהַכּוֹאֲבִים עַל־שְׁמִמוֹתָהּ, וּבּוֹכִים  
עַל־שְׁבָרֶיךָ:

מְבוֹר שְׁבִי שׁוֹאֲפִים נִגְדָהּ, וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוִים אִישׁ מִמְּקוֹמוֹ אֶל־נֹכַח  
שְׁעָרֶיךָ:

Your air—the breath of life!  
Flowing myrrh, the dust that rises from your soil!  
Your rivers, molten honeycomb!  
What joy my soul would have if I could walk  
naked, barefoot, on the ruins,  
on the rubble that your Temple has become,  
where once your covenant-tabernacle was,  
now hidden,  
site of your two Cherubim  
that dwelt once in your hidden room—  
I'd shear off, throw aside my splendid locks,  
curse the fate that has defiled your nazirites  
in an unclean land.  
What pleasure can I get from food and drink  
while watching dogs drag away  
your lions in their teeth?  
How can my eyes enjoy the daylight  
when I see your eagle's corpses  
carried off by crows?

Cup of Sorrow, be gentle now! Let me be!  
Long enough have my guts been filled with gall.  
To contemplate the fate of Oholah  
is to gulp your poisoned brew  
to think of Oholivah's fate  
is to suck the dregs.

Jerusalem, most beautiful! You bind your hair  
with love and grace  
as your true friends have bound their souls to you—  
your friends who are in joy when you have peace,  
but ache at your destruction, weep for your disasters,  
yearn for you from their captivity,  
bow, wherever they may be, toward your gates:  
your flocks, your exiled throngs, scattered  
from hill to hill,  
who still recall your folds,  
reach for your hem, strive to rise  
and grasp the branches of your palms.

Babylon and Egypt at their height—  
what were they to you?  
Could their blind oracles match the Urim and the Tumim of your priests?  
Did they have God-anointed kings,  
prophets, Levites singing in their temples?

עֲדְרֵי הַמּוֹנֶה, אֲשֶׁר גָּלוּ וְהִתְפָּזְרוּ מֵהָר לְגַבְעָה, וְלֹא שָׁכְחוּ גִדְרֵיךָ:  
הַמַּחְזִיקִים בְּשׁוֹלְיֶךָ, וּמִתְאַמְּצִים לְעֵלוֹת וּלְאַחוֹז בְּסַנְסַנֵי תַמְרֵיךָ:  
שׁוֹעֵר וּפְתָרוֹס הַיַּעֲרֹכוֹף בְּגִדְלָם, וְאִם הֵבֵלָם יִדְמוּ לְתַמְיָהּ וְאוֹרֵיךָ:  
אֶל-מִי יִדְמוּ מְשִׁיחֶיךָ, וְאֶל-מִי נְבִיאֶיךָ, וְאֶל-מִי לְוִיֶיךָ וְשָׂרֵיךָ:  
יִשְׁנֶה וַיַּחֲלֶף כְּלִיל, כָּל-מַמְלָכוֹת הָאֵלֶּלֶל, חֲסָנָה לְעוֹלָם, לְדוֹר  
וְדוֹר נִזְרֵיךָ:  
אִנֹּף לְמוֹשָׁב אֱלֹהֶיךָ. וְאֲשָׁרֵי אָנוּשׁ, יִבְחַר וַיִּקְרַב וַיִּשְׁכַּח בְּחֻצְרֵיךָ:  
אֲשָׁרֵי מַחְכָּה, וַיִּגְיַע וַיִּרְאֶה עֲלוֹת אוֹרָה, וַיִּבְקַעוּ עָלָיו שְׁחָרֶיךָ:  
לְרֵאוֹת בְּטוֹבַת בְּחִירֶיךָ וְלַעֲלוֹז בְּשִׁמְחָתְךָ, בְּשׁוֹבֶךָ אֵלַי קִדְמַת  
נְעוּרֶיךָ:

The crown of the ungodly kingdoms will tarnish, vanish;  
your greatness will endure, your crown is everlasting.

God chose to dwell in you:

Happy the one He chooses to bring near,  
who makes his home within your courts,  
who waits and lives to see your rising sun,  
the new dawn breaking over you,  
who lives to see those dear to you in bliss,  
rejoicing in your joy,  
when you return to what you were  
when you were young.

## *Eli Tziyon—Wail, O Zion*

אֵלֵי צִיּוֹן

TRANSLATED BY ROBERT GORDIS

*This kinah is usually the last one chanted and it has a well-known, mournful tune. The first two lines, which function as a repeating chorus, capture the essence of Tishah B'Av: "Wail, O Zion, with your cities, like a woman in travail (i.e., in the travail of childbirth)/Like a maiden girl in sackcloth for the husband of her youth." On Tishah B'Av, we give vent to all of our bitter emotion over the destruction of the land of Israel in ancient times, as well as for the terrible persecution our people had suffered over the centuries in the Diaspora, as guests of often hostile host countries. Just as during the week of sitting shivah a mourner avoids his or her normal routine in order to release the emotions of grief and loss, so too, during the hours of Tishah B'Av, the mourning Jewish people chants Eikhah and the kinot in order to help us release the emotions of grief and loss. For nearly all the days of the Jewish calendar, we celebrate the holiness of life. Tishah B'Av is the day reserved for us to "wail . . . like a woman in travail . . ."*

*This kinah lists the details of our loss:*

*"For the exile of God's servants . . . , for God's palace (the Temple), now forsaken . . . , for the enemy's oppressions . . . , for the wounds and endless blows . . . , for the torture of her sons . . ."*

*Some see hope expressed in the image of the first line: Zion (Jerusalem) wailing like a woman in travail. After all, following the wailing of a woman in the travail of childbirth, new life is born. The centuries of wailing by Jews for Jerusalem destroyed preserved a deep love for Jerusalem and the land of Israel over the generations. In the last century, Jerusalem and the land of Israel were reborn as a homeland for the Jewish people. This fulfilled the Sages' teaching that those who mourn for Jerusalem in its destruction will merit rejoicing over Jerusalem rebuilt (Talmud, Ta'anit 30b). Our final hope for Jerusalem and the land of Israel is that it will be blessed with peace.*

## אֵלֵי צִיּוֹן וְעָרֶיהָ

אֵלֵי צִיּוֹן וְעָרֶיהָ. כְּמוֹ אִשָּׁה בְּצִירֶיהָ.  
וְכָבְתוּלָהּ חֲגֵר־תֶּשֶׁק. עַל-בַּעַל נְעוּרֶיהָ:  
עָלֵי אַרְמוֹן אֲשֶׁר נָטַשׁ. בְּאַשְׁמַת צֶאֱן עֲדָרֶיהָ.  
וְעַל בָּאֵת מְחַרְפֵי-אֵל. בְּתוֹךְ מְקַדֵּשׁ חֲדָרֶיהָ:  
עָלֵי גְלוֹת מְשֻׁרְתֵי-אֵל. נְעִימֵי שִׁיר זְמֶרֶהָ.  
וְעַל דָּמָם אֲשֶׁר שָׁפָךְ. כְּמוֹ מִימֵי יְאוּרֶיהָ:  
עָלֵי הַגִּיּוֹן מְחוּלֶיהָ. אֲשֶׁר דָּמָם בְּעָרֶיהָ.  
וְעַל וַעַד אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַם. וּבִטּוֹל סִנְהֶדְרֶיהָ:  
עָלֵי זְבָחֵי תַמִּידֶיהָ. וּפְדִיוֹנֵי בְכוּרֶיהָ.  
וְעַל חֲלוּל כְּלֵי-הַיֵּכָל. וּמִזְבַּח קְטוּרֶיהָ:  
עָלֵי טַפֵּי מְלַכְיָהּ. בְּנֵי דָוִד גְּבִירֶיהָ.  
וְעַל יָפִים אֲשֶׁר חָשָׁה. בְּעַת סָרוּ כְתָרֶיהָ:  
עָלֵי כְבוֹד אֲשֶׁר גָּלָה. בְּעַת חֲרַבָן דְּבִירֶיהָ.  
וְעַל לַחֵץ אֲשֶׁר לָחַץ. וְשֵׁם שִׁקִּים חֲגוּרֶיהָ:  
עָלֵי מַחֵץ וְרַב מַכּוֹת. אֲשֶׁר הִכּוּ נְזִירֶיהָ.

*Wail, O Zion***Chorus**

**Wail, O Zion, with your cities, like a woman in travail,  
Like a maiden girt in sackcloth for the husband of her youth.**

- א For God's palace, now forsaken through the sin of Zion's flocks,  
ב For the entrance of blasphemers trampling in her sacred halls.  
ג For the exile of God's servants, sweet singers of her melodies,  
ד And for their blood that poured forth like the waters in her streams.  
ה For the melody of her dances, now grown silent in her towns,  
ו And for the meeting-place now ruined and her courts now desolate.  
ז For her daily sacrifices and redemptions of her first-borns,  
ח And for the desecrated vessels and her altar of incense.  
ט For the children of her kings, princes of King David's line,  
י And for their beauty now grown black when her crowns were stripped away.  
יא For the Glory, now in exile, with God's Mercy-seat destroyed,  
יב And for the enemy's oppressions, girding sackcloth on her loins.  
יג For the wounds and endless blows that her holy men sustained,  
יד And for the smashing on the rock of her babes and all her young.  
טו For the glee that filled her foes, who laughed at her calamity,  
טז And for the torture of her sons, free-born, pure and noble.

וְעַל נַפְוִץ אֵלַי סָלַע. עוֹלָלִיָּה נְעָרִיָּה:  
עֲלֵי שְׁמַחַת מְשֻׁנְאִיָּה. בְּשַׁחֲקָם עַל שְׁבָרִיָּה.  
וְעַל עֲנוּי בְּנֵי־חֹרִין. נְדִיבִיָּה טְהוֹרִיָּה:  
עֲלֵי פֶשַׁע אֲשֶׁר עָוְתָה. סְלוּל דֶּרֶךְ אֲשׁוּרִיָּה.  
וְעַל צְבָאוֹת קְהָלִיָּה. שְׁזוּפִיָּה שְׁחֹרִיָּה:  
עֲלֵי קוֹלוֹת מְחֹרְפִיָּה. בְּעַת רַבּוֹ פְּגָרִיָּה.  
וְעַל רִגְשַׁת מְגִדְפִיָּה. בְּתוֹךְ מְשָׁכֵן חֲצָרִיָּה:  
עֲלֵי שְׁמֵךְ אֲשֶׁר חָלַל. בְּפִי קָמִי מְצָרִיָּה.  
וְעַל תַּחֲנוּן יְשׁוּעוֹ לָךְ. קָשׁוּב וּשְׁמַע אֲמָרִיָּה:  
אֵלַי צִיּוֹן וְעָרִיָּה. כְּמוֹ אִשָּׁה בְּצִירִיָּה.  
וּכְבַתּוּלָה חֲגֵרֶת־שָׁק. עַל־בְּעַל נְעוּרִיָּה:

- ד For the sins that she committed, straying from the righteous path,  
 ז And for the hosts of her assemblies blackened by catastrophe.  
 ק For the shouts of her revilers, as her corpses mounted higher,  
 ר And for the tumult of her scorers in the Temple's holy courts.  
 ש For Your name that was profaned by the mouths of her oppressors,  
 ת And for the mercy that they cry for; hear her plea and answer her!

**Chorus**

**Wail, O Zion, with your cities, like a woman in travail,  
 Like a maiden girt in sackcloth for the husband of her youth.**

Transliteration of *Eli Zion*

**Chorus:**

*Eli Tzion v'arehah kemo ishah v'tzirehah,  
 V'khivtulah ḥagurat sak al ba'al n'urehah.*

- א Alei armon asher nutash b'ashmat tzon adarehah,  
 ב V'al bi'at m'ḥarfei Eil b'tokh mikdash ḥadarehah.  
 ג Alei galut m'shartei Eil n'eimei shir z'marehah,  
 ד V'al damam asher shupakh k'mo meimei y'orehah.  
 ה Alei hegyon m'holehah asher damam b'arehah,  
 ו V'al va'ad asher shameim u'vitul Sanhedrehah.  
 ז Alei zivḥei temidehah u'fidyonei v'khorehah,  
 ח V'al ḥilul kelei heikhal u'mizbah k'torehah.  
 ט Alei tapei m'lakhehah benei Daveed g'virehah,  
 י V'al yohfyam asher ḥashakh b'eit saru kh'tarehah.  
 יא Alei khavod asher galah b'eit ḥohrban d'virehah,  
 יב V'al loḥeitz asher laḥatz v'sam sakim ḥagorehah.  
 יג Alei maḥatz v'rov makot asher huku n'zirehah,  
 יד V'al niputz elei sela olalehah n'irehah.

- 
- ש Alei simḥat m'sa'nehah b'sohḥkam al sh'varehah,  
ע V'al inu'i v'nei ḥorin n'divehah tehorehah.
- פ Alei feshah asher avta s'lol derekh ashurehah,  
צ V'al tziv'ot k'halehah sh'zufehah sh'ḥorehah.
- ק Alei kolot m'ḥohrfehah b'ait rabu fegarehah,  
ר V'al rig'shat m'gadfehah b'tokh mishkan ḥatzeirehah.
- ש Alei shimkha asher ḥullal b'fi kamei metzarehah,  
ת V'al taḥan y'shav'u lakh k'shov u'sh'ma amarehah.

*Contemporary  
Poetry*



**שירים**

## נודו למיִלֶּלֶת

נודו למיִלֶּלֶת על נְהָרוֹת בְּבֶל  
 על שִׁירָה כִּי שָׁבַת מִפִּי הַנְּבִל,  
 על אֶרֶצָה כִּי על יַד חֶרֶב הִגִּירוּ,  
 על אֵל צוֹרָה בְּאֱלֹהֵי זֶר הִמְירוּ.

אֵן רִגְלֶךָ בְּצַקָּה, גוֹי אֲבָד, תַּנְוִיחַ?  
 מִתִּי על צִיּוֹן יַעֲרָה הַרְיוּחַ,

וּמִשִּׁירוֹת הַיְכָל כִּי יִתְנוּ קוֹלָם  
 יָשׁוּב לֵב עֲמָה וַיַּחֲזִי כִימֵי עוֹלָם?

מִתִּי, הֲזֵה, גּוֹלָה אֶל כָּל אֶפְסֵי אֶרֶץ  
 תִּמְצָא מְנוּחַ מִשֹּׁד וּמִפְּרֶזֶץ?  
 גַּם יוֹנָה מְצֹאָה קֵן, מְעוֹן כָּל גִּבֹּר,  
 סֵלַע — הַשָּׁפֵן, וַיִּהְיֶה — רַק קֶבֶר!  
 (תִּירְגַם י.ל. גוֹרְדוֹן)

Translated into Hebrew by Y.L. Gordon.

*Oh! Weep for Those*

LORD BYRON (1788–1824) was one of the most famous of the English romantic poets.

Oh! weep for those that wept by Babel's stream,  
Whose shrines are desolate, whose land a dream;  
Weep for the harp of Judah's broken shell;  
Mourn—where their God hath dwelt, the godless dwell!

And where shall Israel have her bleeding feet?  
And when shall Zion's songs again seem sweet?  
And Judah's melody once more rejoice  
The hearts that leap'd before its heavenly voice?

Tribes of the wandering foot and weary breast,  
How shall ye flee away and be at rest!  
The wild dove hath her nest, the fox his cave,  
Mankind their country—Israel but the grave!

## על השחיטה

שמים, בקשו רחמים עלי!  
 אם-יש בכם אל ולא בכם נתיב —  
 ואני לא מצאתיו —  
 התפללו אתם עלי!  
 אני — לבי מת ואין עוד תפלה בשפתי,  
 וכבר אזלת יד אף-אין תקנה עוד —  
 עד-מתי, עד-אנה, עד-מתי?

התלני! הא צנאר — קום שחט!  
 ערפני ככלב, לה זרע עם-קרדום,  
 וכל-הארץ לי גרדום —  
 ואנחנו — אנחנו המעט!  
 דמי מתר — הך קדקד, ויזנק דם רצח,

דם יונק ושב על-בתנתך —  
 ולא ימח לנצח, לנצח.

ואם יש-צדק — יופע מיד!  
 אף אם-אחרי השמדי מתחת רקיע  
 הצדק יופיע —  
 ומגר-נא כסאו לעד!  
 ובקשע עולמים שמים ימקו:  
 אף-אתם לכו, זדים, בחמסכם זה  
 ובדמכם חיו והנקו.

וארור האומר: נקם!  
 נקמה בזאת, נקמת דם ילד קטן  
 עוד לא-ברא השטן —  
 ויקב הדם את-התהום!  
 יקב הדם עד תהמות מחשבים,  
 ואכל בחשך וחתר שם  
 כל-מוסדות הארץ הנמקים.

*On the Slaughter*

ḤAYYIM NAḤMAN BIALIK (1873–1934) was the major poet of the Hebrew renaissance. In the spring of 1903, the civilized world was shocked by news reports of a bloody pogrom in Kishinev (Bessarabia). Bialik was sent there to report on the massacre and he responded with a series of poems. The title of this poem, “On the Slaughter,” is drawn from the concluding phrase of the blessing that the *shoḥet* recites when performing ritual slaughter. The poem draws on language from Judges 6 and Psalms, often creating tension by reversing biblical meaning.

Heaven: Pour your mercy on me!  
If there is a God whom I have not found  
then pray for me!  
My heart is dead and I cannot pray.  
My hand is weak, there is no hope—  
How long, until when, how long?

Hangman: Here’s my neck, come and kill me!  
Break my neck like a dog. You have the arm, the axe.  
The whole earth is a scaffold to me.  
We—we are the few!  
My blood is free to flow—  
Strike the skull for murder’s blood.

The blood of the newborn and of the old  
are on your clothes and will never be washed, ever.

Justice: If it exists, appear at once!  
But if it appears after I am destroyed  
Let its throne be hurled down forever,  
Let the heavens eternally rot with evil.  
And evildoers: go forth in violence.  
Live in your blood, and be cleansed of your guilt.

Cursed is the one who calls for vengeance.  
Satan has not yet created revenge like this:  
Revenge for the blood of a small child.  
Let its blood pierce the dark abyss!  
Let it eat away in the dark and break through  
all the foundations of the corrupted earth.

## אין עוד משלים

לא נדמינו לכלבים בגוים. כי הן כלב אצלם ירחם  
 ילטף ויש גם שינשק מפני גוי, כי כולד  
 חמוד בביתו יפנקוהו ושש בו תמיד;  
 ובמות כלב זה, מה מאד יאבל עליו גוי!

לא הובלנו כצאן לטבחה בקרונות רכבות  
 כי כצאן מצרע הובילוננו למו כליה  
 הרוך כל הנופים היפים באירפה.  
 לא כלצאנם עשו הגוים בגופנו:  
 בטרם שחיטה לא עקרו את שני הצאן:  
 לא פשטו מגופם את צמרם כאשר לנו עשו:  
 לא דחפו את הצאן אל האש לעשות אפר מן חי  
 ולזרות את האפר אל פני נחלים וביבים.

היש משלים עוד לזה אסוננו שבא לן מידם?  
 אין עוד משלים. (כל המלים צאלי צללים) —  
 ובזה הבטוי המחריד: אין עוד משלים!  
 כל ענוי אכזר שיעשה בן אדם בארץ גויית לאדם,  
 ידמהו הבא להמשיל: הוא ענה כיהודי.  
 כל מגור כל זועה כל בדידות כל עגמה  
 כל בכיה הומיה בעולם  
 יאמר הממשיל: זה משל מן המין היהודי.

אין שלם לאסוננו כי מדת הקפו הוא עולם:  
 כל תרבות מלכיות הגוים עד שיאה — בדמנו  
 וכל מצפונה — בבכינו.

ואם יש עוד תשובה-טהרה לנוצרי עולם זה —  
 היא: ודוי: הם חטאו. הם רוצים את החסד הכאב:  
 להיות יהודים ובגורל יהודי: תמיד סנה.  
 מני מלך על כס ועד האכר בשדה:  
 להעלות על תרנם דגלו וסמלו של דוד.

*To God in Europe* (Excerpt)

URI ZVI GREENBERG (1894–1981) was an important Hebrew poet who witnessed anti-Jewish pogroms in his youth in Poland, and who, in later years, became very involved with the building of a Jewish homeland in Israel.

## No Other Instances

We are not as dogs among the gentiles: a dog is pitied by them,  
fondled by them, sometimes even kissed by a gentile's mouth;  
as if he were a pretty baby  
of his own flesh and blood, the gentile spoils him  
and is forever taking pleasure in him.  
And when the dog dies, how the gentile mourns for him!

Not like sheep to the slaughter were we brought in trainloads,  
but rather—  
through all the lovely landscapes of Europe—  
brought like leprous sheep  
to Extermination itself.

Not as they dealt with their sheep did the gentiles deal with our bodies;  
they did not extract their teeth before they slaughtered them;  
nor strip them of their wool as they stripped us of our skins;  
nor shove them into the fire to turn their life to ashes;  
nor scatter the ashes over sewers and streams.

Where are there instances of a catastrophe  
like this that we have suffered at their hands?  
There are none—no other instances.  
(All words are shadows of shadows)—  
*This is the horrifying phrase:* No other instances.

No matter how brutal the torture a man will suffer  
in a land of gentiles,  
the maker of comparisons will compare it thus:  
He was tortured like a Jew.  
Whatever the fear, whatever the outrage,  
how deep the loneliness, how harrowing the sorrow—  
no matter how loud the weeping—  
the maker of comparisons will say:  
This is an instance of the Jewish sort.

What retribution can there be for our disaster?  
Its dimensions are a world.  
All the culture of the gentile kingdoms at its peak  
flows with our blood,  
and all its conscience, with our tears . . .

*Poland*

MENACHEM Z. ROSENSAFT (1948– ), born in the Displaced Persons camp of Bergen-Belsen, is one of the foremost leaders of the sons and daughters of the survivors of the Holocaust.

I am the Jew  
who would have prayed  
three times a day  
had black flames  
not spewed me  
into the August sky  
  
without a grave  
without a stone  
my ashes  
screams  
burning blood  
have penetrated  
Carthage-like  
this earth  
that did not quake  
to shatter crematory walls  
that did not swallow  
railroad tracks  
whose grass refused  
to become crimson

I know  
of course I know  
that all earth  
is innocent  
only the killers  
killed

I know  
of course I know  
that Germans  
not Poles  
murdered the I  
I would have been

but covered by the dust  
of that other I  
and of all the millions  
of other I's  
even fields  
where flowers never withered  
have become desolation  
devastation

they stood there watching  
Stashek and Leshek  
as I was shoved  
into the cattle car  
*good riddance to the bloody Jews*  
they thought  
*we'll get their houses now*  
they thought

they stood there smiling  
Hans and Fritz  
as they shoved me  
into the gas  
*good riddance to the bloody Jews*  
they thought  
*it's almost time to eat*  
they thought

I am the last Jew to die  
there  
the last Jew to die  
the last Jew  
I am